

The STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself was bound with our sins. At Gethsemane He was bound with chains. Before Pilate and Herod He was bound. So when He was scourged and while bearing the cross to Golgotha. He was bound with nails. Our sins riveted Him to the gibbet. There He was our Substitute. He took the place of condemned bondslaves. Because He was so bound we are able to overcome the devil, bind the strong man, spoil his house and trample him vanquished under our feet. Then we go on to sing the song of the soul set free! Hallelujah!

See "Studies in Isaiah" — page 116

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MEDITATION

All By Grace!

Rev. M. Schipper

"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.

Here is a deliberate contrast made between grace and works.

The two, grace and works, are mutually exclusive.

Either it is grace or it is works; it can never be both, grace and works. If you say it is all of grace, you must of necessity say there is nothing of work. And if you

say it is of works in any sense of the word, then you should never speak of grace again.

And this contrast is emphasized in the last part of the text. Yes, we are aware of the fact that the Authorized Revised Version omits this last part; but, as we see it, not with good reason. But even if it is omitted, the contrast between grace and works would remain. On the other hand, if the last part is retained, the contrast becomes all the more emphatic. Then the first part would stress the truth that it is all of grace; while the last part would stress the truth with the added notion that he who says it is of works in any sense of the word should never speak of grace in any sense of that term.

More important, however, is the question: Why did the apostle insert this verse in this particular context?

There are those who insist that the text has no meaning or significance here. They see no connection with the foregoing, nor do they see any connection with what follows the text. This, we believe, is a serious error.

It should be quite apparent that there is a definite connection with what follows the text. There the apostle shows that Israel sought for a righteousness before God; however, Israel sought that righteousness not by grace, but by the works of the law. And the apostle makes it very clear that what was not obtainable by the works of the law, was obtained merely by grace.

Moreover, as we hope to make plain, there is also very definitely a connection between our text and that of which the apostle had been speaking in the preceding.

Still more important is the question: What does the apostle refer to when he says, "it is all of grace"?

The answer to this question must be sought in the preceding context. There we notice that he speaks of election by grace. (verse 5) He also speaks of the remnant that is saved. (verse 5) And still farther back, in verse 4, he speaks of those who are reserved, or preserved, namely, those who had not bowed the knee to Baal. So it is evident that when the apostle says in our text: "And if by grace," he is referring to these three truths: to our election, to our salvation, and to our preservation. It is all of grace!

Election by grace!

Election, that eternal and sovereign decree of God whereby He chose certain persons in Christ Jesus to share with Him in the glory of His eternal covenant and kingdom — that is by grace!

Election is eternal, from everlasting, before the world and time began. Election is not in time, or affected by time. It resides in the eternal mind and will of God, and is irresistible, unchangeable, and unconditional as God is Himself. It is therefore a sovereign decree. In our election, God was not affected by, nor did He choose us because of what we were, or because He saw beforehand what we would become. Rather He chose us in order that we might become the heirs of His glory, that we might be holy and without blame before Him.

Election is personal. We must have nothing of the philosophy that election pertains to nations. Though it is true that historically God realized the election of grace in the old dispensation in the nation of Israel, it was never true that the nation of Israel per se was God's chosen people. The apostle Paul in another portion of this epistle (9:6) writes: "for they are not all Israel, which are called Israel." This was true in the old dispensation as it is in the new. If this means anything at all, it certainly means that Israel as a nation was not the chosen people of God. The truth is that the line of election ran through this nation. God's people in the old dispensation were found almost exclusively, not entirely, in this nation. Rather, Scripture teaches that God has chosen very definite persons. Scripture implies this when it informs us that our names are written in the Lamb's book of life. Christ knows His sheep, and calls them all by name. (John 10:2,14)

We hasten to add, however, that though election is personal, it is also organic. By this we mean that when God chose His people He did not determine merely upon so many individuals, loose and apart from each other. Rather, He chose them in Christ Jesus. Christ is *the* elect, and Head of all His people. And all whom the Father gave to Him in election are as members of His body. In one word, God chose the church, of which Christ is the Head, and all the elect constitute the members of His body. Such is the Scriptural view of election as set forth by the apostle in Ephesians and Colossians.

Election is by grace! Not by works!

You ask: Is there anyone who believes and says election is by works? The answer is: Indeed, there are!

This was precisely the doctrine of the Pharisees in particular and of Judaism in general. They believed not only in work righteousness, that they were justified by performing the works of the law; but

they believed also that God had chosen them because of their works. They believed that, because of their long prayers, because of their tithes and offerings, and because they did the works prescribed in the law, God had chosen them in distinction from others who did not the works.

This doctrine of the Pharisees has projected itself in the doctrine of Arminianism as we know it today. O, indeed, the Arminian believes in election. He even goes so far as to say that election is of grace. But here is his deception — he says, God chose those whom He saw beforehand would believe. To them faith is not the fruit of election, but the ground; or it is the condition man fulfills, on the basis of which God elects him. It is election by works, or, at best, by grace and works, not by grace alone. The apostle denies this when he says: "If it be of works, then is it no more grace." It is all by grace!

Moreover, the apostle also speaks of the remnant that is saved. "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace."

We need not delineate the Scriptural idea of the remnant, which we have done in another Meditation quite recently, except to say that the remnant does not refer to some kind of a left-over which God gets after the devil has had his first choice. Rather, always in Scripture the remnant is looked upon as God's prime choice, His very special possession. And that is surely the idea here. It is the remnant according to the election of grace.

It is this remnant that God saves.

This salvation of the remnant may be viewed both objectively and subjectively. Objectively He does everything to save this remnant. He sends His Only Begotten Son into the world, Who in His incarnation becomes partaker of their nature. His Name is called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins. He bears their sins in His own body on the tree of the cross, under the vials of God's holy wrath. In perfect obedience He lays down His life for His sheep, the remnant. He justifies them in His blood, and is raised from the dead as the testimony of their justification. He is exalted in their nature to God's right hand, where in their behalf He serves as their Paraclete. Here He receives of the Father the Holy Spirit without measure, whereby He is enabled to complete the work of their salvation.

Subjectively He works that salvation in the remnant by the Spirit of the exalted Redeemer. He applies to all the remnant all the blessings of salvation He merited for them. He regenerates, justifies, calls, sanctifies, and at last also brings into eternal glory all the elect remnant.

This salvation, from beginning to end, is all of grace. Of grace alone!

But you ask: Is there anyone who would deny this? And again, the answer is: Indeed, there is!

Always there are those who deny the vicarious atonement upon which the salvation of the remnant rests. They repudiate what they call Blood Theology, and in its place substitute an atonement which is accomplished by the repentance and faith through which the saved are supposed to redeem themselves. To them the cross was not God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, but merely a demonstration of God could do to every man that is a sinner, but which He will not do if they will only repent. To still others the Christ of the cross was merely an example of how we must also be willing to die, if necessary, for our principles. It was not so that Christ on the cross died for our sins.

Arminianism, also in respect to the matter of the salvation of the remnant, remains consistent; it insists that the saved are those who accept the proffered offer of salvation which God has prepared for all men, head for head. To the Arminian, faith is the ground of salvation, or the condition which man fulfills in order to be saved. He will not accept the truth that we believe because we are saved. In one word, Arminianism, while it prates that salvation is all of grace, denies this truth by adding grace and work, the work of faith man performs. He cannot and will not accept the truth that salvation is all by grace.

Finally, the text, in the light of the context, also insists that the remnant is preserved by grace.

The apostle, in the context, reflects on the days of Elijah, when all appeared so dark to him in respect to the state of Israel. Elijah laments that Israel, in spite of all that the prophets had preached, went a whoring after every strange god, and killed all the true prophets sent to them, and that Elijah, so it seemed to him, was the only one of the true people of God left. But God came to him with the startling revelation: "I have reserved to myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal."

These seven thousand constituted the remnant that is preserved by Jehovah.

God preserves the Church, which is the remnant according to the election of grace. While the forces of evil may assail the remnant, and while it may appear, as it undoubtedly did to Elijah, that the cause of Jehovah God is hopeless in the world, though it may look as if apostasy destroys the Church of God in the world — God, nevertheless, reserves, and preserves His precious possession. So, as Jesus expressed it, the very gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church. That Church which God preserves also therefore perseveres unto the very end, and the latter is the fruit of the former.

This preservation is also all of grace!

You ask: Is there anyone who will deny this? And again, the answer is: Indeed, there is!

Those who deny that election and salvation is all of grace, also insist that God helps those who help themselves. They teach that you may be saved today, but if you are not careful you may be lost tomorrow. They put it all in reverse, and say: If you persevere, God will preserve you. Not, do they say, you persevere because God preserves you.

The text says: It is all of grace, also your preservation!

Not of works, in any sense of the word!

Does that mean then that God elects and saves the remnant in such a way that they are put to sleep, and ride, as it were, in a Pullman sleeper to heaven? Not at all!

God, Who is the Thesis, and makes His people to be of the thesis, also creates the antithesis, and calls His people to oppose the darkness, to fight against sin and evil. He even promises a crown of life to those who are faithful unto death, so that there is no crown without battle.

But let it be abundantly clear, the good work He begins in us, He also finishes, and His preserving grace also causes us to persevere in the battle until we obtain the crown.

Indeed, from beginning to end, God alone brings His people to everlasting glory, so that His also alone may be all the praise.

Your election is all of grace. Your salvation is all of grace. And your preservation is all of grace. Can you think of anything that must be added? That's everything, isn't it?

It is all by grace!

EDITORIALS

Baptism on the Mission Field (2) Present Truth Betrays Its Real Colors A Sad Spectacle

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

Baptism on the Mission Field (2)

In our previous editorial we explained that our Form of Ordination of Missionaries was originally only a form designed for the ordination of missionaries to the heathen. If you want to read the Form as it was originally composed, then you must omit the section entitled, "Unto the Dispersed." The latter was added by the Christian Reformed Church in the early 1900s, and we inherited this revised form. The important point here, as we hope to make plain, is that the duties of the missionary were originally formulated for a missionary *to the heathen*; and this has something to do with the *order* in which these duties are listed.

Synod's Study Committee was instructed "to investigate whether on the mission field there may be, or should be, administration of the sacraments, especially baptism" and "to take into account . . . the Form for the Ordination of Missionaries . . ." The Study Committee did this. But we believe: 1) That the Study Committee's explanation of the Form is contrary to the plain language of the Form. 2) That the Study Committee did not see that there is a per-

fectly natural explanation for the order of the duties of the missionary in the Form. This we will try to make plain.

First of all, let us get before us the language of the Form of Ordination in which the duties of the missionary are set forth:

In the first place thou art to bring to their attention by all fit and lawful means, the glad tidings that Jesus Christ has come into the world to save sinners. All thine actions, thy speaking and thy silence, yea, all thine influence is to co-operate to recommend the gospel of Christ, etc.

Secondly, thou art holden, if it pleases God to make thy work fruitful unto the gathering of a church, to administer the Sacrament of Holy Baptism according to the institution of the Lord and the requirement of the covenant. (Note: Lest there be any doubt about it, let it be noted that this point speaks very definitely of "the gathering of a *congregation*," as is plain from the Dutch original, "indien het God behaagt uwen arbeid vruchtbaar te maken tot het vergaderen eener gemeente." HCH)

Furthermore, thou art called wherever it is necessary and possible to ordain elders and deacons even as Paul charged Titus, chapter 1:5, saying: "For this

cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that were wanting, and appoint elders in every city, as I gave thee charge." But lay hands hastily on no man.

Moreover, there is committed unto thee, as minister of Christ and steward of the mysteries of God, the administering of the Holy Supper of the Lord according to the institution of Christ.

Besides this, there is commended unto thee the maintaining of christian discipline in the midst of the congregation, by faithful use of the keys of the Kingdom, etc.

And finally, beloved brother, be a faithful servant of Jesus Christ, and a careful shepherd of the flock, etc.

Notice the order here: 1) Preaching. 2) Baptism. 3) Ordination of elders and deacons. 4) The Lord's Supper. 5) Discipline. 6) Shepherd of the flock.

Especially should we notice that the duty of baptism comes *before* the duty of ordaining elders and deacons, while the duty of administering the Lord's Supper *follows* the duty of ordaining elders and deacons. Why?

There can be no question about it that this order is intentional. As we saw in our historical study, Dr. Beuker himself, the author of this Form, stated that he adhered as much as possible to the Form for the Ordination of Ministers. But here he departed from that Form. For the latter has the following order: 1) Preaching. 2) Public prayer and supplication. 3) Administration of the Sacraments (both mentioned in the same paragraph, HCH). 4) Discipline and government.

We repeat the question: WHY this order for missionaries?

The answer is a perfectly natural one: this Form was originally designed to fit the peculiar situation of a missionary to the *heathen*; and for a missionary to the heathen, because of the peculiar circumstances, this order is necessary and all these duties are included. Bear in mind the following:

1. A missionary to the heathen will be laboring among unbaptized persons exclusively. Not only will there be unbaptized infants, but the *adult converts*, coming out of heathendom, will be unbaptized. Ordinarily a home missionary does not encounter that situation: the adults have usually been baptized.
2. A missionary to the heathen must ordain elders and deacons. But an unbaptized, non-confessing elder or deacon is an impossibility. Hence, such a missionary must necessarily receive the confession of faith of adult converts and must thereupon baptize them *before* a congregation can be instituted and elders and deacons be ordained. Roughly equivalent to this step on the home mission field is the fact that

when a congregation is organized membership testimonials must be received by those in charge of organization: "In order to organize the congregation the committee meets with the persons concerned, who have meanwhile requested their certificates of membership, or if it be impossible to have their certificates transferred, those present shall give testimony one of another that they were members in full communion and of good report in the congregation from which they are now separating. After a service of worship shall have been conducted under the guidance of the committee, the latter shall request those present to tender their certificates, in as far as possible. The committee having found the certificates in good order and having accepted them, they shall proceed to election of officebearers, who shall immediately upon their election, be installed in their respective offices." (Decision #3, Article 38, Church Order) If my memory serves me correctly, there have also been instances of profession of faith at such an organizational meeting — prior to election of officebearers. And I suppose that there could also be — if the situation arose — the profession of faith and baptism of a previously unbaptized adult.

3. A missionary to the heathen would also necessarily have to administer the Lord's Supper for a time. Ordinarily a home missionary does not do this, except, perhaps, immediately after organization. Usually the missionary moves on to a new field, and the new congregation receives classical pulpit supply. The situation would be different on the foreign field. There would be elders and deacons, but perhaps for a long time no native pastor. The missionary remains in the area, possibly serving more than one newly established congregation. Hence, he preaches and also administers the supper.

4. The same is true of the duty of discipline. Ordinarily the home missionary has no occasion to exercise discipline in a congregation established through his labors. He moves on. But on the foreign field this would be different. There is no native pastor. And although there are elders and deacons, they are new to the faith and in much need of the instruction and guidance of the missionary. And the same is true of the last duty mentioned, the labor of a pastor. One can well understand that on the foreign field the missionary cannot simply move on and drop the care of an infant congregation once it has been organized. And again, this is different on the home mission field.

Now all this is a far cry from the ordinary situation on the home mission field. And it is also plain as the sun in the heavens that surely the baptism of infants prior to the ordination of elders and deacons is not at all necessary. And yet the fact remains that this same Form was simply taken over by the Committee of the Christian Reformed Church in the early 1900s and

adjusted a bit so that it could be used for Home Missionaries. I would hazard a guess that there was some carelessness and thoughtlessness involved here, and that in making this adjustment due consideration was not given to the obvious differences of situation between the foreign field and the home field.

Nevertheless, the decision stands. We as Protestant Reformed Churches, having inherited this form, are also bound by it; and it applies to a home missionary as well as to a foreign missionary. And this means, therefore, that *to the extent that the same situation prevails* on the home mission field as on the foreign mission field, the same order of duties also prevails.

Do not forget, however, that the stand of our churches in this regard does not simply depend on the alleged synodical precedent of 1956. It is also a binding decision of our churches in 1934 and 1944: "If possible the organization of a congregation shall precede the administration of the sacraments." (Decision under Article 39, Church Order)

Do not forget, moreover, that the question still remains: what is the meaning of the stipulation in the Form, "... if it pleases God to make thy work fruitful unto the gathering of a church . . ."? On this also I am in disagreement with the Study Committee's report.

But about this next time, the Lord willing.

Present Truth Betrays Its Real Colors

Present Truth is a magazine which apparently has a rather wide readership among people of Reformed persuasion, including not a few who are also readers of our *Standard Bearer*. Although the originally favorable opinion of this magazine which some Reformed people had has probably changed somewhat, nevertheless occasionally I still hear favorable comments about it. Besides, the magazine itself claims to go under the banner of the Reformation. Its masthead boasts that it is "dedicated to the restoration of New Testament Christianity (why not Old Testament also? HCH) and committed to upholding the great Reformation principle of justification by faith." Again, it claims to proclaim boldly "those great principles upon which the Reformation was founded — namely: 1. *Sola gratia*. God's saving activity outside of us in the person of Jesus Christ is the sole ground of our salvation. (A very poor definition of *sola gratia* when you analyse it. HCH) 2. *Solo Christo*. Christ's doing and dying on our behalf is the sole basis of our acceptance and continued fellowship with God. (Again, a defective definition, as analysis will reveal. HCH) 3. *Sola fide*. The Holy Spirit's gift of faith through the hearing of this objective, historical gospel is the sole *means* whereby Christ's substitutionary life and death are imputed to us for justification unto life eternal . . ."

However, if there were any doubts about the heterodoxy of this magazine until now, these should now vanish like the morning mist in the light of the September, 1976 issue, which is devoted to the subject of election.

From a Reformed point of view, it would be difficult to find a more complete catalogue of errors with respect to cardinal Reformed truths.

It is not my purpose to offer an extensive critique of all that is stated by Editor Robert D. Brinsmead in his lengthy third article on "The Legal and Moral Aspects of Salvation," in which he especially writes about the subject of Election. To do so would require more time and space than it is worth; one could, in fact, fill an issue of our magazine with such critique.

But this is not necessary. I only wish to point out several very obvious errors which any Reformed reader could discern, and then sound the warning not to be misled by the alleged loyalty to Reformation principles of this widely distributed magazine. Whatever *Present Truth* may claim to be, it is our contention that it actually is an enemy of the principles of the Reformation.

In the space of this one issue one can without difficulty discover the following errors:

1. The denial of sovereign predestination. And as you might expect, this denial concentrates on the denial of sovereign reprobation! That viper is everywhere clasped to the bosom!

2. The denial of total depravity under the guise of teaching it. This is plain in the footnote on page 9, where we are told that total depravity "does not mean that man is as bad as he can be but that the whole man, even the best in man, is tainted with human sinfulness." That is a far cry from being by nature "incapable of doing any good, and inclined to all evil," as our Heidelberg Catechism puts it.

3. The denial of definite atonement. "Christ did not only purchase some men by His blood, but He bought the whole race of men and thereby gained the right to be the Judge of all." (p. 13).

4. The denial of regeneration and, with it, the denial that faith is the gift of grace. Mr. Brinsmead insists that justification by faith precedes regeneration, and he denies that the sinner must be regenerated by the Holy Spirit before he can believe and be justified.

5. The error of a sort of general offer of the gospel. This is couched in different terms than those to which we are accustomed, but the error is no less Arminian. Notice: "In Christ humanity is already justified and freed (Rom. 5:18; 6:7). When, by the power of His intercession and the agency of the Holy Spirit, Christ comes in the power of the gospel to the

sinner, justification and freedom verily draw nigh to him, and — irrespective of his moral condition — he is given the right to exercise the freedom which humanity has in Christ,” (p. 14). And if there remains any doubt about the above error, let it be noted that the next paragraphs make it plain that there can be and is a reaction of unbelief as well as a reaction of faith when Christ through His Spirit comes with the above objective gospel. After all, you see, it is up to Man!

I have one more grave objection to *Present Truth* in this issue. That objection is of an ethical nature. It is two-fold:

1. In the article to which I have referred above, the writer challenges Reformed Christians to depart from the position of Luther, Calvin, Westminster, and Dordrecht under the ruse of the Reformed motto, “reformed and always reforming.” This is deceit. Departure from the Reformed faith and “reformed and always reforming” have nothing in common. Be not deceived!

2. In his “Editorial Introduction” the writer tries to leave the impression of objectivity when he writes: “We have reprinted several articles on the subject of election by some notable scholars, not because we necessarily agree with them, but because (1) we should all know what significant points are being taught in the Christian church, and (2) we think the articles are significantly stimulating to challenge our thought and study on the question of election.” And later he writes: “We have not repeated the orthodox Reformed view of election, because that is well known.” And what happens? Without exception, *Present Truth* presents the writings of those who are enemies of the Reformed view. Besides, in his own article Mr. Brinsmead presents the views of men like Hoeksema and Van Til through the *misrepresentation* of that arch-enemy of the Reformed view, Dr. James Daane. Moreover, Brinsmead makes it very plain that he cites Daane with approval. Well, if Brinsmead thinks that Daane’s caricature of Hoeksema (and Van Til) is a correct representation of their “orthodox Reformed view of election,” then Mr. Brinsmead is only betraying his own ignorance of the orthodox Reformed view.

The trouble is that Mr. Brinsmead’s appeal to enemies of the Reformed view is no accident. He is in their camp!

A Sad Spectacle

In connection with our comments about *Present Truth* there is a very sad spectacle to which attention must be called.

We have already mentioned the fact that *Present Truth* capitalizes on the writings of James Daane in opposing the Reformed view of election. And while it is true that Daane has become notorious for his un-Reformed writings on this subject, the fact remains that he is supposed to be a Reformed man, and in name and official connection is a Christian Reformed minister. It is a sad spectacle when the writings of those who by solemn vow are supposed to be defenders of the Reformed faith can be used as ammunition against the Reformed faith.

As I said, however, we have come to expect such things from Dr. Daane.

An even sadder spectacle it is that *Present Truth* is able to use a publication of Reformed Fellowship in opposition to the truth of sovereign predestination. But this is exactly what has happened. In 1968 Reformed Fellowship published the book *Crisis in the Reformed Churches*. In that book, sad to say, there were not only some instructive chapters but also a veritable diatribe against the Reformed doctrine of reprobation by Dr. Klaas Runia. This chapter is entitled, “Recent Reformed Criticisms of the Canons.” At one time we criticized it in detail in connection with events “down under.” Lo and behold, it is this chapter which is now reprinted in *Present Truth*!

Sad spectacle!

Not long ago Reformed Fellowship in its *The Outlook* was critical of Harry Boer’s denial of reprobation. Rightly so!

But in its own publication Reformed Fellowship gives occasion for the enemies of the Reformed truth of reprobation to blaspheme!

It is time that Reformed Fellowship repudiates that publication and forbids further use of it. They should not go about hiding a lie in their right hand!

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TRANSLATED TREASURES

Acts of the Synod of Dordrecht

Historical Foreword Addressed To The Reformed Churches of Christ (3)

To this the States-General declared that this clause must not be understood as if by it they wanted something in the doctrine of these Churches changed, seeing that review does not always bring with it change, but can also imply establishment of the doctrine. But even so, they declared that the clause could not be left out without the preceding judgment of this Province, which had expressly added it. Accordingly, on March 15, 1606, they gave to the Deputies of the Churches letters of consent in which this clause was also included. And the Deputies sent these letters to the Churches of the respective Provinces, at the same time informing them how diligently they had attempted to have this clause omitted. The Netherlands Churches, having received these letters, were indeed

happy that after so many years of waiting consent had finally been won for the convening of a National Synod; but they were nonetheless not a little offended by this clause. The problem was not that they did not desire that the Confession and the Catechism should be revised at the National Synod in the ordinary and proper manner, but rather that they feared that those persons who were attempting to get changes in doctrine would thereby be emboldened, just as though by this clause they were allowed, by the public authority of the States, to upset and to change everything as they pleased, and as though these disputings and differences had come forth not out of curiosity, but out of a desire to fulfill the will of the States. The States-General also let it be known

in these letters, that they deemed it good that some learned and peaceable Theologians from every Province should be called together, in order that they might take counsel with them concerning the time, place, and manner of holding the National Synod. Matters standing thus, the annual Synod of the Churches of Holland was held at Gorinchem, in August, 1606. At that Synod, after the Deputies of the Churches had reported what they had done in the matter of the National Synod, and what the States had decided, they saw fit to instruct the Deputies diligently to persist in seeking the convening of a National Synod. And although the Synod judged that the Confession and the Catechism could be properly reviewed in the National Synod according to the normal procedure for such matters, nevertheless they wanted those who would be called together by the States of Holland from South Holland to the meeting at which they would deal with the time, place, and manner of holding the National Synod to be instructed to seek from the States-General, in the name of these Churches, that the aforementioned clause, for the reasons already cited, should be omitted from the letters of authorization, and that in the place of that clause some softer words, which would occasion less offense, should be used.

At the same Synod, the demand was made of all Ministers of the South Holland Churches and all Professors of Sacred Theology in the Academy of Leiden that they should immediately make known their suspicions and their insights against the doctrine contained in the Confession and the Catechism. For Arminius and the Ministers siding with him frequently tried to boast that they had very many such reservations. The Ministers were to do this in their Classis, and the Professors to the Deputies of the Churches. The purpose was that these objections might be brought lawfully to the National Synod, in so far as they could not be dealt with in the Classis. When this was placed before the Ministers who adhered to Arminius, they refused to present their reservations in the Classis. They claimed that they were not yet ready to do so. But they promised that they would do so at the right place and at the proper time. Arminius, who was also admonished about this by the Deputies of the Churches, replied that this could not take place at that time in an edifying manner, but that he would reveal them in full at the National Synod.

Not long after this, May 23, 1606, the States-General called together certain Theologians from every Province, namely: Johannes Leo, Johannes Fontanus, from Gelderland; Franciscus Gomarus, Jacobus Arminius, Johannes Uitenbogaard, and Johannes Becius, from South Holland; Werner Helmichius and Gerardus Hermannus, from North Holland; Hermannus Faukelius and Henricus

Brandius, from Zeeland; Everardus Botius and Henricus Johannes, from the Province of Utrecht; Sybrandus Lubbertus and Johannes Bogerman, from Friesland; Thomas Goswynius from Overijsel; Johannes Acronius and Johannes Nicaeus, from the city of Groningen and Ommelanden, in order to obtain their advice concerning the time, place, and manner of the holding of the National Synod. The States-General presented to them various items which were to be treated at this gathering. As far as the time was concerned, it was declared unanimously that it was necessary that the Synod should be convened immediately at the beginning of the coming summer, in the year 1608. Concerning the place, they declared that the most suitable place to hold the Synod would be in the city of Utrecht. And concerning the manner, they declared:

1. That the objections which would be treated at the Synod should be brought by every Provincial Synod to the National Synod;

2. That from every particular Synod, by vote of the same, four ministers and two elders should be delegated; but that in place of the elders they might also delegate men of singular learning, experienced in Theological matters, and of pious testimony, even though they were not serving in any ecclesiastical office;

3. That these Delegates would be given power not only to deliberate but also to make decisions and to give decrees in all matters treated at the Synod;

4. That the rule according to which judgment would be made in all differences concerning doctrine and morals would be the only Word of God, or the Holy Scripture;

5. That not only the Churches in the United Netherlands, namely, those of Dutch and of French language, but also those Churches of the Netherlands which are scattered outside of the Netherlands, whether under the cross or elsewhere, would be accredited to the National Synod;

6. That they should request the States-General to send their commissioners, men making confession of the Reformed Religion, to the Synod, and that these commissioners would preside over the order in the name of the States-General;

7. That also the Professors of Sacred Theology should be called to the Synod.

In all of these points they were agreed, but not in certain others. For Arminius, Uitenbogaard, and the two Delegates from Utrecht whom they had attracted to their side had pressed for these three items over against the others:

1. That for a decision and judgment of the Synod should be counted not that which was approved by

the majority vote of those who were delegated to the Synod, but that which would be decided by the votes of all delegated Ministers; and that by the name of Synod not only those delegated were to be understood, but also all the delegating ones themselves;

2. That the Delegates would always be free, as often as they pleased, and if they would find themselves aggrieved in any matter, to leave freely for the purpose of asking advice;

3. That the revision of the Confession and of the Netherlands Catechism was completely necessary, and that on this account they saw no reason why the clause concerning revision of those documents should not be placed in the letters of authorization.

The other Ministers and Professors judged:

1. That for anything to be counted as a decided opinion of the Synod that which would be decided either by unanimous vote or by the vote of the majority of the Delegates to the Synod would be counted. Further, that by the name of Synod were to be understood only those who, being lawfully delegated with power to decide, were gathered together;

2. That it would indeed be permitted freely to take time off to consult with one's own people, but

nevertheless thus, that the proceedings of the Synod were not to be disrupted, but that when, how, and for what reasons one should be excused should not be according to the whim of every individual Delegate, but according to the judgment of the whole Synod;

3. That the Confession and Netherlands Catechism might well be reviewed in so far as the Synod for proper reasons judged it necessary; that everyone would also be free to present to the Synod whatever he might think to have against those documents, so that the Synod might consider the same and pass judgment; but since the clause concerning revision, if it would be placed in the letters of authorization, would give to one an offense and to others too great a freedom to bring up all kinds of innovations, they judged that it was proper to request the States-General that for the peace of the Churches, this clause should be omitted in the letters of authorization; and instead, that these or similar words should be proposed, namely that the Synod is convened for the establishment, agreement, and furtherance of the pure and sound doctrine, for the preservation of peace and good order in the Church, and finally for the provision of the true religion among the inhabitants of these lands.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

A Mark of Distinction

Rev. John A. Heys

God's people are a peculiar people.

Be careful, however, when you say that. They are strange but not odd. They differ, but they are not queer. There is something unusual about them, but they are not squares.

The world likes to call us oddballs, queer, squares and the like. And indeed we do have sharp corners of faith and of principle and therefore are like squares in the midst of round characters that roll with every temptation and lust that presents itself. We do seem odd to those whose vision is distorted by the spiritual intoxication of the pleasures of the flesh, and whom the Word of God has never penetrated, off whom that Word rolls as water off the back of a

duck. We are queer in the sight of those whose citizenship is in the kingdom of darkness and whose lives have been fashioned and designed by the father of the lie. More than the clothing of the Pilgrims looked queer to the American Indians when they landed on our shores, the child of God today looks queer to the world — and indeed ought to look queer — in dress, practice, and speech, in the home he builds, in the God he serves, in the things wherein he finds pleasure, and in the deeds he condemns, in the way he conducts his business and in his Sabbath activities, and in fact all that he says and does.

We well remember going some ten years and more ago into the interior of the island of Jamaica, up into the hills near the little town of Latium. A native was

coming down the hill with his little son aged about two or three. This little child had never been far from home up in the hills amid subtropical vegetation of thick banana groves and coconut palm trees. He had never seen a tourist and knew only his own dark-skinned neighbors and friends. Suddenly confronted with a "white man" was too much. With a frantic scream he rushed to hold tightly to his father. And we can only wonder how queer, how strange, how utterly different we must have looked to that child. But do we really look so different from a spiritual point of view to the world? Is there not a sickeningly desperate attempt on the part of the church today to look as much like the world as it can? This is so tragic because the child of God is peculiar. He is different. He has an entirely different life, world-and-life view, set of standards, way of thinking, desires and ambitions, and consequently an entirely different conduct, behavior, and outward walk of life.

Remember, however, that the child of God is strange and different because all the rest of the human race has departed from the norm and he has been returned to it. Man was created in the image of God, and there is nothing queer and odd about that. This made him to be an extremely beautiful creature. But in Adam he lost it all and became a citizen of the kingdom of darkness. Created in the image of God, and in His likeness, he from a spiritual point of view now began to look like the devil. His thinking and willing became devilish, and his outward behavior revealed him to be an enemy of God. The whole human race became odd because man was now at odds with God. He who was created as God's friend-servant became His enemy. Therefore Paul writes in Romans 8:7, "The carnal mind (that is, the fleshly mind of our first birth obtained through fallen parents) is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God; neither indeed can be." He who was created saying "My God I love Thee" began with vehemence to say, "How I hate Thee!" He who lived for God and dedicated himself and the whole earthly creation in the service of God now elevated his own flesh to the throne to dedicate himself and all he has to satisfying the lusts of that flesh, and to denying the God Who created him and sustained him upon His earth with His rain and sunshine and food and drink. He who was created aiming his whole life at the glory of God turned his back upon God to deny Him His glory and seek it for himself. No wonder then that those who are restored to this former spiritual state look strange to those whose eyes and minds have become estranged from God.

Bear in mind that the lie of Satan was designed exactly to make God look strange to man who was made in His image. The lie gave man a strange presentation of the sovereign God Who made the whole

creation. The lie corrupted the truth concerning Him and presented a distorted picture of Him which man began to believe. Today the natural man cannot see God correctly. And he cannot understand the believer recreated in the image of Christ. He has spiritual astigmatism, a spiritually defective eyesight, a distorted picture in his mind of God; and therefore he must have queer ideas about the children that God brings forth through the Spirit of His Son. The believer is not queer, but the unbeliever has queer ideas concerning him. There is nothing odd about God's covenant people, but the covenant breaker is simply incapable of appreciating that covenant and has odd thoughts in regard to such a precious fellowship and friendship which God exercises with His people.

Christ, our covenant Head, the Last Adam, they did not understand and His ways they did not want. He looked too much like the God from Whom they were estranged. And so they nailed Him to the tree and could not understand why people would want to follow Him. In fact the whole idea of a covenant of God and a relationship of friendship with Him was so very contrary to all their thinking. The natural man wants to get as far from God as he can. God is ruled out of His whole creation. And today man will spend billions upon billions of dollars to send his rockets and men to the moon and to the planets to prove that there is no God and for proof of his atheistic evolution. He hates the very thought of God. That is, he hates the very idea of a God such as the one of Scripture, a sovereign, holy, and righteous God Who demands our whole life and upon Whom we depend for every breath of life.

The people God has called out of such a wicked world and formed for Himself to show forth His praises, with whom He will live in covenant fellowship and friendship, were in the Old Testament given a mark of distinction when God gave to Abraham the sign and seal of circumcision. Now here we had a real, visible mark that distinguished all of Abraham's seed from the rest of the human race of that day. Genesis 17:9-27. It was, however, a mark that had spiritual significance, being a sign and a seal of an inner, spiritual distinction that God had made between His people in Christ and the whole generation of Satan. Those who had the distinction of being chosen to be God's children received this sign and seal. A distinct and a distinguished people they are indeed: sons of God, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ of the whole creation.

This they must also believe, and therefore they must be circumcised and not fail to circumcise all those born in their family and all the servants which God gives to them together with the children born unto them. No, not every one of these is by that sign made to be a covenant child. Not all who were of the

children of Abraham were such peculiar people. But the sign, the mark must be placed upon all in the sphere of that covenant, and God will make distinct and different whom He sovereignly and eternally wills to have as His people. This we can never know, for we cannot read the heart. We can misjudge so quickly and so readily. We can be too quick in saying that one is not and too swift to judge that one is because of outward works which we see. Judas Iscariot was deemed by the eleven as such a child of God and was trusted with the bag and the money for the poor. The one thief hanging there on the cross was till the last hours of his life judged to belong to Satan's family of reprobates. But it is in the sphere of the covenant family and home that God is pleased to have covenant instruction given, and it is in such a sphere that He gathers His children and makes for Himself a distinct and spiritually different people.

And so Abraham was circumcised and bore a mark of belonging to this distinguished people that has God's covenant promises and in principle is God's friend among a host of His enemies. And to Ishmael he gave that sign. Upon all the servants which he had and upon all the male seed which they brought forth he placed this mark of distinction.

And of what was it such a mark of distinction besides declaring these to be God's peculiar people? Or if you will, what does this mark declare the work of God to be whereby He makes them distinct? There is a cutting away but not disfigurement, even as in baptism, which later on replaces this mark of distinction and gives us a new kind of mark; there is removal by washing but not robbing and depriving of something valuable. In baptism there is the removal of sin, a washing away of sin. It is a depriving of that which is obnoxious, a deliverance of that which is to our harm and hurt. And so in circumcision there was a cutting away, a removal symbolically of filth, and then again, a removal of the filth of sin. That makes us spiritually different from the world. That makes us a spiritually different people. The guilt of sin is gone from God's covenant people, and the power and corruption of sin have been removed. They are clean.

They are righteous and holy in His sight. They are renewed after the image of God's Son to be in the likeness of God once again. What a distinguished people they are! What a tremendous difference there is between them and the seed of the serpent!

That mark, of course, does not make them differ. The blood and Spirit of Christ do that. But that mark symbolizes such a difference. And such a mark, both in the giving of it and in the reception of it, is an exercise of faith on the part of this distinct people that such a difference does exist. It is God's sign and seal to them that He indeed makes such a distinction between men and has been pleased to realize it in their midst and homes and families. It also becomes an obligation to this peculiar people to make use of it to express their faith in God's promises and thereby to testify to the world their trust is in God as the God of their salvation.

Let us consider some New Testament truths in connection with this sacrament as given to Abraham in order to see the blessedness of the covenant and the beauty of the sign. Paul writes in Romans 7:18, "For I know that in me, (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing. . . ." And then in the next chapter, in Romans 8:7, 8 he writes, "Because the carnal (that is, the fleshly) mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Both texts speak of our sinful flesh. In it dwells no good thing. It is full of enmity against God. In it we cannot please God. All this would bar us from covenant fellowship with Him not only, but we would not want it in that enmity which fills this flesh. But the sacrament of circumcision (and for us today the sacrament of baptism) speaks of the cutting away of that flesh, separating us from the sinful flesh, delivering us from its enmity and wickedness. In circumcision only a little of the flesh was removed. But it was God's sign of delivering us from it all, even as baptism speaks of the washing of our whole body from sin. A distinguished people we are. And God's sacrament is indeed a mark of distinction wherein we may rejoice, and for which we may give thanks.

THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS

Christ: Very God and Very Man

Prof. Robert D. Decker

"We believe that by this conception, the person of the Son is inseparably united and connected with the human nature; so that there are not two Sons of God, nor two persons, but two natures united in one single person; yet, that each nature retains its own distinct properties. As then the divine nature hath always remained uncreated, without beginning of days or end of life, filling heaven and earth: so also hath the

human nature not lost its properties, but remained a creature, having beginning of days, being a finite nature, and retaining all the properties of a real body. And though he hath by his resurrection given immortality to the same, nevertheless he hath not changed the reality of his human nature; forasmuch as our salvation and resurrection also depend on the reality of his body. But these two natures are so closely united in one person, that they were not separated even by his death. Therefore that which he, when dying, commended into the hands of his Father, was a real human spirit, departing from his body. But in the meantime the divine nature always remained united with the human, even when he lay in the grave. And the Godhead did not cease to be in him, any more than it did when he was an infant, though it did not so clearly manifest itself for a while. Wherefore we confess, that he is *very God and very Man*: very God by his power to conquer death; and very man that he might die for us according to the infirmity of his flesh."

The Belgic Confession, Article XIX

This article speaks of a profound and great mystery, the union and distinction of the two natures, divine and human, in the Person of the Son of God. While much can and must be said in this connection, it remains the incomparable mystery of the wonder of the incarnation. With the words: "by this conception," the article refers to the subject of the previous article which concludes: "... so that in truth he is our Immanuel, that is to say, God with us." Thus Article XIX contains a most beautiful confession concerning the truth that Jesus Christ is "*very God and very man*."

This statement of our faith concerning the Mediator is the product of a long and involved struggle concerning the truth of the Person and natures of Christ. Early in its new dispensational history the church was forced by the great Christological controversies to crystallize and proclaim its faith concerning the wonder of the Person and natures of Christ. A variety of errors were quickly to appear on the scene and had to be dealt with by several great councils of the church. There was the error of Docetism. These denied the human nature of Christ. According to Docetism Christ possessed no real human nature, but only appeared in a human nature for a time. Another error was that of the Arians under the leadership of Arius. They denied the divine nature of Christ and insisted that while Christ was the best man who ever lived, He was nonetheless merely a man and not God. Thus the Arians were really the forerunners of modernism which teaches that Christ was the most "Godlike" of men, but only our example and not our divine Savior. Arianism was dealt with and condemned by the Council of Nicea in 325. In close connection with the error of Arius there arose a group known as the semi-Arians. They taught that Christ did not have the same nature as God, but a nature which was like God's in every respect. The Council of Constantinople in 381 condemned this error and reaffirmed the church's position against Arianism. At about the same time a man by the name of Apollinarius who was bishop of the church at Laodicea taught that Christ did have a complete human nature, but that the divine "logos" took the place of the human soul. This error was also con-

demned at Constantinople in 381. There was also the error of Nestorius. This man denied the unity of the two natures of Christ and, according to some, almost fell into the error of teaching that Christ had two persons. Finally there was the error of the Eutychians who denied the distinction between the two natures of Christ. These spoke of the two natures as being fused together into one. The Council of Ephesus in 431 condemned this error. All of these errors were referred to when the church finally adopted its definitive statement concerning the Person and natures of the Mediator at the great Council of Chalcedon in 451. This council declared that the two natures of Christ were united in the one divine Person: "inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ; as the prophets from the beginning have declared concerning him, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us." (Philip Schaff, *Credentials of Christendom*, vol. II, pp. 62, 63) The position of the church, as is also obvious from the carefully worded statement of Article XIX, has remained unchanged from the position of Chalcedon.

The church confesses with this Article that Christ is personally the Son of God Who is "inseparably united and connected with the human nature; so that there are not two Sons of God, not two persons, but two natures united in one single person." In other words, the one Person of the Son of God exists in two natures, the divine and the human. A person may be defined in general as an individual subsistence in a rational, moral nature. The person is the subject of all the actions and life of the nature. Or, if you will, the person is that which says "I" and which is the subject of all the activity of the nature in which it subsists. The person is that which remains unchanged through all the changes from birth, to life, to death which the nature undergoes. The Person from the cradle to the grave remains unchanged. It is always the same "I."

The Person of the Mediator is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Person of the only begotten Son of God. The Second Person of the Holy Trinity, therefore, assumed a human nature, grew up in that nature, lived in that nature, suffered and died in it, took it out of the grave and into the glory of heaven.

Secondly the article emphasizes the relationship between the two natures within the one divine Person. Concerning the distinction between the two natures, it says that they always retained their own individual properties. This means that the divine nature always remained “uncreated, without beginning of days or end of life, filling heaven and earth . . .” And, although the divine nature was always present, that nature “always remained united with the human, even when he lay in the grave. And the Godhead did not cease to be in him, any more than it did when he was an infant, though it did not so clearly manifest itself for a while.” The divine nature during the life of Jesus often remained hidden, wrapped in human flesh. Likewise does the human nature retain its properties. It remains “a creature, having beginning of days, being a finite nature, and retaining all the properties of a real body.” Not only so, but while through the resurrection from the dead, the human nature became immortal, “nevertheless, he hath not changed the reality of his human nature; forasmuch as our salvation and resurrection also depend upon the reality of his body.” Thus it is that the two natures of Christ always remain distinct and separate with respect to their own properties. This truth the Reformed churches maintain overagainst the error of Luthernism which, in connection with its doctrine of the Lord’s Supper, teaches the ubiquity of the human nature.

Article XIX also refers to the relation between the two natures from the point of view of their being inseparably united in the one Person of the Son of God. The two natures were so inseparably united, the article affirms, that they were not even separated by the death of Christ. This means, the article explains, that when Christ was dying He commended into the hands of His Father a real human spirit. Therefore also the divine nature of Christ was present with His human nature even when it lay in the grave, as the article explains: “. . . And His Godhead did not cease to be in him any more than it did when he was an infant.” This, it must be remembered, is a great mystery. Christ remained all through His life and in His death both very God and very man. It is true that the human nature only partially revealed the divine nature of Christ, while He was on earth. In glory, the human nature of Christ is the perfect instrument of

the revelation of the divine nature. We cannot, of course, see the divine nature either of God or of Christ. Yet when Christ is in heaven in all of His exalted glory, the divine nature will be fully and completely revealed to us for Christ is “. . . the brightness of his (God’s) glory, and the express image of his person.” (Hebrews 1:2) And, Christ is “the image of the invisible God . . . for it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell . . .” (Col. 1:15, 19)

This perfect union of the two natures in the one divine Person of the Son of God is necessary according to this article. It is necessary for Christ to be very God in order that He might conquer death by His power. Only as very God could Christ possess the almighty power necessary to endure the terrible death of the cross. Only as very God was Christ able to bear the full penalty against sin. Only as very God was Christ able to defeat death by His death. Only as very God was Christ able to die the death of the elect and deliver them from that terrible power. Likewise it was necessary for Christ to be very man in order that “he might die for us according to the infirmity of his flesh.” Christ had to die as very man because man had sinned. Man, therefore, had to pay the penalty for sin in order to satisfy the justice of God.

Thus too we see the practical significance of all these great truths. The perfect union between the divine nature and the human nature in the eternal Person of the Son of God is the only possibility of our salvation. This is the kind of Mediator we need in order to be saved. When we understand this truth, then we can also understand that our salvation is fully and perfectly accomplished by our God on our behalf. We need not doubt, therefore, but that all that is necessary for our final salvation and glory has been merited for us by Jesus Christ.

Finally, this doctrine is basic for the whole doctrine of the Covenant. In Jesus Christ, very God and very man, is the closest possible union between God and man. And it is because Jesus Christ is both very God and very man, that when the elect are engrafted into Christ by a true and living faith and become members of His body, they also dwell in perfect and most intimate fellowship and communion with God in the eternal covenant of grace. It is in Christ that God tabernacles with His people. It is in Christ in the highest possible sense of the word that God dwells with His people in friendship and fellowship. In Christ God becomes their God and they become His people. In Christ they enjoy the blessings of His presence and communion for ever and ever. Christ is the temple of the living God in Whom dwells both God and the elect by a true and living faith.

Know the standard and follow it. Read THE STANDARD BEARER!

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

Letter to the Members of the Congregation at Philadelphia

Dec. 1, 1976

To the members of the church at Philadelphia,

In my last letter to you, written about a month ago, we began a discussion of this rather common tendency among some members of the Church to form small groups of Bible-studying Christians who meet together in the homes of the members for personal edification and spiritual strengthening. I mentioned to you the fact that this movement, increasingly popular, has in some instances become a substitute for church attendance, and has even become a substitute for membership in the church. In fact, sometimes groups of believers have withdrawn from the established Church and have been content to be "members" of such an informal group without joining another Church or without organizing a congregation of their own.

They have, for one reason or another, become dissatisfied with the established Church; they are disillusioned with a Church which has apostatized; they have concluded that the Church as institute has outlived its usefulness. They are content to go their independent and informal way. They find that the spiritual edification which they need is better found in such small groups of believers meeting together for personal Bible study and devotions than in the formal worship services of the established Church.

Last time I wrote that we were going to take a closer look at this whole tendency, to evaluate it from an historical point of view and from the point of view of Scripture.

Let us then get on with the matter.

I said in my last letter that this phenomenon was not new in the Church. This is true. Especially at times when the Church sank deeply into dead orthodoxy and when heresy was rampant in the Church, believers would come together in the homes to study the Scriptures, to read the writings of pious men of God from former years, to pray together, and to build one another up in the faith. You must remember that in the years prior to the early part of the 19th Century, most of the Churches of the Reformation in Europe were State Churches. Earlier than this, of course, had been the Separatist Movement in

England; but even before that movement, the Church in England was an Established Church under the control and direction of the State. In many cases this State control was, at least in part, responsible for the decline in doctrine and life which characterized the "main-line" Churches. And, indeed, in England, when the Separatists left the Church, there were many believers who did not, for one reason or another, go along with this Separatist Movement and who, in the State Church, formed such "home-study groups."

But in the early part of the 19th Century, in almost all the countries on the continent, there were movements such as this. Groups of dissatisfied believers, unhappy with the state of affairs within their denominations, formed informal groups which met within homes to gain for themselves what they could no longer get from dead and heretical preaching within their denominations. In many instances these groups were directly related to movements of secession — not only in the Netherlands, but also in such countries as Germany and Switzerland. Yet, when new denominations were formed by secession movements, not all those who were dissatisfied with their denominations went along. In many instances people felt a certain obligation to stay with their mother Church. They refused to separate and go along with those who departed from their mother Church. They stayed where they were. But they chose to satisfy that which was lacking in their spiritual life by means of such "Gezelschappen" or fellowship groups.

Now, you must clearly understand that there is nothing wrong in itself in groups of believers getting together to turn to God's Word, study its truths, mutually seek to understand better the Scriptures and edify one another in the faith. In fact, this is indeed part of the functioning of the office of believers. Far better it is for God's people, when they come together for a social visit, to talk about spiritual things than to discuss things of little or no value, to engage in unseemly hilarity or, worse, to spend the time in gossiping. And indeed, insofar as these "Gezelschappen" in the early part of the 19th Century led to the Secession Movement (under De Cock, Brummelkamp,

Van Raalte, et. al., in the Netherlands) these groups served a good purpose.

But the fact is that these same groups assumed a different form in subsequent years. In some instances, for example, groups of people would come together because they considered themselves the "kernel" within the Church. This was often found in those Churches which emphasized a wrong conception of conversion. The majority of the congregation were unconverted because as yet they had had no definite "conversion experience." But there were some who did consider themselves "converted" and who could point to some usually dramatic incident in their life which was considered an experience sealing their conversion. These "converted" would consider themselves the "kernel" in the Church and would meet together as a kind of a church within a church. They were the true elect within the Church, the truly converted within the outward structure of the Church.

When such groups came together, one of the chief purposes of such meetings was to discuss and perhaps evaluate their conversion experiences and to tell one another what "great things God had done for them." These groups became highly mystical and subjective; and the whole concept fostered pride — as anyone can readily see.

In development of another sort, and this especially in recent years, small groups of believers, totally unhappy with the situation in their mother Church, and sometimes not knowing where else to turn, withdrew from their mother church and formed small and relatively informal groups which never became an instituted Church but remained unorganized groups which met on the Lord's Day to read old writers and to study and pray together. I recall the time I talked with such a group. They assured me that they received the preaching of the Word through the old writers who spoke to them more powerfully than any minister they had ever heard. They said that their experience of the communion of saints, while somewhat restricted here on earth because of the smallness of their group, was nevertheless primarily with the saints in heaven. They admitted that it was difficult to have a celebration of the sacraments, but that they could themselves administer these sacraments when the need arose. There are many such groups around today. They seem to have become so disillusioned with the organized Church that they are frightened at the very thought of becoming a part of such a group again.

I said in my last letter to you that the various forms of Pentecostalism are other manifestations of this same general tendency. Those who depart from their denominations and join themselves to various Pentecostal groups express that their reasons for doing this are mainly that there is a serious lack in the

organized Church. Perhaps this lack is apostasy from the truth. Perhaps the Church they left is characterized by worldlimindedness. Perhaps the Church of their birth is fallen into dead orthodoxy. Perhaps a sort of hierarchy of ecclesiastical assemblies had choked the spiritual life of the saints and had made effective protest against wrongs impossible. Perhaps a certain "spirituality" is lacking for which their souls thirst. Perhaps the Church which was once their home is too much devoted to the intellectual, to doctrine, and not sufficiently devoted to the emotional, to experience. Or perhaps there are combinations of the above which form the reasons for their leaving.

In any case, they find life among "Pentecostals" much more worthwhile because there free rein is given to the spirit, experience is emphasized, Godly life is stressed, fellowship is rich and full; in short, there is no stifling institutional structure which makes the spiritual life of the saints difficult at best and impossible in many cases.

We must examine these trends of our day and test the spirits to see whether they be of God. But we must do this in the light of God's Word.

Before we go into this in any kind of detail, I want to assure you that in these letters I do not intend to give a lengthy critique of modern day Pentecostalism. Enough has been written about this so that you can discover easily the evils and dangers of this movement without my writing about it. Nor do I want to criticize in detail the whole idea of "Gezelschappen." At least, I do not intend to criticize these movements in detail from the viewpoint of their dangers and evils. I am particularly interested in the question of the importance of the Church as institute in the life of the child of God. That is the main purpose of my writing. I do not want to see you tempted to look askance at the church institute and abandon that institute as a hopeless structure which is incapable of meeting your spiritual needs. This is the real danger, and this needs our emphasis.

Nor do I intend to defend the institute of the Church at all costs. There are some who define patriotism as being, "My country, right or wrong." I am not going to defend loyalty to an ecclesiastical institute on the grounds of: "My Church, right or wrong." The question is not whether there are things wrong with the instituted Church or whether all is well. It simply is a fact that cannot be contradicted that the movement towards fellowship groups is often born in a frustration with the Church institute which is completely justified. But the question is whether to leave the church institute and establish such an independent, unorganized, "informal" group is the solution to the problem.

Our discussion will therefore be somewhat narrow;

but this is because I am primarily interested in being positive. We shall have to see that the institution of the Church is ordained by Scripture; and, seeing this, we shall have to see that the Church institute is a necessary part of the life of the believer; that, in fact, he cannot get along without it.

But we will wait with this until our next letter. In the meantime, think on these things, and let me know your reaction to them.

With fraternal greetings,
H. Hanko

ALL AROUND US:

The R.E.S. and Sunday Observance

The Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands

The "Mark of the Beast"?

Kuitert on Election

"Concerned Presbyterians" no more

Rev. G. Van Baren

The R.E.S. and Sunday Observance

The Reformed Ecumenical Synod, meeting in Cape Town, South Africa this past summer, faced the question of a united stand of all Reformed churches on the issue of observance of Sunday. In the *R.E.S. News Exchange*, it is reported that in 1968 the matter of Sunday observance was raised, and in 1972 an international committee was appointed to study the issue. They were to give attention to:

1. the existing views among Reformed churches,
2. the hermeneutical problems underlying these differences,
3. the significance of the history of salvation for our understanding and observance of the Fourth Commandment, and
4. the practical implications of the Fourth Commandment for both the older and younger churches.

One would think that among Reformed churches there ought to be no real question on the proper use of Sunday. But evidently such is not the case. In addition, the R.E.S., which presumably exists to provide guidance and leadership within the Reformed churches, did not dare to take a stand. Division with the R.E.S. was clear-cut — so a decision was taken to "accept with brotherly forbearance both views." The report states that:

The study committee produced two reports which

varied so greatly that they could not be fused into one without doing injustice either to the one or to the other, or to both. The advisory committee of the RES analyzed carefully both reports and then proposed that the Synod not choose between them but accept with brotherly forbearance both views as being in the Reformed tradition. It is expected that this will terminate the discussion in the RES, for the time being.

Faced, however, also with the growing secularism of society and its erosion of the faith-life of God's people, the Synod urged that all the churches "should stand together on their united conviction that the Lord's day has been given for the good of man, to be used, like all God's gifts, to the glory of God." The Synod called upon its member churches to "maintain the observance of the Lord's day as a day of rest, worship, good works and Christian joy." The Synod, upon recommendation of the advisory committee, also adopted a "Message to the Churches" on the Sabbath/Sunday issue.

It is interesting that the report mentions the attempt to "fuse" two reports (which was impossible in this case). A better word might perhaps be: "compromising." And when "compromising" is impossible, then one accepts with "brotherly forbearance" two opposing positions. Such decisions do not bode well for the R.E.S. Perhaps at a later date, when these reports are available, we can present a summary of them.

The same R.E.S. news letter reports that three more denominations were added to the membership of the organization. All three are from South Africa and are black. This brings membership of R.E.S. to 38 denominations and above 5,000,000 members.

The Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands

The *Clarion*, paper of the Canadian Reformed Churches, reports on the meeting of the Reformed Churches (Synodical) of the Netherlands. The Synod is an on-going gathering that meets this year until Nov. 27th. To be treated there is a book of Dr. Kuitert entitled, "Zonder Geloof vaart niemand wel." There are questions to be treated concerning restructuring of the consistory; child or adult baptism; church-visitation; reports from the W.C.C. and R.E.S. meetings. By a vote of 38-28 the Synod decided to maintain its decision of 1914 that those who reject infant baptism cannot be considered eligible for the offices of elder or deacon. The Synod is also discussing the question of participation of children in the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

The "Mark of the Beast"?

An interesting article is found in the November 1976 issue of *Reader's Digest*. Entitled, "Coming Soon: 'Electronic Money'," it speaks of the time in the near future when money will hardly be used any more. Rather, by means of a card assigned to all, and a secret number which an individual must use in connection with the card, deposits can be made at banks, purchases will be made, etc. But even those who say this will surely come, and that it will be good, feel some nagging doubts. The article states:

An even greater worry is the threat to individual and business privacy. At the push of a button these computers can instantly array on an electronic screen all your financial transactions — your earnings, debts, where you travel, how you spend your money. Although such information is closely guarded, the fact that it is accessible to someone in the bank, or to interlopers who may tap into the network, leads to the fear that it could be used for blackmail or for unwanted commercial solicitations.

It is also true that the government, according to court decision, has the "right" to examine anyone's bank account and transactions. How easily such can lead to the time when the antichrist will have complete control on buying and selling — and business will be conducted only by those who have the card and the assigned number! This is all coming. One cannot stop "progress." But we are reminded that the one who refuses to bow before the antichrist, will lose his "right" to a number. Even the article reminds of what could happen by one who loses his card and number:

In this new, totally electronic age, the enforcement of financial obligations will present few difficulties, since failure to pay up could be disastrous. The culprit might even be forced to undergo what EFT men call "plastic surgery" — the cutting off of his bank cards. Economically speaking, this would make him a non-person.

The same magazine contains the interesting paragraph on "Galloping Knowledge":

A century ago, it may have been possible for a truly well-educated person to absorb almost all the important knowledge accumulated by mankind. Today, human knowledge is expanding so rapidly that no one can catch up with it.

"By the time the child born today graduates from college," says Robert Hilliard, chief of educational broadcasting at the Federal Communications Commission, "the amount of knowledge will be four times as great. By the time the same child is 50, it will be 32 times as great — and 97 percent of everything known in the world will have been learned since that child was born."

The memorizing of reams of facts will not be necessary; they will be quickly available in computers. But future man will need great knowledge if only to know what it is he wants to know.

Kuitert on Election

Present Truth magazine of September 1976, quotes from Dr. Harry M. Kuitert who wrote in his book, *Signals from the Bible*, on the subject of election. Striking, that a "Reformed" theologian can easily twist the truth of election into something entirely different from that traditionally taught in Reformed churches, and maintained in the Reformed creeds. He writes:

The main issue of the Bible's message of God's election is not what we sometimes call predestination. It is rather God's preference, as He brings it to light. But is this democratic of God, to prefer one people? Does the word "preference" soften the blow; is not preference about the same thing as arbitrary choice?

To answer this question we have to keep our Bible open. We should ask ourselves *whom* it is that God prefers. We can best get at this by reading the story of Jesus Christ, for He stands in our midst as *the* representative of this God who has preferences. Anyone who has seen Him at work has seen God Himself at work (John 14:9).

For whom does Jesus Christ show preference? Is it not clear on every page of the Gospel? He prefers the lost, the publicans and sinners, the sick and rejected. In a word, He prefers all those in need of His saving hand.

This is the golden thread that binds Romans 9 together. Paul is not dealing with the question of the *pre*-destiny of some individuals; he is revealing God's preferences.

"Concerned Presbyterians" no more.

A small paper published periodically by concerned Presbyterians of the Southern Presbyterian Church has printed its last paper recently. This group has been struggling against the inroads of modernism and liberalism in the Southern Presbyterian Church and against its proposed merger with the United Presbyterian Church of the north. But the task has proved

hopeless. First, a split in the churches, when the Presbyterian Church in America was founded with over 400 congregations, took many of the conservatives from the larger denomination. Secondly, the last Assembly of the larger denomination showed clearly in its voting that it was the liberal who was firmly in control of the church. One can mourn when voices are increasingly being silenced and objections to the modernism within denominations cease.

STUDIES IN ISAIAH

A Hack-Horse For Sin

Rev. Robt. C. Harbach

"And lambs graze as (in) their pastures and deserts (where the flocks got) fat will sojourners (nomad shepherds) consume" (v. 17, Heb.). 1. *Here the second woe ends, the longest of them all.* The literal fulfillment of this we see today where modern Jerusalem, about thirty-five feet above the ancient Jerusalem, is a Mohammedan city, and much of Palestine is pasture land for Arab shepherds. Sheep graze over the ruins of Jerusalem as their pasture. (Once Jehovah's vineyard, now a pasture!) These sheep are God's people from among the Gentiles. By nature these sheep were aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of the promise, Christ's other sheep, not of the Israelite fold. These feed on the pastures where Judah's flocks had once gotten fat but were left desolate by rulers, elders, scribes and Pharisees, pastors who would not feed the flock. 2. *Deliberate enslavement to sin.* "Woe to those who draw iniquity with the cords of evil, and the sin as cords of the cart" (v. 18, Heb.). Not so much drawn away by and to sin as their toilsomely tugging it along after themselves by tempting temptation, soliciting the illicit and dragging it all out by perverse persistence in the evil ways of bold contempt of God and His warnings. Sin lashed and drove them as teamsters did their nags, yet "Ephraim was a young trained heifer loving to tread the threshing floor" (Hos. 10: 11, MLB).

This is the third woe, pronounced against the apostate church. The first woe was against covetous, insatiable Mammon worshipers; the second against hedonistic debauchees, the third, here, against supposedly strongminded men, free-thinkers, naturalistic rationalists; the fourth against teachers of "new

morality," moral perverts; the fifth against the bacchanalian ways of government men. There is nothing but woe for the wicked and the apostate church.

The picture here is of a draw-horse, a work-horse, a hack-horse. It is hitched with the cords of vanity. The traces are lighter than air, yet they are as heavy as a cart-rope. The hack-horse is thus harnessed and enslaved to sin with froth, fiction and sham with a cob-web righteousness. It is a picture of the folly of sin, the slavery of sin, the exceeding deceitfulness of sin. Solomon's vanity and hobby was that he collected women, yet he was not a Don Juan nor a Rudolph Valentino. He was a hack-horse to sin! In man's own view he sees himself entangled only with a gossamer thread, but in God's view, he is held in check with a cart rope heavy harnessed to a wagon-load of iniquity and sin. He is a willing slave, drudge, lackey, and hack-horse for sin.

The picture is of a thin, scrawny, worn out equine bag of bones locked in harness to a huge wagon loaded with granite boulders. It is the picture of a man under the influence of the gospel who is a sermon-taster for the purpose of criticizing the minister's pronunciation, his grammatic structure, even the theme and divisions of his discourse. He is a spiritual trifler, like the courtier who stands before the king playing with a feather. On Pentecost Sunday he draws pictures of cloven tongues of fire on his thumb nail, which curiosities he shows off to his idle friends. He is known by his friends: Talkative, Short-wind, Sleepy-head, and No-heart, along with his girl-friend, Dull. These have no interest in the gospel, no concern to hear the preaching of the word, or to read and

study Scripture. They despise that which they trifle with. They are butterfly religionists. They react to the things of God and to life itself with one perpetual giggle. Yet they easily develop into malicious scoffers. They had better break these cords of vanity, these strings of soap bubbles which characterize their life, before they become cart-ropes, before these silly sheer threads become steel cables, before they become wrapped up in a hawser like an over-wound mummy.

How did they become so frivolous? They began by questioning the truth. They questioned the doctrine of the infallibility of Scripture, questioned limited atonement, efficacious grace, effectual redemption, the doctrine of creation, of election and reprobation, in fact, they questioned the Reformed Confessions. To those who remain faithful to these things they say, "You amateur theologians! you think all truth is hammered out on your anvil!" They say, "The truth is too broad and too complicated that we can be sure of its meaning." So they question it. Take a statement like that in Acts 13:48, "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." They question that. If the statement had been the opposite, they would have questioned that, too. But they will make it say the opposite, anyway, as though the Lord had said, "As many as believed were ordained to eternal life." They think it smart to question or twist Scripture. They will take either side to refute the other, and neither side to defend. To their sophisticated mind there is no up or down; they like to compromise, and hang somewhere in between. Their "hang-up" is their being "in betweenites." For them, there is no true or false, no concept of black or white, no right or wrong; they prefer subtleties and subterfuges. They are like Janus, or Mr. Facing-both-ways. They have no "yes" or "no" except as they are regulated by the clock, the weather, and the pocket book. They will not be catechized, for they would catechize Christ. Like the skeptic, they are sewed up tight with truth-denying cords.

This poor, decrepit hack-horse drags along pulling the fear of man behind him. Someone startles him with, "You go with that Reformed bunch in the little white church!" To which the answer may be, "I'm too old to change," or, "my parents make me." When it is further demanded, "How do you stand a sermon for a whole hour?" (or for forty-five minutes!), he is nearly ready to apologize to Satan. The hack-horse will let one pull one ear this way and the other that. He is more concerned with the smile of a frivolous friend or a fool's opinion than seeking first the kingdom of God. So a young woman may be bound by the cords of vanity to win a vain, empty, brainless man; and a young man may deny the faith to be known as a free-thinker or a man of culture. Both the young woman and the young man may be slaves of

custom, style, the passing fad, of what other people think, slaves of the crowd. They pull the rickshaw now, but soon will be staggering to haul Juggernaut. They think themselves hung about with daisy chains, but will find them iron shackles, and that they love them.

The load of sin always increases, as in the days of the horse-drawn garbage wagons the weight increased as the day wore wearily on, while the poor nags struggled to keep on with their toil. So it is with those who make long pilgrimages on their knees or wash in the Ganges, the world's most horribly polluted river. The National Geographic Magazine once showed Hindu holy men with their backs pierced so a thong could be drawn through the skin, thus to hitch them to heavy loads which they pulled, parading their pitiful "piety." Self destruction also becomes a game in the name of Bacchus, god of the bottle, or in the name of Aesculapius, god of the syringe. Demons gloat over such fools. Slaves to sin drag their dreadful loads as though it were a great sport.

Then the road worsens. The load becomes heavier, the way stonier, the ruts deeper, the grades steeper, the pot-holes boggier. The cup of sin, at first, is like a bubble-headed goblet of champagne, but they who drink it must do so to the very dregs of gall. The old nag, after fifty years of hauling the load of sin, looks like an old hag chased by fifty howling wolves. Harnessed and harassed by sin, loaded down with it, driven by it, they are finally wrecked by it. Then the cords of sin eternally hold the sinner. The unjust remains unjust still, and the filthy, filthy still (Rev. 22:11a). Judas enmeshed with threads of Utopia became bound with cables of unavailing remorse. Samson entangled in the nylon net of a woman's wiles was soon captive to a Philistine tow-rope to his undoing. He was Delilah's hack-horse before he became the Philistine's blind mill-horse. A man is a slave to lust before he is a slave to the devil.

In the end, the load finally crushes the hack-horse. The devil drives him onward and downward pell-mell along the precipitous slope where it is impossible to turn back or aside; then the load itself overtakes and crushes him. They who engage in joint worship with Romanists and Modernists are hack-horses for the pope. Adherents to the ecumenical movement are pack-horsing for Antichrist. The devil is not finished yet, driving such abjects as Belshazzar the drunkard, Dives the glutton, Ahasuerus the lecher, Demas the Mammon-lover, and Gehazi and Judas the greedy.

This old, bony, sway-backed, tottering clod-hopper is ready to fall to pieces. But at day's end it cannot be taken from harness, nor removed from the traces for fear the miserable, ancient carcass could never be hitched up to get going again. It stands trembling, dozing, and fitfully dreaming until awakened at dawn

with the sharp crack of the hard-taskmaster's whip. Who can break this slave out of its bondage? Who wants to? Helplessly and hopelessly bound, it perishes in its slavery.

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself was bound with our sins. At Gethsemane He was bound with chains. Before Pilate and Herod He was bound. So when He

was scourged and while bearing the cross to Golgotha. He was bound with nails. Our sins riveted Him to the gibbet. There He was our Substitute. He took the place of condemned bondslaves. Because He was so bound we are able to overcome the devil, bind the strong man, spoil his house and trample him vanquished under our feet. Then we go on to sing the song of the soul set free! Hallelujah!

QUESTION BOX

About Retirement of Ministers

(continued)

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

The final question is: how can we determine when a minister should retire? The Church Order speaks of being "rendered incapable of performing the duties of their office." Hence, the answer is: a minister should retire when he becomes incapable of performing the duties of his office. This is a rather simple matter to determine, of course, in those instances in which a minister is obviously physically incapacitated. In other instances, however, that "incapable" is a bit more difficult to interpret. When is a man incapable of performing the duties of his office by reason of age? Does he have to be so feeble that he cannot mount the platform? Must he be so full of infirmities of body and mind that preaching becomes an obvious impossibility? I do not believe this. I believe that especially in our day, with all its pressing problems and conflicts and its busy life, our congregations need alert, vigorous ministers who have understanding of the times, who are capable of intense, vigorous, fresh preaching, who are capable of the same kind of instruction in catechism and societies, who are capable of positive leadership and guidance, and who are capable of alert and vigorous pastoral care. The minister himself must, in the first instance, confront the question whether he is still capable of such a ministry; and if he is not, then he should honestly face the necessity of retirement. There is no shame in that — especially not when a minister has worked hard and long all his life and has been through the mill of conflict. And our churches can and will honorably

provide for such men, and also continue to esteem them and appreciate them as long as they are among us. And if a minister should fail to see his own incapability, then his consistory and congregation will do him and themselves a favor by helping him to see it.

Can any guidelines be suggested according to which this question should be answered? I believe there are such objective guidelines, and I will suggest a few obvious ones. They are guidelines for the minister himself, first of all.

1. Is the minister preaching old sermons or reworked old sermons rather frequently? Yes, I know those old sermons may be good; and I know how any minister goes about justifying the use of those old sermons. The fact is, however, that when any minister — young or old — uses old sermons, he is not developing and growing. And no one stands still: if he does not develop and grow, he goes backward. This will inevitably lead to stale preaching, whether in Heidelberg Catechism preaching or in so-called "free material" preaching.

2. Is the preaching intense, vigorous, sharp? Or is it rather hum-drum and matter-of-fact? Is the congregation swept up and carried along in the preaching, so that it becomes intensely involved and interested? If a minister has lost the physical and mental stamina and vigor to preach in this intense manner, and if preaching becomes a chore that has to be gotten out

of the way twice a week, it is time to quit.

3. Does the preaching break new ground as far as its subject material is concerned, or does it cover ground familiar to all and which has probably been covered umpteen times before? Is the subject material such that the sermon is just about predictable to anyone reasonably familiar with Protestant Reformed preaching? If the answer is Yes, this is an indication of lack of exegetical initiative and development.

4. Does the preaching address itself to current needs, current dangers, current theological and doctrinal developments and trends, and does it do so pertinently? If it does not, this is an indication that the minister is not keeping up in his reading and studying.

5. Does the minister continue to prepare well and thoroughly for the catechism classes and for Bible discussion in the societies? Or does he give this preparation a lick and a promise, expecting to bank on his experience and his backlog of knowledge?

6. Does the minister have good contact with the young people of the congregation? Does he know them, know their peculiar problems and needs? Does he work with them and give them counsel and leadership? Or is he out of touch with them?

7. Does the minister continue to be active in pastoral labors faithfully? Or does he have no time for the sheep? Does he labor pastorally only by reaction, that is, only when confronted by some specific need or problem? Or does he know the flock intimately and labor positively and preventively?

8. Does the minister furnish good, positive leadership in the consistory? Or does he seek to avoid or to postpone dealing with problems, trying, perhaps, to get meetings finished as soon as possible?

9. Does the minister continue to do all the tasks in the congregation which he formerly did, or does he complain that he has too much work and try to escape work which would ordinarily and routinely be expected of him?

10. Is the minister willing to do his part in denominational activities, such as classical and synodical committees, etc.? Or does he decline these duties in behalf of the churches in common?

These are just a few suggestions. Undoubtedly more such questions can be raised. They are questions which are not necessarily limited in their value to ministers faced by the question of possible retirement because of age. Some careful, objective introspection and self-evaluation is good for any minister. But in this connection, I only wanted to point out that a minister should approach the entire question of whether he is or is not ripe for retirement as objectively as possible, and that there are indeed some test-questions which can be confronted.

Come, my soul, cast off despair
To Gethsemane repair;
Hear the suff'ring Surety cry,
"Father, let this cup pass by."

Wrath Divine upon Him lay, —
All His followers fled away, —
Hear Him utter, with a groan,
"Father, let thy will be done."

This was love beyond degree,
Jesus agonized for me,
Bore my guilt — tremendous load!
Saved me with His precious blood.

Yes, my Saviour suffered thus,
To redeem me from the curse;
He has vanquished death and hell:
I shall ever with Him dwell.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The congregation of the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church of Wyckoff, New Jersey was deeply saddened by the death of one of its members, MR. CHARLES DE GROOT.

Our prayer is that our gracious and merciful God and Father may continue to comfort the bereaved widow and families with the blessed comfort that He alone is able to give. We encourage all by the truth that while this is indeed a great loss for the family and congregation, it is a great gain for him, as he has entered into the house of many mansions of the Father that the Lord Jesus Christ has prepared for all His saints.

On behalf of the Congregation,
Rev. Arie den Hartog

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Mr. and Mrs. Society of Hull (Iowa) Protestant Reformed Church wishes to extend their sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Duane Brummel in the loss of her father, MR. JOHN COLEBRANDER.

We pray that the Lord will sustain them in their sorrow.

"— the Lord thy God, He it is that doth go with thee; He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." (Deuteronomy 31:6).

Egbert Gritters, Pres.
Mrs. Don Hoksbergen, Sec'y.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On December 14, 1976, the Lord willing our beloved parents, MR. AND MRS. JOHN C. FLIKKEMA, SR. commemorate their 25th wedding anniversary. We, their children, are thankful to God for them, and express to them our gratitude for the good instruction we have received. It is our prayer that our God will continue to be with them and with us. May we together seek to serve and praise Him who has so richly blessed us.

"Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God." (Psalm 146:5).

Their children,
John and Ruthanne Flikkema
and John Michael
Steve and Karen Ophoff
Thomas
Gail
Steven

News From Our Churches

Our church in Hull, Iowa has extended a call to Rev. Mark Hoeksema from a trio which included Rev. Dale Kuiper and Rev. Gise Van Baren.

The following appeared under the heading of 'Church News' in the October 10 Edmonton bulletin: "Rev. B. Woudenberg of Lynden, Washington has accepted the call extended to him by our church in Kalamazoo, Michigan. He will leave for his new 'station' in the Lord's service this month. Our minister, Rev. Moore, is the first one to fill a classical appointment in the Lynden church. It is an honor and a joy for us to do this for our sister church in Lynden, as we have received so much from them! God has used their prayers and labours and especially the labours of their minister for our strengthening and comfort in the most holy faith. Rev. Moore is scheduled to to to Lynden for the Sundays of November 7, 14, and 21." Rev. Woudenberg made many trips over the mountains between Lynden and Edmonton to meet with the group in Edmonton both before and after they organized as a Protestant Reformed Church.

Those of us in the United States look forward to celebrating our National Day of Thanksgiving toward the end of November, but did you know that our congregation in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada celebrated the Canadian National Day of Thanksgiving on October 11?

Many of our churches across the land sponsored public programs in recognition of Reformation Day, October 31. In the Grand Rapids area Rev. M. Joostens spoke in First Church on October 29. His topic was "The Priesthood of All Believers." Rev. Van Baren, who was chairman for the evening, brought greetings from our congregation in Prospect Park, New Jersey, where he had spoken for a Reformation Day observance meeting the previous evening. The Men's Society of our South Holland, Illinois church sponsored a lecture on October 27 in their church. Rev. Herman Veldman of our South-west Church in Wyoming, Michigan spoke on "Evangelism in the Light of the Reformation." Coffee and doughnuts were to be served afterwards in the church basement. The Men's Society in Randolph, Wisconsin planned to sponsor a public lecture on November 11 in their church. They invited Rev. George Lubbers of Pella, Iowa to speak on the subject "The Decalogue and the Reformation." Moving a

little farther to the west we find that the consistory of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Isabel, South Dakota sponsored a public lecture on October 29 also. Their pastor, Rev. Miersma, was to speak on "The Reformation and the Holy Scriptures." Our church in Loveland, Colorado commemorated the Reformation with a public program in the Lesh Jr. High School in Fort Collins. Rev. G. Lanting's lecture topic was "The Reformation, A Liberation of the Bible." At least some of the lectures mentioned above and many from past years are available to you on tape recordings. Write to the *Standard Bearer* Business Office for information. The address is inside the front cover of this magazine.

The Reformed Witness Hour radio program is now heard at a new time in the Randolph, Wisconsin area. The new schedule is Sunday morning at 8:30 on WLKE, 1170.

The opening of the new Christian School in Hull, Iowa was celebrated with a dedication program on October 8. Open house was held from 5:30 to 8:00 PM. The dedication program was scheduled to begin at 8:00 and included special numbers by the school children and an address by Rev. Kortering on the subject, "The Educated Pilgrim." Refreshments followed the program.

On August 21 and 22, 1976, our church in South Holland, Illinois celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of that congregation. In honor of that joyful occasion, the church published a rather attractive booklet. The booklet contains a number of interesting items including a photostatic copy of the records of the official organization meeting of the church on August 24, 1926. This record is written in the Dutch language. For those of us who are not too well acquainted with Dutch, a translation is included. Also included is a message from their present pastor, a brief history of the congregation, pictures of some of the 'sons' of the congregation, including Rev. George Lanting and Rev. Gise Van Baren, and 4 young men now attending our seminary and two who are entering pre-seminary training. Two pages are devoted to a brief history of the Christian School opened by members of the congregation in 1961. A booklet very well done! Our Hudsonville congregation also celebrated their 50th anniversary this past summer. A note in the Randolph bulletin commented on Hudsonville's anniversary booklet — which I have not seen . . . yet.

K. G. V.