

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Is it possible to immerse one's self in the life of a local congregation while letting the denomination as a whole go its own way? Especially if one is a member of a relatively conservative congregation with a relatively orthodox minister and a concerned and godly consistory, cannot one devote himself to the affairs of the congregation and let the denomination go its own evil way?

See "My Sheep Hear My Voice" — Page 283

CONTENTS:

Meditation –	
The Silent Sufferer	266
Editorials –	
Baptism on the Mission Field (7)	268
Reformed Thought on Baptism (3)	269
Voice of Our Fathers –	
Faith in Jesus Christ	272
From Holy Writ –	
Exposition of the Book of	274
Guest Article –	
The Canons of Dordrecht:	
An Historical Perspective (1)	276
The Signs of the Times –	
The Black Horse of Revelation (6)	278
Translated Treasures –	
Acts of the Synod of Dordrecht (7)	280
My Sheep Hear My Voice –	
Letter to the Members of the	
Church at Philadelphia	283
All Around Us –	
The ACL and the Athanasian Creed	285
IRS and tax exemption for churches	286
Abortion – Again	286
Support for Scripture?	287
Tidbits	287
News From Our Churches	288

THE STANDARD BEARER

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

Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc.

Second Class Postage Paid at Grand Rapids, Mich.

Editor-in-Chief: Prof. Homer C. Hoeksema

Department Editors: Prof. Robert D. Decker, Rev. David J. Engelsma, Rev. Cornelius Hanko, Prof. Herman Hanko, Rev. Robert C. Harbach, Rev. John A. Heys, Rev. Jay Kortering, Rev. M. Hoeksema, Rev. George C. Lubbers, Rev. Meindert Joostens, Rev. Marinus Schipper, Rev. Gise J. Van Baren, Rev. Herman Veldman, Mr. Kenneth G. Vink.

Editorial Office: Prof. H. C. Hoeksema
4975 Ivanrest Ave. S.W.
Grandville, Michigan 49418

Church News Editor: Mr. Kenneth G. Vink
1422 Linwood, S.E.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49507

Editorial Policy: Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for the Question-Box Department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be neatly written or typewritten, and must be signed. Copy deadlines are the first and the fifteenth of the month. All communications relative to the contents should be sent to the editorial office.

Reprint Policy: Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting of articles in our magazine by other publications, provided: a) that such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; b) that proper acknowledgement is made; c) that a copy of the periodical in which such reprint appears is sent to our editorial office.

Business Office: The Standard Bearer
Mr. H. Vander Wal, Bus. Mgr.
P.O. Box 6064
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

Australian Business Office: Reformed Literature Centre,
P.O. Box 849,
Rockhampton 4700,
Queensland, Australia

New Zealand Business Office: The Standard Bearer,
c/o OPC Bookshop,
P.O. Box 2289,
Christchurch, New Zealand

Subscription Policy: Subscription price, \$7.00 per year (\$5.00 for Australasia). 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, and he will be billed for renewal. If you have a change of address, please notify the Business Office as early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of delayed delivery. Include your Zip Code.

Advertising Policy: The *Standard Bearer* does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$3.00 fee. These should be sent to the Business Office and should be accompanied by the \$3.00 fee. Deadline for announcements is the 1st or the 15th of the month, previous to publication on the 15th or the 1st respectively.

Bound Volumes: The Business Office will accept standing orders for bound copies of the current volume; such orders are filled as soon as possible after completion of a volume. A limited number of past volumes may be obtained through the Business Office.

MEDITATION

The Silent Sufferer

Rev. H. Veldman

"He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth." Isaiah 53:7.

How striking is the repeated use of the personal pronoun "we" and "us" in this fifty-third chapter of Isaiah! How emphatic, therefore, is the divinely inspired writer's setting forth of the truth that our Lord Jesus Christ suffered and died only for His own, His elect given Him of the Father!

What an amazing phenomenon we have here! We read: "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth." In spite of all this, He opened not His mouth. Is it any wonder that the Ethiopian eunuch expresses his amazement, according to Acts 8:30-34? Is not silence under suffering a very

strange thing? Is not *His* silence so much more amazing, unbelievable? Yet we read: He never opened His mouth. All this evil He permitted to be inflicted upon Him, even until the end. As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth.

AMAZING

He was oppressed and He was afflicted. The first word means, "to be driven," as a rabbit or a hare is driven, hunted and hounded, even unto death. The second word means, "to be depressed or afflicted," even as grapes are pressed. Christ was hounded and afflicted; no place was permitted Him in the midst of the world. The birds of the air have nests, and the foxes have holes, but the Son of Man had no place where to lay His head. The birds and the foxes are not begrudged these things; but they were denied Him!

How true this was of our Lord Jesus Christ throughout His life! Already during His infancy He was driven into Egypt. And during His public ministry He was hounded and afflicted relentlessly. . . .

This, however, was true especially at the end of His life while among us. Think of Gethsemane. How the devil tried to crush Him, when His disciples slept and could not watch with Him even one hour! From Gethsemane He was driven to Annas, a deposed high priest, and by a motley multitude armed with lanterns and staves and swords. From Annas He was driven to Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, and from there to Pilate, to Herod, and then back to Pilate. How He was maltreated before the Roman governor! And then they led Him to the accursed tree, crucified Him with two malefactors. And He was crucified in the midst of them. How truly it applies to Him: All the day long He was killed for our sake; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter; He was oppressed and He was afflicted, despised and rejected of men.

And He opened not His mouth. O, this does not mean that He never opened His mouth. Did He not speak to His enemies in the garden of Gethsemane? Did He not open His mouth before Annas — see John 18:20-23? He also spoke before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin. And of His appearance before Pontius Pilate we read that He gave a good testimony, witnessing of the fact that He is the King of the Jews, and also reminding the Roman governor of the fact that he would have no power except it were given Him from above. Enroute to the cross He addressed the women of Jerusalem. Upon the cross He also opened His mouth, speaking the seven cross words. The meaning, we understand, is that He did not open His mouth in rebellion. He never opened His mouth to ward off the enemy, to escape the cross. He suffered in perfect submission and obedience; He never attempted to escape from the way of suffering and

the power of the enemy. He was dumb as a sheep before her shearers.

What an amazing phenomenon! We read literally: "He was oppressed; and while He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth." Besides, the pronoun "He" appears here with emphasis: while *He* was afflicted. And then we read: *Yet He* opened not His mouth.

He was so innocent. I refer now, of course, to the relation in which He stood over against His enemies. How innocent He was and how wicked they were . . . ! When did it ever happen that a judge declares a defendant innocent and then proceeds to execute him?! And when did a judge ever preside over an easier case than did Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin and Pontius Pilate?! Besides, He could have destroyed His enemies, even by the breath of His mouth. This power He surely had. . . . If ever a man had the right to resist, and also the power, it was surely this Jesus of Nazareth. Hence, how utterly amazing is His silence! Indeed, how true it is: *Yet He* opened not His mouth. Why this perfect and complete submission?

NECESSARY

This Silent Sufferer is our Mediator. He did not stand alone. He did not appear merely as another of the sheep; He stood in the place of all the sheep. He was not merely another individual among individuals. He was the Head, the representative Head of sinners, of an entire congregation of elect sinners, an elect multitude which no man can count. He represented a congregation of lost sinners, lost sheep, who had forfeited all the grace of God, could never save themselves. He was not merely Jesus of Nazareth; He was the Christ, our Chief Prophet, Only High Priest, and Eternal King.

Why did He come? He did not come simply to show us the way home. He did not merely come to tell us how much God loved us and then beg us to love God. He did not come merely as a great example, or teacher, to instruct us how we must conduct ourselves. He surely did not come to extend to us the offer and possibility of salvation, and then leave it to us to accept Him and follow Him the best we can. He came to redeem us, hopelessly lost but eternally elect sinners. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. Unto Him was given a definite charge, mandate, as recorded in John 6:39.

This explains His silence. Salvation is exclusively now a matter between God and Christ. Jesus assumes our guilt, the guilt of sin. And so salvation is exclusively a matter between God and Him. This salvation is not conditional. It is not so that He dies for us if only we believe on Him. We do not establish the efficacy of His work. Jesus' cross stands alone. God

laid upon Him the iniquities of us all. The elect are no longer on their own. Salvation is solely a matter between God and Christ; our salvation stands or falls with Him.

Hence, bearing our guilt He must also bear the punishment. What He must bear is so much more than what all the reprobates in hell will ever bear. Indeed, each reprobate pays for his own sin. Jesus bears the punishment for the sins of all the elect. And, He must suffer this infinite wrath of God in perfect and conscious obedience. In that one awful moment of eternity, upon the cross of Calvary, never to be understood by us, Christ must experience, in all its fulness, the awfulness of the wrath of God upon all our sins. It reminds us of a song:

"None of the ransomed ever knew,
How deep were the waters crossed;
Nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed thru,
Ere He found His sheep that was lost."

Now we understand His silence. A short while ago we wrote that if ever a man had the right to open His mouth it was this Jesus of Nazareth. Let us change this, shall we: If ever a man had no right to open His mouth it was this Jesus of Nazareth. Hence, as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, being led to the cross, so the Lamb of God stood before His divine Executioner; and, as our Mediator, looking up, as it were into the eyes of the living God Who sent Him, He responds: Even so, Father, Thy law is written in My heart; I come Thy will to do; glorify Thyself and reveal Thy righteousness through Me, even in deepest hell; save Me, not from this hour, but out of this hour.

BLESSED

How terrible is this silent suffering of the Man of Sorrows for the wicked! Imagine: He opened not His mouth! They hated Him without a cause. David, too,

was hated, but never without a cause. His enemies could always find some fault in him. But this Jesus was hated without a cause. He never gave them a single reason to hate Him. And, He never opened His mouth. He permitted Himself to be led to the slaughter, to allow Himself to be killed. He gave the world full opportunity to reveal themselves in all their sin and wickedness.

Indeed, how terrible! Now the world has revealed itself in all its sin and iniquity. Now the world has established its own condemnation, its own utter unworthiness. O, that world may laugh now. But presently this Man of Sorrows will surely open His mouth, as the Lord of glory, and consign them to hell and ruin, unspeakable misery forever and ever.

However, how wonderful and blessed this Silent Sufferer is for the Church of the living God! On the one hand, how blessed for Christ Himself! Indeed, His way was unutterably difficult. Never will we be able to understand or fathom His way of sorrows. For our Lord Jesus Christ, however, it meant that He finished the work which He came to do. He went all the way, as the Silent Sufferer, and for Him the way of the cross led Him into glory, into the Father's right hand, and there He saves His church, all His elect own, even unto the uttermost.

And how blessed this suffering is for us! What does this mean for us, who love God because He loved us first, who now believe in Him because He dies for us? What does this mean? It means that we are at peace with God! It means that all our sins and debts are paid; it means that all is well between us and God; it means that life and glory everlasting and heavenly immortality are ours forever and ever. Philip asked the Ethiopian eunuch: Understandest thou what thou readest? Do we understand? O, the beauty, the comfort of this all! Indeed, He opened not His mouth, suffered and died that we might live. To Him, the God of our salvation in Jesus Christ, our Lord, be all the praise and adoration, now and even forever.

EDITORIALS

Baptism on the Mission Field (7) Reformed Thought on Baptism (3)

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

We now continue our discussion of the section of the Study Report which deals with the Church Order.

At the conclusion of our last installment we pointed out that the Report's solution with respect to the

Baptism Form (use of which is required by Article 58 of the Church Order) does not fit. The second question at infant baptism and the fourth question at adult baptism use the expression “here in this Christian Church.” This very language prohibits the Report’s solution of “making it plain to the baptized persons, or their parents, that ‘this Christian Church’ refers to the institute that sends out the missionary.” There is, of course, further language in these Baptism Forms which conflicts with the position of the Study Report. The entire presupposition of these Forms is that baptism belongs in the *church*. In the exhortation to prayer in both of these forms, reference is made to “the edification of his Church.” What sense does this language make if the Church is not present when this is read? And bear in mind: *the church is not present* on the mission field. In Rev. Harbach’s document attached to the Study Report there is repeated reference to “the unorganized congregation.” But remember that this is simply a nonentity. There is no such thing as an unorganized congregation. This very expression is a contradiction in terms! If there is a congregation, it is organized; if it is not organized, there is no congregation. And if there is no congregation, it cannot possibly be said that the church is present. This means that the expression in the first question at infant baptism, “members of his Church,” also does not fit on the mission field. It means, further, that the expression used in the exhortation before the questions in adult baptism, “thou art sincerely to give answer before God and his Church,” also does not fit. All of this language presupposes and is based on the idea that the church is present at baptism; but on the mission field it is not yet present. And, therefore, it is impossible to baptize with the use of our adopted Forms.

Another facile solution of a conflict is offered by the Study Report with respect to Article 60 of the Church Order. This article reads: “The names of those baptized, together with those of the parents, and likewise the date of birth and baptism, shall be recorded.” The Study Report simply says: “The baptism records, therefore, can be held either by the missionary, on behalf of the sending church, or by the sending church.” The ground of this is supposed to be the fact that the missionary and his labor are “the arm of the congregation.” Now let us understand this clearly. When there would be infant baptism on the mission field, as proposed by the Study Report, *those baptized infants would be members of no congregation*. They would not be members of the church on the mission field: for there is no church as yet. Nor would they be members of the sending church, Hope Church of Grand Rapids: for no “branch” of Hope is established on the mission field under Article 39 of the Church Order. In other words, the infants are baptized as members of

nothing. And their parents are as yet members of nothing — unless, as has frequently been the case in the past, they still technically retain their membership in another denomination. Now I ask: how, then, can the sending consistory or any representative of that consistory hold the baptismal records of infants who are, in fact, not members of the sending church or of any other church? And do not forget: these baptismal records are not just a technicality. What is involved in baptism and baptismal records is *church membership*. This is the importance of Article 60. And that I am correct in this is plain from Monsma and Van Dellen’s *The Church Order Commentary*, p. 247: “In answer to the question why we keep baptismal records the obvious reply is simply: In order that each Church may know who have been baptized. Or, to state it differently: In order that each Church may know which children and young people belong to it by virtue of their Baptism and so that each Consistory may know which children and young people fall under its special care and jurisdiction.”

But there are other difficulties in the Church Order on which the Study Report does not even touch.

Article 56 reads: “The covenant of God shall be sealed unto the children of Christians by baptism, as soon as the administration thereof is feasible, in the public assembly when the Word of God is preached.” This article presents two difficulties for the position taken by the Study Report. The first is the expression “children of Christians.” From the very outset in Reformed churches this expression has been understood as referring to members of the Reformed churches. Again I quote from *The Church Order Commentary*, p. 231: “The general principle having been established a number of practical questions soon presented themselves. From the very outset it became the rule to baptize only children of parents who belonged to the Reformed Churches. But some parents, who were in sympathy with the Reformation and at heart at odds with the Roman Church, nevertheless failed to make a final break with Rome because they lacked the courage of faith and clarity of conviction. Officially they were still Roman Catholics. Sometimes such parents requested a Reformed Church to baptize their child. The first Synod (Emden, 1571) replied to a question regarding such cases by referring to the opinion of the theologians of Geneva, Ministers and professors. The rule should be, so Beza (Calvin’s successor at Geneva, HCH) had written, *that only children of Church members should receive baptism*. But in abnormal times, as when the Church was in process of being reorganized, or when severe persecutions were raging, exceptions to this rule might be made. Children of weak and fearful parents might be baptized under these circumstances, though not without certain stipulations and promises. But as will be

realized, that ruling was by way of concession for the period of transition.” (italics added)

The second difficulty presented by this article of the Church Order lies in the words “in the public assembly when the Word of God is preached.” Now let it be understood: I am not denying that the Word of God is preached on the mission field. That is not the difficulty. What we must see clearly is that on the mission field and in a mission station *there is as yet no public assembly*. For that term “public assembly” — and every commentary on the Church Order will confirm this — refers to a regular church service, i.e., to the official gathering of a local congregation for public worship. Going all the way back to the Synod of Dordrecht in 1574 this principle has been insisted upon in Reformed churches. And the position of the Study Report conflicts with this principle. This is not because the Church Order is not geared to the mission situation; it is because the Study Report wants to change what we have always practiced in the mission situation.

Finally, we call attention to Article 59 of the Church Order: “Adults are through baptism incorporated into the Christian church, and are accepted as members of the church, and are therefore obliged also to partake of the Lord’s Supper, which they shall promise to do at their baptism.”

We have already quoted from the Form for Adult Baptism, which also refers to promising to partake of the Lord’s Supper, even as does the above article. It goes without saying, of course, that on the mission field such a promise could be for a long time meaningless, for the simple reason that the Lord’s Supper is not celebrated except in the local, instituted congregation.

But we are especially interested in the first part of this article: “Adults are through baptism incorporated into the Christian church, and are accepted as members of the church.” Do not make the mistake of thinking that this article is speaking of a kind of abstract incorporation into and membership in a so-called visible catholic church. This is not the case; and one would not expect a Church Order to speak of this anyway. But what this article speaks of is being incorporated into the church as represented in the local congregation. And then it is also very significant with respect to the meaning of baptism. Van Dellen and Monsma, *The Church Order Commentary*, p. 245, have the following enlightening comments:

“The significance of this statement is that those who have come to years of discretion and comparative independence can only be admitted to Church membership by profession of faith and Baptism administered upon this profession. The term ‘Christian Church’ as used in Article 59, does not stand on par with the expression ‘Church of Christ’ as

used in Article 1. The expression ‘Church of Christ’ is used to indicate the body of believers living in a certain region or country. It does not as a rule refer to these believers as they are organized into a Church or Churches. (See comments, Article 1) The term ‘Christian Church’ in the present article, however, refers to a specific congregation or organized Church. The opening provisions of Article 59, therefore, simply specifies that adults who stand outside of the organized Churches can only be incorporated into a local or particular Church upon confession and Baptism, and that thus they are admitted to full membership rights in the Church which so receives them. A literal translation of Article 59 on this score would make this interpretation very evident. Literally we read: ‘Adults are to be incorporated into the Christian congregation by Baptism, and are thus to be accepted as members of the congregations.’ He who has been granted adult Baptism thereby receives all the privileges of Church membership. He stands on par with those who were baptized in infancy and who in later years made profession of their faith.”

This makes it very evident that in our churches adult baptism cannot properly be administered on the mission field in the way proposed by the Study Report. Why not? The reason is simple: there is no church there into which they can be incorporated and accepted as members. Under such circumstances, therefore, adult baptism would lose the significance ascribed to it in the Church Order.

But again, this is closely connected with the significance of baptism in relation to the church as the body of Christ. This will be the subject of our next discussion, the Lord willing.

A very interesting and informative little Dutch book by H.J. Olthuis is entitled (I translate): *The Baptismal Practice of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, 1568-1816*. As the title indicates, this book studies the actual practice of the Reformed Churches with respect to baptism; and as you might expect, there is much data taken from synodical records and decisions. There is strong emphasis on the idea that baptism belongs in the instituted church, in the gathering of the congregation for public worship, and may not be administered elsewhere. Let me cite a few passages.

“Nevertheless they are not so absolutely necessary unto salvation (the sacraments, HCH) that the lack of them would be the cause of someone’s damnation. Also, they may not be administered by unlawful ministers and still less outside of the gathering of the congregation, as, for example, with the Roman Catholics, who permit baptism by women out of fear that sick children may die unbaptized.” (p. 10)

“In harmony with this (Articles 30, 34 of the

Netherland Confession, HCH) those gathered at the Convent of Wezel in 1568 declared: 'Since the sacraments are joined to the ministry of the Word by an unbreakable bond, let no one doubt that they belong to the office of minister. We, therefore, judge that baptism can be administered in the proper manner by no one else than by the minister of the Word.' In the same manner, repeated mention is made in the Church Order of Dordt of 1574 and in that of 1619 of the 'ministers' or 'church ministers' to whom the administration of baptism is committed, 'in the public gathering of the church along with the preaching of the divine Word.' " (pp. 25, 26)

"It would be difficult, however, to have a speedy administration of baptism in the smaller villages, where at the beginning of the Reformation they were no yet able to obtain their own minister. Religious services could not yet be held there at regular times. And since they might not administer baptism, as we shall see later, except 'only in the public gathering of the Church when the Word is preached,' many children would remain unbaptized for a considerable time. But also in this, provision was made by holding baptismal services during the week. 'In the places where preaching seldom takes place and where, nevertheless, there are children to be baptized, a time shall be set at which they may present the children in the church for baptism, and they shall ring the bell, call the people together, and have a brief sermon before baptism.' " (pp. 61, 62)

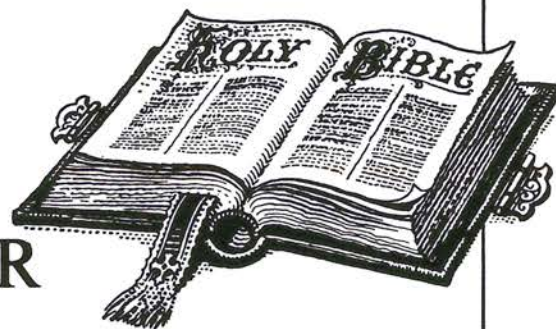
"The administration of baptism is a matter in which the entire congregation has an interest, at which the entire congregation must participate. If the one baptized, the parents, the witnesses and relatives are in the first place interested therein, the congregation receives a new member. She must receive this new member among the members of the covenant openly, and bear it up in prayer. But at the same time, everyone is reminded of his own baptism and of the obligations which this brings with it, both for himself and — if he has children — for his family, in order that he should bring them up in harmony with that baptism.

"Already Valerandus Pollanus in his *Liturgia Sacra*

of 1551 warned the church of the refugees at London not to administer baptism, except after a worship service. Baptism, thus the liturgy says, may not be administered separate from the preaching 'because Christ committed baptism and the preaching of the Gospel to his disciples at the same time.' As much as possible, one must try to let the congregation participate in that which happens at the worship service. They must learn to understand in what way salvation in Christ becomes visible in baptism. The Articles of Wezel speak just as clearly: 'Baptism shall be administered nowhere else nor in any other manner than in the gathering of the church, accompanied by the preaching and the catechism.' Thus, also, the later synods strove for an administration of baptism in public, that is, in the presence of the congregation and accompanied by the preaching of the gospel. 'One shall not administer baptism except only in the public gathering of the church when the divine Word is preached.' (Church Order of Dordrecht 1574, Art. 58; Acts of the National Synod of Dordrecht, 1578; Church Order of Middleburg 1581, Article 39; Church Order of 's Gravenhage 1586, Art. 50; Dordrecht 1618-19, Art. 56)."

In the next section of this same chapter the author discusses the proper place for the administration of baptism. He points out how repeatedly the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands insisted that baptism should be administered in the place where the gospel is preached to the congregation. Since in the beginning of the Reformation the gatherings of believers could not take place in a church building, they were automatically compelled to baptize in certain houses. This, however, took place only where believers gathered for the preaching of the Word. As soon as possible, they built their own churches, and in these churches baptism was administered in the gatherings of the church for public worship. Although from time to time, because of the superstitions which persisted with regard to baptism, various synods compromised and allowed private baptisms, the overwhelming position of the churches was as stated above, namely: that baptism should take place in the local congregation, in the local church building, in the service for public worship, where the Word is preached.

Subscribe Now
to
THE STANDARD BEARER



THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS

Faith in Jesus Christ

Prof Robert D. Decker

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

The Belgic Confession, Article XXII

With this article, and continuing through Article XXVI, the *Confession* speaks of what is generally called "Soteriology" or the Doctrine of Salvation, or more specifically, the doctrine of the application of the blessings of salvation. It should be noted in this connection that the *Confession* follows a different order than we usually follow. We conceive of the order of salvation (*ordo salutis*) in terms of: regeneration, calling, faith (conversion), justification, sanctification, preservation, and glorification. The *Confession*, however, speaks of: faith, justification, sanctification, and good works. Concerning any "order" we must remember that the order is logical and not temporal. Further, we must distinguish between what Christ objectively merited for us and the order in which we consciously receive and appropriate these blessings of salvation. That the *Confession* follows the order which it does is due to the fact that it makes no distinction between faith as a power and faith as a conscious activity. The *Confession* simply speaks of faith as the "sole instrument" whereby salvation is given and appropriated. Therefore it treats faith first.

We may also note by way of introduction that the Article really sums all the blessings of salvation under one term, "righteousness." This is proper, for Christ, as the fulness of all the blessings of salvation, is called both in Scripture and in this article, Christ our Righteousness. Furthermore, the blessing of righteousness is the fundamental blessing of salvation. It is that in the sense that all the other blessings of salvation are based upon it. Righteousness or justification is logically before all else.

This righteousness, i.e. all the blessings of salvation,

the article emphasizes, are in Christ. This truth the fathers maintained overagainst the doctrine of Rome according to which one is saved by faith in Christ and good works. The *Confession* will have none of this. It argues that all things requisite for our salvation are in Christ. Those who possess Christ through faith, therefore, have complete salvation in Him. The *Confession* concludes: "Therefore, for any to assert that Christ is not sufficient, but something more is required besides Him, would be too gross a blasphemy; for hence it would follow that Christ was but half a Savior."

This language also effectively shuts the door to the errors of Arminianism. Arminianism really teaches that Christ is not sufficient, but that something more is required besides Him. Arminianism would say that all of our salvation is in Christ. Arminianism would also say that we are justified by faith alone. The trouble is that Arminianism would also insist that man of himself must believe. Arminianism teaches free will. Every man has the ability, the freedom, to choose for Christ or against Him. Before a man can be saved he must be willing to believe. According to this conception of things faith really becomes another work which man must perform in order to be saved. Then, too, it could never be said that all of our salvation is in Christ. Let it also be clearly understood that if the gospel be an offer of salvation, or if the promise of God be general, then the Arminian heresy of faith as a work of man cannot be escaped. But this the article emphatically denies when it insists that Christ is not half a Savior but that all of our salvation is in Him.

Positively the *Confession* asserts that all of our salvation is in Jesus Christ. This means that Jesus

Christ is a *complete* Savior. And because Jesus Christ is a complete Savior, faith is the only means by which we may be saved. We are justified *by faith alone, sola fide*. This means we are justified by faith alone and not by works. These two are mutually exclusive. Scripture teaches us: "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8, 9) Further, Scripture declares: "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." (Romans 11:6) This faith cannot be the work of man but only the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit Who "... kindleth an upright faith in our hearts." Thus it is that we are justified not by faith and works, but by faith alone.

This is not to say that faith itself justifies us. Never may it be said that we are justified on the basis of our faith. Rather, faith is the "sole instrument," the means by which we are justified. This article teaches that all of our salvation is in Christ. Jesus Christ is our complete Savior. The question becomes, how does that salvation which is in Christ become ours? The answer is, only by means of God-given faith. Faith is the sole instrument by which we are placed in living communion with Christ so that we embrace Him and receive out of Him all the blessings of salvation. That faith is God's gift to us, it is not "of ourselves"! God saves us completely and finally.

But what is faith? How may faith be defined? What are its elements? Faith is the bond which unites us to Jesus Christ. Although this is not directly stated by the article, it is implied when it states that faith "is an instrument that keeps us in communion with him." Faith is the living connection between Christ and believers. Or, it is the channel through which flow all the blessings of salvation. Thus the Scriptures speak of Christ as the vine and His people as branches which live out of that vine. The Scriptures also speak of Christ as the Head of the Body and of believers as the members of that body who live out of the Head, Jesus Christ. By means of faith we are made one with Christ. We embrace Him by faith and receive out of Him all His benefits, life, and glory!

Faith is also a power or faculty. What we mean is that God implants in the hearts of His people the ability to believe even before they consciously believe and before this faith becomes active. Just as a baby has the power to speak before it ever exercises that power, so also do the elect have the power of faith, the power to believe, even before they exercise that power. And that power must be there if faith is ever to be exercised! Without that gift of God no one will believe, no matter how often the gospel is preached to him.

Faith consists of two elements: knowledge and confidence. The knowledge of faith is not merely an intellectual apprehension of the truth of the gospel or the doctrine of Scripture. It is not mere "head knowledge." It is the spiritual knowledge of God, the knowledge of love, the knowledge which according to the Word of Christ is Life eternal. (Cf. John 17:3) By means of faith the child of God lives in the fellowship of the God of his salvation. He knows God as His God and Father for Jesus' sake.

But faith is also confidence. On the basis of the knowledge of faith and flowing out of that knowledge of faith is the confidence of faith. The confidence of faith is trust. It is the assurance the believer has that his own sins are forgiven. In the confidence of faith the believer casts himself upon Christ. Nowhere is this more beautifully stated than in Question and Answer twenty-one of the Heidelberg Catechism: "What is true faith? True faith is not only a certain knowledge, whereby I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in his word, but also an assured confidence, which the Holy Ghost works by the gospel, in my heart; that not only to others, but to me also, remission of sin, everlasting righteousness and salvation, are freely given by God, merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits." That is the true faith by which we are ingrafted into Christ and receive out of Him all the benefits and blessings of salvation.

That faith is active. The article briefly sums the activity of faith in these words: it "embraces Jesus Christ and all his merits, appropriates him, and seeks nothing more beside him." By the power and gift of faith the believer actively embraces Christ and all his merits. By faith the believer knows his great need, his sin and depravity. He knows that he has nothing in himself whereby he may be saved. By faith that believer also recognizes Christ as the only One Who can supply His need. He knows Christ as the complete Savior in whom is all his salvation. By faith the believer longs for Christ. By faith the believer embraces Christ and appropriates all His merits. By faith the believer seeks nothing more outside of Christ. He knows that all of the blessings of salvation are in Christ.

Thus by faith the saints are richly blessed. Faith is the "instrument which keeps us in communion with him in all his benefits." In living communion with Christ we are assured of the forgiveness of our sins. We know that we have been delivered from death's terrible curse. We are assured that life everlasting is ours. And we know that all things are for us and nothing can be against us. We belong to Christ and in Him we have the blessed fellowship with the God of our salvation.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of the Book of Galatians

Rev. G. Lubbers

PAUL SEPARATED TO THE GOSPEL FROM HIS MOTHER'S WOMB — (Gal. 1:15)

The text here indicates that there were two definite steps which brought Paul into the grace of apostleship of Christ as a preacher to the Gentiles, in both of which neither Paul nor man had anything to contribute.

The first of these is that Paul was separated to the Gospel-ministry from his mother's womb. He was preeminently a vessel of God's sovereign choice. Here, too, it was not of him that runneth, nor of him that willeth, but of God who giveth mercy. From eternity Paul is the preordained man to be the apostle to the Gentiles, to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. (Eph. 3:1-6) He is separated, he is already set in the service of Christ the King of Israel, when a wee child. God had His forming hand on him as a vessel which He was moulding perfectly for the task which he was to perform. He was thus in a class with Moses, the man of God, who, too, was formed for eighty years for the purpose of leading Israel out of Egypt land. Each step of the way is necessary for the forming of the choice vessel, the only man who could perform a certain task. Paul was born a Jew, a Hebrew out of the Hebrews (Phil. 3:5). His father was a Roman citizen living in no mean city, called Tarsus. Early he was sent to school as a child from a good family and learned Greek and the philosophers; then he sat as a youth at the feet of Gamaliel. Here he learned to read the Scriptures in Hebrew and in the Septuagint. And thus he was separated from his mother's womb, knowing the Scriptures which are able to make us wise unto salvation by faith in Christ Jesus.

But there is another element here. It is that Paul was not only separated but that he was *also called*. This "called" was wholly a matter of grace. If there is one word which Paul uses much, it is the term grace! All is of grace. Whenever he thinks of the abundance of work which he might perform in the preach-

ing of the Gospel, he always emphasizes that it was not he who did all this work, and suffered all this reproach for the sake of the Gospel, but that it was the grace of God which was with him and which strengthened him. (I Cor. 15:9,10) The sending church of Antioch in Syria had recommended Paul and Barnabas to this grace of God. However, Paul in a very special sense refers to the "calling" by Christ to the ministry and to his conversion to the grace of God. Here he received his sight and was baptized and straightway he began to preach Jesus to be the *Son of God*. He had seen this Son of God in the brilliant light above the glory of the midday sun. This Son of God, Jesus, had called him. And the one thing which made all things clear concerning the Scriptures and the promises was that Jesus is the Son of God. That was also his central and all-pervasive message at all times. He preaches Christ, the Messiah of the Scriptures, to be the Son of God. That is the heart of the preaching. Apart from this Son of God there is no life at all. His calling was a calling from darkness and the power of sin and death into the kingdom of God's beloved Son. (Col. 1:13)

Such are the two great facts in Paul's life. He is *appointed* and he is *called*, in sovereign design and boundless grace. Therefore, it is when it "pleased God" to reveal His Son in me. Paul did not look for and find Christ, but God found him, and that, too, at His own time. It had to be exactly when Paul is at the height of his persecution of the church, and making havoc of the church, even unto the gates of the city of Damascus. Paul must so walk the way of Judaism and attempt his justification by law, that he may see the exceeding riches of Christ. Up to this point Paul knows nothing about the riches of Christ. The "scales" had not yet fallen from his eyes, and the veil of unbelief was still over his heart. (Acts 9:18; II Cor. 3:13) He could not steadfastly look upon that glory of Moses' face seeing that it led to Christ, the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. He had no eye for the real meaning of Moses' glory of

the law until he saw the greater glory of the risen Son of God, Who is the effulgence of God's glory, the expressed image of his Being. (Heb. 1:3) Then all became plain to him. Jesus is the very Son of God. God had spoken of old time through the prophets, but this same God now is speaking through His Son, higher and greater than the angels. (Hebrews 1:1 f.f.)

That Paul emphasizes that God revealed "his Son in me" refers to both his subjective personal life (Phil. 3:1-13) and to his knowledge of the meaning of the prophets as they are all fulfilled in Christ, the Son of God. Paul has it all by revelation, and he has nothing from men, the brethren, or the apostles, Peter or the others!

The point is well established that Paul, although an apostle as one "born out of due time" (I Cor. 15:8), was nevertheless an apostle extraordinary. He was called in an extraordinary way, for he did not walk with Jesus in the land with the other disciples. (At that time Paul was sitting at the feet of Gamaliel, a Pharisee, thinking that the ignorant people who knew not the law were accursed!) He was not with Jesus on the mount of Olives when He ascended to heaven and angels came to explain and to comfort. (Acts 1:11) Paul was not concerned about his person in the first instance, but rather that as an apostle his work might stand as the work of Christ Himself in the preaching of the Gospel.

The gospel of justification by faith must stand apart from the works of the law!

The manner of Paul's former life and of his calling by grace establishes the veracity of Paul's Gospel-preaching beyond a doubt. He did not need to learn from those in Jerusalem, the mother church, nor from those who were apostles before him! It was all of revelation, the divine disclosure to Paul.

PAUL WENT INTO ARABIA AFTER HIS CALLING BY CHRIST (Gal. 1:17)

Paul asserts that after being called in Damascus to the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles he did not "confer with flesh and blood." This is the general statement. He could have conferred about this matter to the brethren in Damascus and with Ananias, who baptized him. But all that Ananias knew about the Gospel Paul knew better. He did not seek any advice from them, and receive Gospel from them and instruction. Nor did he, as would seem natural, return to Jerusalem to see Peter. He went to the Lord Himself in Arabia. It is a very brief statement which we have concerning Paul's going to Arabia and his returning to Damascus. We read, "but I went into Arabia and returned again unto Damascus." The reason for the brevity is evidently that Paul is simply telling the Galatians that he did not confer with flesh and blood.

He does not enlarge upon this at all. Not with a syllable!

There has been much question and debate concerning the place called Arabia. It would seem most natural and compelling to believe that Arabia is the place where Mt. Sinai is found. (Gal. 4:25) That is the position of Dr. Lightfoot. Writes he on page 88 of his *Epistle To The Galatians*, "For if we suppose that the apostle at this critical moment betook himself to the Sinaitic peninsula, the scene of the giving of the law, then his visit to Arabia becomes full of meaning. He was attracted thither by a spirit akin to that which had driven Elijah to the same region. (I Kings 19:8-18) Standing on the threshold of the new covenant, he was anxious to look upon the birthplace of the old: that dwelling for a while in seclusion in the presence of 'the mount that burned with fire' he might ponder over the transient glories of the 'ministration of death' and apprehend its real purpose in relation to the more glorious covenant which was now to supplant it. Here surrounded by the children of the desert, the descendants of Hagar the bond-woman, he read the true meaning and power of the law. In the rugged and barren region, whence it issued, he saw a fit type of that bleak desolation which it created and intended to create in the soul of man. . . ." The arguments of those who would have Damascus itself Arabia, referring to the region immediately near to Damascus, are weak. For these see the quotations in Lange's *Commentary on Galatians*. On pages 25 and 26 these can be found.

There is a strong suggestion in the text itself that Paul's going into Arabia was connected with "revelation" of the Gospel which he was to preach to the Gentiles. Christ was revealed in him that he might preach him as the "Son" to the Gentiles. If we bear in mind that Paul had been instructed at the feet of Gamaliel in the "tradition of the fathers" we may assume that due to this veil of unbelief the Scriptures of the Old Testament had verily remained a closed book to Paul. The brief time that Paul had in Damascus only one point is established: Jesus is the Son of God. He is the Messiah. But there was much that Paul needed to learn yet concerning the wide and far-reaching implications of this all for the Gentiles as fellow-heirs, to be of the same body with the Old Testament saints. And this is a point in which Paul excels far above the other disciples or apostles. Does he not write with great power to the Ephesian Christians how he excels in this knowledge by revelation? He writes, "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery . . . which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ

by the gospel: whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace given me by the effectual working of his power.” (Eph. 3:3-7) We could go into great detail here, but we feel that the point made by Dr. Lightfoot is very well taken and established. Paul had to go to the mountain of God (Ex. 3:1) where Moses saw the burning bush; he went to the place where Moses spoke to God face to face and where Moses’ face was shining because of the glory of that first covenant. Here Elijah went to hear what God would do when the still small voice came to him, and here Paul will see “revelations and visions.” Here he must have seen things which are unutterable. He saw more visions of the glory of heaven than did Moses on the Mount.

Yet, he briefly states, “I went to Arabia and returned to Damascus.”

The writer of Acts of the Apostles says nothing about this. This going to Damascus must somehow be placed between Acts 9:22 and 23. Paul returns a stronger preacher than ever. Now he does not merely assert that Christ is the Son of God, but he goes farther. We read, “he *confounded* the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.” (Acts 9:22) Paul placed all the Scriptures together (*sunbibazon*), all the testimony was knitted together in a convincing way. All things pointed to Christ as the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes. The effect: unbelief cannot see. The more Paul preached (and he kept it up) the more the Jews were confused in their unbelief. They had a veil upon their hearts – until it would be taken away in grace.

But Paul had not yet seen any of the other Apostles up to this point.

GUEST ARTICLE

The Canons of Dordrecht: An Historical Perspective (1)

Rev. Marvin Kamps

Introduction:

With the contents of the Canons of Dordrecht, readers of the Standard Bearer are undoubtedly in a measure familiar. The truths of God’s sovereign grace in Christ are boldly preached from the pulpits of our beloved Protestant Reformed Churches. This truth is confessed by the “pew.” This is as it ought to be. For the Reformed faith must ever remain the content of our worship. To confess the sovereign, particular and irresistible grace of God in Christ is to lift towards heaven an anthem of praise to God. Our praise in the pulpit must ever be our faithful preaching of God’s sovereignty. The truth of God’s glorious grace, freely bestowed unto salvation unto some and not others, is the thrust of the Canons. This truth we believe.

We should point out that the Canons of Dordrecht are currently the subject of heated debate in the C.R.C. Dr. H. Boer in particular has expressed “questions” and objections to the doctrine of sovereign predestination. Especially the doctrine of reprobation has fallen on hard times in the C.R.C. Dr. Boer, and others obviously, attack articles 6 and 15 of the first head of the Canons. There is, according to Dr. H.

Boer, no Scriptural basis for the doctrine of reprobation as taught in the Canons.

To this debate in our “mother church” we must give a listening ear. We must be alert and sensitive to every attempt to undermine the Reformed faith and its doctrine of God’s sovereignty. Our own well-being as churches must be sought by viewing “how” and “why” others in another denomination attack truths which truly Reformed men hold dear.

But our purpose in this article is not to discuss this controversy in the C.R.C. We leave that to others. Our purpose is to give a historical perspective to the Canons. We want to show the significance of the historical events that form the background for our fathers who wrote the Canons. It is important, I believe, to have some knowledge of the historical circumstances in which the Church wrote the Canons. These include not only the events immediately preceding 1618-1619, but also the events and circumstances which lie many years before the convocation of this great Synod. If we are to appreciate fully the confession made by the fathers at Dordrecht then we must have some knowledge of the historical

setting in which the Canons were produced.

A brother who has little appreciation of history might object to the above and ask: "Is not a conviction that the Canons are biblical sufficient? Can an understanding of the historical framework in which the Canons were born be of any real value?"

Certainly, the fact that the Canons are based on God's Word is fundamental. On the Word our faith is based. Surely! This is above all important. But this fact does not make the historical events and circumstances of little or no value. Certainly, the historical is subordinate and secondary in importance to the scriptural basis for the confessions. But an understanding of the historical framework in which the Canons were written is of great value.

Let me point out why.

The events of one's youth in a large measure form the man! One's adult attitudes and perspectives of life are often expressions of what was deeply impressed upon him in the formative years of his youth. What a man is today can be explained in part by what he experienced in his youth. The joys, trials, and discipline of one's youth leave their mark on this person many years later. The same is true collectively of the Church. The mature Church which at Dordrecht in faith gave birth to the Canons was a Church spiritually formed and prepared in its infancy to do just this work. It is often said that the Church which produced the Canons was of the "most flourishing period of Reformed Theology." Well, then, were not the unique events prior to 1618 the fertile soil, in part at least, which caused the beautiful flower of the Reformed Theology to flourish?

Flesh and blood believers, brothers in Christ, in the name of the Church of Christ and on behalf of the Reformed Church of the Netherlands, formulated the truths of God's Word as expressed in the Canons. Who were these men? What kind of men were they? By what were they influenced? What shaped their faith and conviction? You say: through God's grace and by the work of the Holy Spirit, Who applied God's Word to their hearts. Yes, but what were the events of their youth through which God in grace formed them? Events and experiences are means of grace, too. We must not deny the significance of historical events in the lives of God's people.

We must remember that God prepares His people through historical events of the past to walk in faith and obedience in the present. Here the emphasis must be laid . . . on God's Work. God forms men through events. The historical events of one's life are events which God willed eternally, determined and brought to realization as *His means* in grace to form the believer for his work and station in the cause of God's Kingdom. Thus, past historical events in the lives of

God's people are of immeasurable significance.

By way of example, who can deny the tremendous impact and influence the events of 1924 had upon our parents and grandparents? The ridicule and scorn they endured for the truth's sake were trials which God used as His means, from the old foreordained, to strengthen their faith in the Word. Who does not understand the influence the depression years had in teaching our fathers the lesson of faith that we are but dependent children before God? If one suffers to obtain something, he will cherish that which he has finally acquired. So also the Church of any period of time which endures all trials and sufferings in obedience to God's Word is a Church which will not soon lightly regard its confession which in times past she suffered to maintain.

The contrary is also true. The person which does not know how he came to own that which he possesses, nor what is its use, soon accounts this possession as useless and expendable. In demonstration of this fact, consider many so-called Reformed believers today who objectively possess the Canons as their confession. Many have no knowledge of how or why the Canons were formed. They do not know what the fathers from 1560-1619 had to go through to gain and maintain their proper confession. Besides, these same Reformed believers today have ever taken the way of compromise with the lie and amalgamation with the world. Every time obedience would require suffering hardship these "Reformed pilgrims" have chosen the "easy way out" — habitually rationalizing an errant walk! How, I ask, can anyone expect these Reformed believers today to maintain the unpopular truth of unconditional predestination as stated by the Canons? The fact is that an heritage, which one's father would not jealously defend and boldly declare, has fallen to those who are spiritually ill-prepared to receive or defend it. If the first of any succeeding generations taught their children the way of compromise, how can they (or we) expect their children, the second generation, to suffer for the truths which their elders principally compromised away. Children who have not been diligently taught the truth of God's Word by word and example are spiritually ill-fitted to wage spiritual warfare for the truth. They, as their father, are "soft" re the truth. Historical events of the past, in this instance, are God's means, which sweep today's children, according to God's severe justice, swiftly down the smooth highway of apostasy.

We, as all men, are children of our past.

Our fathers at Dordrecht were children of their past. What was that past? What were the influences of their lives which shaped their faith and confession?

To this history we turn next time.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

The Black Horse of Revelation

Rev. H. Veldman

When we speak of the signs of the times we are immediately reminded of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse as recorded in the sixth chapter of the book of Revelation. It is not our intention, in these articles, to call attention to this passage in any detail. We understand, I believe, that these horsemen ride their horses throughout the New Dispensation. They do not refer to successive periods of history in a chronological order. Neither do they refer to a future period which still lies before us. If the latter were true, then this passage of the Word of God would not speak particularly to us. It is surely true that these horsemen ride their horses simultaneously throughout the ages of the New Dispensation, although it is true that these phenomena become more intense as history goes on.

The horse, according to the Word of God, is preeminently an animal of war. Scriptural passages, such as Ps. 33:17, Job 39:19-25 (what an amazing passage this is!) and Zechariah 1:8 ff. and 6:1 ff., clearly indicate this. As these horses go forth into the earth, they are irresistible, cannot be checked or frustrated; as they leap forth out of the counsel and decree of the living God, nothing can stop their progress; they will certainly accomplish their mission. And we do well to bear in mind that these horsemen are controlled directly by our Lord Jesus Christ.

We must also bear in mind that, as far as these horsemen of Rev. 6 are concerned, the personal identity of each rider is not important. Each rider, of course, is not to be identified with the Christ. To be sure, these horses are certainly directed and controlled by the Christ. He is the Lamb Who appears in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts — see Rev. 5:6. It is the Lamb (Rev. 6:1) Who opens the seals; it is He, therefore, Who sends and directs these horses forth into and upon the earth. Yet, it ought to be plain that these riders must not be identified with the Christ, as far as this vision of Rev. 6 is concerned. The apostle sees the Lamb as He opens the first four seals and, therefore, causes these four horses to dash forth out of God's decree. These horses have riders.

These riders cannot be identified with the Christ Who sends them. So, the important question is not: who are these riders? The question, however, is important: what is signified by these riders? We must not separate these horses from their riders. We must interpret them together. There can be no doubt as to the significance of these riders. Rev. 6 emphasizes that these horses do not run wildly, at random. They are directed and controlled. They run toward, accomplish a definite goal. The Lamb of God directs them. And that they have riders means that they are directed intelligently; these irresistible and irrepressible forces, strong and vehement in battle, do not run wildly; they are constantly controlled by the Lamb of God Who appears as having been slain and is now risen and glorified.

In this article we call attention to the black horse. We do this not because this horseman is the most important of these horses. The most important of the horsemen is undoubtedly the white horse. This horseman is first, must be first, and the other three horsemen follow him and serve him. Besides, all these horses are running today. They are all of the greatest importance and practical significance. It is surely worthwhile to understand every one of these four horsemen. The reason why we call attention to the black horse in this article is because of the peculiar significance of this horseman. It is the social aspect of our present day and age which we would emphasize.

Indeed, how true is the Word of God! How applicable it is to all the ages! The scriptures are surely not time-bound, true only of the day and age when they were written but not necessarily true today. This black horse is held before us in Rev. 6:5-6. We read: "And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine."

The color of this horse is black. The rider is a

merchant man; he carries a pair of balances in his hand, and we should notice what he cries. From this we may establish his identity. Black is the color of scarcity and want. This appears from Jer. 14:2 and Lam. 5:10. Black is naturally the color of want; white is the implication of all colors, whereas black is the absence of color; it represents physical want. In harmony with this are the other details. On the one hand, he has a pair of balances in his hand, and he cries: "A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny." But he also cries: "See thou hurt not the oil and the wine." This means that this black horse symbolizes the ever present contrast between the rich who live in abundance and the masses of poor who live by the day.

How Socialism and Communism hate this horseman! They theorize that all men have an equal right to all the goods and possessions of this world. They oppose all class distinctions, would wipe out all differences between the various classes of people. The rich must share their wealth with the poor; the poor have as much right to the wealth of this world as the rich; people must live together on an equal basis. Of course, today one may also witness wide disrespect for all law and authority; students demand a voice in the determination of what they are to study; the laborer must determine working conditions with the employer. This philosophy, so prevalent today, is, we must understand, dead wrong. Inequality is not necessarily injustice. Of course, there is inequality. All men are not equal. Some are rich whereas many more are poor. And we maintain that inequality is not necessarily injustice. Socialism violates the Word of God in two respects. First, it is not true that all men have an equal right to all the goods and possessions of this world. All men would then have an equal right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Fact is, however, man has the right to nothing. That I have less than my neighbor is not injustice; and this for the simple reason that I have no right to anything. I am a sinner under divine condemnation; the only thing to which I am entitled and which I deserve is the suffering of the wrath of God, temporally and eternally in hell. Secondly, socialism also violates the scriptural truth that all men simply are not created equal. The only equality among men as set forth in the Word of God is that all men are sinners, under divine condemnation. Otherwise, however, some are born rich and others poor; besides, and this is potent, the Lord did not give to all men equal powers of body and soul, of mind and will. We can, therefore, readily understand that socialism and communism hate this black horse.

Now we must notice that Christ, through this black horse with its rider, maintains the distinction between the few rich and the masses of the poor. Our present day and age is characterized by the class struggle. We

have the constant struggle between those who have and them that have not. How the capitalist and laborer are constantly at each other's throat! The rich would maintain his riches and increase them; the poor seeks and would acquire them. All men are at heart capitalists. How different conditions are today than not too many years ago! The economic spiral is climbing day by day. All are afraid today of the danger of inflation. Salaries and wages are constantly on the increase. Yet, this increase is also accompanied by a constant rise in the costs of consumer goods. People earn more and more; but the cost of life's necessities and also of life's luxuries climb day by day.

How vividly this condition of today is set before in this Word of God! On the one hand, we read of a measure of wheat for a penny and three measures of barley for a penny. A penny was a day's wage. One measure of wheat for a penny and three measures of barley for a penny constituted a day's sustenance. Yet, the same is also true today. A small percentage of the world's wealth (not more than 25%) is shared by the masses of the people. It is true that the laboring man of today makes more than a penny a day, but his income today is matched by the rising cost of living. And, if and when a depression sets in, it does not take very long before these masses of people are compelled to go on relief. The point is that his wage is always swallowed up by what he needs. On the other hand, "do not hurt the oil and the wine." Governments and various agencies may combine their efforts and talents to fight poverty and destroy this class distinction. But the Word of God declares: do not hurt the oil and the wine. These represent the rich. The distinction between the few rich and the poor masses of the populace must continue. This is taught by this Word of God.

Do we understand this Word of God. Indeed, let us be comforted by this particular scripture. Let us understand that the crucified and risen and glorified Lamb of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, sends forth this black horse with its rider to maintain the distinction between the few rich and the many, many more poor. On the one hand, we may witness the riotous living of some, their revelling in wealth and abundance, in feasting and merriment. On the other hand, we also have among us a continuous cause for rebellion and dissatisfaction, for the continuous rising up of the many against the few. Always the black horse runs triumphantly through the earth, maintaining this distinction between the rich and the poor, being sent out by the Lamb Who appears as having been slain. How important it is to know and to believe that all these things are controlled directly by Him Who is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, our Lord Jesus Christ. He, Who loves His church, died for that

church, is even now in supreme control of all things.

Why is this? The church of God's elect must be gathered throughout the ages, even until the end of the world. All must be saved, the entire wheat harvest must be harvested and gathered in. Class struggle must continue, also wars and rumours of wars. The development of sin must be gradual. Matters may not reach their climax before the time appointed by the living God. This explains the social disturbances of our present day and age. The day is coming when this class struggle, these wars and rumours of wars, will come to an end. This will mark the kingdom of the antichrist. Then all will be peace and prosperity

throughout the world. The only exception to this era of prosperity and peace will be the people of God, the faithful followers of the Lamb. Not having the mark of the beast upon their foreheads they will not be able to buy or sell. They will be subjected to a terrible persecution, so great that the days will be shortened for the sake of the elect. However, the Lamb of God stands upon the mount Sion. Then our redemption will be at hand. Let us attend to this sign of the coming of our Lord. May the Lord grant unto His people that they may be faithful, if need be unto death. May they keep their garments unspotted in the midst of the world. God will save us even until the end.

TRANSLATED TREASURES

Acts of the Synod of Dordrecht

Historical Foreword

(7)

(Connection: In the preceding section we saw Gomarus, accompanied by several of his fellow ministers, debating against Arminius, accompanied by several of his fellows. The subject was the various points of doctrine about which they disagreed. The conference was held in the presence of the States. At the conclusion of the conference, the States promised to convene a Provincial Synod; but to this promise conditions were attached with which the Reformed ministers could not comply. They also ordered both parties to submit their views in writing. Arminius, however, died without having prepared his document,

October 19, 1609. When the convening of a synod had been made impossible again, the Arminians became bolder in their attempts to undermine the Reformed faith. In 1610 they met secretly and without authorization from their churches and drew up the Remonstrance, which included their own doctrinal beliefs, the infamous Five Points of the Remonstrants. This Remonstrance was addressed to the States. Until the time of the Hague Conference, however, no one was able to obtain a copy of this Remonstrance and to answer its slanders. Affairs had reached a low point for the Reformed party.)

Along with this trouble and misery of the Churches, there came yet another, which increased the anxiety and the difficulties above measure. For when they sought a person who might be called to the Theological Ministry in the place of Jacobus Arminius, the Deputies of the Churches earnestly and in the public name of the Churches petitioned and begged the Curators of the Academy of Leiden that they would at least put in his place a person who was free from all suspicion of wrong doctrine, in order that through this means the differences of the Academy of Leiden might in due course end, and peace might be returned to the Churches. To this end, they recommended certain excellent Theologians, both foreign and Dutch, but in vain. For the Remonstrants, who seemed to have won the hearts of some beforehand, brought it about through their recommendations that Conradus Vorstius, Professor at Steinfort (a person who for years was justly suspected of Socinianism by the Reformed Churches)

was called to the Theological Ministry in the place of Arminius; and to that end Uitenbogaard was sent to Steinfort. The Deputies of the Churches, understanding this, judged it to be their solemn duty to admonish the States that such a person would be like a nail in the wound, especially seeing that the affairs of the Church were in a state of confusion, and that he should not thoughtlessly be admitted to this ministry. In order to do this more fruitfully, they requested through letters that the Theological Faculty of Heidelberg, to whom this Vorstius was very well known, would forthrightly declare whether they judged that this Vorstius might, in this situation, be placed in charge of the youth in the Academy of Leiden, to instruct them, with fruit, peace, and edification of the Churches. They also answered, August 26, that a certain book concerning God and concerning the divine attributes had just been published by him, and that in this book he cast aside the doctrine of ancient and more recent Theologians and taught

that God, according to His Being, had quantity, size, and finiteness, and that He was composed of Being and incidental matters, that according to His will He was changeable, that He was subject to a passive power, and other monstrous views. Further, they stated that ten years before this he had been sent to Heidelberg in order to purge himself of Socinianism, of which the Churches already at that time accused him, before the Theological Faculty, where Dr. Pezelius also was present. They stated, further, that he had at last purged himself, leaving behind a manuscript; but that he had not confirmed that purging, but, on the contrary, often and in many ways had made himself suspect; that he had a nest full of monstrous ideas in his head, with which he had until now corrupted the school and the youth of Steinfurt. And they stated that if a person who was under such suspicion as to doctrine would be called to the renowned Academy of Leiden, it would be nothing else than trying to put out the fire with oil. When both the Deputies of the Churches and the esteemed Magistrates of the chief cities of Holland, namely, those of Dordrecht and of Amsterdam, informed the Curators and also the States of these things and petitioned them not to increase the difficulties of the Churches and put them in danger of new and greater disturbances by calling such a person, the Remonstrants, October 18, clung with might and main to their position, that they would not turn aside from this intended call. Meanwhile, Vorstius came to Holland; and, after he had been heard in the assembly of the States (no one else of the Ministers being present except Uitenbogaard), he went back to Steinfurt.

About this time, when some students of Sacred Theology who had been called to the ministry of the Word were to be examined in various Classes, August 22, September 22, the Remonstrants brought it about that the Classes were ordered by the Commissioned Advisers of the States that, with respect to the Article concerning predestination and what is connected with it, they were to require of no one a further explanation beside that in the Five Articles of the Remonstrance. At the same time the Five Articles of the Remonstrance were delivered to the Classes. Besides, it was also forbidden that anyone should be barred from the service of the Church who declared himself in agreement with the Remonstrants with respect to the aforesaid Articles. Because the Ministers, for many reasons, objected against consenting to this, the Deputies of the Churches at their request presented their objections concerning this at the next gathering of the States of Holland and West-Friesland. At the same time they declared that they were ready to show in a lawful Synod that these Articles of the Remonstrance were in conflict with God's Word and also with the Confession and the Catechism of the Netherlands Churches. They further requested the

States that they would not in this manner force these unsound articles, which had never been properly investigated in any lawful assembly of these churches, upon the churches, but that they rather would convene a Provincial Synod, something which had so frequently been requested and for so long a time had been desired, in which the Articles, according to the rule of God's Word, might first be lawfully investigated. They also pointed out with what great offense and damage to the churches the intended calling of Vorstius would be mixed, and on this account they petitioned that this call might be prevented by the authority of the States. When this matter was taken under advisement, it was decided that at the next following fathering of the States in the Hague, before the gathering of the States themselves, a Conference would be held concerning the Five Articles of the Remonstrance between six Ministers chosen from each side. The Remonstrants chose for themselves Johannes Uitenbogaard, Minister in the Hague; Adriannus Borrius, and Johannes Arnoldi Corvinus, of Leiden; Nicolaus Grevinchovius of Rotterdam; Eduard Poppius, of Gouda; and Simon Episcopius of Bleiswijk. The Ministers on the other side had, through the Deputies of every Classis, chosen Petrus Plancius, Minister at Amsterdam; Johannes Becius of Dordrecht; Libertus Fraxinus, of den Briel; Roardus Acronius, of Schiedam; Johannes Bogardus, of Haarlem; and Festus Hommius, of Leiden.

When they came together, on March 11, 1611, the Remonstrants refused to enter into conference with the other six Ministers in the capacity of Deputies of the Classes of Holland and West-Friesland, such as they showed themselves to be by their credentials, in order that they should not seem to be parties of the Churches. Indeed, they protested that they would rather leave with matters unfinished if they would not relinquish this capacity. When there had been a long debate about this, the other Ministers preferred to give way before this importunity, rather than to wrangle about this any longer. And those who had been delegated from the Classes, before they entered into Conference, requested of the States that the promise made to the Churches two years earlier at the time of the Conference between Arminius and Gomarus (August 18, to wit, that the judgment of this case, when the Conference was finished, would be left to the Provincial or National Synod, and that the States would reserve judgment) might here also be renewed. As far as procedure was concerned, they would follow this order, that the parties on both sides would put the proofs of their views in writing, and thereafter would hold an oral Conference about them. Before they turned to the investigation of the Articles, the Ministers who, as before stated, had been delegated by the Classes furnished an answer against the Remonstrance of the Remonstrants, a copy of

which they had at last obtained only a short time before the Conference. In this answer they demonstrated that the Remonstrants had presented the views of the Reformed Churches in a bad light and that they had slanderously fabricated many things against those views; they also showed that the Remonstrants had not forthrightly revealed their own views, nor presented all the Articles concerning which there were differences. And since there were more main points of disagreement than those declared in the Five Articles, they humbly petitioned that by the authority of the States the Remonstrants would be ordered to reveal themselves clearly and forthrightly also concerning all the remaining points. Accordingly, when they were to investigate the first Article of the Remonstrance, in which it is set forth that God from eternity has decided to save the persevering believer (which no Christian denies), and when this Article was presented as though it embodied the doctrine of God's eternal election, the Remonstrants were requested that, for the clarification of their views expressed in this Article, they should declare two things more precisely: first, whether they held that this Article comprehended the entire decree of Predestination; second, whether they believed that faith and perseverance in faith are causes or conditions which precede election unto salvation, or whether they are fruits which come forth from election and follow upon the same. After they had for some time sought excuses, they finally answered. To the first question, they answered that they acknowledged no other predestination to salvation than that which was expressed in the first Article. To the second, they answered that faith, in the consideration and view of God, precedes election to salvation, and does not follow it as a fruit. Thereupon they presented in return seven other questions, both about election and about reprobation, to which they desired that the Ministers delegated from the Classes should answer. Since these questions did not belong to the point of difference concerning the first Article, and since many of them were also unnecessary and very involved, and were presented by the Remonstrants for

the very purpose of leading the discussion off into tangents, away from the chief point of difference, therefore the Ministers by request demonstrated to the States this improper manner of dealing. They did not request, however, that they should not reveal their views concerning reprobation (as the Remonstrants frequently falsely accused them); but they clearly declared their views in so far as they held to be sufficient for the peace and edification of the Churches, not only orally but also in writing. They declared that, when they posited an eternal decree of election of particular persons, they also at once posited an eternal decree of reprobation and passing by of some particular persons, seeing that it cannot be that there should be an election without there also being at once a reprobation or passing by. They declared, further, that recklessly to investigate all difficult questions concerning this Article would do nothing else than fill the Church with useless disputes and strivings which serve no good purpose, and would disturb the peace of the churches. Further, they declared that this their explanation, expressed in the Petition, ought to be sufficient for every temperate and peace loving mind, namely, that they believe and teach that God condemns no one, yea, has also decided to condemn no one, except justly on account of his own sins. Accordingly, it pleased the States that, putting those thorny questions aside, they should turn to the treatment of the Articles. The Ministers delegated by the Churches presented by document their reasons why they rejected each Article in particular. The Remonstrants also posited over against these and presented by document their proofs by which they intended to establish every Article. Concerning these reasons and arguments they debated orally in the gathering of the States. Festus Hommius spoke for the one side, in the name of the Ministers delegated by the Churches; and on the other side, in the name of the Remonstrants, first Adrianus Borrius spoke, and thereafter by turn, Nicolaus Grevinchovius, Johannes Arnoldi, and Simon Episcopius.

**The STANDARD BEARER
makes a thoughtful gift
for a shut-in.**

**Know the standard
and follow it.**



**Read the
STANDARD BEARER!**

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

Letter to the Members of the Church at Philadelphia

March 15, 1977

To the Members of the Church at Philadelphia,

We have neared the end of our discussion of the wrongness of separating one's self from the Church. We shall, in fact, conclude our discussion of this matter with this letter. There is, however, one point which still needs to be discussed. This point was brought to my attention by one of your fellowship, and it is important enough to discuss in a separate letter.

The occasion for this question was some remarks I made in an earlier letter concerning the reasons why people separate themselves to form isolated Bible study groups. You will probably recall that I made some remarks to the effect that people often do this because they are unhappy with their Church. They are unhappy with the denomination of which they are a part because they see various evils which are present in their denomination: support of false doctrine, protection of heretics, tendencies to Boardism on a classical or synodical level, clericism — a domination of ecclesiastical affairs by the clergy to the exclusion of elders and deacons and believers, and such like things. This sort of situation on a denominational level can spill over into congregational life so that the preaching in a local congregation goes stale at best, heretical at worst; and so that Christian life is lost from the congregation, swallowed up in a tidal wave of materialism, worldliness and carnal living.

When we were discussing these things, I mentioned that people who are dissatisfied with this state of affairs and who express their dissatisfaction by forming individual Bible-study groups sometimes sever their relationships with their congregation altogether to form an independent, quasi-ecclesiastical group. But they do not always do this. Sometimes they form such a group while at the same time maintaining their connection with the established Church.

It is in connection with this latter statement that a question arose. And that question came down to this: what is the relationship between a local congregation and a denomination? Is it possible, e.g., to be a part

of the local congregation and not be responsible for what goes on either at a classical or synodical level? Is it possible to immerse one's self in the life of a local congregation while letting the denomination as a whole go its own way? Especially if one is a member of a relatively conservative congregation with a relatively orthodox minister and a concerned and godly Consistory, cannot one devote himself to the affairs of the congregation and let the denomination go its own evil way?

This question really has to be carried back one additional step. Is it possible to be a member of a congregation in which things are done, actions taken, sermons preached which are not according to the Scriptures by living one's own individual life with one's family or with a group of like-minded believers in the congregation, and let the congregation go its own way without being unduly affected by the evils present in that congregation?

These questions are rather important issues for people, and we ought to say something about them.

We ought perhaps to start with the idea of denominations and the relationship in which a local congregation stands to a denomination.

This has been a subject of no little discussion over the years — especially among those who have made a study of Reformed Church polity. And the study has not been merely an abstract study of principles involved in this question; rather the study has had all sorts of consequences for the life of the Church throughout the ages. In practically every church controversy this question has somehow intruded. It is not my intention to discuss this question from that point of view. That would involve a lengthy discussion which would carry us far afield. My purpose is different from this.

We have stressed, in past articles, the truth that the local congregation is autonomous. That means, on the one hand, that each local congregation is a *complete* manifestation of the body of Christ in its own right. That means, on the other hand, that the authority of

Christ within His Church is an authority which is exercised within a local congregation *only*, through her officebearers. This is one matter of importance. It is a truth which the Church denies (either in theory or in practice) to her own spiritual peril.

On the other hand, it is also true that there is no explicit injunction in Scripture which commands local congregations to form a denomination. No one can point to a specific command which makes it obligatory for Churches to do this. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the calling to form denominations is a calling of which Scripture does not speak. Scripture repeatedly emphasizes that the Church of Christ must *express* the unity which she has in Christ. And this unity, because it must be *expressed*, must result in denominations. Local congregations form a denomination of congregations with which this unity can be expressed in the midst of a world of confusion and disunity.

This unity must be a unity of one faith, one doctrine, one calling — according to Paul in Ephesians 4:1-13. And that unity of one calling also implies that local congregations labor together, within the bounds of a denominational life, in the fulfillment of that calling. Hence, local congregations join together to solve mutual problems, to encourage and correct each other, to establish Theological Schools, to do the work of missions, etc. Denominations are important, and denominations have their Scriptural place in the life of the Church.

We are aware of the fact that denominational life, however, must never intrude upon congregational life in such a way that the autonomy of the local congregation is lost. However, I do not intend to go into this whole question now. The point which is of concern to us is: how are congregations related to denominations from the viewpoint of the individual responsibility of the believer?

The answer to this question involves the truth of what is called “corporate responsibility.” Man is created by God in such a way that he never stands in the midst of life as an individual. God created Adam as the head of the whole human race — as both organic head and legal head. The second Adam, Christ, is also the organic and legal Head of His people. Man forms, therefore, a unity, an organism, a single body. Paul says that God created all the nations of men who dwell on all the face of the earth of one blood. (Acts 17:26.) John Donne, the English poet, said that man is not an island — although this is true probably in a far deeper sense than Donne meant it.

This is an important truth. It is the curse of Arminianism that this heresy denies it. I said once in a sermon that, from a certain point of view, the error of individualism, so common in Arminianism, is

worse than the error of free will. In fact, the doctrine of free will really stands or falls with the whole Pelagian conception of individualism. Arminianism has no conception of the unity that prevails among men. Arminianism constructs a theology which assumes that each man is an isolated individual to be treated as such in his relation to Adam, to his fellow man, and to God. But nothing could be farther from the truth. Man lives as a part of a whole. In the broadest sense of the word, man is a part of the whole human race. He fell with the whole human race and stands guilty before God with the whole human race. The true human race of God’s election is also one in Christ. The believer never stands alone either. He is one with Christ and therefore one with all the people of God in every age.

This unity of which man is a part is an organic unity. If we can think in this connection of a human body, (a figure which Scripture uses, by the way, to describe the Church, cf. I Cor. 12) then the small bone in the knuckle of my right hand is an organic part of my body as a whole; but it is also a part of my right arm; and, further it is a part of my right hand; and more specifically yet, it is a part of the index finger on my right hand. To every part of the whole and to the whole it stands in a certain relation. If I die, soon the knuckle of the index finger of my right hand also changes back into dust. So it is with the believer. From the point of view of history he is a part of the whole human race. But through sovereign election, he is also a part of the body of Christ. But within that body of Christ, he stands in all sorts of other relationships. He stands in the organic unity of a family, of a local congregation, of a denomination, of a particular society, of a nation, of the number of employees in a given place of work, etc.

Now it is always true that whatever happens to a man affects in some way the whole unity of which he is a part. To go back to my figure, what happens to the knuckle of my right index finger affects all of me. Or, the other way around, what happens to my body or to my arm or to my hand or to my finger, affects also that knuckle. This lies in the nature of an organism. There is not anything which can change that.

God sees us and deals with us, God saves us and judges us, God fulfills his counsel with us and accomplishes his purpose through us, only within the context of all the relationships of life in which we stand. What happens to the organism or the part of the organism to which we belong affects us. And what happens to us affects the organism. When one member of the body suffers, the whole body suffers. (I Cor. 12:26.) When the nation goes to war, I am affected — whether I agree with the war or not. When a member of my family is ill, the whole family is affected. Whatever I do as a father in the family has

its effects upon and has repercussions for the whole family.

Further, as a part of such a corporate group, I am responsible for what goes on in that group. The extent of my responsibility is determined by the position I occupy in that group — that is true. It is more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah than for Chorazin and Bethsaida. But nevertheless, the whole family of Achan was stoned and burned when Achan took the accursed things from Jericho. And God visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him.

This makes the whole matter of membership in a congregation and a denomination an important matter. What happens in a denomination and a congregation of which I am a part is my responsibility for which I am held accountable before God. I can never escape this. I may not like it. I may attempt to deny it. I may ignore it. I may live as if it is not true. But the fact remains for all that.

God does not await the day of judgment only to make this reckoning. God works this whole

accountability out in history. So true is it that what a denomination does is my responsibility that I bear all the consequences for that path which my denomination has chosen to walk. I bear these consequences in my life and in the lives of my family members. If the denomination goes astray doctrinally, the terrible consequences of this come upon me and my family. There is no escaping this. I may try in my life to escape these consequences and hold fast to the truth. I may even be partially or wholly successful in this for a time. But the consequences are mine to bear. The congregation of which I am a part goes gradually astray along with the denomination. And I — and my family — go along with it, even sometimes without my being aware of it. When decay of the body sets in, it may take a while for the decay to affect the extremities, but sooner or later this will happen.

Well, I must close this letter. I am really finished with this subject, although I have had to end it rather abruptly. If you do desire to discuss this matter further, let me know.

Fraternally in Christ,
H. Hanko

ALL AROUND US

The ACL and the Athanasian Creed IRS and tax exemption for churches Abortion -- Again Support for Scripture? Tidbits

Rev. G. Van Baren

The ACL and the Athanasian Creed

Christian News, a conservative Lutheran periodical, presents reports concerning the state of affairs within the Lutheran community. In its issue of Feb. 7, 1977, it presents evidence that the American Lutheran Church no longer defends the Athanasian Creed. It presents the shocking fact that within major denominations the basics of Christianity are being denied. The report states:

While the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has in recent years repeatedly said that Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven and that those who die without a saving knowledge of Christ are lost, the American Lutheran Church no longer accepts this scriptural position. It allows its clergymen to reject the Athanasian Creed.

"Judaism" is the theme of the Winter, 1977 DIALOG, a Lutheran journal of theology.

DIALOG has published articles and editorials

questioning such basic Christian doctrines as the physical resurrection of Christ and Christ's virgin birth.

None of the articles on Judaism in the Winter, 1977 DIALOG maintain that Christianity is the only saving faith and Jesus Christ the only way to heaven. DIALOG advances the anti-scriptural notion that Jews can be saved without confessing Christ as their Savior from sin.

Professor Harold H. Ditmanson of St. Olaf College is the author of one of the articles in DIALOG titled "Judaism and Christianity: A Theology of Co-Existence." Ditmanson, after describing the orthodox Christian approach to Judaism which maintains that "Jews should become Christians," writes: "It is a matter of debate whether or not this traditional description of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity can be found in the New Testament. But there can be no doubt that it took shape in the very early centuries of the church. By the end of the third

century, the Jew was seen by Christians in general as an unbeliever."

Professor Ditmanson, an American Lutheran Church clergyman, says that "Christian attitudes toward Jews are surely negative if Jews are seen as unbelievers, targets of conversion."

Ditmanson maintains the Jews believe in the same God Christians accept. He writes in *DIALOG*: "Christians who take seriously the disavowal of the curse have already begun to entertain the conviction, at least by implication, that Judaism lives not because of stubbornness or demonic influences, but by God's design. The vitality of Judaism is a sign of faithfulness, not blindness. The millions of Jews who have suffered and died for their faith have paid the price of obedience, not disobedience. If this is true, it follows that Judaism has a witness that God wants it to bear. Thus God does not want a world without Jews. If Jews have such a witness to bear, then Christians need Judaism and can learn from it something about their own faith. Hostility, then, is impossible, as is any imperialism or condescension in approach. . . ."

IRS and tax exemption for churches

There has been repeated, and often justified, complaint against tax-exemption of church properties. The arguments, pro and con, I will not now present. There are reports, however, that the government is attempting to crack down on this area of tax loopholes. Perhaps one might be inclined to say that it is about time. There are churches that hold extensive real estate properties which involve no function for the church except to earn it tax-free monies. However, as soon as the IRS or the government begins to define what is a church and what is proper church activities, the possibility is that the faithful church will be affected. Can government properly define what is legitimate church? Can it limit what it considers proper church activities? Will not such decisions on tax exemption, though apparently so necessary because of widespread abuses, be used to regulate and perhaps limit the proper work of the church? Some of these concerns are expressed in the *Presbyterian Journal*, Jan. 26, 1977:

The U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has issued a new order, which has the effect of law, defining which "auxiliaries" of a denomination are to be considered tax-exempt.

Religious leaders reacted immediately because the new order could affect the tax-exempt status of some Church agencies. James E. Wood Jr., executive director of the Joint Baptist Committee on Public Affairs, said: "If the Churches accept this new IRS rule, it would be tantamount to their acceptance of the authority of the government to define the role and mission of the Churches."

Mr. Wood continued, "Under the Constitution, each Church is the sole source of the definition of its

mission and the Church alone is capable of determining those auxiliaries which are integral to and integrated into that mission."

In the Jan. 4 *Federal Register*, the IRS published a final official ruling amending the Income Tax Regulations of the Internal Revenue Code, Section 6033, by defining an "integrated auxiliary of a Church." Items published in the *Federal Register*, such as this new IRS rule and presidential executive orders, carry the authority of law, although not subject to approval by any legislative body.

"An organization affiliated with a Church will be considered an integrated auxiliary if the principal activity of the organization is exclusively religious," says the new IRS rule. Many Church leaders contend that the government lacks the competence to determine for a Church or its agencies which activity is or is not "exclusively religious."

Some observers feel that the new rule could affect tax exemptions of Christian Schools, day care centers, charitable agencies and other related church organizations. If it should not affect exemption, it could bring on excessive amounts of paper work.

Abortion — Again

Increasingly, cries are raised against that horror in our land, abortion. It is murder on a grand scale — over a million a year. To spend money to find cures for cancer, to pass laws to reduce, hopefully, the more than 50,000 deaths on our highways — appears to be utter foolishness in light of the wanton destruction of over a million lives annually through abortion. The *Christian News*, Jan. 31, 1977, reports on some of the action taken against this terrible sin:

While President Carter was holding a reception in the White House for the diplomatic corps, a "pro-life" rally — the first major all-day demonstration of his administration — was held on the Ellipse, across the street from the executive Mansion.

It was the fourth annual March for Life, held Jan. 22 on the anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court decision in 1973 which greatly liberalized state abortion laws proscribing abortions. The marchers came from many states to register their protest.

The official metropolitan police estimate of the number of persons who marched down Pennsylvania Avenue from the Capitol to the Ellipse was 40,000.

There are many, of course, who are "pro-life" for reasons other than what God has given in His Word. For that reason, too, one finds it difficult and usually impossible to cooperate with "pro-life" movements. But the horror of this terrible crime ought to be impressed on us. We condemn Germany for killing millions of Jews and others who opposed their regime during and before the last World War. We condemn those in Germany who silently acquiesced to these brutal murders. Yet, is there basically any difference

between what was done then — and what is being done now? Then, the “worthy” purpose was to eradicate the hated Jews — now the “worthy” purpose is to eradicate unwanted babies and prevent overpopulation on this earth. The scenery is a bit different (hospitals and clinics instead of gas chambers); the goals are a bit different (eradicate babies instead of Jews); but the method is the same: kill these human beings. God’s law is being wilfully violated by those who know well what that law is.

Support for Scripture?

The child of God believes the Word of God by faith. Yet one finds it to be of interest when worldly scholars discover evidence that what the Bible says is true. A report in the Los Angeles *Herald-Examiner*, Nov. 6, 1976, as reported in *Christian News*, states the following:

The recent discovery of the ancient civilization at Tell Mardikh in Syria has rocked the scientific community — penetrating deeply into biblical scholarship.

Many scholars now agree that the data found at this site explodes the waning view, popular in the 19th and early 20th centuries, that Israel’s religion was evolutionary in nature. Too, it shows that the early books of the Bible were not mythological “spiritual lessons” — fabrications written at a later date and lacking historical accuracy.

On the some 20,000 clay tablets discovered, dated at 2,500 B.C., approximately 230 places and personal names have been identified. Up until now a good many of the names hadn’t turned up anywhere except in the Bible, leading many scholars to believe them fictional. The consideration cannot now be ignored that these are “real” places and “real” names,

put into the time framework of traditional Scripture structure.

In regard to the tablet discovery, Dr. David Noel Freedman of the Religious Studies Department, University of Michigan, and editor of the *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, said:

“This is the best information we have so far about ancient civilization and there is an added point for those interested in the Bible. We’re all in for a real shakeup in liberal scholarship.”

The article continues by pointing out how that this recent discovery identifies many of the historical names and places in the Bible. The Christian needs not this sort of evidence to convince him concerning our Bible, but such discoveries are of interest because they show how wrong great scholars of the past were. The discoveries show not so much the truthfulness of Scripture, but the fallibility of man and his theories.

Tidbits

When is a “dance” not a “dance”? When it is held at Calvin College. Then it is a “party-with-music.” One wonders: Are they ashamed of their “Calvinism”? Or are they embarrassed about their “worldliness”? Or is it an attempt to hide something from someone?

A favorable review of Prof. H. Hanko’s book *The Mysteries of the Kingdom* is given in the *Banner*, Feb. 11, 1977. It concludes: “We trust that the book will be given a wide circulation. May it be a useful instrument as God’s kingdom is extended in our world through the power of His Word and Spirit.” And it’s an occasion to ask ourselves: “Have we added this book to our libraries yet?”

Addition to Church Directory

Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church

Clerk

& Treas.: Mr. W.H. Clason
1317 Pinehurst Blvd.
Kalamazoo, Mich. 49007

Pastor: Rev. B. Woudenberg
427 N. Fletcher
Kalamazoo, Mich. 49007

NOTICE

The Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School, Grand Rapids, Michigan, will be in need of a teacher in the lower elementary grades for the 1977-1978 school year. Application can be made by writing to:

Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School
The Education Committee
John Dykstra, Jr., chairman
1545 Wilson Avenue, S.W.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On March 17, 1977, our parents, MR. AND MRS. GARRET FLIKKEMA, will celebrate their 25th Wedding Anniversary. We are thankful to God for them and the covenant home which they have given to us. It is our prayer that the Lord will continue to bless them and to guide them in the years ahead.

Their children,
Mr. and Mrs. Richard Flikkema
and Tammy
Mr. and Mrs. George De Jong
Patricia Ann
and James Robert

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On March 19, 1977, our parents, MR. AND MRS. DONALD LOTTERMAN, will celebrate their thirtieth wedding anniversary. We are thankful to God for their covenant instruction and guidance. We would like to wish them God’s continued blessing as they journey life’s pathway together.

Their children,
Mr. and Mrs. Clare Kuiper
Mr. and Mrs. Ed Lotterman
Mr. and Mrs. Harry Van Den Berg
Michael
Marcia
Steve
and 9 grandchildren

News From Our Churches

The following news about the organization of our newest congregation in Houston, Texas appeared in the February 20 Hope (Walker, Michigan) bulletin: "On Tuesday and Wednesday, our pastor (Rev. Ronald Van Overloop) and elders King and Engelsma assisted the group in Houston in their organization. Much of their time was spent with Rev. and Mrs. Harbach conducting family visitation and discussing future mission work. At the organizational meeting on Tuesday evening our pastor delivered the sermon and Rev. Harbach chaired the meeting. Those organized totalled four families and twenty souls. The excitement for the Church and the enthusiasm for the truth was very great and something to witness. The beauty of this enthusiasm was that it was filled with gratitude to God and trust that He would care for them in the future." Because of a rather busy week, Rev. Van Overloop and Rev. Veldman exchanged pulpits for the Sunday evening service on February 20.

Rev. Joostens noted in the Faith Church bulletin on February 20 that the coming week was a kind of a special week for the Faith congregation "in that Tuesday marks our 4th birthday as a congregation. What can we say or do except to resound our doxology, 'Praise God from Whom all blessings flow.' " Hope Church also marked this as a bit of a special time as both the mortgage on the church and the parsonage were liquidated. "We thank God for his faithfulness in supplying the means for us to make this possible."

During the past week I received '77 church directories from our churches in Randolph, Wisconsin, and Southwest, Wyoming, Michigan. Both of these directories are something quite above the 'ordinary' directories to which I have been accustomed to. In addition to the membership roles, the Southwest directory lists the birthdates of the children in the congregation (why not the older folks?) and considerable additional information which would be especially valuable to a new member of the congregation, such as society membership and the policy to be followed in the event of a tornado watch. Randolph's directory also contains a concise history of the congregation, birthdays and anniversaries arranged by day of the year, the church financial report for 1976, the 1977 collection schedule, and church building use rules. In all, a fine piece of work.

Yesterday I received an air-mail letter addressed to

"Mr. KENNEWS VINK" in the "YOU.ESS.AYE". That, of course, could only come from elder J.M. Faber who has been deeply involved in what he calls "the Jamaican Labors 77" with Rev. John Heys and their wives. Mr. Faber says that a complete report on their work will be submitted by Rev. Heys and printed in the *Standard Bearer*. The following from elder Faber's letter is of interest: "The work which has given us much joy in the discoveries of progress made in the teaching and in the growth of knowledge of the Reformed Faith suffered a saddening blow. Rev. Beckford was a victim of a 'nervous breakdown' before we arrived. His condition deteriorated very rapidly. Our first visit to his sick-room resulted in our giving him some comfort from the Scriptures and prayer, but in our second visit we could no longer reach his consciousness. From that time he had been unconscious, and was hospitalized. There he lingered in an unconscious state until February 15th when he was taken into glory. His ministry was short, but complete according to the will of the King of His Church, who called him into the ministry. This loss cuts the 'work-force' by 25% in Jamaica, and according to purely human reasoning, does irreparable harm to the two churches he was serving, but according to our sanctified reasoning, this, too, will work together for good for Jamaica's 'called according to His purpose.' " The Fabers and the Heyses expected to leave Jamaica about February 23.

The Randolph consistory has decided to begin the practice of singing a song, Psalter #425 stanza 5, right after baptism. While the parents are still standing at the baptism fount, the congregation will rise and sing. The Hull, Iowa consistory decided to change the last doxology of the afternoon worship service to "May the grace of Christ the Savior. . ." The Southwest Church council has decided to continue the Sunday evening services at 7:00 because not all of the Southwest members are able to attend services at 6:00 PM.

A Quiet Thought from the Southeast bulletin: "If godliness be evil, why is it so much professed? If it be good, why is it so little practised?"

A last-minute bit of news, received just before this column went to print: Rev. Arie den Hartog has declined the call extended to him from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Christchurch, New Zealand.

K.G.V.