

THE STANDARD

Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

VOLUME XXXVII

MARCH 1, 1961 — GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

NUMBER 11

MEDITATION

THE AGONY OF JESUS

"And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down and prayed, saying, Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Thine be done. And there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." — Luke 22:41-44.

It was not long before this hour of woe that Jesus walked and talked, He spoke and washed the feet of His disciples. 'Twas night, and Judas was not there: a bargain must be kept, a bargain foul, a handful of silver must be earned. But on that silver cleaves a stain, a stain so deep that endless ages shall not cleanse that spot in nethermost abyss of hell. The flames rise high, the pain, the suffering is so deep and night is dark, 'tis called the outer darkness of a place especially created for all the damned.

'Twas night, and Judas was not there.

And when the little band of lovers of the Son of God came near with Jesus to the garden of the olives, it seemed as though a special gust of wrath struck our Redeemer. A change came over Him who spoke so calm and sweet in upper chamber, where all would eat and drink of lamb and wine. 'Twas ended; they stood and sang a hymn beloved from age to age by lovers of Jehovah. They went into the night and soon they saw the brook, the Cidron of Gethsemane.

* * * *

I spoke about a gust of wrath that struck the Saviour. The signs, the outward signs, are there: I hear of agony of soul and stark amazement. The favored three were there; their story came to us who live so far away from scenes described in Holy Writ. They told us of that agony, that dread and sorrow of the Lord.

But even when the band of lovers was diminished, and

only three were there, it was too much: the Lord craved solitude, He will withdraw Himself and be alone. Oh yes, He was alone in all His suffering.

The Holy Spirit tells us of a distance such when rock is thrown by strength of a mere man. And there the Saviour sank in shadows of the night, 'neath silent olives. Hark, be still. We hear the Saviour's words, and see the tears that stream, and thicken, fall, are swallowed up by ground that is thrice holy. If Moses stood on holy ground where God would speak of faithfulness and love, what shall we say of this green grove, this holy place where Jesus suffered, cried in agony of soul and spirit? What shall we say of blood-drops heavy, blood that is so precious that it bought and purchased countless sinners and a whole new world? Oh yes, we heard of blood-drops, and of agonizing prayers and supplications, thrice repeated: the Son is praying to His Father, so well beloved. So hark, and be now very still. We'll listen to our Substitute. For He, though separated from His church the distance of a rock when thrown by man, is very near to us in this dread hour. Why weeps the Lord, I ask, why does He shed this precious blood that glistens on His forehead? Why does He groan and pray and spend His soul in nameless grief? It is because He has you in His arms, His heart, His breast; He's one with you and all that are foreknown by loving Father of the sheep. 'Twas not for sin and guilt that He did own that blood was pressed from Him. It was the guilt of His known flock that Father found and saw, and visited with stroke on stroke, till Jesus lay in dust of death, eternal death.

We see the tears of God, the sweat of blood of God: strange mystery of salvation.

* * * *

He knelt and prayed and asked His God and Father if this dread cup of awful death and hell might pass.

He asked and prayed and turned to His disciples. But they were weary, oh so weary and they slept, the sleep of utter sadness and amazement. Events had been so strange, so unforeseen, so unexpected.

Yes, Peter, James and John had fallen asleep. While

Jesus prayed and groaned in agonizing pain of hell. No, Jesus, no, the church cannot keep pace with Thee when Thou art treading such dark ways of awful retribution. They sleep when Jesus went to hell. "One solitary hour you cannot watch with Me? With Me who am thy Friend, thy Goël, thy Redeemer? You cannot watch with Me while devils rage about Me and the Father is so far, so far away?"

And Jesus went His way to solitude anew, a solitude that is so absolute, so strange to ways of men, that no one understands or grasps to tell his fellow. To understand the poet you needs must know his land, his ways and life. But Jesus is the wholly Other, He's God Supreme, but God who suffers in the frame of man. And, no, I cannot understand such tears, that blood, these agonizing prayers, in darkness of a night that shall be celebrated in the heavenly city, when this pure Lamb of God shall stand 'mid angels and the host of men made perfect.

He went His way, and prayed again the selfsame prayer: O Father, hear! Is there an other way in which I could redeem Thy sheep from death and hell? This way that is before Me is so dreadful; the monster of this death that stands before Me I must swallow, and I'm afraid and dread the fires that glow and do consume Me. Is there an other way, dear Father?

* * * *

O, do not say that Jesus did not want to be obedient to His Father! The very thought may perish with the thinking. It was not possible that Jesus would rebel. It was His very meat and drink to do the will of Him who was His life. And He *did* show us in the selfsame prayer. Oh, no, not only at the end of this thrice dreadful cry, not only when He would negate His own desire and will, but at the very start of crying to His God. Before one word is uttered of these supplications, except the sweetest word of Father, He bends His will, negates His own desires and cries: "If Thou be willing!" It is the victory of purest love, of wonderful obedience, of oneness with the Father. It sets the tune of a sweet melody that grows and sings even while 'tis sung in awful depths of fear and trembling.

"If it be not Thy will, dear Father, then let this monster come and take Me in his claws of death unspeakable, in horror of forsakenness from Thee, when soon I shall be stretched on the accursed tree, where all may see and gaze upon the mystery of Thy adored salvation, where devils led by Lucifer and mobs of men shall mock and spit, shall laugh and taunt, but where the angels shall be silent. 'Twill be the hour of all the forces of corruption and deceit. But I shall then be silent, except to open doors of love to all My own, forced open by My prayers for murderers of God. I shall be silent, Father, if it's Thy will I die this cursed death which I do fear and dread."

Oh no, the Saviour's will is at the very start in harmony with His God.

But He's afraid of this stark night of terror: reaction of His holy Soul against a state of those that have deserved to die the death that is eternal.

* * * *

And so, the distances are great in this sweet garden. A stone's cast hence? O no, but countless miles away. I may not even speak of earthly measure, mark or span.

The distances are measured by my God: He knows the depths of this Vicarious suffering. The stone's cast grows into the lengths of an eternal way, a *via dolorosa*. There lives no man who ever measured death, the distances of death that are eternal, and least of all the solitary way to hell along which Jesus trod.

He prayed alone, so far away from Peter, James and John, so far away from you and me, and from the church He bought with His own blood.

And He went farther still; in this sweet garden we saw His kneeling form. Few hours from then He is in awful darkness; and we see no more. From very far away we hear the groans, while drops of blood fall heavily upon the place called Golgotha.

* * * *

And yet, seen from another focal point, He was not far from you and me. In that dread hour He held you in His arms and bears you safely Home.

You're washed by blood, you're purified by all this woe, for He stood in your place, dear lovers of the Lord! He took you in His arms from all eternity. This garden and this blood, pressed from His holy forehead, is foreknown and loved before. It is the thought of peace, of wondrous peace, that is now realized.

No, Jesus, no, there is no other way: this is the way that Thou must go. It's wisdom of the Father. Thou wert in counsels sweet, before the earth was born, and there we measured all that way, that *via dolorosa*. 'Twas then that all those drops of bloody sweat were counted, their preciousness established, their fruits were willed, and all the songs engendered by that blood were sung from everlasting, within the heart of God.

* * * *

But hark, what means that rustle and that shining light in yonder grove of olives? It is an angel of the heavenly host. The Father heard the prayers of Jesus, and strength of God is sent, is come with this loved messenger of light

of heaven. He hovers above the prostrate form of Jesus, and strengthening powers lift the Saviour now. He wends His way to sleeping men, so weak, so weary. He speaks to them in accents low, in measured words that tell a wondrous story: Sleep on, My own, sleep on and take your rest! It is enough; the hour is come when I shall be exalted and lift from this so sorry earth. But God shall be exalted in this My work, this labor to redeem. Sleep on, and take your rest. And rest they did and do, and ever will. The work is done: my Saviour died and rose again and went to heaven. And all the sheep, bought by this blood, shall follow Him to halls of joy in God.

* * * *

And so the words of David ended. The echo of those agonizing words grew still. The garden rests, will rest with all reborn creation. And men, with angels, sing, will sing till moons shall shine no more.

The prayers of David ended; they ended in a sob, but O, the songs that grew from this so throbbing heart of Jesus!

G.V.

THE CROSS OF CALVARY

My God, My God I cry to Thee;
O why hast Thou forsaken Me?
Afar from Me, Thou dost not heed,
Though day and night for help I plead.

But Thou art holy in Thy ways
Enthroned upon Thy people's praise;
Our fathers put their trust in Thee,
Believed, and Thou didst set them free.

They cried, and, trusting in Thy Name,
Were saved, and were not put to shame;
But in the dust My honor lies,
While all reproach and all despise.

My words a cause for scorn they make,
The lip they curl, the head they shake,
And, mocking, bid Me trust the Lord
Till He salvation shall afford.

My trust on Thee I learned to rest
When I was on My mother's breast;
From birth Thou art My God alone,
Thy care My life has ever known.

O let Thy strength and presence cheer,
For trouble and distress are near;
Be Thou not far away from Me,
I have no source of help but Thee.

Psalm 22:1-6

THE STANDARD BEARER

Semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July and August

Published by the REFORMED FREE PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION
P. O. Box 881, Madison Square Station, Grand Rapids 7, Mich.

Editor — REV. HERMAN HOEKSEMA

Communications relative to contents should be addressed to
Rev. H. Hoeksema, 1139 Franklin St., S. E.,
Grand Rapids 7, Mich.

All matters relative to subscriptions should be addressed to Mr.
James Dykstra, 1326 W. Butler Ave., S. E.
Grand Rapids 7, Michigan

Announcements and Obituaries must be mailed to the above
address and will be published at a fee of \$2.00 for each notice.

RENEWAL: Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order.

Subscription price: \$5.00 per year

Second Class postage paid at Grand Rapids, Michigan

CONTENTS

MEDITATION —

The Agony of Jesus.....241
Rev. G. Vos

EDITORIALS —

Calvin and Common Grace.....244
Rev. H. Hoeksema

OUR DOCTRINE —

The Book of Revelation.....246
Rev. H. Hoeksema

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES —

The Revelation of Jehovah.....248
Rev. B. Woudenberg

FROM HOLY WRIT —

Exposition of I Timothy.....250
Rev. G. Lubbers

IN HIS FEAR —

God's Royal Priesthood.....252
Rev. J. A. Heys

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH —

The Church and the Sacraments.....254
Rev. H. Veldman

THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS —

The Belgic Confession.....256
Rev. H. C. Hoeksema

DECENCY AND ORDER —

The Subjects of Baptism.....260
Rev. G. Vanden Berg

ALL AROUND US —

The Church and Social Functions.....262
Mormons In Navajo Land.....263
News Briefs.....263
Rev. H. Hanko

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES.....264

Mr. J. M. Faber

EDITORIALS

Calvin and Common Grace

On the above mentioned subject, Dr. Herman Kuiper has written a couple of articles in *The Banner* under the title "Surprises in Calvin." He does this by several quotations from Calvin's writings, both from his well-known work the *Institutes* and from his Commentaries.

The chief purpose of these quotations is, evidently, that Calvin believed also in the theory of "common grace" and in the well-meaning offer of salvation to all that hear the preaching of the gospel.

On these quotations I wish, first of all, to make a few general remarks.

1. First of all, I do not deny that Calvin sometimes seems to teach what Dr. Kuiper wants to make him teach in and by these quotations. Calvin was an astoundingly voluminous writer and, therefore, it is not surprising that in his writings one may find statements that appear to contradict his fundamental emphasis on the sovereign grace of God or, if you please, on the truth that God loves, not all men, but only the elect.

2. Secondly, it is not fair to present Calvin as teaching "common grace" by making a few quotations which are taken out of their context as does Dr. Kuiper. To this I will refer presently.

3. It is possible and, in fact, very probable, that Calvin, though always emphasizing sovereign grace which is only for the elect, in the course of his development, contradicted what he himself had written in an earlier period.

As to the fact that Kuiper simply quotes Calvin without regard to the context in which these passages occur, I call attention to the following quotation: "Throughout Scripture God's paternal goodness is celebrated and His readiness to do good." This is what Kuiper quotes. Now let us read the same quotations in its context: "Briefly then, it will be sufficient for him at present to understand how God the Creator of heaven and earth, governs the world which was made by him. In every part of Scripture we meet with descriptions of his paternal kindness and readiness to do good, and we also meet with examples of severity which show that he is the just punisher of the wicked, especially when they continue obstinate notwithstanding all his forbearance."

Now, why does Kuiper break off his quotation where he does, especially since he discontinues in the middle of a sentence and puts a period where Calvin has a comma? Is it because the last part of the sentence does not confirm the idea that God's goodness and paternal care is over the wicked as well as over the righteous?

I will also quote Calvin and, too, from the very next

paragraph to that from which Kuiper quoted the above half sentence, I, 10, 2:

"Moses, indeed, seems to have intended briefly to comprehend whatever known of God by man, when he said: 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation' (Ex. XXXIV, 6, 7). Here we may observe, *first*, that his eternity and self-existence are declared by his magnificent name twice repeated; and, *secondly*, that in the enumeration of his perfections, he is described, not as he is in himself but in relation to us, in order that our acknowledgement of him may be more a vivid actual impression than empty visionary speculation. Moreover, the perfections thus enumerated are just those which we saw shining in the heavens, and on the earth — compassion, goodness, mercy, justice, judgment, and truth. For power and energy are comprehended under the name Jehovah. Similar epithets are employed by the prophets when they would fully declare his sacred name. Not to collect a great number of passages, it may suffice at present to refer to one psalm (CXLV), in which the summary of the divine perfections is so carefully given, that not one seems to have been omitted. Still, however, every perfection there set down may be contemplated in creation; and, hence, such as we feel him to be when experience is our guide, such he declares him to be by his word. In Jeremiah, where God proclaims the character in which he would have us to acknowledge him, though the description is not so full, it is substantially the same. 'Let him that glorieth,' says he, 'glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth' (Jerem. IX, 24). Assuredly, the attributes which are most necessary for us to know are these three: loving-kindness, on which alone our safety depends; Judgments which is daily exercised on the wicked, and awaits them in a severer form, even for eternal destruction; Righteousness by which the faithful are preserved and most benignly cherished."

What does this all mean except this that there is no common grace, that God loves the righteous, that is, the elect, and that He hates the wicked?

You say, perhaps, that Calvin, nevertheless, also teaches that God is kind and merciful to every individual man and that he contradicts himself in passages such as are quoted by Kuiper? Perhaps he does. I will not deny it. But this is not the current teaching of Calvin. And I maintain that Calvin, as far as his current teaching is concerned, always maintains that grace is not common but always particular and is never on the reprobate but always on the elect only. For that reason Kuiper in his articles in *The Banner* gives a wrong impression of Calvin.

Dr. Kuiper also quotes from Calvin's commentaries. I have no ambition to go through all his quotations. But a

good illustration is what he quotes from Ps. 92:10-12: "God hates no one without a cause, nay in so far his workmanship he embraces them in fatherly love."

Now, I do not care for that distinction between as righteous or wicked and men as God's workmanship. That is an abstraction which is nowhere found in Scripture. Besides, this is not the question that concerns us here. The question is rather whether God loves and is gracious to the wicked and reprobate.

And then I must confess that I am amazed that Kuiper can quote from this particular psalm. For the entire psalm teaches very clearly that God does not love and is not gracious to the reprobate wicked. Just listen to this: "O Lord, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep. A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this. When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever." This is the tenor of the entire psalm.

But we are interested to find out what Calvin teaches in the context of the passage that is quoted by Kuiper. In his commentary on this psalm he writes:

"First, he declares the destruction of God's enemies to be as certain as if it had already taken place, and he had witnessed it with his own eyes; then he repeats his assertion: and from all this we may see how much he had benefited by glancing with the eye of faith beyond this world to the throne of God in the heavens. When staggered in our own faith at any time by the prosperity of the wicked, we should learn by his example to rise in our contemplations to a God in heaven, and the conviction will immediately follow in our minds that his enemies cannot long continue to triumph. The Psalmist tells us who they are that are God's enemies." — Here follows the quotation by Kuiper; then Calvin continues — "But as nothing is more opposed to his nature than sin, he proclaims irreconcilable war with the wicked. It contributes in no small degree to the comfort of the Lord's people, to know that the reason why the wicked are destroyed is, their being necessarily the object of God's hatred, so that he can no more fail to punish them than deny himself."

Does Calvin teach here, as Kuiper would have his readers believe, that God loves the wicked reprobates, that He is gracious unto them, that He cares for them with a paternal care? And must God's people be comforted by the knowledge that God loves them? Surely not in the passage from which Kuiper makes a single quotation ignoring the context. On the contrary, Calvin teaches here that the wicked are "the objects of God's hatred" and that He cannot fail to punish them.

One more quotation I will make in this connection. Dr. Kuiper quotes as follows:

"Psalm 115:16: All the comforts which we possess are so many tokens of God's fatherly care. Satisfied with his own glory, God has enriched the earth with an abundance of good

things that mankind may not lack anything. All the riches which the earth contains proclaim with a loud voice what a beneficent Father God is to mankind."

In this connection the question must be asked: who are included in the "we" and "mankind"? Are all individual men and, particularly, the wicked included?

The Psalm and also Calvin's commentary give us the answer and that answer is emphatically: No. The Psalm throughout speaks only of the people of God and that, too, in distinction from the ungodly heathen. Just let me quote a few verses:

"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake. Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God? But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased. Their idols are silver and gold . . . They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them. O Israel, trust thou in the Lord: he is their help and their shield. . . . The Lord hath been mindful of us: he will bless us; he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron. He will bless those that fear the Lord, both small and great. The Lord shall increase you more and more, you and your children. Ye are blessed of the Lord which made heaven and earth." vss. 1-4, 8, 9; 12-15.

Surely, there is no common grace in the entire psalm.

But how about Calvin? How must we understand, in the quotation which he makes of him, that God is a beneficent Father to every individual man, even to the wicked?

Well, let us read him in what follows in the same context from which Kuiper made his quotation. I quote:

"But is there one among a hundred of them who reflects that God in bestowing all good things upon us, reserves nothing for himself, except a grateful acknowledgment of them? And not only in this matter does the ingratitude of the world appear, but the wicked wretches have conducted themselves most vilely, in open and most infamous blasphemy; perverting this verse, and making a jest of it, and saying that God remains unconcerned in heaven, and pays no regard to men. The prophet here declares that the whole world is employed by God for the sole purpose of testifying his paternal solicitude towards mankind; and yet these swine and dogs have made these words a laughing-stock, as if God, by reason of his vast distance from men, totally disregarded them."

Now, my question is whether God is also a beneficent Father to these wicked and blasphemous wretches, to these swine and dogs? My reply is: emphatically *No*. Even though Calvin speaks of the abundance God bestows on mankind, this does not include every individual but certainly excludes the wicked, "the swine and the dogs," as Calvin calls them.

And this, as I have already shown, is in harmony with the whole psalm.

I have more to say about this next time, D.V.

H.H.

OUR DOCTRINE

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

PART TWO

CHAPTER XVIII

The Voice of Joy

Revelation 19:1-5

That salvation is of our God. It came from Him. He is the planner and author of that salvation. He is the finisher of that salvation. He it is that must receive all the glory. And from the depth of their heart all the saints that have been redeemed now shout and sing, "Salvation is of our God! Hence, to Him belongeth the glory." God's glory is the effulgence, the radiation, of His glorious being. In all His works, His name, the wonders of His revelation, the works of His hands, here especially the glory of God as it became evident in the work of salvation, more particularly in the destruction of Babylon—in all this the glory of God shines forth. The same is true of His power. It is His mighty strength, over against which no enemy can stand, the power of His omnipotence, before which all the powers in earth and in hell are brought to nought.

But we must not forget that in these very words that ascribe salvation and glory and power to the Most High there is implied a silent contrast, which must, however, be very conscious before the minds of these singers. They undoubtedly mean to say too: "Salvation and glory and power belong not to the gods of the world, but to our God." The world also has its gods. And for a time it seemed as if these gods were powerful and glorious enough to save the world from its misery and to establish the glorious kingdom of peace and justice without God and without the Lamb. In Babylon, the city of the great beast and of the dragon, there was joy and happiness and riches and luxury. There accumulated the tremendous wealth of the world. There shone the power of the world. There was heard the voice of the harper and the trumpeter, the voice of the bride and of the bridegroom. It was a picture of joy and happiness and greatness and power. And it seemed as if the dragon finally had succeeded to make the world his glorious kingdom. It seemed as if salvation belonged to him. For only those that were of him and worshipped his image could partake of the blessings of that kingdom. It seemed as if all the glory of the world belonged to the dragon. For in fact all the inhabitants of the world wondered after the beast; and those that refused could find no place of safety in the world. It seemed as if all the power belonged to him: for all the kings of the world had added their power unto the beast, and the

faithful worshippers of the Lamb were helpless and defenseless. And therefore, for some time it had seemed actually as if the hope of the people of God was idle and as if not their God, but the gods of the world were the authors of salvation, to whom belonged glory and power. And it was only by faith, as an evidence of things unseen and as the substance of things hoped for, that the faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ had maintained all the time that unto their God belonged salvation through the Lamb and that unto Him all glory and honor and power must be ascribed. But now it is all so different. Gone is the power and the splendor and the glory of Babylon. The boasting of the dragon and of the beast has come to an end. Babylon is destroyed. The kingdom of Antichrist is no more. The historic proof has finally been given that salvation and glory and power did not belong unto the gods of this world, did not belong unto the beast, did not belong to the dragon, not unto all the world-powers, not unto the power of Antichrist, but unto God. On earth there is desolation and weeping and wailing because of the fall of the great city that once was the hope and the pride of the world. But in heaven are the Lamb and all His people and all the glorious angels, the entire glorious economy of the New Jerusalem that is presently to descend from heaven to earth. And therefore, that entire throng, in jubilant joy because of the victory of their God, breaks out in song. And in emphatic contrast with the gods of the world and their absolute failure to establish salvation and reveal their power, they sing, "Salvation and glory and power belong unto our God." Hence, the multitude sings, "Hallelujah, praise Jehovah." Hence, the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures bow down in reverent worship. Hence, all the servants of the Lord that fear His name, both small and great, are urged to sing praise unto the God that has revealed His power and glory and His wonderful salvation.

It is, then, not in the abstract that they sing of God's glory, but in connection with the revelation of that glory in the specific incident of the destruction of Babylon. This joy of the world is the grief of God's children; the grief of the world is the joy of the children of the kingdom. Not indeed as if the children of the kingdom should rejoice with a sinful joy over the suffering and agony of the dwellers in Babylon; but they rejoice in the righteous judgment of God. Babylon was for them the embodiment of rebellion and transgression against the God Whose name they loved. It is the city whose iniquity cries unto the heavens. There God's name was trampled under foot, and His righteousness and glory was despised. There the Savior of the world was mocked at and crucified, and His name was defiled. There the truth of God was denied, and the worship of God forbidden. There the people of God were persecuted and cast into severest tribulation. In a word, all that was connected with God, with their God and His name, was hooted and despised and mocked at and trodden under foot. The glory of God's name was covered up by the iniquitous rebellion of Babylon. But now the

glory of that name has appeared. It has appeared in the judgment of Babylon, the great whore. It has appeared that God is righteous and just and powerful and glorious. And therefore, they sing in joy over the destruction of Babylon. Babylon hated God and His Christ: and therefore they hate Babylon. And hence, they cannot but exult in her weeping and wailing and desolation: "For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication." She it was that caused all the earth to depart from the living God and to rise in rebellion against Him. She it was that corrupted the whole earth with her harlotry. Her destruction is the destruction of the entire system of black iniquity inaugurated in paradise by the devil. And therefore, even as the whole earth justly rejoices in the eternal damnation of the devil, that prince of darkness, and no one can pity that embodiment of hellish iniquity in his suffering, so all the people of our God rejoice at the desolation of Babylon and all that her name implies and can have no pity with her hellish sorrow.

And finally, this multitude sings with joy over the destruction of Babylon because her destruction, besides being the justification of God, the theodicy, is at the same time the justification of all God's people. With the opening of the fifth seal we saw how the souls under the altar cried to God Almighty for vengeance because their blood had been shed for the testimony of Jesus. Then it was told them that they should wait yet a little while and have patience until also the rest of their brethren had died and been killed by the power of Babylon. Since that time centuries have elapsed. And in those centuries the brethren have suffered and have been persecuted and put in prison and brought to the scaffold and to the stake; and the power of Antichrist had been triumphant in her wanton iniquity and godlessness and cruelty against the saints of the Most High. Streams of blood have flowed since that time. But now the time of judgment has come. It has become evident that the testimony of Jesus and the Word of God is true forevermore and that the cry of His people came into the ears of Jehovah Sabaoth: "He hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand." And once more, therefore, they sing and praise and shout for joy. For Babylon is fallen, and God is glorified and justified in her destruction, and they have been avenged for all the suffering and tribulation they endured at her hand. Small and great join in with the song of those that fear the name of God. For Babylon is fallen, fallen forever. For her smoke riseth forever and ever, and never shall the power of rebellion and iniquity arise again.

Once more, if we enter into the sanctuary of our God and notice the end both of Babylon and of God's people, can there be much doubt in our hearts as to the side we choose, by the grace of God, to take in this world? Heed, therefore, the call of your God, and go out from her, have nothing to do with the sins of Babylon, that ye may not partake of her judgments. Let us join in with the chorus of the multitude and of the elders and of the living creatures, and

respond to the voice that goeth forth from the throne with the fourfold, "Hallelujah, Amen! Yea, Amen forevermore!"
H.H.

Attention — Synodical Committees

All Synodical Committees (*Standing Committees and Special Study Committees*) are herewith reminded that their reports to Synod are to be prepared for publication with the regular Synodical Agenda.

These reports are to be sent to the undersigned not later than April 15, 1961.

Stated Clerk of the Synod of the
Protestant Reformed Churches

G. VANDEN BERG
9402 South 53rd Court
Oak Lawn, Illinois

Notice for Classis West

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet, the Lord willing, in South Holland, Illinois, on Wednesday, March 15, 1961 at 9 A. M.

The consistories are reminded of the rule that all matters for the classical agenda must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk not later than 30 days before the date of Classis. And all matters that are to be brought to Synod must also be presented at this classis.

REV. H. VELDMAN, *Stated Clerk*

Adams Street School

Will need four Protestant Reformed teachers to complete its teaching staff this coming fall, 1961-1962.

Please give this your earnest prayer and consideration that our children may be brought up in the knowledge and fear of our God.

Education Committee
GERRIT PIPE
1463 Ardmore St., S. E.
Grand Rapids 7, Michigan

Heaven and earth the Lord created,
Seas and all that they contain;
He delivers from oppression,
Righteousness He will maintain.

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

The Revelation of Jehovah

And Jehovah said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for by a strong hand shall he let them go, and by a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land.

And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am Jehovah: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, as God Almighty; but by my name Jehovah I was not known to them. And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their sojournings, wherein they sojourned. And moreover I have heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have remembered my covenant.

Exodus 6:1-5 (RV)

In Egypt, the land of Pharaoh, on the river Nile, the scene was set for one of the great revelations of all times. God had determined to manifest His greatness and His power in such a way that it would be declared throughout all the earth. For this purpose the providence of God had been preparing the situation in Egypt for many years.

First there was Pharaoh. A reprobate and therefore unregenerate man, he had been set upon the throne of the great and powerful nation of Egypt. Already he had revealed the wickedness of his heart. When first upon the throne he had followed the example of his predecessors in persecuting the children of Israel with hard labor and other grievous afflictions. It was more than a merely utilitarian move to gain the fruits of their labor; it arose out of a deep-set hatred for the people of God. Thus when Moses and Aaron had come to demand that Israel be allowed to go and worship its God, he had answered back in anger. He refused to recognize the very existence of Israel's God. He refused to allow Israel to go and worship its God. As though to prove the superiority of his own authority and power, he commanded that Israel's already unbearable burden should be made many times the greater. Pharaoh was a wicked man. When presented with the Word of God, he had only one desire, to prove that it was false.

Then there were the children of Israel. Their fathers had been brought into the land of Egypt by Joseph four hundred years before. For many years they had lived peacefully in Egypt and had learned to love its prosperity. But in recent years this had been changed by the ever increasing burden of persecution. At last, groaning under their affliction, they had cried to their God for deliverance. With joy they had listened to the message of Moses and Aaron assuring them that God had heard their prayers and the time of deliverance was drawing near. With believing hearts they bowed and worshipped. But when instead of deliverance they found that the anger of Pharaoh was aroused and their burden of labor was increased, their faith faltered and was well nigh

gone. They disowned the leadership of Moses and refused to listen any more to his words.

Finally there was Moses himself. Through forty years in the wilderness of Midian he had learned to know himself as a sinner, dependent completely upon his God. But with humility had come a calling and a command to go and lead the children of Israel out of bondage. He had not wanted to go, but because he feared God he had obeyed. His only confidence had been based on the power of the Word of God. Now he had spoken this word both to Israel and to Pharaoh. It had not wrought deliverance. It had only aroused the anger of Pharaoh and increased the burden of Israel. Moses found himself rejected by all. Discouraged he turned to God and complained, "Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? why is it that thou hast sent me? for since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all."

This was the situation that God had prepared to show forth His glory. There was none who expected that deliverance for Israel was possible. Pharaoh was determined to use all of his power to prevent it. Israel in weakness of faith had faltered and desired only to appease the anger of Pharaoh. Even Moses had faltered when Israel was not immediately saved and he found himself rejected by all. For what was soon to happen no man would ever be able to take the credit. It would be a work founded solely upon the faithfulness of Jehovah to His covenant.

Having heard the complaint of Moses, God came to him and spoke. "Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land." In spite of all appearances God's promise remained sure and true. He had promised to deliver His people, and regardless of how impossible it appeared to Moses and Israel, that he would do. Moreover, He went on to instruct Moses how and why this could be so. He said, "I am the LORD (Jehovah); and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them. And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers. And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have remembered my covenant. Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the Lord (Jehovah), and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: and I will take you to me for a people and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the Lord (Jehovah) your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you in unto the land concerning the which I did swear to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the Lord (Jehovah)."

Central in the whole work of God whereby He delivered

His people from the bondage of Egypt was the name Jehovah. By giving this name pre-eminence in His revelation God was introducing a new phase of covenant dealings with His people. This name had been known by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but not as the principal name of God. In their day He had revealed Himself as God Almighty Who, because of His great power, was able to establish His covenant and take them to be His covenant-friends. Now it was no longer necessary to stress the establishment of the covenant and the ability of God to do it. Now it was necessary to reveal His faithfulness to the covenant long before established with the fathers. This faithfulness was implied in the name Jehovah. It was equivalent to the name I AM THAT I AM with which God had first appeared to Moses in the burning bush. It implied that God would continue to perform the works promised to the fathers many years before. He had heard the groanings of Israel and would restore them to the land of Promise. It implied, as God said to Moses, "I have remembered my covenant."

Revived by this Word from God, Moses went again to speak to the children of Israel. But the people had tasted of the cruelty of Pharaoh and would not be encouraged to anything that might arouse his wrath the more. In anguish of spirit they rejected the word of Moses.

Again God appeared unto Moses and said, "Go in, speak unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, that he let the children of Israel go out of his land."

To Moses this appeared an impossible command. He felt as though he had come up against a wall past which he could not proceed. The people of his own nation, who had at first received him with joy, would no longer listen to him. For this he felt guilty and responsible. Was it not perhaps the crudeness and vileness of his own lips that had offended them and brought the matter to such an evil state? If he could not maintain his influence over the Israelites who were essentially sympathetic, how could he ever do anything with Pharaoh who hated him? He brought his objection to God, "Behold, the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me; how then shall Pharaoh hear me, who am of uncircumcised lips?"

Patently the Lord explained to Moses. "See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet. Thou shalt speak all that I command thee: and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israel out of his land. And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them." It was not the inability of Moses to speak well that had aroused the anger of Pharaoh; it was the normal reaction of a wicked heart to the Word of God. Moses stood as

the representative of God, and it was that which angered Pharaoh. This was, as God had ordained, the way in which He would reveal His own greatness as Jehovah. Not Moses but God was hardening Pharaoh's heart.

It was at that time also that God instructed Moses, saying, "When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Shew a miracle for you: then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent."

Encouraged again by this revelation from God, Moses and Aaron went forth into the court of Pharaoh. Boldly they repeated the command of God that Israel should be released to serve God in the wilderness. As God had foretold, Pharaoh was ready to challenge them by demanding of them a sign of power, a miracle. At the command of Moses, Aaron cast down Moses' rod and it became a serpent.

This was a significant miracle. The rod was a symbol of the authority which had been entrusted to Moses at the burning bush, the office of shepherd to God's chosen people and representative of God. The serpent, on the other hand, had been, since the fall of man, a symbol of Satan and the power of sin. Rather significantly, the Egyptians of that time had taken it also as the chief symbol of their gods. The act of Moses revealed symbolically that the powers of evil can only go forth as determined by the act and authority of Jehovah, the God of Israel.

To Pharaoh, however, this miracle was not very impressive. His wise men were experienced in the works of sorcery which included the charming and manipulation of snakes. Summoned by Pharaoh, they with their enchantments soon put on the appearance of duplicating the act of Moses.

It was then that the truly significant thing happened. The serpent which came forth from Moses' rod swallowed those which the Egyptian magicians had cast down. This was a warning to which Pharaoh might well have taken heed. The evil deeds of Pharaoh and his magicians and his gods, represented in the serpents, would never be able to escape the determinate power of Israel's God. The power represented by Moses' rod would swallow them up and bring them to nought. Moses had but to catch the tail of the remaining serpent and it was restored again into his rod, destroying forever the works of the wise men of Pharaoh.

This was the first outward demonstration of the power of Jehovah in Egypt. All that was to follow would only serve to substantiate its truth. In faithfulness to His covenant, He was determined to deliver His people. All the powers of sin which sought to oppose Him could only do so in subjection to His determination and power. In doing so they would be swallowed up and destroyed. God was showing directly to Pharaoh what soon would happen to him. But this revelation only served to harden the heart of Pharaoh the more. In the stubbornness of his wicked pride he refused to hearken unto the Word of God, even as God had said.

B.W.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of I Timothy

(I Timothy 1:3-11)

a.

The church of God in the world, the pillar and ground of the truth, is ever plagued by ignorant jugglers, who, although they know really nothing concerning the things they speak of, nevertheless confidently affirm what they say.

These are really dangerous men against whom Paul does not cease to warn, instruct and admonish. In view of these fellows Paul exhorted Timothy to abide at Ephesus when he left Ephesus to go into Macedonia. It seems that it took some persuasion on the part of Paul to convince Timothy to stay at that post. Now Paul is evidently in Macedonia and he will once more call his son Timothy's attention to these nefarious and pestilent would-be teachers of the church.

The matter is very serious. The question at stake is really a very important one. It is the question concerning the law of God and the legitimate use of the law in relationship to faith and the Gospel. These men who agitate the church are those who *will* to be law-teachers; they are opponents of sound doctrine which leads to godliness. They have never understood the real *end* of the law as ordained by the Lord in His gospel dispensation. And the result is that they would place the church which is *under grace* once more *under the law*.

And there are "some" in the congregation who must be charged not to teach a different doctrine, giving heed to fables and endless genealogies.

In this essay and the next we would call attention to this polemic which Timothy is instructed to wage in the church at Ephesus.

In the verses 3 through 7 we read the following: "*As I exhorted thee to tarry at Ephesus, when I was going into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge certain men not to teach a different doctrine, neither to give heed to endless genealogies, which minister questionings, rather than a dispensation of God which is in faith [so do I now, G.L.]. But the end of the law [charge] is love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned: from which things some having swerved aside unto vain talking; desiring to be teachers of the law, though they understand neither what they say, nor whereof they confidently affirm.*"

First of all I would call attention to what I would denote the general *characterization* which Paul makes of this teaching of a *different* doctrine. The term in the Greek is *hetero-didaskalein*, that is: to teach different doctrine. It is important to notice the emphasis here. Paul is not speaking

here simply of *another* doctrine, that is, a little different emphasis in doctrine, nor yet of some truth which had heretofore not been proclaimed as the truth in Jesus. In the abstract that would be conceivable. Nay, he is most emphatically characterizing the teaching of those who would be teachers of the law as a *different* doctrine. Their doctrine is diametrically opposed to the sound doctrine in Christ, the Word of the cross. Most beautifully this distinction between another doctrine and a different doctrine is expressed in Gal. 1:6: "I marvel that ye are so quickly removed [removing] from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel, which is not another gospel: only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ." Or, again, we read in II Cor. 11:3, 4: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we did not preach, or if ye receive a different spirit, which ye did not receive, or a different gospel, which ye did not accept [receive subjectively, G.L.] ye do well to bear with him." We understand, of course, that in the last-cited passage Paul is using irony. When he says "ye do well to bear with him" he means the very opposite. He is employing a figure of speech called *irony*! However, and that is our point here, the distinction of a "different" gospel is borne out here too. It is important to notice this emphasis of Paul concerning a *different* doctrine.

Hence, the alarm must be sounded.

Some men must be charged not to teach a different doctrine.

And Timothy must perform this important task of forbidding "some men" thus to teach.

This different doctrine is further characterized by Paul as being "fables and endless genealogies."

It is of importance to notice what Paul means with the term "fables." Trench in his *Synonyms* makes the observation that the term "myth" (muthois) is ever employed in the New Testament as the opposite of the word (logos) of truth. He affirms that the word "myth" (muthos) has gone through three stages of development and usage. First it was employed of a true story and account. Then it was used with a certain antithesis to the term (logos) word. It is really what is mentally conceived over against what is actually true and real. It then refers to the hidden teaching in the more apparent terminology which is employed. And, finally, the term fable (myth) degenerated into falsehood; a simple "tale" and "story" devoid of all reality and truth. It seems that thus Peter speaks of myths in II Peter 1:19 where the "cunningly devised fables" are contrasted to "the more sure prophetic word [logos]" and the reality of the glory of Christ's transfiguration upon the mount.

From what has been observed it seems warranted to con-

clude that Paul in employing the term "myths" is characterizing the teaching of the law, the different doctrine as being void of all Gospel-truth; it is the simple production of the imagination of ignorant men.

He also terms this *different* doctrine as "endless genealogies." A genealogy is really a family-register. Paul seems to have less in mind a literal family registry than what is represented thereby. Some interpreters would have this refer to the emanation theory of the Gnostic theosophists, who spoke of the higher and lower deities, in descending and ascending scale. Possibly this refers here to the Jewish traditions concerning the greater and lighter commandments of the law, and value of being of Jewish descent, pointing out the family tree, tracing it down in endless fashion. At any rate, that is the only other alternative left to those who set the sound doctrine of Christ aside, the free mercies of God according to God's covenant with Abraham of old.

All that such can lead to is word-strife; void of all solid instruction in the Mystery of godliness that is great, it simply led to, gave birth to contention and strife. It only gave the head plenty of work without satisfying the heart, without giving deep inner contentment and peace with God. Paul really says that "such myths and endless genealogies are of such a nature, that nothing else can come forth from them but wrangling and dissension." In Van Oostersee's Commentary on this passage (Lange Series) he writes as follows: "It is difficult to know with certainty what *muthoi* (myths) and *genealogiai* (genealogies) are here specially meant. . . . From all that we gather in this Epistle, it is most probable that reference is made to fables of Jewish form and origin, which were endlessly spun out, and had called forth much dispute in the church."

These Judaizing teachers forever dogged the steps of Paul.

Upon these Paul ever unloads his heaviest artillery; upon these he spares nothing that may stop them in their tracks.

There is not one iota of the dispensation of the grace of God in all these questions of genealogies and myths. It has nothing to do with the dispensation of the grace of God which works faith in the hearts of God's people.

In verses 5-7 Paul demonstrates this by calling attention to the end of the "charge." Writes he: "But the end of the charge [commandment] is love from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned." It should be noticed that Paul does not speak here of the "fulness" of the law, the fulfilment of it as he does in Rom. 13:10: ". . . love therefore is the fulfilment of the law." Love is the *pleroma*; it puts the last drop in the measure of the law and fills it up. There is then room for no more. No more need be added, nor could possibly be added. Paul does not here speak of the *fulfilment* of the law. Fact is, that he does not really even speak of the end of the "*law*." Rather, he speaks of the end of the "charge," of the commandment. This may refer to the "charge" which Timothy must give in the congregation at Ephesus to these would-be teachers when Paul writes "to

charge them not to teach a different doctrine." However, I prefer to refer this "commandment" to the "law" (*nomos*) as the law comes to us with its demands upon our heart and conscience. Then the law is a commandment. The law then comes with its "Thou shalt." Well, that is exactly what the would-be teachers in the church would emphasize, I heard someone say. And I answer: correct! However, they did not understand the "end" (the *telos*) of this commandment of God as given through Moses by angels. They never understood the divine reason for thus giving the law as a commandment.

The following should be clearly kept in mind.

It is the simple teaching of Scripture that the "commandment" is "do this and thou shalt live." That is the law! And, again, "cursed is everyone that does not remain in all that is written in the book of the law to perform it" (Gal. 3:10-12). That is the curse of the law upon all who are not perfect in keeping the commandments. And according to this rule all must die.

On the other hand we know that Christ is the "end of the law." In Him the law is fulfilled. The law cannot give strength to fulfil it; there is no law given to make alive. Gal. 3:21. But Christ is the end of the law, for righteousness to everyone that believeth. Rom. 10:4. All that believe in Him receive His righteousness, even though they have never kept the law. That is justification. However, there is also sanctification. And then the end of the commandment is fulfilled in us in Christ. Paul tells us that here in verse 5: "But the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and a good conscience and faith unfeigned."

That is the sound doctrine of the Gospel.

A pure heart is one which is free from all that is false, all that which hates God's commandments. It stands right over against God. It is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit has here performed what the law could not do. It made the dead heart alive and cleansed it from all filth of sin. Out of that heart comes love for God. And such love is shed abroad in this heart by the Holy Ghost. And when that love reveals itself in the keeping of the commandments — then the end of the commandments is realized. Then the entire law is fulfilled.

Yes, then we also have a good conscience toward God. We then know that we are acceptable to Him. His law is written in our hearts and He remembers our sins no more.

And thus, finally, we are assured that our faith is unfeigned; it is not hypocritical but real and genuine, revealing itself in the fruits of faith which is energized by the love of God.

That is sound doctrine.

All the rest is "different" doctrine, which may not be taught.

(to be continued)

G.L.

IN HIS FEAR

God's Royal Priesthood

The subject about which we wish to write for a few weeks is one that is frequently mentioned in Holy Writ. And it has to do with the office of every believer. Not all have the privilege of serving in the office of minister, elder or deacon in the Church of God. Some covet the position and never have the joy or the honor of the office. Some serve for a year or two and never are chosen by God and man to take up the work again. But there is a threefold office of every believer exactly because he partakes of the anointing of Christ, The Anointed of God.

We must not overlook that glorious truth.

We call ourselves Christians. We desire to have men think of us as Christians. We rejoice in that fact that God has called us to be Christians. And yet we give so little heed to the meaning of this very fact. What is more, our walk of life so seldom reveals that wondrous fact.

Christ, as His very name of Christ or Messiah indicates, is The Anointed of God. He has been ordained by the Triune God and qualified by His Spirit to serve the Church of God in the threefold office of being our chief prophet, our only highpriest and our eternal king. And according to Isaiah 61:1 He is The Anointed of God because God's Spirit has come upon Him to qualify Him to perform the work of salvation upon His Church. Because that Spirit of Christ has also descended upon us and we through Him partake of Christ's anointing, we also are prophets, priests and kings of God.

As we remarked above, Scripture says that repeatedly and presents it as a wonderful blessing that God gives to His Church. Already in Exodus 19:5 and 6 we read, "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then shall ye be a peculiar treasure to me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel." In that chapter already referred to, wherein we read of Christ's anointing we also read, "But ye shall be named the Priests of the Lord: men shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves" (Isaiah 61:6). Again from the same prophet's pen we read in Isaiah 66:21, "And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the Lord." A text wherein all three phases of our office are mentioned is I Peter 2:9 where we read, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a

peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." Here not only do we read of a royal priesthood or a priesthood of kings but the prophetic office is indicated in the words, "that ye may show forth the praises of Him Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." We will have more to say of this much later, but let us point out at the moment that this indeed is our calling as prophets: to praise God from Whom all blessings flow. Then again in Revelation 1:6 we have the same idea expressed in these words: "And hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father: to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." Note here too that this kingly priesthood praises God in the prophetic office as the God of all glory. In Revelation 5:10 we also read, "And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." Finally we read in Revelation 20:6, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years." Thus in both Old and New Testaments that office — for we prefer to speak of it as one office with three phases or aspects — which is mentioned in the Old Testament is presented as the office of every believer. By virtue of regeneration every child of God becomes a prophet, priest and king of God. We may never be ordained in the offices of the Church as we know them today, but all are indeed and must conduct themselves as prophets, priests and kings of God. That in His fear is our calling. And therefore we wish to write for a few weeks on this glorious truth that we are God's royal priesthood.

And why do we have a threefold office?

This is exactly due to the fact that God created us with the three faculties of mind, will and strength. We do not speak amiss when we say that we have this threefold office because God created us in His Own image. Nor do we go astray when we say that in God we find the prophetic, priestly and kingly activities in the absolute sense of the word. Our duties and activities which we perform as prophet, priest and king are but a reflection, and a creaturely reflection at that, of what the Almighty, All-wise, Righteous and Holy God is eternally doing. He is a rational-moral Being Who is the Almighty God. We are creatures of dust who were created in God's image with a rational-moral nature.

In the distinction from the beasts of the field who have brains but no mental reasoning power, we were created with minds and created able to receive the revelation of God's mind into our souls. We could know Him and could be taught concerning Him. And we could serve as His prophets. The brute beast has a will and also definite desires. But in distinction from this animal will and desire man was made to have a moral will. He could love God and was made capable of making moral distinctions. And with that thinking-willing nature that was patterned after God's own thinking-

willing nature man exercises his strength and power. At the pinnacle of God's earthly creation he stands as the link between God and all the rest of that creation. Because he can know God and he loves God all that irrational creation comes to God only through him. That is his calling. The mute tree, the silent flower, the graceful deer, the powerful but irrational elephant, yea all things large and small through man's mind, will and strength serve the glorious Creator of all things. Every man, woman and child with mind and will and strength stands in a lofty calling before God to look to the earth and at all God's creatures, use them well so that the praise of God ascends then from these creatures and through man's mind and will to God. Man does not look in two directions at one time. That is impossible. Nor does he look first at the creature and then at the Creator. As he came forth from that hand of God he saw God in the creature. He was constantly facing God in all his thinking, willing and acting. Physically he may be looking earthward and have his eye focused on the creature, but in that glorious state of rectitude in Paradise his eye was spiritually upon God.

Had things remained that way there would be no need to write about this royal priesthood in the vein that now these things must be written. Nor would it be necessary for us to write *God's Royal Priesthood*. Now it is necessary. For there is also a priesthood of the devil. Man did not lose his rational-moral nature when he fell into sin. Were that the case, there could be no hope of salvation for us. Then we would perish under the judgments of God even as all the brute creation and the inanimate creation shall be destroyed by the fire of God's judgment. We could never believe in Christ. Yea, if there were no rational-moral nature anymore for man, then the Son of God Himself could not take upon Himself our flesh, for He is the Rational-Moral God. We could have no hope, no faith, no love. And with only brute force and strength, we could never be kings. If we cannot be prophet and priest, we cannot be king either.

No, exactly because we retained a rational-moral nature we are so desperately wicked. Because of it we can hate God. Because of it we can come under the power of the lie and be moved from the principle that we may and can be like God. That is the whole tragedy of it. We lost all that which was good out of our mind and will, but no vacuum is created. No void is left. We lost all our true knowledge, our righteousness and holiness exactly because into that rational-moral nature we took in the lie, unrighteousness and unholiness. These do not mix. Where the one enters, the other has to leave. And so today we stand as prophets, priests and kings of the devil. We are in the office of all unbelievers. We do not partake of Christ's anointing but are ruled by the spirit of the devil. Yea, from a spiritual point of view we may say that whereas we looked like God in Paradise, we now look like the devil.

Do we need to prove that statement?

With all the revolution and disrespect for the authorities, with all the violence and bloodshed, with all the immorality and filthiness to be seen on every side, with all the deceit and fraud, all the covetousness and greed, do we need to prove the contention that spiritually we look like the devil? Surely in all these things the virtues of God do not shine forth. In all these men do not catch a glimpse of God's beauty. We surely do not shine forth as a holy nation. Nay, in all these we reveal ourselves to be prophets of the devil to propagate his lie, to be priests of the devil to sacrifice ourselves on the altar of our lusts, and kings of the devil to rule ourselves and all that with which we come in contact in a rule of wickedness.

Yet as believing children of God who are regenerated by His grace, there is in us the new man in Christ. And he is God's royal priesthood. To such we write and not to the world. The world may read, though the world cares not to read, but those of whom we write are those who have been born again with the life from above. They are a kingdom of priests. And to such we write, for in His fear only such can and do walk worthy of their calling in this threefold office of every believer.

Beginning next time then, D.V., we will call your attention to that which is meant and required of us in each one of these phases of our office of every believer. You are a prophet. How do you manifest yourself as a prophet of God? You are His priest. And what must you sacrifice to Him? You are a king. And where do you rule? How must you rule as God's king? And what does your prophetic and priestly calling have to do with your work as king? These are some of the matters we will treat. But at the moment remember this: Walking in His fear means that you conduct yourselves always, every step of the way, as God's prophets, priests and kings.

J.A.H.

IN MEMORIAM

January 26, 1961, it pleased our Heavenly Father to take from our fellowship one of our members

MRS. J. VAN NIEWENHUIZEN, nee Lucy Vander Streek

We hereby wish to express our sympathy to her husband, Mr. J. Van Nieuwenhuizen. His loss is her gain.

Ladies' Aid of the Protestant Reformed Church
of Edgerton, Minnesota

Rev. Bernard Woudenberg, President
Mrs. Henry Huiskens, Secretary

The heavens and earth, by right divine,
The world and all therein, are Thine;
The whole creation's wondrous frame
Proclaims its Maker's glorious Name.

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

THE TIME OF THE REFORMATION

VIEWS ON THE CHURCH

FORMAL PRINCIPLE

(continued)

In our preceding article we were criticizing that form of Rationalism which admits that the Scriptures do contain a supernatural revelation. This type of Rationalism, however, believes the things that are in the Word of God only if and when he is able to comprehend and understand them. In our appraisal of this form of Rationalism we observed, in the first place, that it is not speaking the truth when it declares to believe only that which it is able to understand. And our second observation concerned the written Word of God, the Scriptures. We may now continue with our appraisal of this form of Rationalism.

Our fourth observation of this critical approach unto and treatment of the Holy Scriptures concerns our Lord Jesus Christ. Now we must remember that Rationalism rejects the Scriptural truth that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, coeternal and coessential with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Rationalism cannot accept the Scriptural doctrine of the Trinity because this teaching does not lie within the scope of man's intellect and understanding. According to Rationalism Jesus of Nazareth is nothing more than a mere man. However, we must also bear in mind that the world loves to speak of this Jesus of Nazareth as one of the noblest men that ever lived. They love to point to him as a noble man, as a great reformer who would reform the world, as a wonderful teacher who would instruct all mankind particularly in his sermon on the mount, and as a wonderful example who would show the children of men how to walk and conduct themselves by his own wonderful and unselfish deportment and behavior. So, the world loves to point to him as a wonderful man whom we may well attempt to emulate in all we do and speak. But, let us presuppose that this Jesus of Nazareth were nothing more than a mere man and that He be not the Son of God, coeternal and coessential with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Is He, then, such a noble man? Did He not claim equality with God? Did He not assert that He and the Father are one? Did He not appropriate unto Himself the right to forgive sins and is this not a right that belongs exclusively to God? Were not the Jewish leaders, then, justified in their charge that this Jesus of Nazareth was guilty of blasphemy? Is there a sin more heinous in the sight of God than that a mere mortal man claims equality with the living God? And, yet, all this is surely

understandable, is it not? I mean that the world speaks of this Jesus, who claimed to be God, as one of the noblest of all men. What does the rationalist care about God?! Of what concern is it to him that a mere mortal elevates himself to equality with the living God? Such a sin of blasphemy does not concern him in the very least. He does not bow before the Word of the Lord and certainly has no interest in the God Whose Word he does not recognize as a word before which he must bow with unquestioning obedience. Such a Jesus, exclusively human according to his conception, is not noble but the greatest blasphemer. And we must surely not follow his example in this sin of blasphemy.

However, this is not all. In this connection I wish to call attention to the Scriptural narrative as recorded for us in Matthew 1:18-25. Because of the importance of this passage in this connection permit me to quote it in its entirety: "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband (this word "husband" here means that he was her promised husband, that they were engaged to be married — H.V.), being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save His people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS." Imagine, if you please, if Jesus were not the Son of God, conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary by the Holy Ghost! And imagine, if you please, if the Scriptures were not the inspired Word of the living God, but merely a word of fallible and mortal man! What rational, sane man, I ask you, would write such a story! Fact is, if Jesus be not the eternal Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit, then He was born of a harlot, out of wedlock, and Mary had been shamefully unfaithful to Joseph to whom she was engaged to be married. Mary was with child, was engaged to be married to Joseph, and Joseph was not this Child's father! Joseph perceived his predicament and, being a just man, wished to break off his engagement to Mary. But, inasmuch as, according to Jewish law, he could have exposed Mary's shame and brought her to justice, he, because of his love to Mary, decided to break this engagement privily. So, this means that, if the Holy Spirit had not conceived this child in the womb of Mary, this child's father was another than Joseph. Is this what one

would call a rationalistic, sane way of recording "history"? Does the world ever write concerning its heroes or heroines in this manner? Would any sane man write a book after this fashion? Is it not the policy of the world always to cover up the shortcomings and faults of its heroes? Do our American history books expose the faults and weaknesses of its heroes in this fashion? Yet, this characterizes the Word of God throughout. The Bible does not hesitate to uncover and expose the sins of the saints and people of the Lord. All we need do is to recall what the Scriptures tell us about such men as Noah and David, men who were guilty of the sins of drunkenness and even of murder. Let the world please stop talking about Jesus as a noble and wonderful man, and of his mother as one of the noblest women who ever lived!

Finally, I would call attention to the Scriptural story of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. This narrative was not inspired by the living God!? How else can we possibly explain it? Is this narrative the product of the human mind? Did a mere man think up and concoct this narrative? If a mere man had conceived of this incident would there not have been some people at the tomb of Jesus of Nazareth to witness His departure out of and ascent out of the tomb? Would any mortal have been able to conceive of the resurrection of a man in such a way that this resurrected person could not be seen by earthly and mortal eyes? Besides, the writers write the narrative in such a way that nobody even expected this Jesus to rise from the dead. What credence must we place in the account of the resurrection by mortal men when these men did not even expect this resurrection? Can such a narrative be considered trustworthy? So, man first puts a watch around the tomb of this Jesus of Nazareth, and then we read nothing of His coming out of the sepulchre and that he destroys his wicked enemies at the tomb? How fantastic is this narrative if we do not have Divine inspiration here?! But this is not all. We challenge the world to explain the empty tomb. For one hundred and fifty years the world believed the absurd and ridiculous rumour that while the watchers slept at their post the disciples stole the body of their Lord. What nonsense is this! In the first place, the disciples were not even thinking of the possibility of the resurrection of their Lord. In fact, they did not believe it when it was told them that the tomb of Jesus was empty and that the risen Lord had been seen by some of the disciples! And, in the second place, what would the disciples have done with a dead body anyway? Could a corpse do them any good? Would their faith in such a dead Jesus avail them anything? Thirdly, the disciples stole the body of Jesus while the soldiers slept? Did these watchers at Jesus' tomb sleep perhaps with one eye open? Did they see the disciples remove the body of Jesus while they were sleeping? Would any court or sane, rational judge believe such a story? Indeed, let the world explain the empty tomb! Fact is, the tomb was empty. This is an historical fact. It is simply a fact that Jesus was in the sepulchre, that Roman soldiers

had been placed as a guard around that grave, that the disciples did not expect the resurrection of their Lord, and that, nevertheless, in spite of all this, the tomb was empty! Besides, the linen clothes were in that sepulchre as if Jesus were still in them. Also this is an historical fact. And to this we may add that the resurrected Christ was seen by witnesses, not once but several times, yea by five hundred at one time. It is simply a fact that there is no event in all of history which has been proved and established more than the resurrection of our Lord. God certainly saw to that. And, as far as the Scriptures are concerned, that they speak the truth concerning sin and evil is established by the living experience of every child of God. We know that what the Scriptures teach concerning sin and evil is true. We experience it fully and completely in our lives. We do not write this because we feel it our duty to prove, rationalistically, the truthfulness of the Word, but only because the Rationalist has no ground under his feet. The Rationalist rejects the Word of God because he hates the truth, the truth of God. He is not motivated by his reason in his rejection of the Scriptures, but only by his evil heart.

Now we have one more question to answer: Is faith irrational? Does the rejection of the theory of the Rationalist imply that faith is unreasonable and irrational? The Rationalist claims to be motivated by reason. Is it then true that the believer in the Scriptures as the Word is not motivated by reason and clear thinking? The Reformers rejected Rationalism as well as Mysticism, the error which places feeling and emotion of the child of God above the Word of God. The Reformers insisted that the Bible is the only rule of faith and conduct, that that Word of God must govern all our thinking, and not that our reason must lord it over the Scriptures. The Rationalist maintains and insists that he may not be deprived of the use of his intellect and thinking with respect to matters which he must believe or refuse to believe. Did the Reformers set forth as their principle that faith and the act of believing rule out this use of the intellect and of the mind? Is it not according to and in harmony with the Word of God that, although the child of God is governed by a regenerated heart, this regenerated heart also controls and directs his will and his mind, so that the principle of the new man and rebirth of the Christian does not cancel or destroy his calling to use also his thinking with respect to the truth and the things of the Word of God? We will stop here for the time being. Let us, the Lord willing, face this question in our following article and attempt an answer to the question whether our faith must be viewed as irrational and unreasonable.

H.V.

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

The Voice of Our Fathers

The Belgic Confession

INTRODUCTION (continued)

The Great Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-'19, played an important role in the history of our *Belgic Confession*. To it, in fact, must be credited the fact that we have this confession today in its present form and that it has achieved an important position among Reformed creeds. Usually we connect only our *Canons* with the Synod of Dordrecht. And indeed, the *Canons* were the most important accomplishment of the Synod. But they were not by any means the only accomplishment. This Synod occupied itself with many other matters. We may say that the Reformed churches of Dutch origin did not reach maturity and full unity really until the Synod of Dordrecht, and that this Synod finally established the official creedal position and church political position of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.

We must remember that during the Arminian controversy the very existence of the *Heidelberg Catechism* and the *Belgic Confession* was endangered. This stands to reason. The Remonstrants did not want to be bound by these Reformed documents. For it was not thus, that prior to the composition of the *Canons* our Reformed churches had no position as to the doctrinal truths at issue in the Arminian controversy. On the contrary, the *Canons* merely served the purpose of articulating and further explaining the position that was already set forth in our other creeds. And the Arminians felt to be sure that there was not room within the confines of the *Catechism* and the *Confession* for their views. Therefore they never wanted a synod at which they would be on trial on the basis of Scripture and the confessions. They knew very well that they would be condemned on that basis. But they were more than willing that a national synod be convened for the purpose of reviewing and revising the *Catechism* and the *Confession*. This the Contra-Remonstrants did not want at all. They saw in this a clever maneuver on the part of the Arminians. In the first place, this maneuver was designed to evade an ecclesiastical trial of the Arminians. At such a synod Remonstrants and Contra-Remonstrants would appear as equal parties, with equal rights and privileges. In the second place, if the Arminians at such a synod could succeed in getting the creeds revised to suit their designs, the cause of the Reformed faith would be lost. Once the creeds were revised, the Arminians would have official confessional standing, and their views could never again be attacked as heretical. On the contrary, there would be no room left for the Reformed view. And, in the third place, at such a synod the Arminians, especially because they had the backing of the government, stood a good chance of controlling such a synod and having things all their

way. Hence, for a long time there was a struggle about the mere question of the convening of a national synod. Without the government a synod could not be convened. But the government would convene a synod only for the purpose of revising the confessions. This was entirely out of order. If the confessions were to be revised, this could be done only by way of carefully circumscribed gravamina against definite expressions found in the creeds. But simply to convene a synod with the general mandate to review and revise all the creedal literature of the churches was an unheard of thing. This would mean that all that the church had ever formulated and confessed was to be called in question. Hence, the Contra-Remonstrants did not want a synod under such conditions. And this was one of the reasons why the Arminian controversy became such a protracted struggle.

When finally there was a shift in power, and with it a shift in sympathy, in the government, and when the condition of a revision of the confessions was removed, the Great Synod was convened in 1618-'19. And, as you know, the Arminians were indicted, tried, and found wanting.

Then, unexpectedly, after the Arminians had been condemned, the Synod in its one hundred forty-fourth session was after all confronted with a demand to review the confessions. It must be remembered, however, that this was not the same as the earlier demand of the pro-Arminian government. This was not a demand for revision, but for review. And the purpose was not to make any radical changes in the confession, but rather to establish, over against the slander of the Arminians, that according to the consensus of all the churches the Confession of Faith of the Netherlands Churches was in harmony with the Scriptures. This becomes evident from the way in which the request was put by the governmental deputies in the name of the States General. This request was that the Confession of Faith of the Reformed Netherlands Churches should be read and examined in the presence of the foreign theologians, and that every member of the Synod, foreign as well as domestic, should declare whether he finds anything in this Confession as far as the doctrinal points and the essence of the doctrine is concerned which does not appear to be in agreement with the truth of God's revealed Word or with the confessions of other Reformed churches. However, as far as the method or manner of expression was concerned, and as far as church government was concerned, this was to be examined only by the Dutch delegates. And because especially the British delegates recognized a different form of church government, Articles 31 and 32 of the *Confession* were excluded from this review.

The Synod acceded to this demand of the government. Every delegate was furnished with a copy of the *Belgic Confession*. Thereafter the articles were read in order, and everyone was requested "that he, after proper and diligent and serious examination of the same, should further freely and uprightly declare whether in the doctrines con-

tained in the Confession he had noted anything which was not in harmony with God's Word and which he judged it necessary to change." (Cf. "Handelingen der Nationale Synode," p. 305.)

The record of the one hundred forty-fifth session shows that the delegates from Great Britain were the first to declare themselves on this subject. They informed the Synod at this session that they had examined the *Confession* as carefully as they had examined the teachings of the Remonstrants, and that notwithstanding the Arminians' insinuations, they found nothing therein contrary to God's Word, and that for the most part those Arminian indictments could be brought against the confessions of all the Reformed churches. In the one hundred forty-sixth session we find that all the delegates, foreign and domestic, declared that there was no doctrine in the *Confession* that was in conflict with Scripture, but that, on the contrary, all were in agreement with the truth of God's Word and the confessions of other Reformed churches.

After this, the foreign theologians solemnly exhorted the Netherlands members of the Synod to persevere steadfastly in this Confession of Faith, to transmit it unfalsified to their descendants, and to maintain it unadulterated even to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. And with equal solemnity our fathers unitedly pledged that it was their purpose to persevere in the calling of this sound doctrine, to teach it purely in the Netherlands Provinces, diligently to stand for it, and keep it, through the grace of God, unadulterated.

An interesting sidelight is the fact that at this same session the delegates from the Waalsche Kerken informed the Synod that the Confession of Faith was approved by a National Synod of the French Churches in 1583. And in the Acts of the Synod of Dordrecht was entered a quotation from the Acts of the French Synod to this effect. This was probably done because the French delegates were unable to attend the Synod of Dordrecht.

We recite this history in detail here because it shows that the *Belgic Confession* really attained its full stature, not only in the Netherlands but also in the Reformed community generally, at the time of the Synod of Dordrecht. From this time on this creed occupied a place of importance among the numerous Calvinistic confessions, having met with approval from all the churches.

The Synod of Dordrecht performed one more important service with respect to the *Belgic Confession*. In the Post-Synod, that is, the sessions of synod which were held after the foreign delegates had departed and after the chief business of the synod had been attended to, it was decided to prepare authentic versions of the *Confession* in French, Dutch, and Latin. The Synod took cognizance of the fact that there were several different versions in existence, each of which differed from the others in various details. A committee was appointed to prepare an authentic text; and they received the mandate to compare the various versions, but to

pay special attention to the version which up to this time had been recognized as authentic in the Dutch and the French churches. This was in the one hundred fifty-fifth session, May 13, 1619. The men appointed were Antonius Thysius, Hermannus Faukelius, Daniel Colonius, Festus Hommius (also secretary of the synod), and Godefridus Udeannus. Ten days later the French and the Dutch versions were prepared, and the Synod spent three sessions treating the proposed versions. To the revisions which were made we need not give our attention at this time. Suffice it to say that after careful deliberation and with some further corrections, these French and Dutch versions were adopted by the Synod, and have functioned since then as the authentic text of the *Belgic Confession*. The Latin version, prepared by Festus Hommius and later published, was not ready in time and was never treated by the Synod. For our Reformed churches, therefore, the French and the Dutch text of Dordrecht are authentic and form the basis of our English translations.

From Dordrecht to the present is a long time. And we cannot go into detail as to the history of this period. Soon after the glorious victory of Dordrecht a period of decline set in. The Reformed churches in the land of our forbears were assailed first by the blighting blast of dead orthodoxy, which began as the lulling breeze of complacency after the hard-fought battle against Arminianism. Rationalism and Pietism were next to assail the churches. It must be remembered too that the church was during this period in bondage to the state, a factor which made it impossible for the champions of the truth successfully to do battle within the church. And to be sure, the confession of the church was endangered in this period, but not in such a way that we of today were deprived of it. In the first place, the official creed of the Reformed Churches had been established once and for all at Dordrecht, that is, before the tides of Rationalism and Pietism swept over the churches. In the second place, the nature of the assault during this period was different. The enemy did not seek to do away with the creed officially. The attempt was rather to ignore the confessions and to make them dead letters in the church. Modernism and error was tolerated while officially and in name the church still maintained the Three Forms of Unity. And so it came to pass that when the separations of 1834 and 1886 took place, these constituted a return to the creeds which were officially held to be the standards of the Reformed Churches. Through the colonization and immigration of our forbears in the 19th and 20th centuries this heritage of the Reformed faith was transferred to our shores; and thus we have the *Belgic Confession* today.

But once more we may face the question: do we truly have this confession as our own today? Or are we like so many others, past and present, who hold to this confession in name, but not in fact? Our future studies should help us to answer this question.

We must next consider the authority and position of our *Belgic Confession*, and, in connection therewith, its value as a creed.

And then we may say, in the first place, that both historically and from the point of view of its contents our *Belgic Confession*, more than any other of our creeds, purposes to be a *symbol*. A symbol is a sign, a mark of distinction. Thus, for example, a flag or other national emblem may be called its symbol, that is, the mark of distinction whereby a nation may be distinguished from all other countries. In this same way the confession of a church serves the purpose of a symbol. It constitutes the mark of distinction whereby a certain church and its faith may be known and distinguished in and over against all the world in general, and whereby a particular church may be distinguished from all other churches. Implied in this very idea of a symbol, in the first place, is the fact that it is the calling of the church in the midst of the world to be a living testimony of the grace of God, to let her light shine everywhere, and therefore to give constant expression to her faith, that is, to that which she believes to be the truth revealed in the Word of God. This is such an evidently Scriptural truth that we need not take the time to prove it now. Implied in this idea, in the second place, is the element of distinctiveness, or of spiritual and doctrinal isolation. A nation's flag sets it apart from all other nations, distinguishes it as occupying a position which no other nation occupies. A church's creed too sets it apart from the whole world, marks that church as occupying a position by itself, the position of faith. And, especially since the era of the Reformation, when churches and sects multiplied rapidly, a church's creed sets that church apart from all other churches, marks that church as occupying the position in which she claims to be the purest manifestation of the body of Christ on earth. And therefore, in the third place, a church's symbol is at the same time a weapon of apology, of defense of her faith. By means of it the church gives an answer to every man that asketh a reason of the hope that is in her.

Now, considered historically the *Belgic Confession* is surely preeminently such a symbol. As we have seen, this confession was addressed, first of all, to the civil authorities. And to them the churches in the Lowlands intended to set forth their faith, to vindicate their position, and to show the injustice of the persecution and oppression in which the authorities were engaged. Furthermore, this confession was obviously intended to distinguish the Reformed churches and the Reformed believers from both Anabaptists and Roman Catholics, and to demonstrate that the "believers dwelling in the Lowlands" desired "to live according to the purity of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." And, in the second place, in that age of reformation, when the pure faith was once more coming to light in the Lowlands and when many remained to be enlightened and converted from the bondage

and darkness of Romanism, this creed also served as a symbol to the believers in general. It proclaimed, "Here, in these churches, is the true faith. Here, in distinction from all other churches, the purity of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is maintained and preached. By this confession you may know what we believe, and you may compare it with that which is taught and preached elsewhere and with the Holy Scriptures, and thus know that here is the true church of Jesus Christ!"

The same is true when you consider the *Belgic Confession* from the point of view of its contents. To be sure, our other confessions also serve as symbols. In the very nature of the case, a creed is always at the same time a symbol, or mark of distinction. Our *Canons* certainly function as a symbol. But this function of the *Canons* is limited by the very fact that they deal only with certain points of doctrine, not with the whole of the Reformed faith. The *Heidelberg Catechism* is also a symbol. But to serve as a symbol is not its *chief* purpose. The very viewpoint and method of the *Catechism* preclude this. Its viewpoint is subjective and experiential, and its method of question-and-answer is the method of a book of instruction. But the *Belgic Confession*, while it intends to set forth the living faith of the church, as is evident from its "We all believe with the heart, and confess with the mouth," or, "We believe and confess," or, simply, "We believe," nevertheless follows the objective, doctrinal order in its treatment of the truth. We may outline its 37 articles as follows:

1. Article 1 is an introductory article, expressing belief in the one God, and at the same time informing us that the confession proceeds from the theological standpoint.
2. In Articles 2-7 the confession treats the means whereby God may be known by us:
 - a. The two-fold means. Article 2.
 - b. The divine origin of the written Word of God. Article 3.
 - c. The canonical books. Article 4.
 - d. The authority of Holy Scripture. Article 5.
 - e. The difference between the canonical and apocryphal books. Article 6.
 - f. The sufficiency of Holy Scripture. Article 7.
3. In Articles 8-11 the doctrine of God is set forth:
 - a. The Trinity. Article 8.
 - b. Proof of the doctrine of the Trinity. Article 9.
 - c. The divinity of Jesus Christ. Article 10.
 - d. The divinity of the Holy Spirit. Article 11.
4. Articles 12-15 speak of creation, man, and sin:
 - a. Creation. Article 12.
 - b. Divine Providence. Article 13.
 - c. The Creation and Fall of Man. Article 14.
 - d. Original sin. Article 15.
5. Articles 16-21 speak of Christ:
 - a. Predestination. Article 16.

- b. The promise of the Savior. Article 17.
 - c. The Incarnation of Jesus Christ. Article 18.
 - d. The two natures of Christ. Article 19.
 - e. The work of Christ from the viewpoint of God's justice and mercy. Article 20.
 - f. The satisfaction of Christ. Article 21.
6. Articles 22-26 speak of the doctrine of salvation :
- a. Saving faith. Article 22.
 - b. Justification. Article 23.
 - c. Sanctification and good works. Article 24.
 - d. The abolishing of the ceremonial law. Article 25.
 - e. The intercession of Christ. Article 26.
7. Articles 27-35 deal with the doctrine of the church :
- a. The Catholic Christian Church. Article 27.
 - b. The obligation to join ourselves to the true church. Article 28.
 - c. The marks of the true church. Article 29.
 - d. The government of the church. Article 30.
 - e. The offices of ministers, elders, and deacons. Article 31.
 - f. The order and discipline of the church. Article 32.
 - g. The sacraments in general. Article 33.
 - h. Baptism. Article 34.
 - i. The Lord's Supper. Article 35.
8. Article 36 speaks of the civil magistrates.
9. Article 37 deals with the doctrine of the last things.

It must be remembered, of course, that this function of the *Belgic Confession* as a symbol does not exclude, but rather implies its value from other points of view. In the first place, also this confession serves the positive purpose of a basis and bond of union: upon its basis churches of a common faith can officially and formally unite or have correspondence. In the second place, the *Belgic Confession* serves as a means for the preservation and defense of the truth and for the transmission of the truth in the line of generations to the church and to believers in all ages. And, in the third place, the *Belgic Confession*, the more so because it sets forth the truth in systematic, objective order, can serve as a wonderful means of instruction, both to those within and to those without the church. This cannot be emphasized enough in our day. The confession of a church means nothing except in so far as it is the expression of a living faith. Or, to put it another way, the confession of a church as an official creedal statement is valueless except in so far as it is indeed the confession of its members. If, on the other hand, the confession is buried in the dust of antiquity and has a place, not in the hearts of the members, but only in the archives and official literature of the church, it can serve only to rise up as a testimony against the church in the judgment of God, solemnly reminding the church of what she ought to be, but is not! The church must be thoroughly indoctrinated, therefore. The most solemn duty of

the church, in pulpit and catechism class and on the mission field, as well as in its relations and contacts with all other churches, is to maintain the "purity of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." The whole well-being of the church is wrapped up in this maintenance of the faith. The healthy church is the church whose members know what they believe, and believe what they know. The true unity of the church is to be found only on the basis of the truth. And the extension of the church is only possible when the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ in all its purity is proclaimed and propagated.

In this connection we must also deal with the arguments raised against the authority and value of our confessions. It is claimed that confessions are merely human productions. The objection is raised that confessions bind the conscience. It is argued that creeds create division and schisms. And it is alleged that confessions hinder the development of the truth.

Essentially, the answer to all these arguments is two-fold.

In the first place, our confessions have no authority by themselves, but derive all their authority only from Scripture. This implies that any binding power which a confession may have is the binding force of the Word of God itself. The latter only may bind the conscience. Only, therefore, in so far as a confession is the expression of the truth of the Word of God may its authority be acknowledged; and only in so far as the church does not fall into the error of dead confessionalism, but acknowledges the Scriptures as the continuous, living source and criterion of her creeds — only in that measure will she be a living, growing church, becoming richer and purer in her knowledge and possession of the truth as it is in Jesus. In the second place, those who deny the authority and value of our confessions must first deny the historic and organic development of the church in the midst of the world under the continuous guidance of the Holy Spirit, Who was poured out in the church in order to lead her into all the truth. If only this latter truth is kept in mind, it cannot be maintained that the confessions are mere human products. But under the obligation of Scripture itself to confess her faith, and under the inward impulse of the indwelling Spirit of Christ, the church must needs give expression to her faith, to the glory of God and to the salvation of the saints.

H.C.H.

Let all who seek Thee now rejoice,
 Yea, glad in Thee abide,
 And, loving Thy salvation, say,
 The Lord be magnified.
 My lowly state and bitter need
 The Lord has not forgot;
 Thou art my Saviour and my help,
 Come, Lord, and tarry not.

DECENCY and ORDER

The Subjects of Baptism

(Continued)

In our last article we introduced a question concerning the propriety of baptizing children that have been adopted by Christian parents. Is it correct that such children, who may or may not have been born in the covenant line historically, are the proper subjects of baptism? Is it not more correct as well as much safer, especially with those that have been born outside of the historic covenant line, to wait until they reach the years of discretion?

We have seen that there are differences of view and opinion with regard to this matter. Some favor immediate baptism while others hold that the only correct position is that of waiting. Favoring the latter position, the authors of *The Church Order Commentary* express themselves as follows:

"It appears to us that one's position on this question regarding the permissibility or non-permissibility of the baptism of adopted children of non-christian birth, is largely determined by one's covenant view. If one holds that the covenant of grace is essentially only a covenantal form for the promise of salvation for those that believe, then in all likelihood he will favor the baptism of all adopted children. If, on the other hand, one believes that the covenant of grace is an actual bond or league of life-relationship between God and His people in Christ Jesus as their federal head, then one will in all likelihood judge against the baptism of adopted children of non-christian birth.

"We may also add that it is our conviction that the language of Article 34 of our Confession, and of Lord's Day 26 and 27 of our Heidelberg Catechism, as well as the language employed in our Form of Baptism, is against the practice of baptizing children of non-christian birth. These writings all assume that the subject of baptism is 'in Christ,' as His people's Redeemer and second Adam. We find no warrant in Scripture for assuming that children born of unbelieving, godless parents are 'in Christ,' simply because they are legally adopted by believing parents. According to our standards and our Form of Baptism, baptism is not merely a sign and a seal upon a conditional promise of God, *but a sign and a seal of saving grace in Christ*. Those who are baptized, to say no more, are assumed to be federally, legally in Christ our second Adam. (Note well, our standards and Forms do not contend that every child born of believing parents is *actually* federally in Christ for there are exceptions to every rule, and far less that every child is *actually, subjectively* in possession of all the benefits of Christ's obedience and death; regeneration, etc.)

"Upon what basis does the meaningful assumption referred to above rest? Upon the assurances of God regarding the (natural) children of believers. It cannot be assumed that children of pagans and non-christians are (federally, representatively, covenantally) in Christ until they by their confession and walk of life manifest themselves as Christians. Consequently the present writers believe it is better to postpone the baptism of adopted children in question until they manifest themselves as Christians. But we would urge all office-bearers to study the reports delivered at the Synod of 1936 and then let each come to a conscientious decision as to what he believes to be proper. The injunction of God to Abraham (Gen. 17) to circumcise also the children of the slaves, is a strong argument in favor of the administration of baptism to the children in question. But those who do not favor the baptism of these children reply and assume with the Synod of Dort that Abraham did not circumcise all children of pagans, but only those whose parents had been circumcised and taught to believe on the true God.

"It may also be said that the recent or present day leaders of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands are, as far as we know, all opposed to the practice of baptizing children of non-christian parentage, though adopted into Christian homes. This is most likely due to the fact that the question concerning the baptism of adopted children, born to godless parents, is at heart a question regarding the covenant. The stricter covenant conception, which holds that the covenant is in essence a bond of life-relationship between God and His people in Christ Jesus, is the prevalent conception in the Netherlands Churches of our forebears" (*Church Order Commentary*, pp. 233, 234).

With the authors of this quotation we fully agree when they speak of the question of the baptism of adopted children as being "at heart a question regarding the covenant." Likewise it is true that one's position on this question will be largely determined by one's covenant view. However, in our opinion, the whole question is somewhat oversimplified when the authors of this quotation arrive at the conclusion that, "If one holds that the covenant of grace is essentially only a covenantal form for the promise of salvation for those that believe, then in all likelihood he will favor the baptism of all adopted children," and again, "If one believes that the covenant of grace is an actual bond or league of life-relationship between God and His people in Christ Jesus as their federal head, then one will in all likelihood judge against the baptism of adopted children of non-christian birth."

The latter view expressed here is our present concern since we do not believe that the covenant is a mere "form for the promise" but is in essence the gracious relation of living fellowship or friendship between God and His people in Christ Jesus. It appears that Monsma and VanDellen also take the position that the covenant is an "actual bond or league of life-relationship between God and His people." From this it becomes evident in the rest of the quotation

that their objection to the baptism of adopted children born of non-christian parents lies in that: (1) "They find no warrant in Scripture for assuming that children born of unbelieving, godless parents are 'in Christ,' simply because they are legally adopted by believing parents, and, (2) It cannot be assumed that children of pagans and non-christians are (federally) in Christ until they by their confession and walk of life manifest themselves as Christians." What we must point out here is that according to these authors, baptism is not administered on the strength or basis of a conditional promise but on the basis of the *assumption* that the baptized is *in Christ*. If that cannot be assumed there can be no baptism. Since there is no basis to assume this in the case of adopted children of non-christian origin, it is concluded that one should wait with their baptism until it becomes evident whether they are or are not in Christ. It is claimed that this assumption can be made with regard to the (natural) children of believers and so they can be baptized in their infancy. However, this is certainly not true. There is no more basis in Scripture to assume that all the natural children of believers are in Christ than there is to assume that children adopted by believers are in Christ. In fact, Scripture declares very plainly that all the children born to believers are *not* in Christ. In Romans 9:7 and 8 we read: "Neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children, but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called, that is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." If, therefore, these authors would follow their own reasoning through consistently they would have to advocate the postponement of the baptism of all children until such time as it became evident whether or not they were indeed in Christ.

We disagree with the contention that "one who believes that the covenant is an actual life-relationship between God and His people in Christ will in all likelihood judge against the baptism of adopted children of non-christian birth." It is entirely possible to favor the baptism of such children while holding the "stricter covenant conception." The answer, it seems to us, lies entirely in one's conception of the *basis* of baptism. Let it be understood that we do not believe that the mere fact that a child of non-christian origin is adopted by Christian parents makes that child a child of God. Adoption is not synonymous with election. However, it cannot be denied that when such a child is adopted by believing parents (apart now from the question of the propriety of such adoptions), that child is incorporated into the historic line of the generations of God's people. It is reared in the covenant sphere because of its adoption. As such it should then also receive the sign of the covenant which is baptism for it is plainly the revealed will of God that all children of believers shall bear that sign (elect and reprobate alike). The case of Abraham is indeed to the point. Genesis 17:10, 12 states: "This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; every man child among you shall

be circumcised . . . he that is born in the house, or *bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed.*" And verse 13 emphasizes this adding: "He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised." Considering that in the Old Dispensation circumcision was the sign of the covenant of God and that baptism is the sign in this dispensation, the same would apply to those children who are not of our seed but who, through adoption, are brought into the historic line of the generations of the church.

These children then are not to be baptized because of a conditional promise of God to them. God does not offer them salvation upon the condition of faith. Neither are they baptized on a false and entirely unbased supposition that somehow their adoption has actually incorporated them into Christ. The adoption of these children is no guarantee of their regeneration. Not at all. But they are baptized because in the providence of God they are through their being adopted by believing parents brought into the historic line of the covenant of God as it runs through the generations of the faithful and as such they must be marked—marked with the sign of the covenant of grace. They are then instructed, as are all the children of believing parents, in regard to the meaning and significance of that sign and if in later life they repudiate it and reveal themselves as profaners of the covenant, they shall be beaten with double stripes.

G.V.d.B.

GOD AND HIS CHURCH

Let the king behold Thy favor
For Thy servant David's sake,
Unto whom a sacred promise,
Sure and faithful, Thou didst make.
If his children keep Thy covenant
And Thy testimony own,
Then, as Thou, O Lord, hast promised,
They shall sit upon his throne.

Thou, the Lord, hast chosen Zion,
Thou hast ever loved her well;
This My resting-place forever,
Here, Thou sayst, I choose to dwell.
Surely I will bless and help her,
Feed her poor, her saints make glad,
And her priests shall stand before Me
In salvation's garments clad.

I will cause the might of David
Ever more and more to grow,
On the path of My Anointed
I will make a lamp to glow;
All His enemies shall perish,
I will cover them with shame,
But His crown shall ever flourish,
Blessed be His holy Name.

ALL AROUND US

THE CHURCH AND SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

According to a recent report, a Methodist Church in Sydney, Australia, has opened a special kind of night-club for teen-agers. No liquor is sold in the night-club, but popular teen-age musicians are hired to entertain the crowds; the young people dress as they like, eat hamburgers and sip soft drinks, watch television, dance, play table tennis or billiards, and in general have a good time.

Rev. Peter Van Tuinen, in *The Banner*, raises the question in connection with this report, "What is the church?" He writes,

The Sydney experiment is a rather spectacular case, but it illustrates a very common and insidious fault in the thinking of many church people; namely that the church must compete with the world in the matter of entertainment. Society meetings are evaluated on the basis of their entertainment value, and potential members of the church societies choose something more entertaining. They should rather frankly recognize that they are not choosing one form of entertainment over another, but choosing entertainment in preference to edification and the exercise of Christian fellowship. Catechism classes, of course, are dull as compared to a basketball game or a movie, but those who make such a judgment overlook the fact that the church is not trying to entertain but to instruct and to edify. Some religious and evangelistic movements have sought to win people by interspersing entertainment and gospel, or even by reducing an evangelistic or religious meeting to an entertaining spectacle. The results are not likely to be spiritually edifying, but rather to encourage the attractive idea that life in all of its aspects ought to be entertaining.

There is no doubt about it that people are entertainment-wild today. Consider the vast amounts of money that are spent just to "have fun." No doubt this is partly due to the fact that people in general have plenty money to spend on luxuries, that they have plenty leisure time in which they seem to think they must be entertained. But another factor seems to be that people are becoming intellectually and spiritually lazy. It is difficult, if not impossible, to get people to think about anything which requires intellectual effort. And it is indeed much easier to be occupied by entertainment that requires no mental strain or concentrated attention. These influences of worldliness and the craze for entertainment have their effects also upon the church and the covenant seed of the church.

It is also no doubt true that people are more and more seeking to be entertained in their churches. This brings up another interesting point that has come to my attention several times in recent years. The architecture of church buildings has reflected this growing trend towards the church becoming a social center. Of course, in the general sense of

the word, architecture, because it is one of the arts, has always reflected the ideas and ideals of its times. And, more particularly, church architecture has reflected the spiritual life of those who worshipped in the churches, their confessions and beliefs. We need only think of the Middle Ages when the peasants, reduced to the lowliest of circumstances in daily toil and drudgery, nevertheless were eager to help in the construction of the great cathedrals; for in their building of them, they expressed their hopes and longings and they watched them grow and worshipped beneath the lofty domes and soaring spires. Also in the Reformed Churches since the time of the Reformation, the architecture of the churches has, as a general rule, reflected the fact that to those who stood in the tradition of the Reformation, the center of the church life was their worship of God and the preaching of God's Word. For this reason, the auditorium marked the central and most important part of the church building; the pulpit with the Bible occupied a place of instant attention; the adorning of the building was strictly in keeping with the need to inspire the congregation to worship.

But in many churches this emphasis has changed. And this change is reflected in the architecture of the buildings. No longer is the preaching of the Word of God and the assembly of the congregation to worship the center of church life. Rather the church has become a social center, a meeting place of various people, a place of entertainment and business, of administration and social occupations. I recall a church I was in some time ago which rather startlingly emphasized this. Although there were several thousand people on the rolls of the church, the auditorium, newly built, seated only about 600, and, I was told, it was seldom more than half full. Yet the church building and the neighboring parish house were large. There were lounges with rugs and upholstered furniture, kitchens, banquet halls, offices for all kinds of administrative personnel, offices for a minister of music, a minister of psychiatry, a social worker or two; there were separate rooms for a library, for pastoral counseling, a rather elaborately equipped first aid room with medicine chest and stretchers and cots, spacious rooms for brides and attendants, a chapel capable of seating about one hundred people for weddings and other minor meetings. I suppose it is only a logical conclusion that presently the church will have its own "night-club," its own basketball courts and bowling alleys. But the church has then also forgotten its reason for existence — its calling to do nothing else but preach the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Conspicuously lacking are facilities for the instruction of the covenant seed of the church in the truth of God's Word, places for society meetings where the study of Scripture is the primary activity and the auditorium as the chief part of the entire building where the congregation faithfully comes together on the Sabbath Day to worship God in the communion of the saints. No longer can the modern church sing with the sweet singer of Israel, "I was glad when they

said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together: Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord." Psalm 122:1-4.

MORMONS IN NAVAJO LAND

In the January issue of *Moody Monthly*, an interesting article appears which tells of missionary work by the Mormons among the Navajos. The Mormons are being eminently successful in their missionary work, claiming to date some 8000 converts. The appeal of the Mormons is primarily due to the fact, according to this article, that the Mormons teach that the Indians of America are direct descendants of the lost tribes of Israel. According to the Mormon story, contained in *The Book Of Mormon*, translated by Joseph Smith who was the founder of the movement, a group of Israelites escaped from Jerusalem about 600 B.C. at the time of the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. These migrants traveled across Arabia to the shores of the Persian Gulf where they built a ship and set sail eastward through the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, finally landing on the west coast of South America. This group was the basic nucleus from which has come the Indian tribes of the Western Hemisphere including all the Indians of our own country.

Because this has appeal to the Indians, and because the Mormons pose as the only ones who have real knowledge of Indian origin, these people have had unusual success in persuading the Indians to join their sect.

According to this same article in *Moody Monthly*, most ethnologists (experts in the field of the origin and development of the races) are agreed that the Indians did not descend at all from Shem and the Jews. They are for the most part Mongoloid — related to the yellow race, or the result of a mixture of Mongoloid and Negroid. Besides, so the article maintains, it is generally agreed that the tribes of Indians found in America came in separate migrations, none earlier than 500 B.C. and some as late as 800-1300 A.D. At least some of them came from Asia via the Alaskan route.

But the Mormons are bound to their views by the infallible inspiration of the *Book of Mormon* which was translated from some old plates supposedly found by Joseph Smith in a hillside near the Smith farm at Palmyra, New York. The plates are now in charge of the angel Moroni and the translation has become a part of the Mormon Bible. The Mormons would have to repudiate their belief in both Joseph Smith, the angel Moroni and the *Book of Mormon* if they did not maintain their views that the Indians are descendants of the Israelites.

One is reminded of the words of Jesus to the Jews, equally applicable today, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child

of hell than yourselves." Matt. 23:15. And yet — much of what goes under the name of missionary work in other church circles can be characterized in the same way.

NEWS BRIEFS

From *Christianity Today* we quote the following:

Thirty-four Lutheran congregations are applying for membership in a new church body to be known as the Church of the Lutheran Confession. All but 2 of the 34 formerly belonged to the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. They object to some of the synod's doctrinal practices and to its continuing relations with the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod in the Synodical Conference of North America.

Congregational Christian Churches favor merger with Evangelical and Reformed Churches by a margin of about twenty to one, according to Dr. Fred Hoskins, co-president of the United Church of Christ which is being formed out of the merger. Hoskins says that of 1427 local congregations which have voted on the proposed merger, 1358 have given assent. A number of large Congregational churches have declared their opposition to the union, however, including historic Park Street Church in Boston.

A pastor in the Church of Sweden was fined 75 crowns (\$14.50) last month for refusing to perform a second marriage for a divorced person. The Rev. Alf Hardelin of Oeja was sentenced under a law which compels ministers of the national Lutheran church to marry all couples wishing a church wedding even if the partners are divorced people.

According to *The Banner*, there have been recent reports of persecution in Colombia once again in which Protestants have suffered. In Barrancabermeja, Protestants were attacked by vicious armed men. In San Gil, a band of unknown men smashed the doors and wooden window blinds of a Protestant meeting place and poured rifle and pistol fire into the building for approximately an hour. Although there were thirteen people in the building, they all escaped unhurt. Handbills stating "I am a Catholic" were distributed that morning to be posted on the front doors of homes. The meeting place that was shot up had no such card. In Suaita, unknown men forced their way into a Protestant home, struck a mother's head with machetes, smashed furniture and damaged other furnishings, tried to ruin plantain trees and garden crops outside. The mother succeeded in getting to her pastor's home and was taken for treatment. There are places in the world where persecution of the church goes on.

H. Hanko

Do you agree that it is especially during Lent season, when we are reminded anew of the suffering of our Lord, that we can appreciate the Gospel found in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

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

February 20, 1961

Randolph's consistory has presented a new trio to the congregation consisting of the Revs. H. Hanko, H. H. Kuiper and R. Veldman.

Our Missionary, Rev. G. Lubbers, is currently laboring in the Tripp, S.D. area, and is scheduled to preach in the Legion Hall, Feb. 8, 15 and 22. His sermons are based on the first five questions and answers of the Heidelberg Catechism. A small pamphlet, written by the Missionary, distributed in the area, contained a warning against the modern trend towards church mergers, decrying the fact that sound doctrine, as delineated in the Heidelberg Catechism, is not of paramount interest anymore. The first leaflet also advertised our Radio Broadcast of the Reformed Witness Hour which can be heard on a Sioux Falls station.

Mr. Peter Kooistra, the oldest member of First Church, and of the entire denomination, was given the desired release from his body of death Friday, Feb. 10. Upon his confession we may believe that he is now a member of the Church Triumphant, joining those who have gone on before and who are eagerly awaiting the Judgment Day when "the lamb which was in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

In Southwest's bulletin we found this terse paraphrasing of James 3: "The most untameable thing in this world has its den just back of the teeth."

The Northwest Protestant Reformed Christian School Society, founded in June of 1960, has as its goal a Christian school for the children of the Hull and Doon congregations. The Board has been busy and has appointed various committees: The Comm. of Location has drawn up a map with pins representing the location of the children of school-age from the above congregations. The Propaganda Comm. has been assigned the task of distributing material relating to progress, thereby arousing more support for that worthy cause, and plans a monthly News Letter. A Lecture Comm. has been appointed to sponsor lectures of an inspirational nature so that the members of their congregations may be united in the calling to educate their children to the best of their ability. The first lecture was scheduled for Feb. 24 at the Doon Church, with the Rev. B. Woudenberg, of Edgerton, as the speaker. The topic — "The Necessity of Prot. Ref. Christian Education."

From Edgerton, Minn., we received the following contribution from the Board of the Free Christian School So-

ciety, over the signature of H. Miersma, sec'y: "Our school consists of two rooms. Four grades are taught in each room. Miss Evelyn Huizenga, from our Randolph, Wis., congregation, is the teacher of the four lower grades. Mr. Dale Kuiper, our Principal, teaches the four upper grades. His home is in Loveland, Colo. We have twenty-nine pupils from nine families. The school society has a membership of twenty-one families. The school opened its doors in the Fall of 1950, making a decade of teaching that which is dear to the hearts of all truly Protestant Reformed people."

Year Book Changes: Randolph's new clerk is Mr. Herman De Vries, Box 644, Randolph, Wis.; their new treasurer is Mr. Peter Fisher, R.R. No. 2, Randolph, Wis.

The Ladies' Aid Society of First Church has providentially been compelled to function without their president for an indefinite period. Their chairman, Mrs. H. Hoeksema, has been hospitalized because of a gall bladder infection, and surgery for removal of that organ is indicated.

The Adams St. School Mothers' Club served a supper at the school Feb. 17. Donations from the diners amounted to more than \$300.00.

On Feb. 12 the Lynden congregation was instructed in the Word of God as it is found in Job 23. The pastor, Rev. Harbach, preached on the theme, "Longing for Christ," examining the plaint of Job as it is concentrated in the third verse, "Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat."

The membership in attendance at the February P.T.A. meeting in Hope School was entertained with the showing of pictures depicting life behind the "Iron Curtain."

Oak Lawn's bulletin for the first Sunday in Lent carried a sizable paragraph taken from Rev. H. Hoeksema's book, *The Amazing Cross*. The reading of such a quotation is helpful to quiet meditation before the service, and serves admirably to prepare the soil of the heart to receive the seed of the Word.

The following news item was sent in by the program committee of the Reformed Witness Hour: "The past Sunday, Feb. 26, Rev. H. Hoeksema began a series of radio sermons commemorating the suffering, death and the glorious resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Last week our speaker introduced this group of Lenten sermons with a message entitled, 'The Suffering of Our Lord.' During the month of March, D.V., he will continue his messages with the subjects, 'What Christ Suffered,' 'Jesus' Death — The Condemnation of the World,' 'The Death of the Cross,' 'The Death of the Son of God,' and concluding this current series of broadcasts, Resurrection Day, April 2, with an appropriate sermon entitled, 'The Lord Is Risen Indeed.'"

. . . see you in church.

J.M.F.