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MEDITATION

THE BURDEN OF JESUS' BLOOD

"Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children."

MATT. 27:25

The last attempt Pilate made to clear Jesus was to put Him on an ignoble duo: Jesus or Bar-Abbas! Whom do you desire?

Ignoble? Beloved reader, I do not know what word to use to adequately express the horror of that duo: Jesus or Bar-Abbas! Principally the people are to choose between God and the devil!

And if that duo is horrible, what shall I say of the people's decision? They say: Give us the devil, and kill God? That's the truth.

And those people are horrible, are they not?

Yes, oh yes, they are horrible. And the whole world will today say: Yes, they are horrible.

But attend to this: those people are you and I.

That action shows you in a measure to what depths the human nature has sunk.

But there are more horrors.

* * * *

Pilate is set at nought. He has two more words.

First: But, ye poor deluded souls, what shall I then do with this Jesus? But the people are not in a mood to reason about what is right and wrong. They have but one answer: They all say unto him: Let Him be crucified!

Second: Why, what evil hath He done?

And the answer? It's the same as before. They are in a blind stupor of the very hatred of God. Again they say: Let Him be crucified!

Pilate is at his wits' end: watch him! He is afraid of a tumult. He is afraid that a tumult will ensue.

And now watch him. He will employ a Jewish custom: he took water; washed his hands, and he will speak his last words: I am innocent of the blood of this just Person: see ye to it!

Now read Deuteronomy 21:1-6. There you find the same ceremony. All the elders of a city near which a slain man is found will wash their hands in water, and say, "Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it!"

Yes, I know it: Pilate is nevertheless guilty. I know that if he was not converted before his death, he will be damned in the righteous judgment of God in the day of Christ. But listen to this: He will furiously condemn this multitude in God's judgment. He will remind them of these last words of his: he called Jesus a just Person. He did not want to kill Him. He wanted to set Jesus free. All the water of the oceans cannot obliterate these facts.

The eternal burden of Jesus' blood does not fall centrally on Pilate. He is guilty incidentally. But the central burden belongs on this multitude, and especially on the Pharisees, the elders of the people, the lawyers, the judges, the priests, the leaders of the people!

Two persons vocally assert the innocence of Jesus: the thief on the cross, and this Pilate. You know, sometimes I wish that Pilate were converted before his death. Just because he wanted to set Jesus free, and just because he openly asserted the innocence of our beloved Savior.

But enough of that. Let's go on.

Here is the answer of the multitude when they see Pilate wash his hands in vain: Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children!

Oh the horror of that statement. A thousand times it is realized throughout all the New Testament history.

They assume the whole of the burden of Jesus' blood.

* * * *

The Blood.

Essentially it is the life of a living creature. If your blood flows away, your life is gone. The blood is the bearer of your life. A heart empty of blood is a dead heart.

All blood is precious. Remember your blood banks, your transfusions, the haste of them.

Some cannot see blood. They faint. That's very natural. Blood should never be seen, except in the rosy glow on a healthy face.

But this is the Blood of Jesus. This is the blood of the innocent Lamb of God.

This is the Blood of God (Acts 20:28).

And this innocent, beautiful Blood of Jesus is shed!

Of course! It should be shed. It is the Blood of Him who is declared guilty by God Himself.

Jesus, standing there in the judgment hall of Pilate is carrying all the burden of the guilt of His sheep, given Him by His Father. He must be slain. As He is hurried to Golgotha, you may say: and it pleased the Lord to bruise Him!

There is a figure used by the Holy Ghost in Isa. 53:6 which is lost in our English translation. In our English Bible we read: "and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." But in the Holland version we read: "but the Lord hath caused all our unrighteousness to walk toward Him."

What a figure! Look at Jesus: all our sins are running toward Him, until they all rest on Him.

And God is just and righteous.

His Blood must be shed. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die!" That's the law of God which altereth not.

Christ is innocently put to death by the Sanhedrin, the people of Israel, Judas, Pilate, Herod, the soldiers.

But looked at from the viewpoint of God: Jesus is put to death according to strictest justice of God. All His pangs, and sorrows of death are meted out to Him. There is not one ounce of suffering but it is deserved. All the eternity of death He suffers, He should suffer. It is beautifully just!

* * * *

The Blood of God was shed at Golgotha.

Justly, according to God.

But there is another side to this terrible Drama. From the viewpoint of all whom I enumerated above, He is the Innocent Lamb of God. From the viewpoint of Pilate and the Jews, Jesus is Innocent.

And they shed the Innocent Blood.

They shed His blood for they hated Him. They hated Him exactly because of His great Innocency. And that calls for wrath.

I ask you, if God is incensed with eternal wrath when you slay a man in wickedness, what shall God say when you shed the Blood of God?

As soon as the innocent blood paints the earth, it cried to God for vengeance. Abel's blood cried to God and it was heard.

And there at Golgotha lies the Blood of Jesus, and it has cried to God for almost two thousand years.

And the world continues to crucify the Lord afresh. The guilt and the wrath accumulate.

* * * *

But this Blood of God?

The Jews have an answer: Let that Blood come upon us and upon our children.

Awful self-condemnation!

Thirty years later on this very spot, judgment was given against 3600 for insurrection. And a few years later there was a forest of crosses around Jerusalem when Titus warred against it.

And all the ages God has set all nations and tribes against the Jews. They are still paying for this cry. The Blood of God is upon the Jews and upon their children indeed.

And not alone upon the Jews. They are the main culprits. And God never forgets.

But it is true also against all the wicked world of every age. The whole world is always arrayed against God and His Anointed Son.

God asks a simple question of every man, woman, and child: What think ye of My Jesus? And their answer is always: We think Him a curse! And the result is that Jesus' Blood is upon the wicked world. And on their children.

Oh, but that Judgment Day will be terrible! The world has counted the Blood of the New Testament an impure thing, and they have done despite unto the Son of God. They have trampled Him under foot. It shall be terrible to fall into the hand of the living God, for our God is a consuming fire!

* * * *

Come, beloved, let us look again at our text. But let us read it in another way, and then we will have most wondrous salvation.

This text is our prayer very often.

"His blood be upon us, and upon our children!"

Is there ever a day, beloved, when you do not crave this blood upon you, to wash you, and to make you clean? Do

you not cry daily unto God and say: O God, wash my children and their children in that precious Blood?

Of course you do.

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!

O the voice of that blood of Jesus! It damns Pilate, Herod, the soldiers, the multitude, Judas!

In the Judgment Day that Blood shall be required of millions. And that Blood shall damn them unto all eternity in hell, where their worm shall not die and their fire shall not be quenched!

But that same Blood shall liberate you, exalt you to the highest heavens, put you into the very Bosom of God with Christ.

On that Blood of God is built the new Jerusalem with all its glittering beauty.

On that Blood sparkles the diamond, the jasper stone and the ruby, and the rainbow above the Godhead, green as the emerald.

That Blood of Jesus makes you clean, so clean and pure as though you in your own person had fulfilled all the law of God.

That Blood makes you sing, shout for joy in heavenly hallelujah's.

That Blood shed in the judgment hall of Pilate, on the Via Dolorosa, on the hill called Golgotha, the Place of a Skull, tells the sweet story of the Love of God.

O that love of God in the Blood of Jesus! Imagine if you can: He loved us so much that He went to hell for us, and was tortured with all the tortures the damned endure, and much more, for He bled as the Beautiful, as the most Beautiful Thing God ever showed to the world!

Blessed Blood of Jesus! Amen.

G.V.

Announcement

Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet, the Lord willing, at 9:00 A. M. on April 6th in the Hope Protestant Reformed Church located on the West Beltline of Grand Rapids. Consistories in the appointment of their delegates will please take note.

Rev. M. Schipper, *Stated Clerk*

Office-Bearers' Conference

will be held April 5, at 8 o'clock in Hope Protestant Reformed Church. Rev. A. Mulder will be the speaker. Topic: "What is the relationship of the offices in the church, namely, the office of Minister, Elder and Deacon? Is it true that the one is elevated above the other?" All present and former office-bearers are urged to attend.

J. Docter, Secretary

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EDITORIALS

Christian Education In Our Country

When, in this article, I speak of Christian education in our country, I refer especially to such education as is taught, not in our churches or even in the Reformed Churches in general, but by far the majority of the large denominations outside of our churches.

We have, first of all, the systematic religious education conducted by the church officially in our catechism classes which all the children of the church and also our young people before they make public confession of their faith are obliged to attend. In these catechism classes they are not merely instructed in some general knowledge of the Bible but are also indoctrinated in the Reformed faith.

Besides, we have our Christian day schools, in which all the instruction is, or is supposed to be, based on Christian principles.

But in by far the majority of the American Churches this instruction of the children and young people is left to the Sunday school.

What kind of instruction is offered in the Sunday school?

This question is answered by David W. Baker in an article that appeared in *Christianity Today* of Feb. 29, 1960.

The author is an ordained minister in the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. He reveals rather astounding facts concerning this instruction in the Sunday schools of America.

First of all the Rev. Baker informs us that there are two types of lessons used by the Sunday schools: Uniform and Graded lessons.

As to the first, the Uniform Lessons, he informs that they are designed to give "consideration of some aspect of the life or teaching of Jesus and some challenge to the Christian way of life." He also expresses his opinion that it is "amazing how little of the total content of the Bible is studied during the entire course of two or three cycles; also which doctrinal passages are dealt with, and which are *omitted*." This last is not surprising in view of the fact the lessons are chiefly designed to consider "some aspect of the life or teaching of Jesus."

He then informs us that there are different Graded Lessons. One series of lessons is produced by the Methodist Church. It contains a study for the Adult Bible course on the book of Romans. Of this the author remarks that it is not altogether satisfactory because "it leans heavily on liberal commentaries, and too easily espouses the views of critical scholarship." Another example of graded lessons is a book for three-year-old children. This book, according to the author, may or *"could* be used equally well in any *public* school, or in any private nursery school enrolling Unitarians, Jews, and Moslems!"

The author then discusses the theological principles which the lessons are supposed to embody and which reflect the views of the National Council of Churches. He quotes from an article that appeared in the *International Journal of Religious Education* which is the official organ of the Division of Christian Education of the NCC (National Council of Churches). The article discusses the subject of the Word of God, and this especially from the viewpoint of authority. He writes, and now I quote from the article in *Christianity Today*:

"Where does the Christian go for authority? Does he simply consult his own experience to discover his relation with God and God's activity in life? Does he accept the dogmatic interpretations of an infallible Pope? Or does he find authority in an infallible Scripture? In wrestling with this question theologians have rediscovered the Protestant concept of the 'Word of God.' God's Word is neither an infallible book or Pope, nor individual experience. It is God's action in human life, revealed partly in human experience and fully in Jesus Christ. The Bible has authority insofar as through it God's living Word is spoken to men. The Church has authority only as it speaks God's Word . . . According to this view, the Bible is a book which historical criticism must analyze. It witnesses of the fact that 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.' The Christian is not bound to particular words as God's Word. The Bible is not simply history, but the record of God's mighty action in history . . . God speaks his living Word through the Bible and the Church . . . The authority of the Bible rests in neither words nor creeds, but in their witness to the mighty act of God in Christ."

Poor Sunday school pupils that are taught such a mixture of Barthian-modernistic-orthodox theological principles! The Bible is not infallible. It is not the Word of God. It has no authority except in so far as the living Word of God speaks through it! And who determines whether the "living Word of God" speaks through it in any particular moment or by any particular passage of the Scriptures? The inevitable answer is, of course: Man. There is no authority except the authority of Man who hears the living Word of God. And, of course, that living Word of God Man does not only and not necessarily hear in a certain portion of the Bible, but he may hear it just as well, say, in Shakespeare's Macbeth or in some other writing. Once more I say: poor scholars that are taught on the basis of such vague and good-for-nothing conglomeration of so-called theological principles!

But there is more. But this must wait till our next issue.

H.H.

As To Being Protestant Reformed

We are writing on the covenant between God and His people in Christ Jesus as one of the most important elements of the Protestant Reformed faith.

We repudiated the idea that the covenant consists of an agreement between God as the first party and man as the second.

We also repudiated the notion that the covenant is essentially a conditional promise.

And at the close of my last article we expressed the idea that Adam stood indeed in covenant relation to God in virtue of his being created in the image of God but, at the same time, we rejected the notion of a covenant of works.

The essence of the covenant relation is, according to our conception, a bond of friendship.

This, we remarked in our last article, is based on Scripture. This we will now demonstrate.

First of all, then, we must once more refer to Adam in the state of righteousness. We read that he was created in the image of God: "And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness . . . So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him." Gen. 1:26, 27. That image of God which as we know from Scripture consists in true knowledge of God, righteousness, and holiness, is, on the part of man, the basis of the covenant relationship. For on the basis of this image of God he knew God and had covenant fellowship with Him. Moreover, we read that, as His image-bearer, God gave him dominion over all things in the earthly creation: "and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." Gen. 1:26. And again: "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." Gen. 1:28. In other words, Adam as he was created in or after the image of God, and as he stood in covenant fellowship with Him, was also God's king-servant. Indeed, Adam was a glorious creature, far more glorious than we can even imagine. If we do note that after his fall, according to our Netherland Confession, "he lost all his excellent gifts, which he had received from God, and only retained a few remains thereof," and if then we see how that fallen man still reveals his power in the accursed creation, how wonderful and glorious Adam must have been in the state of righteousness!

But this in passing.

Certain it is that Adam, as he was originally created, was the friend-servant-king of God.

Besides, we read of the saints that they walked with God, an expression that denotes intimate fellowship and friendship with God. Thus we read of Enoch: "And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters . . . And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." Gen. 5:22, 24. The same we read of Noah: "These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God." Again, we read that they talked with God which is another manifestation of covenant fellowship. God revealed His counsel unto them and hid nothing from them: "And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you." Gen. 9:8, 9. And in Gen. 18:16ff. we read: "And the men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way. And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he shall command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." And thereupon the Lord revealed to Abraham all that was in his heart concerning Sodom and Gomorrah. After this Abraham, as he was walking with God also talked with Him and made intercessory plea for the righteous that might still be in those cities.

Moreover, Abraham is called the friend of God: "But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend." Isa. 41:8. And again: "And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God and it was imputed to him for righteousness, and he was called the friend of God." Jas. 2:23.

Again, this idea of the covenant was symbolically expressed in tabernacle and temple: God dwelling with His people under one roof.

Also, it is well-known that again and again the marriage relation, that most intimate of all human relationships, is presented as a figure of the covenant of God with His people, and that violation of the covenant is called adultery.

In Psalm 25:14 this idea of the covenant is almost literally expressed: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant." Here the Hebrew word for "secrets" may be translated by friendship or by intimacy or familiar intercourse so that we may read: God realizes His covenant with those that fear Him by drawing them into familiar intercourse with Him.

Frequently we read in Scripture that God dwells in and with His people. In that sublime prayer of the Lord that is found in John 17 we read the well-known words: "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfect in one." And in II Cor. 6:16 we read: "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

H.H.

OUR DOCTRINE

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

PART TWO

CHAPTER TWELVE

The Angels and the Voice

Revelation 14:6-13

Once more I must warn you against a literal conception and interpretation of the text. There are many who all of a sudden forget that they have to do with symbolism and that in our text we have to do with a vision when they come to this portion of the book. And then they read as if the text said: "Then shall an angel fly in mid-heaven and shall preach the gospel once more to every creature." And yet that is certainly not the meaning. John tells us that he sees a vision. And in that vision he first beholds the beasts representing Antichrist coming out of the earth and out of the sea. And, in the second place, he tells us how he sees the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, surrounded by His people. And now once more, he beholds three angels and hears one voice. And therefore also this part still belongs to the vision. As such it must be explained. If we bear this in mind, we will not reach the absurd conclusion that in this portion Scripture teaches us that in the end of time angels will proclaim the gospel of Christ in order to sound a last warning to all nations. That certainly is not the meaning. In fact, this entire portion is not written for the people of the beast at all, but to comfort the people of God and of the Lamb. Hence, the text does not mean that an angel shall preach the gospel in the end of time as a last warning. We have no literalism, but symbolism, a vision, in the words of our text. The contents of the symbolism is that an angel flies in mid-heaven and shouts to all the earth, to all nations and tongues and tribes, that they shall fear and worship God. Thus it is in the vision. And the question is: what is the significance of this?

There are many who maintain that here we have a symbol of the preaching of the true gospel of Jesus Christ. The angel and his voice represents the call of the gospel to all nations. Among these there are again some who find in Rome the antichrist, and who therefore find the fulfillment of this vision in the rise and work of Martin Luther. Immediately before the days of Martin Luther, so they say, the power of Rome was supreme. And therefore chapter 13 is really fulfilled in the dominancy of the papacy. And when Martin Luther rose and recovered the Word from the dust of the convent and preached that Word to all nations, the fulfillment of the prophecy of this angel was seen. Others claim that here we have no reference to the time of the Reformation, but rather to the time of the judgment, to the end of time. And they are undoubtedly more correct. This entire vision has reference to the time of the end. And according to these interpreters, this portion symbolizes the fact that in the end the gospel will be preached to all men, so that it may cover the earth. But none of these interpretations fits the contents of our text. In regard to the first it may be said that the Romish papacy may be a type of Babylon, but it was certainly not the final manifestation of Antichrist pictured in chapter 13. It was only a very partial realization of that power. And therefore, our portion, which evidently refers to the said Antichrist, cannot refer to Martin Luther. And again, as to the second interpretation, as if in those latter days there will be a special preaching of the gospel, I would maintain that in those days the preaching of the gospel has well-nigh finished its course. There is no place for it, at least not in the kingdom of Antichrist. That kingdom is not characterized by heathen darkness, in which the light of the gospel never shone. On the contrary, Antichrist shall rise from the midst of the Christian world. It shall be well-acquainted with the gospel. It shall know the truth. But it shall deliberately depart from the truth. The sin against the Holy Spirit shall be a general phenomenon in that kingdom. And therefore there is no hope, and there is no gospel. But, in the third place, against all such interpretations stands the plain indication of the text that this angel does not preach the gospel of Christ Jesus at all. He does not come with the message of salvation. He does not preach Christ. He does not urge men, "Be reconciled to God." Not at all. Interpreters have been deceived by the word "good tidings," or "gospel." Just because we read that this angel proclaimed eternal good tidings, they draw the conclusion that he was preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to all men once more. But that is not the case. The good tidings of this angel have nothing to do with the gospel of Jesus Christ and salvation. For, in the first place, let us notice that he preached an eternal gospel; and the gospel of Jesus is not eternal. God does not eternally proclaim that gospel. He does not eternally come with the call to accept Him and believe in His name. That gospel to all men covers but a very brief period of history. And therefore, the gospel of Christ cannot be meant. Still more clear this becomes if we read the contents. It merely states a demand. It does not speak of salvation. It does not mention the name of Christ. It does not tell the old story at all. It simply comes with the demand to all people and nations: "Fear God, and give him glory, and worship him." And therefore we must discard all these interpretations.

In order to understand the words of our text you must grasp the whole situation once more. Antichrist is supreme. Just imagine that you, as a child of God, live in those days. Antichrist has set up his kingdom. He rules over all the world, and all the world admires him and his kingdom. That antichristian reign will be characterized by apostasy from the living God. God and His truth shall be denied, and the blood of Jesus shall be trampled under foot. The devil and the beast shall be the object of worship. On every street

and corner, in every shop and store you meet with the image of the beast; and universally men bow before him. Everywhere you meet with men that bear the sign of the beast on their forehead and on their right hand. You, as a people of God, shall not be able to buy or sell; and they shall push you to the wall. There is no refuge, it seems, and the suffering is awful. It is a world of tribulation, and the blasphemy against God's name is seemingly unpunished. What now will be the question arising in your mind? It will be this: shall God allow this? Shall He let the glory of His name be trampled under foot, and shall He let His saints be unrevenged? That all depends. If God will let go His eternal claim, namely, that the creature shall worship Him, and worship Him alone, and fear and glorify His name, He shall let these things go, and there is no end in sight. If God has changed His mind, if our covenant God can renounce His eternal claim, namely, that He only should receive the glory, then indeed the case is hopeless. Then He shall do nothing. Then He shall not arise to crush this awful power and to save His own people. Then we are the covenant people of a God Who has surrendered the glory of His own name. But that is not the case. No, the Lamb stands on Mount Zion. And because the Lamb, the Anointed of God, stands in the place of His power, God will not let go His demand. And therefore, to every nation and tribe and tongue comes the demand: "Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters."

From this point of view all is plain. The meaning of these words can now be understood. The angel sounds the eternal gospel. It is the gospel that God is sovereign, the gospel that God is supreme. It is the gospel that all creation must fear Him, and Him alone, and that He will judge all who refuse to worship Him. It is the gospel that He alone is worthy of worship since He made all things and therefore is the sole sovereign of them all. That demand is as eternal as God's own decree, and it will last forever. That gospel God will never change. For unto all eternity, even in the new heavens and the new earth, it will still be the gospel. That demand is now placed over against the wicked kingdom of Antichrist. There, in that kingdom, they worship the beast; there they give glory to Satan, and they fear Antichrist. There they say, "Antichrist has made all things. Who is like unto the beast, and who can war with him?" There they cast God's glory in the dust and trample His precepts under foot. But even over against this state of things God maintains His claim: "Fear Me, and give Me glory. For the hour of My judgment is come. And worship Me: for I have made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and the fountains of waters." Then also is clear the whole significance of the scene. This sounds like gospel in the ears of God's people. Even though it may seem as if God has relinquished His eternal claim, they may depend on it that He shall vindicate it to the end and that He shall reveal His wrath to the kingdom of Antichrist. It does mean that in the future it shall actually go forth. It does not mean that an angel shall bring it, but it does mean that the people of God may depend on it: God shall maintain His glory and claim. And because the Almighty maintains that claim, the kingdom of darkness must be destroyed.

If this is clear, then the rest is not difficult to understand. The first angel announced that God maintains His eternal claim over against the power and the kingdom of Antichrist. And the second and third angels announce the destruction and punishment that must naturally follow where this eternal demand of the Almighty is not obeyed. In that eternal gospel which the first angel in the vision preached we have the deepest ground, the supreme reason, for the judgment of Antichrist and his kingdom. Just because God is sovereign and maintains His claim to be feared and worshipped and glorified by all creatures, and because, in direct opposition to this claim of the Almighty, stands the kingdom of Antichrist, trampling that glory under foot and worshipping the beast, the latter must be judged and destroyed. Already the first angel announced that the hour of God's judgment is come. The second angel prophesies of that judgment and speaks as if Babylon is fallen already. And the third angel announces the terrible punishment that will be inflicted upon those that worship the beast and his image.

It is here that we meet with the term *Babylon.* "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, who hath made all the nations to drink of the wine of her fornication," so the first angel shouts through mid-heaven. As to this name *Babylon,* we may remark, in the first place, that this is not the place to explain it in detail. Naturally not: the angel merely makes a pre-announcement of its destruction. He is prophesying. And prophesying, he sees the objects of his prophecy so vividly that it appears to him that Babylon is fallen already. In a future portion of the book of Revelation we read of the fall of this Babylon in detail, and then is the time to explain it. And therefore, here we merely must understand the general idea. There are different interpretations of this Babylon. There are some who make it the apostate church pure and simple, without anything else, while others claim that it denotes not the apostate church but the center of the political world-power. It seems to us that neither is quite correct, and that for the simple reason that the apostate church and the power of the world in the future will be perfectly one, one in life and view, one in hope and doctrine, one in purpose and aspiration, one in power and attainment. And for that reason apostate Christianity, or the apostate church, must not be separated from the power of the beast. In our portion it is evident that the entire power of Antichrist is denoted by the name *Babylon.* It rather denotes the heart of the antichristian kingdom, just as Jerusalem was the heart of Canaan and of the theocracy of Israel. And as of the name, we remember that Babel, or Babylon, is originally the name of the city of mighty Nimrod. When the peoples came together and made the attempt to establish the

world-power and maintain themselves, they also tried to build a city and a great tower. That city is the city of Babel, or Babylon. And therefore this name reminds one of the wound which the beast had received and which was healed. Babylon in Scripture stands for the great opponent of the people of God, the center of the world-power that oppresses God's saints. By Babylon the children of Jerusalem were made captive. In Babylon they suffered in captivity, far from the holy land. There they sang in lonely exile, yearning for the land of their covenant God: "O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones." Of Babylon's fall in the literal as well as in the symbolical sense of the word the prophets of old had spoken. Babylon stands for all that opposes and oppresses the people of God's kingdom. So here it denotes in one term the rule and dominion of Antichrist. That kingdom has made the nations drunk with the wine of her fornication. It has through its false prophet led all the tribes of the earth to blaspheme the name of Jehovah and to worship the beast. It has oppressed the people of God and made it that they could neither buy nor sell. Its destruction and judgment is the hope of the people of God. For its destruction they pray. For its judgment they long. And they can sing it with the people of God of old: "Happy is he that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against a rock." And now, behold, the fall of that great and powerful Babylon is announced. That kingdom of Babylon seemed permanent and impregnable. But the Lord had appointed His Holy One over Zion. And the angel announces the fall of the great city with a certainty that leaves no doubt and that looks upon the whole scene as if it were already accomplished: "Fallen, fallen is Babylon, the great, that had made all nations to drink of the wine of her fornication." Again, it is to the comfort of the people of God that this vision is seen. For in the fall of Babylon they see their own victory and the victory of Christ.

A third angel comes upon the scene and announces the judgment upon the individual worshippers of the beast. Here upon earth it seemed as if they were supreme and as if they could oppress the people of God with impunity. They lived like lords and participated in all the blessings of creation. And often the people of God were perhaps inclined to complain with Asaph that there is no knowledge with the Most High. They themselves, who served the Lord and followed Him wheresoever He goeth, — they themselves suffered want and tribulation, were in pain and distress every day. But the wicked and unbelievers, the worshippers of the beast, prospered and knew of no suffering. And therefore the people of God are given a glimpse of their end. Even as Asaph of old went into the sanctuary and considered their latter end, so also the people of God that live at the time of Antichrist receive a vision of the end and of these worshippers of the beast in their eternal estate. Their eternal punishment is described in vivid terms. The torment of hell is pictured as God has prepared it for them.

Let us notice, in the first place, that this torment is both internal and external. Everyone that worshippeth the beast, so the text reads, and receiveth a mark on his forehead or upon his hand, he shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God which is prepared unmixed in the cup of His anger. Evidently these words refer to the spiritual and internal suffering of the ungodly. The wine of the wrath of God is evidently a figure. The meaning is that these worshippers of the beast shall receive a wine to drink, the spirit, or alcoholic contents, of which is the wrath of God. Even as common wine affects the spirit of man, so shall the wine of the wrath of God affect the worshippers of the beast. By drinking this wine the worshipper of the beast shall receive the wrath of God as a burning fire within his soul, so that this wrath of God burns him from within, troubles him, leaves him no rest day or night. It shall be spiritual torment night and day. Even as the greatest happiness and the most profound peace consists of communion with the God of grace and love, so the most terrible suffering shall be that which is caused by the consciousness of the wrath of the Almighty. It shall be unmixed, that is, undiluted. Never shall the worshipper of the beast in eternity receive one glimpse of God's love. Here upon earth he received the things of the world, and God let His sun shine upon the wicked and the good alike. But when the measure of iniquity shall once be full, they shall receive nothing but the wine of the wrath of God unmixed. But it shall also be an external suffering. They shall exist body and soul. And therefore they shall suffer as such. With fire and brimstone they shall be tormented, and that forever. Little are we able to describe the terribleness of hell. No more than we can fully describe the bliss of the new heaven and the new earth, no more can we describe the state of the damned in hell. But we may be sure that these symbols of fire and brimstone stand for grave realities. Worse than all the suffering of the earth, worse than all the agony that may be seen upon the battlefield of the world, shall be the suffering of those that worship the beast and his image. And, in the third place, that suffering shall be everlasting. Their smoke goeth up forever and ever. God is vindicating His righteousness and glory in the wicked that are prepared unto the day of destruction.

Wonderfully strange, at first sight, stands the sentence: "Here is the patience of the saints, that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." And yet, if only these words are read in their proper light, the whole is plain. The idea is that because the saints see the end of their enemies, see it and believe it, that Babylon is fallen and that the worshippers of the beast are doomed to everlasting punishment, they can be so patient. What is their patience? It has been described in a portion of Chapter 13. It was they that did not kill by the sword. It was they that did not lead into captivity. In other words, that patience consists in this, that in all the tribulation and suffering in the reign of Antichrist, they were calmly, serenely submissive. They did not

try to gain control of things. They did not employ main force. They were patient. Even though they could not buy or sell, they did not use the sword to obtain what they wanted. Their suffering did not persuade them to deny their God and their Lord, did not seduce them from the way of God's covenant. One word, one nod, one bow might suffice perhaps to gain for them the favor of the power of Antichrist and would supply them with the necessities of life abundantly. But they refused. Patiently they bore the cross and followed the Lamb whithersoever He led them. And that patience is explained. Why were they so patient? Why could they bear the suffering? Why could they submit without rising in rebellion and employing main force? Simply for the same reason that Asaph became patient when he regarded their latter end in the sanctuary of his God. They knew that their enemies could not escape their reward, and that in the day of the Lord they would be judged in righteousness. And hence, they left it all to their Lord, mindful of the warning of Scripture that vengeance belongeth unto Him.

But this is not all. The scene does not close with the announcement of destruction upon the enemies and upon the kingdom that follow the beast; but it also pictures the great and glorious victory of believers, that do the will of God and die in the Lord. For after the angels have retired and sounded their voice, another voice is heard from heaven, we do not know of whom. He commands John with special emphasis to write: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." These words have been often misunderstood, and preached at many a funeral. They have been wrongly interpreted. It was thought generally that here we have a proof of the fact that the soul is blessed immediately after death. "From henceforth" would then mean: from the time they depart from this earth, immediately after physical death. And of course, this is true in itself. The dead shall be blessed, shall rest from their labors immediately after death. But it is not true that this word refers to that truth. In the first place, we might remark that in that case it would be very ambiguously expressed. Instead of "from henceforth" an expression like "from death on" or "immediately after death" would have been much clearer. In the second place — and this is a far weightier objection — we read that their works do follow them, evidently referring to the day that each one shall be judged according to his works. And this cannot be said of the soul immediately after death. And therefore, that explanation does not hold. On the other hand, there are interpreters that limit the blessedness of the ones that are mentioned here to the saints that die during the time of Antichrist or in some other period. They limit the expression "that die in the Lord." But also this is not to be done. It simply says that the dead that die in the Lord shall be blessed henceforth. And that does not allow of any arbitrary limitation.

In order to obtain a clear view of the meaning of these last words we must remember that the entire portion places itself upon the standpoint of the very last. That is plain, for instance, from the voice of the three angels. The first one announces that the hour of God's judgment is come. The second one announces that Babylon is already fallen. The third one announces that the worshippers of the beast are to be sent to everlasting torment. On that same standpoint also the voice that is here speaking evidently places itself. It speaks, therefore, not of the bliss of the soul which it shall enjoy immediately after death, but rather after all is past. Henceforth, that is, from the time that the voice speaks, after all the battles are fought, after Babylon is fallen, after the wicked are sent to hell, when the judgment day is past — henceforth shall be blessed those that die in the Lord. And therefore, not merely the dead that die during the time of Antichrist, but the dead of all ages shall be blessed from that time forth and forevermore. Are they then not blessed before that time? Surely, they are. They have entered into life, and they are free from the tribulation of this present time the moment they pass away from the scene of battle of the church militant. But their bliss is not perfect. Their body is still in the grave. And all the brethren have not been gathered in. But henceforth, that is, from the point of view of the angel that speaks, when time shall be no more and when eternity shall dawn, then shall be fully blessed all the saints that die in the Lord. Just because they died in the Lord, just because they belong to Him and because He has paid for all their sins, they shall enter into everlasting glory.

But there is still more. Surely, all the saints shall die and be blessed in the Lord. It is not because of their works, but because of the work of Christ Jesus that they shall enter into the eternal kingdom. And therefore the bliss shall be general. But shall there be no distinction? Surely, there shall be. All shall be perfectly blessed. But not all shall reach the same state of glory. In the covenant God has prepared some of His people to do great things, to be special witnesses of His name, to fight the kingdom of darkness in a special way. And just because God has prepared some of His children for special works, so that they do more than others and suffer more than others and bear the brunt of the battle more than others, they also shall have a special place in glory. They were in suffering more than others. They were despised more than others. They were in tribulation in a special sense of the word. God prepared Elijah to do great things. But he also fought more than all the prophets of his time. God prepared His prophets, like Isaiah and Jeremiah, for special work. But they also went through special suffering and tribulation. God prepared the apostles and the martyrs to be faithful in a special sense of the word. And they suffered more than others. And so it shall be at the time of the Antichrist. Not all are equally strong among the children of God. Not all are equally fit to testify and bear the brunt of the battle.

H.H.

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

Joseph's Meeting With His Brothers

And the sons of Israel came to buy corn among those that came: for the famine was in the land of Canaan . . . .

And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him. GENESIS 42:5 and 8.

Egypt's years of plenty came and went just as God had revealed. They were followed by a very grievous famine. The waters of the Nile ceased from overflowing their banks, and the ground became hard and parched. No new food would grow. The people were forced to live off the crops which Joseph had warned them to lay aside. But it was not long before even these private storages began to dwindle and disappear. Knowing that the storehouses of Egypt were full, the people went to Pharaoh crying for food. Pharaoh referred them to Joseph, for he knew that in this matter also, Joseph was guided by the Spirit of God. But Joseph hesitated with opening the granaries; he knew that the famine would be long and the storage should not be allowed to deplete any sooner than necessary. Only when the need became crucial did he allow the grain to be taken out of storage and sold to the people. With care he watched over the distribution of food that none should be wasted. Not only did the Egyptians have to be supplied, but buyers came to him from many different countries, for the famine was over all the earth.

Meanwhile, back in Canaan, the life of Jacob's family had not been going well for many years. Ever since the ten brothers had brought Joseph's blood-stained coat to him, there had come a change over them which Jacob could see although he could not understand. The rough way of life which they had led in former years seemed to have lost its interest for them. They settled down to a quieter life that was much more becoming to them as children of God. In all of this Jacob could have rejoiced were it not for something else. Over the whole subject of Joseph there hung an aura of mystery. The ten avoided the subject. They did not want to talk about Joseph. It seemed, although there was no direct evidence, that they knew more about what had happened to Joseph than they were willing to tell. This made Jacob afraid. He found it difficult to trust his own children. He did not like to leave Benjamin alone with them. He refused to allow him to go out into the field with them. The fear would not leave him that the same thing might happen to Benjamin which had happened to his brother.

Finally the time came when the great famine touched also the land of Canaan. Crops would not grow and the people of the land began to travel to Egypt for food. But now the same hesitant attitude which the ten brothers held toward their departed brother seemed to spread out to cover also Egypt. They avoided the suggestion that they should go with their neighbors to buy corn. What Jacob did not realize was that the brothers also were afraid. They knew that if they went to Egypt their duty would be to look for the brother whom they had sold and try to redeem him. But if they would manage to find him, it would mean that their sin would be exposed. Troubled and frightened, they remained silent. At last Jacob became impatient. "Why do ye look one upon another?" he asked. "Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die." Thus it was, at the command of their father, that the ten men set out for Egypt; but Benjamin was kept with Jacob at home.

For the coming of his brothers to Egypt, Joseph meanwhile was ready and even waiting. For some time already he had anticipated the way in which the Lord would lead. When he became ruler over all of Egypt the possibility of his brothers bowing down before him became very real, just as the dreams of his youth had foretold. Moreover, when it became apparent that the famine was over a broader area than just Egypt so that men came from many different nations to buy food, it became evident to him what would be the occasion of their coming. Rather than go himself into Canaan to visit his family, or to contact them in some other way, he thought it best to wait for the way of the Lord to unfold itself. Patiently he waited, all of the time keeping careful watch over those markets which men from Canaan were inclined to frequent.

As Joseph awaited the coming of his brothers, the question of how he should greet them became for him a matter of grave concern. There were two ways which would seem quite natural. He might have met them in anger determined to punish them for the sin which they had committed against him. This is what the brothers would have expected had they known that he awaited them. However, for Joseph it was quite impossible. Any hatred or bitterness which he might have once felt had long since faded away. He discerned the hand of the Lord in what had happened and was content. He could no longer be angry with his brothers. More natural for Joseph would have been to forget about all that had transpired and to greet them with welcome and joy. Although they had treated him badly, they were still his brothers and, in spite of their sin, children of God. The easiest thing of all for him would have been to greet them with love. But that reaction too would have been natural and God had brought Joseph to be a deeply spiritual man. As he contemplated the expected arrival of his brothers, questions continued to arise in his mind concerning their spiritual lives. Were they still living in sin as they had in the years that he was among them? Did they realize the guilt that was theirs because of the sin which they had committed against him? Were they sorry and repentant for their sins? Did they desire to live new and better lives in the fear of God? These questions troubled Joseph and he felt that he had to learn the answers. If they had not yet learned to put hatred behind them, it was necessary for him to lead them in that way. Moreover, he feared that should they recognize him in his high position, they might pretend to be repentant

for material gain while maintaining hatred in their hearts. He felt that the best that he could do would be to find out their attitude toward his brother Benjamin, who had undoubtedly taken his place in their father's love, before they recognized him as ruler of the land. It was with this concern for the spiritual lives of his brothers that Joseph laid the plan which was followed.

When the ten brothers came into Egypt, God providentially led them to the very market where Joseph was managing the sale of grain. Joseph, ever on the lookout for them, recognized them already at a distance and took personal charge of their transaction. There was little likelihood that the brothers would recognize him. While in the intervening years the appearance of the brothers had not changed a great deal, Joseph looked entirely different. He had grown from youth into manhood. His face was clean shaven like the Egyptians without the rough beard customary in Canaan. He wore royal apparel, and his Egyptian headgear served to disguise his identity. His manners were smooth and polished like a high government official, far removed from the crude manners of the shepherd-boy which they had known in the past. Moreover, the brothers hardly expected to find Joseph in a position of high authority. If their eyes searched for him at all, it was among the numerous slaves that constantly filled the market-place. When their eyes fell upon Joseph, they saw nothing but an austere government official whose every appearance spoke of high rank and great authority. Without question they bowed themselves to the ground before him. It was to Joseph as a sign from heaven. The dreams of his youth which he had not been able to forget, but which always returned to perplex him, were finally come to fulfillment.

With keen disappointment, Joseph's eyes searched and found that Benjamin was not among the brothers. Perhaps there passed through his mind even a tinge of fear lest they might have disposed of Benjamin as once they had disposed of him. For Joseph the presence of Benjamin was most necessary. Only in examining their attitude toward him would he be able to determine whether hatred and jealousy still lingered in their hearts and controlled their lives.

Joseph took the approach of an stern inquisitor. "Whence come ye?" he asked them through his interpreter. The question was natural enough, but the harsh manner was frightening. "From the land of Canaan to buy food," they meekly replied. Joseph had to have reason to detain them, and so he accused them, "Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come." Canaan was the traditional enemy of Egypt and the accusation was not impossible. Shocked and trembling with fear the brothers answered, "Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come. We are all one man's sons; we are true men, thy servants are no spies." The logic was that one man would never send so many of his sons to perform such a dangerous task as spying out the weak points in Egypt's defense. It was not a very good argument but the best they could produce. Joseph after the manner of inquisitors merely repeated his accusation, "Nay but to see the nakedness of the land ye are come." Distraught, the sons of Jacob could think of no other defense than to give more details of their family. "Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not." With joy Joseph heard this. Benjamin and his father yet lived. Even more he now had occasion to summon Benjamin to Egypt. "That is it that I spake unto you, saying, Ye are spies: hereby ye shall be proved: by the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your younger brother come hither. Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison, that your words may be proved, whether there be any truth in you: or else by the life of Pharaoh surely ye are spies."

For three days Joseph put them all in prison to impress upon them the seriousness of their situation and to stir their consciences. Meanwhile also Joseph was led to revise his plan. The suffering which he would cause his father's house was too great. Calling his brothers out of prison Joseph presented to them his revised plan. "This do, and live; for I fear God: if ye be true men, let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison; go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses: but bring your youngest brother unto me; so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die."

It was then that Joseph's plan began to bear fruit. The brothers, not knowing that Joseph could understand their language, for he spoke to them through an interpreter, began to talk among themselves. "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." With deep feeling in his soul Joseph turned from them into another room and wept. This much he had learned. They remembered their sin. They knew that they were guilty and worthy of punishment. It was a joy for Joseph to learn that much, and it made it even more difficult for him to suppress his natural desires and go on with his plan. But there was more he had to know. Were they sorry for their sin or merely for its consequences? Had they laid their hatred aside? Were they willing to live in God's love? That still had to be found out. Returning to the brothers, Simeon, perhaps the leader in their sins of former years, he had bound before their eyes; and, after giving them corn, sent the rest on their way.

On the way, one more cause for fear came to the brothers. Without their knowledge Joseph had restored their money to the sacks in which their corn was carried. When nearly home, one of the brothers ran out of provisions and opened his sack to get more. There he found the money. That it was there on purpose was more than they could imagine. All that they could think was that the Egyptian would find it missing and think they had stolen it. That would make it yet harder on Simeon. In fear they cried, "What is this that God hath done unto us?" and so returned to their father.

B.W.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of I Corinthians 15

III.

(I Corinthians 15:20-28)

a.

The passage on which we will write this time is really too rich in content and too wide in scope to be properly explained in one essay. Here, it seems to us, Paul surely does more than simply remind his readers of what he had instructed them in, while he was in their midst when he brought forth to Christ a pure bride. It is in this passage, no doubt, that we see something of the great and deep thoughts of God to glorify His Son, so that he says to Him in the unfolding of His Counsel, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee; ask of Me and I will give Thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Psalm 2:7, 8. Here we will see some of the implications of "Yet I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." Idem, 6.

This passage reads as follows, in part: "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God even the Father . . . . *For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death . . . . And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall also the Son himself be subject unto him that did put all things under him that God may be all and in all.*" Verses 20-28.

The attentive reader will have noticed that we have italicized only a part of this quotation. We did this intentionally. It is our purpose to write twice on this section in this series of essays, and, therefore, we wish to call attention in this essay chiefly to those elements in the text which I italicized. It is our opinion that it will serve the cause of lucidness and clarity to write two essays instead of one.

There are really two chief and distinct elements in this entire section of I Corinthians 15. The one element, which is possibly the more apparent element in the text is that Christ is "the firstfruits of them that slept." Vs. 20. The other element, although not explicitly stated, is very really the fundamental truth that "Christ is the firstborn of all creation." See Col. 1:15.

It is our purpose to call attention to this second and more fundamental aspect of Christ's resurrection in this present essay. That Christ is the "firstborn of all creation" is abundantly evident in such expressions from Paul in this passage as "Each in his *own order.*" And that "He *must* reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet." Verses 23, 25. And, last but not least, from the very meaningful expression, "in order that *God be all in all.*" Verse 28.

Permit us to call attention to the following elements here in the text, and the general teaching of Scripture on these points.

In the first place, it should be noticed, that most emphatically *Christ* is the one who is raised from the dead. You ask: who is he? He is none other but the person of the Son of God in human flesh, like unto us in all things sin excepted. He came in the likeness of sinful flesh. Rom. 8:3; Hebrews 2:17, 18. He is the true God and eternal life, I John 5:20. He is co-equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit. He is God-with-us, Immanuel. He is the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace.

As the Son in our human nature, he is emphatically the *Messiah,* the Anointed of God. He is appointed to the task of dying for our sins and of rising again the third day for our justification. Hereto was he sent. And this element must not be lost sight of in the jubilant and triumphant outcry of Paul in verse 20: "But now is *Christ* risen, the firstfruits of them that slept." The Anointed of God is risen from the dead. Incidentally we have the same emphasis in Romans 8:33. Who is it that shall condemn? God is the one justifying us . . . *Christ* died, yea, rather, is risen, who is even at the right hand of God! God's Christ, His *Messiah* is king in Zion!

Thus it is in the decree!

And this decree God declares in history. He realizes this "decree" in the death and resurrection of His Son. It is alone in *Christ* that the decree is declared: Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. Psalm 2:7b. And this is *declared* by God in Christ's resurrection! Small wonder that we read the jubilant note here: "But now is *Christ* raised, the firstfruits of them that slept"! God has declared the *decree!*

It should be observed that the Scriptures are rather explicit on this point. A good deal of instruction is had in Scripture concerning God's declaring the decree in the death and resurrection of Christ.

This is touched upon by Paul when speaking of the resurrection he says, "each in his own order"! No, the term "order" in the text does not simply mean temporal order, or succession of events. Rather the term "order" (tagma in the Greek text) is a military term. It refers to the order of rank, of pre-eminence. It refers to the position of honor which is due to each in the plan of salvation. And in that plan Christ has his own "tagma," his own "order." He is the *Firstborn of all creatures,* Col. 1:18, 19.

It is important to notice the teaching of Scripture on this important point of Christ's pre-eminence as the Firstborn.

Various clear and rich passages of Scripture underscore this truth. There is, of course, that very well-known passage in Col. 1:18, 19 where we read: "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead: that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell, and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross, through him, I say, whether things upon the earth, or things in heaven."

Such is Christ's *order*.

His is the place of pre-eminence. And He comes to this place of pre-eminence in His dying for our sins according to the Scriptures and in his being raised again the third day according to the Scriptures.

Hence, Christ is the beginning!

It becomes evident, that he is the beginning, the Firstfruits of all creation, *in* His resurrection from the dead.

Let it be understood rightly. Christ is the firstborn out of the dead because in the counsel of God, Christ is the firstborn of *all* creation. Thus we read in Col. 1:15-17: "who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers: all things have been created through him and unto him; and he is before all things, and in him all things consist" (held together).

We repeat: Christ is the firstborn out of the dead; he could only be such in his "order," since in the counsel of God He is the firstborn of all creation!

This honor and prerogative could never be that of the angels. In the womb of God's counsel, the counsel of his will, God determined that Christ would be the firstborn. He is first. He leads the way. All things were created *by* Him and *unto* Him. This honor of Christ is very beautifully described to us in Hebrews 1:5, 6, where we read: "For to which of the angels said he at any time: Thou art my Son, This day have I begotten thee? and again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?" Here the writer to the Hebrews quotes Psalm 2:7 and II Sam. 7:14.

Thus the "order" of Christ is contrasted with that of the angels, with all the angels without an exception. Must not the Son, because he is the firstborn, receive all glory and worship, even when he enters into this our inhabited world? In Hebrews 1:8, 9 (Psalm 45:6, 7) we read: "And of the angels he saith: Who maketh his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire, but of the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever." Yea, in Psalm 97:7: "And let all the angels of God *worship* him."

It is because of this order of Christ, his pre-eminence, that the resurrection is so wonderful.

For He, that came forth from the grave, had power to lay his life down and had power to take it up again. Life must come forth from the dead. He is the resurrection and the life. And, therefore, the grave gives birth to a Son, the firstborn Son of God! The grave has birthpangs! Hallelujah!

Do we not read in Acts 2:22, 23: "Ye men of Israel hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know: him being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay: whom God raised up, having loosed *the pangs* of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it."

Thus Christ, as the firstborn of God, comes forth from the counsel of God, he comes forth from the *womb of the grave!*

Shall we not here stop and worship him?

He is: my Lord and my God!

And thus God declared here of the decree: Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. Thus we read in Acts 13:33: "And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers, that God hath fulfilled the same unto our children, in that he raised up Jesus: as also it is written in the second Psalm: "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee."

Certainly the Son is eternally the begotten of God in the bosom of the Father. The Father generates the Son. But in Psalm 2:7 reference is to the only begotten Son of God, as he is the Firstborn of all creation, and that, too, as he is the firstborn out of the dead!

Of him we read here in I Cor. 15:25: "For he must reign." It is the divine "must" which is implicit in Christ's being the Anointed Son, the firstborn! And he must reign so that he *subdues* all the enemies of him. Thus the Holy Spirit speaks of Him in Psalm 2:8, 9: "Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

And since Christ is thus the firstborn He will put all things under His feet, and will raise his church with him in glory.

For as the Firstborn, he is also the "firstfruits." He is the firstfruits of them that slept.

G.L.

IN MEMORIAM

The consistory extends its sincere sympathy to our fellow office bearer, Mr. Peter Fisher, in the loss of his father,

JACOB FISHER.

For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Philippians 1:21.

Protestant Reformed Church
of Randolph, Wisconsin
William Huizenga, Clerk

JOHN KNOX AND THE REFORMATION

It is very common among us that we celebrate the Reformation of the church, the beginning of which we consider to be the nailing of the 95 theses to the door of the Schlosskirche by Martin Luther on October 31, 1517. Without any doubt, that event is important and significant in the history of the church. This was the beginning of freedom from the bondage of idolatry and corruption as it existed in the Roman Catholic Church of that day. The dual principle of the Reformation was established: justification by faith, and interpretation of Scripture on the basis of Scripture.

Upon the basis of the learning, study, writing, and instruction of the leaders of this Reformation, the Protestant churches have been guided through the succeeding ages (at least many of them claim to follow the instruction of these Reformers). We too, as churches, maintain that we continue to uphold the same truths of Scripture which Calvin developed on the basis of Scripture.

The fact is, however, that generally we know very little of the Reformation. We have all heard of Calvin and Luther, but how much do we actually know of their lives and the struggles they had to face? It would not harm us at all if we knew more of the history of the Reformation. Simply to study history for the sake of increasing intellectual knowledge would be foolishness. But, as is true with all history, we can see in the Reformation the unfolding of God's counsel and purpose when He preserves His Church and His Truth through the events which then took place.

Of one of the Reformers we have possibly not even heard. That was John Knox. It is true that he is not listed as one of the more important of the Reformers. In fact, it might be better not even to place him in the same class as Luther or Calvin, for he was a follower of Calvin. Nevertheless, the influence of this man is also felt in Protestant churches; especially is this true in Scotland, and in England and the United States to a lesser degree.

First, it might be well to review briefly the history of this man. John Knox lived to be 67 years old (1505-1572). When Knox was born, Luther was 26 and had already been a priest for two years. On the other hand, Knox was four years older than John Calvin.

At the age of 25 Knox was ordained a Roman Catholic priest, and it was not until he was 40 that he became a Protestant convert (28 years after the 95 theses were nailed to the door of the Wittenburg church). Especially two things led to this turn of events in his life. He was greatly affected by the man George Wishart who strongly maintained the truths of Scripture. A short time after Knox became acquainted with Wishart, the latter was captured and burned at the stake at the command of a Romish cardinal.

Two years after he had renounced Roman Catholicism, Knox himself was captured and was made a galley-slave for a period of 19 months. It is reported that during this time his health was ruined. Under pressure of the English authorities, Knox was finally released.

Knox, who was born in Scotland, was unable to return to his native land after his release. For five years he labored in England, and served as one of the six chaplains for King Edward VI. While in England, Knox was consulted when several of the standards of the English church were composed. He was forced later to flee also from England when the Roman Catholic Mary I (Bloody Mary) ascended the English throne.

The next five years of his life Knox lived in Europe, and spent much of this time at Geneva with John Calvin. Knox admired Calvin greatly and was influenced by the learning of this great Reformer. Of Calvin and his instruction, Knox stated that this was "the most perfect school of Christ that ever was since the days of the Apostles." While at Geneva, Knox served as pastor to a church composed of English exiles.

The last twelve years of the life of John Knox were spent in his homeland — Scotland. Much could be written of all the struggles he endured there, but suffice it to say that without fear of man Knox stood firm in the truth. He was not even fearful to condemn his Queen when she walked in sin — and he did that several times to her face.

There are several characteristics of this man John Knox which are worthy of note. First of all, he is to be admired for his strong stand for the truth. It is said of Knox that he was more Calvinistic than Calvin himself. It is evident that nothing could force him to renounce the truth of the Word of God. He strongly opposed all of the Romish corruption which he saw all about him in his own land. He minced no words in condemning the mass, idol worship, the Romish hierarchy, and the other false doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church. Throughout his life he fought to remove this completely from Scotland. Nor must one think that this was a simple task. Scotland at that time was predominantly Roman Catholic — including also its queen.

John Knox was not merely negative. He generally maintained those doctrines which are called Calvinistic. Of course, he insisted upon the truth of justification by faith, even as did Luther. But he was also very strong in maintaining the eternal election of God's people through Jesus Christ. He maintained the same idea of the celebration of the Lord's Supper as Calvin taught. He pointed too to the three marks which distinguish the church which are familiar to us.

You can call John Knox crude and rude as many have done. And undoubtedly his personality was not such that all men were attracted to him. He was indeed very outspoken. Bluntly he declared what he believed to be the truth. He did not couch his condemnations in beautiful language. But, after all, what matters all of that when a man stedfastly maintains the truth? Often the same charge has been made

against others who likewise insisted upon the truth without compromise.

By such men as Knox God has also maintained His Church. Through God's power and wisdom, through His Word and Spirit, He sustains His Church. And throughout the ages He has provided His Church with men who led and directed that Church according to His Word.

A second feature of this man Knox was his fearlessness. It is true that several times he was forced to flee from one place to another. Yet Knox never fled because he was fearful of man. It was at the urging of friends who pointed out that he could serve no useful purpose by placing his life in jeopardy that John Knox would finally agree to remove to another place. His courage is plainly seen in many things during his life. Once he had been captured and made a galley-slave. Doubtless he could have avoided that by forsaking his calling in Scotland. In the latter part of his life, no less than five times, he was summoned to appear before Mary, queen of the Scots. When he stood before the reigning monarch, it was not he, but she, who trembled. He condemned her to her face for her worldly lusts (for she was one who craved the corrupt fashions of the day), and for her false and hypocritical worship of God. At least on one occasion Knox left the queen who copiously shed tears of anger and humiliation at his rebukes. She, who could have given the order to take away his life, was afraid of this man of God. God so preserved Knox that the Queen of Scots dared not to touch him. John Knox himself was confident of God's care and guidance; there was then no reason for him to fear.

When viewing the life of this man, one can not help but recall the word and promise of Christ, "They shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you . . . being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist" (Luke 21).

John Knox was noted also for his eloquence of speech. Eloquence of speech in itself means nothing, but when this gift is used in the service of the Word of Christ, it is a marvelous thing to hear. So forceful was he in his preaching that it is even said that on occasions, pulpits would be splintered. The story is that at the end of his life, when he was so weak that he had to be assisted to the pulpit, after he began to preach his old strength and vigor seemed to return.

What was his impact upon the Reformation? One must certainly acknowledge that he was not a Calvin or a Luther. Surely he was not as learned a man as either, nor was his influence as great. But God so used him that the country of Scotland became strongly Protestant. Without him, humanly speaking, this seemed impossible. Even today Scotland has the reputation of being Calvinistic.

The influence of Knox was also felt in England itself. He assisted in formulating some of their creeds, but his influence goes further than that. If Scotland had remained Roman Catholic, there would have been great danger to Protestant England. Then Scotland could have been used as a base for forces of Spain and France (which were Roman Catholic) to advance against England itself. The Pope could have directed armies friendly to himself to march against England and force Roman Catholicism upon that country. That was the desire of the Pope. But God had determined otherwise. God used this man to lead Scotland from Roman Catholicism and thus also to preserve Protestantism as it existed in England. If one man must be pointed out as the one who was most influential in propagating the views of Calvin among English-speaking peoples, that man would doubtless be John Knox.

Also in our country the influence of Knox is in evidence. Especially with the Puritans the teachings of Knox were transported to this country. And the fact that this country is not bound under the yoke of Romanism can also be traced back to Knox. England, more than any other country, influenced the development of this country. If England had remained Roman Catholic, there is the strong possibility that today the United States would also be dominantly Roman Catholic. All of the above presents a large number of suppositions, nevertheless it may show how that God used John Knox at the time of the Reformation to stand up for the truth; and that the effect of that work in which God directed him is yet in evidence today.

Here was a man of God. May we also receive of God grace that, as Knox, we too stand firm in the truth regardless of all of the opposition of man with the confidence that God will preserve His own in all adversity.

G.V.B.

OMNIPRESENCE

How Thy ever presence thrills me!
How it moves the inmost soul!
Just to feel that as I journey,
There is One who has control.

Not a cross that is too heavy,
Will He give His Saints to bear.
Not a road that is too rugged,
Will He lead us, for He cares.

Every trial and temptation
That may come in life's brief day
Is to help us strengthen, guide us,
Til we're farther on the way.

What a comfort to the Christian,
When it seems he treads alone
He has an ever-present Guide,
Who'll watch and bring him safely home.

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

THE TIME OF THE REFORMATION

VIEWS ON THE CHURCH

FORMAL PRINCIPLE

(continued)

In our last article we called attention to the fact that the Romish doctrine of Tradition must not be confused or identified with the truth which advocated development in the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. Protestantism surely believes in such a development and advancement. We believe in the perspecuity, transparency, and also in the profundity of the written Word of God. There will surely always remain hidden nuggets, treasures, unfathomable riches in the Word of the Lord. However, these riches were always present in the Scriptures. They must never be viewed as revelations of the truth in addition to the Bible. This, we understand, is exactly what Rome means when it speaks of the authority of its traditions. But the Church of God simply advances and grows in its knowledge of these truths which were always present in the Word of God. In this article we wish to continue our critical analysis of the Roman Catholic doctrine of Tradition as decreed in the Romish Council of Trent.

First, the Romish doctrine of Tradition simply involves us in a natural impossibility. It is simply impossible. We do not deny, of course, that Christ and His apostles said more than what is recorded in the books of the New Testament canon, the New Testament. And neither do we deny that these sayings of Jesus, in addition to what is recorded in the New Testament, are just as infallible as these books of the New Testament. We certainly believe that, as far as the apostles are concerned, they, too, wrote and said more than what is written in the New Testament. And they were surely infallibly guided and led by the Holy Spirit whenever they were busy in their official capacity as apostles. We know, for example, that there were more than two epistles to the church at Corinth. And that third epistle must also have been infallibly written. However, it is not the question whether there was more said by Christ and His apostles than what is recorded in Holy Writ. Protestantism maintains that not all the sayings of Jesus and His apostles were intended to constitute a part of the permanent rule of faith and doctrine to the Church.

However, we remarked that the Romish doctrine of Tradition involves us in a natural impossibility. Who will determine what belongs to these unrecorded sayings of Jesus and His apostles and what does not belong to them? We can understand, of course, that these unwritten sayings of Jesus and His apostles could be authoritative in the very early days of the Church in its New Testament infancy. These sayings then were passed on from mouth to mouth. One can conceive of the possibility of this at the beginning of the Church in the New Dispensation. But, as the days of Jesus and the apostles receded more and more into the past, and the distance became increasingly wider between them and the Church, the impossibility of a reliable and infallible tradition became more and more apparent. Does man, because of the presence of the power of sin in him, have the clearness of perception, the retentiveness of memory, or the power of presentation to enable him to give a trustworthy account of a discourse once heard a few years or even a few months after its delivery? Does man, sinful man have the ability to give a trustworthy and reliable account of the sayings of Jesus and His apostles after years and centuries have elapsed since their delivery?

This, however, is not all. We must bear in mind that man is sinful. Would the Lord entrust His infallible Word to the memory of sinful men? Are not all men by nature blind to the things that are of the Spirit? Is it not man's natural disposition and inclination to pervert and misrepresent the truth to suit his own prejudices and purposes? Would God, for example, entrust to man the writing of His Word? There are those, we know, who believe that the Word of God is in the Bible. They do not claim that the Bible is the Word of God but they would maintain that the Bible contains the Word of God, as, for example, a cradle contains a baby. Would God simply instruct a man to write, as in the epistle to the Romans, on the general theme of the Righteousness of God, and leave it to him to write on it and develop it in his own way? And then we should regard Tradition as of equal authority with the Word of God? How can Tradition be a reliable source of religious knowledge? Imagine if the retention of what Jesus or the apostles had said were left to the memory of man! How easy it would be to distort and pervert such truths as are recorded in Romans 9 where we read that the Lord is the Potter and we are the clay, that the living God has the sovereign right to make of the clay whatever He pleases, that He makes vessels of honour and of dishonour, and that no man can or may reply against Him! The danger would surely exist that man would distort and corrupt these sayings to suit his own natural likes and dislikes. However, even this is not all. Still more can and must be said. Again we ask the question: who will determine whether these sayings of Jesus and of His apostles have been correctly reproduced? The Church of God in Africa protested against the exaggerated value which was attributed to Tradition especially in the second century. Cyprian appealed to texts such as Isaiah 29:13, Matt. 15:9, I Tim. 6:3-5 to counteract tradition as the ground upon which the bishop of Rome attempted to maintain himself. The question

is therefore inevitable: who determines the value and purity of these traditions? Is the Church of God the organ which safeguards the infallibility of traditions? But, the church of God could surely not be this organ as far as its general membership is concerned. That is an obvious fact. How could the common membership of the church be in a position to read and interpret countless traditions and sayings of past centuries, also considering the fact that these traditions have come down to us in many and various languages? Distinction can be made in the church of God between those who hear and those who teach. One can hardly expect the hearing element of the church (the laity) to determine what is true or false. Does this teaching element (as, for example, the bishops) determine this question individually or when they are gathered in a council? And if they determine this question only when they are gathered in a council, does then the majority of votes determine the final outcome of the matter? How great must this majority be? Is a majority of one vote sufficient? And so the papal system went one step farther and ascribed infallibility to the pope. Hence, the infallibility of the pope, of one man, is the final result of this development of the doctrine of Tradition throughout the ages. One man, one ordinary mortal controls this tremendously important and vital question.

Another argument that may be voiced against the Roman Catholic doctrine of Tradition is that which revolved around the Roman Catholic doctrine of "common consent." Rome, we know, glories in its unanimity. Roman Catholicism ridicules Protestantism because the latter is so hopelessly divided, cut up into hundreds of churches and denominations. We must bear in mind that, until the middle of the eleventh century, there was but one church of Christ in the midst of the world. It was in the middle of the eleventh century that the great schism occurred between the Latin and Greek sections of the Church of God, between the East and the West, between Rome and Constantinople. And then another tremendous break took place in the sixteenth century, at the time of the Reformation. And we know that since that time the Roman Catholic Church has remained intact; Protestantism, however, has suffered one break after another. Rome points to this fact with pride, seeks in its own unity and unanimity the earmark of its being the true church, and regards the splitting up of the Protestant churches as a sure indication that they are false. And Rome also sees in its own unity and unanimity a certain proof of the infallibility of Tradition. It calls attention to the fact that all the doctrines which they have adopted as based upon tradition must be true because these various doctrines enjoy such universal endorsement and approval.

To counter this argument of Roman Catholicism we may remark, in the first place, that Rome's unity is merely external. Protestantism's divisions and schisms are certainly to be deplored. This, of course, does not mean that we may ever seek the reunion of churches at the cost of the truth. However, any departure from the truth is always deplorable and terrible. Rome's unity, however, is merely external. There all the people are held together in one faith and doctrine by an outward hierarchy, as loops around a barrel. The reason why Protestantism is split up into so many parts and segments is because the Reformation returned the Bible to the people. Give the people the liberty to read and interpret the Holy Scriptures and the invariable result will be that the evil of the human heart will always assert itself. This, of course, is no reflection on the Word of God and its clearness, but on the natural evil of the human heart and mind. The unity of the Roman Catholic Church is not internal and spiritual but outward and forced. That all the people of the Roman Catholic Church accept all the doctrines of Rome, also those doctrines which are based on tradition, is not because they chose them but because they have been imposed upon them.

Besides, in connection with Rome's appeal to the argument of "common consent," we must bear in mind that this argument of Rome is based upon the utterly preposterous assumption that the Romanists are the only Christians in the midst of the world. They claim that there is no salvation outside of the Church, and they claim that the Church is the Romish Church. Rome claims that the Church of Rome receives certain doctrines upon the authority of tradition. They also claim that the Church of Rome includes all the Christians in the midst of the world. And so they conclude that all the Christians throughout the world are in favour of these doctrines. And whereas the Christians throughout the world are in favour of these doctrines these doctrines must be true. This is their argument of "common consent." Of course, this argument falls as soon as it becomes evident that all the Christians in the world are not confined to the Church of Rome. And the claim that all the Christians in the world are confined to the Church of Rome is surely preposterous. The movement of the Reformation was the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men, and this is clear from the fact that they sought to maintain the principle that the Bible alone is authoritative for life and doctrine and that our justification before God is not based in any sense of the word upon any work of man but only upon free and sovereign grace.

Finally, continuing our criticism of Rome's appeal to the argument of "common consent," let us presuppose, for the sake of argument, that the Romish Church is the whole Church of God in the midst of the world, and admit that that Church is unanimous in its maintaining of certain teachings and doctrines. Would in that case the appeal of Rome to this unanimity be conclusive? By no means. Rome must not only prove that they are unanimous *today* in what they teach. But they must also prove that *the* Church was always unanimous also in the past. The Lord willing, we will continue with this discussion in our following article. H.V.

"Evil pursueth sinners; but the righteous shall be recompensed with good" PROVERBS 13:21.

The Voice of Our Fathers

The Canons of Dordrecht

PART TWO

EXPOSITION OF THE CANONS

FIFTH HEAD OF DOCTRINE

OF THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

REJECTION OF ERRORS

Article 3. Who teach: That the true believers and regenerate not only can fall from justifying faith and likewise from grace and salvation wholly and to the end, but indeed often do fall from this and are lost forever. For this conception makes powerless the grace, justification, regeneration, and continued keeping by Christ, contrary to the expressed words of the Apostle Paul: "That while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Much more then, being justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him," Rom. 5:8, 9. And contrary to the Apostle John: "Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because his seed abideth in him; and he can not sin, because he is begotten of God," I John 3:9. And also contrary to the words of Jesus Christ: "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father who hath given them to me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand." John 10:28, 29.

We offer the following corrections of the translation: 1) "to the end" might better be rendered simply by "finally." 2) "from this" should be "from these," referring to justifying faith, grace, and salvation. 3) "powerless" is correct if taken in the specific sense of "ineffectual" or "void." 4) In the second sentence of this article, "grace, justification, regeneration," should be "the grace of justification and of regeneration." 5) The texts quoted should be given consistently as they are found in the Authorized Version.

In this citation of error it is evident that the Arminians went far beyond the position taken originally in the fifth article of the Remonstrance. There, you will remember, they had not dared to do more than to call the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints in question. They had said that the matter of falling away from grace "must be more particularly determined out of the Holy Scripture, before we ourselves can teach it with the full persuasion of our minds." And in that fifth article they had even rather piously quoted one of the passages which the fathers in the article we are discussing employ against them, namely, John 10:28. Here, however, the Arminians are quoted by the fathers as going to the extreme of a complete denial of the truth of the perseverance of the saints. They teach both the *possibility* of a final falling away and the frequent *actuality* of such a fall from justifying faith and grace and salvation into everlasting perdition. This is indeed a terrible doctrine.

Notice, first of all, that they speak of "the true believers and regenerate." The subject, therefore, is not merely those who appear to be saints outwardly. We are not discussing those of whom the apostle John says: "They went out from us, but they were not of us." But the subject is the true saints, those who really believe and who are regenerate, that is, who have the new and heavenly life of Christ in them. Concerning these the Arminians teach, in the first place, that it is *possible* for them to lose their justifying faith, and thus to fall from grace and salvation, something, of course, which follows inevitably upon the loss of justifying faith. If one loses justifying faith, he loses the blessing of justification. And justification is basic. In our justification we have the right before God to all the blessings of grace and salvation; without our justification we have the right to none of them, but only to condemnation and wrath. And to make the matter perfectly plain, the Arminians add: "wholly and finally." Hence, they mean that it is possible for the saint to lose the justifying faith, and therefore also grace and salvation, in such a way that he has nothing left. Not even the power and the principle of that faith is left. It has disappeared completely, so that the saint has reverted to the status of an unsaved, natural man. Moreover, the Arminians are not speaking of a temporary fall from grace — something which would be folly anyway when they speak of a complete fall — but, to make it clear beyond a question, they speak of a *final* falling away. In the second place, the Arminians make bold to state concerning these true believers and regenerate that they not only can, but indeed *often do* fall from justifying faith, grace, and salvation, and are lost forever. Mark you well, the spiritual effect of this terrible doctrine is that not a single believer is safe. All face not only the possibility of falling away, but also the imminent danger of actually being lost forever. According to this view it could very well have come to pass that not a single soul would ever reach everlasting glory and that Christ would occupy heaven without His saints.

It is worth our while in this connection to take note of some of the favorite arguments of the Arminians on this score. Even though these arguments are not mentioned in this article, we should nevertheless be acquainted with them. Forewarned is fore-armed. Hence, while we do not intend to explain all these passages, we will call your attention to them. First of all, the Arminians teach that all those passages which exhort God's people to persevere imply that the falling away of the saints is really possible. To mention a few examples, they point out that Christ says that only they shall be saved that endure unto the end, Matt. 24:13. Or they cite a passage like Hebrews 4:11, where we are admonished to labor to enter into the rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. Or they point to the numerous admonitions to the seven churches in the book of Revelation which are also accompanied by threats — for example, the word to the church of Sardis: "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast,

and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." Or that to the church of Philadelphia: "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." In the second place, the Arminians appeal to Scripture passages which, in their opinion, teach the possibility of a final falling away. They mention the passage in Romans 11 where the apostle Paul speaks of the branches that are cut off on account of unbelief and where he warns believers not to be highminded but to fear. They cite the well-known passage of Hebrews 6:4-8, where the author speaks of the impossibility of renewing unto repentance those who fall away, who crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh. And there are other such passages. And finally, they also claim that there are actual examples of those who fall away. They cite I Tim. 1:19, 20: "Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme." They also mention those who erred concerning the truth of the resurrection, II Tim. 2:17, 18, namely, Hymenaeus and Philetus. Or they mention the false teachers of II Peter 2, who denied the Lord that bought them, and who, after they escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of Jesus Christ, are again entangled in those same pollutions and are overcome. All these are supposed to be examples of men who had really been believers and regenerate and who lost the justifying faith, grace, and salvation through their own apostasy, so that they went lost forever.

As we said, it is not our intention to treat these various so-called Scriptural arguments of the Arminians in detail. That is beyond the scope of this discussion of the *Canons*. For the fathers do not deal in this connection with the Arminians' arguments, but with their doctrine. The arguments were fully treated during the course of the Synod's investigation into the Arminians' writings. And therefore our fathers, following the sound rule that the Scriptures do not contradict themselves, present the current teaching of Scripture on this subject, citing various passages, and implying, of course, that the various texts quoted by the Arminians must be interpreted only in the light of that current teaching of Scripture.

First, however, they very briefly expose the error of the Arminians: "For this conception makes powerless the grace, justification, regeneration, and continued keeping by Christ." This is a noteworthy answer.

In the first place, notice that the fathers do not only speak of the work of preservation as such, but also of the grace of justification and regeneration. This is due undoubtedly to the fact that the Arminians themselves speak of the "true believers and regenerate" and of falling from "justifying faith." But this draws our attention to the fact that these matters are indeed at stake in any discussion of the doctrine of perseverance. It is true that one may speak in the narrower sense of perseverance as that work of God in Christ whereby He keeps His elect unto the final salvation and glory. But this perseverance is never to be separated from the other blessings of salvation. It means that they continue as regenerated, believing, justified, sanctified children of God unto the end, and that God preserves them in these various aspects of grace. He keeps His regenerated child, so that he never loses the new life. He preserves the believer, so that he never loses the faith. He keeps the justified Christian, so that he does not fall out of the state of justification. He preserves the sanctified Christian, so that he continues in the grace of sanctification. Once regenerated is always regenerated; once a believer is always a believer; once justified is forever justified; once sanctified is forever sanctified. Hence, you cannot touch the truth of preservation without touching at the same time all these blessings of salvation in which the saints continue through divine preservation. Hence, the fathers were correct in pointing out that when the Arminians say that true believers and regenerate can and do fall away wholly and finally from justifying faith and salvation, they are making ineffectual not only Christ's continued keeping of His saints but also the grace of regeneration and justification.

In the second place, notice that the fathers accuse the Arminians of making the grace of justification and regeneration and the continued keeping by Christ *powerless* — literally, ineffectual, or vain. In other words, according to the Arminians, these works of grace are no guarantee whatsoever of man's final salvation. It can and does come to pass that a man is justified and regenerated and even kept by Christ but that he nevertheless goes lost forever. All that justification and regeneration and keeping by Christ in that case is vain, of none effect, and went completely for nought. We said "in that case." But the fathers correctly make a general statement: this conception makes vain the grace of justification and regeneration and the continued keeping by Christ. For if it be true in one single instance that a regenerated and justified Christian goes lost forever, then these works of grace are *never* effectual. It is the old Arminian error over again: not the work of God, but the work of man is effectual. All depends on man's free will.

And that leads us to our third remark in this connection, namely, that the fathers exactly take us back to the fact that this Arminian error says something about the work of *God*. Regeneration and justification and Christ's continued keeping are works of grace, works of God. If you make them ineffectual you make God's work ineffectual. And this is the accusation the fathers bring against the Arminians: by your conception you make God's work, not man's work, ineffectual. To be sure, that is a severe accusation. But we must allow it to stand in all its severity. The Arminian doctrine is a God-dishonoring doctrine. And if for no other reason than this, we must oppose it with all our might.

(to be continued)

H.C.H.

DECENCY and ORDER

Church Visitation

(Article 44, D.K.O., Con't.)

When the Church Visitors meet with a Consistory, it is proper that the president of the Consistory presides over the meeting even though one of the rules prescribed for Church Visitation states: *"Of the visitors, one shall function as chairman and the other as secretary. They shall record their findings and actions in a book, which can be consulted at the next visitation, and which can be kept in the Classical archive."* This rule should be interpreted to mean that the visitors function as chairman and secretary of their own committee and not of the Consistory. That this is evidently the intent of the rule follows from the fact that the secretary does not transcribe a record of the visit in the minute book of the consistory but in a book that is the property of the Classis. If then the secretary functions only as secretary of the committee, this would also be true of the chairman. His office as chairman pertains only to his own committee.

The meeting that is called is a *Consistory* meeting. The minister of the church, who is the president of the Consistory, opens the meeting with the reading of an appropriate passage of Scripture and this is followed with prayer as prescribed in Article 32 of the Church Order. Our own custom is to include in these opening devotions the singing of a Psalm. This is fitting. The Consistory is met to be engaged in the Lord's work and this work is a joyous one. That joy may appropriately be expressed by a Psalm of praise or thanksgiving to God. The meeting is then properly constituted and the chairman, after addressing a few appropriate words of welcome to the visitors, extends to them the right to perform the labors for which they have met with the Consistory. The chairman of the church visiting committee then proceeds to this task and the committee's secretary transcribes in their record the transactions that follow.

The prescribed questions that are asked by the Church Visitors are divided into four parts. First, there is a series of nineteen questions that are asked of the whole consistory. Next, there are six questions that are asked of the elders and deacons in the absence of the minister. The third part, consisting again of six questions, is asked of the minister and deacons with the elders being absent. The final part consists of five questions that are asked of the minister and elders in the absence of the deacons.

There is, of course, reason why the various members of the Consistory are asked to absent themselves from the meeting during part of the questioning. The *Church Order Commentary* cites this as "a good rule." Their reasoning is that "if the work of mutual supervision carried on through Church Visitation is to have real significance, then thoroughness and frankness must mark this work. Faults and shortcomings, worthy of mention, will come to the attention of the Visitors much more readily if the various groups of office bearers will absent themselves for a little while than when they remain in the gathering. Some have said if a matter requires mentioning the responding brother should be as willing to broach the matter in the presence of the party concerned as in his absence. But this is reasoning too idealistically. Moreover, it is better in many instances for the office bearer who may need correction that he does not know who broached the matter. To know who mentioned the matter would tend to introduce a personal element which is undesirable."

Although there is an element of truth in the above quotation, it does not, in my opinion, express the entire truth. I believe that, without becoming too idealistic, it may be argued that the presence of a full consistory during all the questioning has certain advantages for the work of church visitation. Nor do I think that the mere assertion that it is easier for a brother to bring up a certain matter against a fellow office-bearer in his absence than in his presence should be a reason that he should be given this opportunity. If he has something against his fellow office-bearer, he should bring it up *in his presence* and neither should he wait until the church visitors are there to do so. Why should he keep a matter that needs correction in his soul for weeks and perhaps even months? Is the relationship of brethren such that they will hate one another when they speak words of correction and admonition? Is not Proverbs 9:6 true anymore? *"Rebuke a wise man and he will love thee."* We must have more of that spirit in the church and less of the spirit of secrecy and cover-up. It is my contention that it is unnecessary to ask the minister, elders and deacons to leave the room while questions are asked and answered concerning their persons and work.

Not only would I advocate that they remain present in the Consistory meeting but I want to offer one further suggestion along this line. It seems to me that it would even be advantageous and fruitful if, for example, the questions that are asked about the minister and his work were answered by the minister himself with the elders and deacons witnessing his answers. Likewise then would the elders answer the questions pertaining to them and their office and so also the deacons with the rest of the Consistory witnessing the answers. Silence on the part of the witnesses would mean agreement with the answers given. Should there then be dissent with regard to any of the answers given, a circumstance would come to light for the church visitors to investigate further.

Let us then apply this to a few concrete questions. The question is asked, for example, concerning the minister: "Is he devoted as much as possible to the exercise of his office?" Now the elders and deacons, in the absence of the minister, might readily answer that question affirmatively and the

church visitors would proceed to the next one. If, however, the minister himself was asked to answer that question, it is possible that he could not, in good conscience, give an affirmative answer. Who knows, better than the minister himself, how devoted he is to his office? And should he then hesitate to answer or to give a negative answer, there would arise immediately a circumstance that should be investigated and corrected as soon as possible.

Another example we will take from the questions now asked in the absence of the elders. Suppose that the elders themselves were asked the fifth question: "Do you try to prevent and remove all offense in the congregation, and try to comfort and instruct the members?" In their absence the minister and deacons might reply that they do but it is also possible that the elders themselves know of offenses that they put forth no effort to remove and would therefore be unable to answer affirmatively. If then, they themselves make admission of neglect in regard to this matter, the church visitors could serve amicably with advice and counsel that would be beneficial to the whole church.

We may cite one more example with reference to the deacons. The question is asked now in their absence: "Are they diligent in the collecting of the alms and do they faithfully realize their calling in the care and comfort of the poor and oppressed?" It might be advantageous to have the deacons testify before the consistory and church visitors in regard to this matter. It is my contention that in all these instances the ones concerning whom the questions are asked are best able to answer them and that, therefore, they should be put to them and not to others in their absence.

I realize that this would be a rather radical departure from past custom. However, this should be no objection if it will improve the institution of church visitation as is my contention. There may be objections because this would undoubtedly make the task more difficult for the consistory members since it would put a little flesh on an otherwise "wassen neus" but at the same time it would make the task richer for the church visitors provided that, as we have suggested before, they would be allowed in connection with their questioning to depart somewhat from the accepted form. For instance, I want to refer you to what Rev. Hoeksema wrote in connection with the question that is asked concerning the preaching from the Heidelberg Catechism. He explains that it is easy to answer the question *"Yes"* and let the matter drop. But he also suggests that the church visitors question further along these lines. We now quote from page 200, Vol. 35, S. B.

"But suppose that the purpose of the question is, too, to find out whether the minister is faithful in studying the doctrine explained in the Catechism and whether he himself remains ahead of the congregation. Then it becomes a different matter. Then the church visitors might ask such questions as these: 'Do you always make new sermons on the Catechism or do you simply put the old pile upside down? What sources do you study in connection with your catechism preaching? Do you preach on the Catechism from different viewpoints? From what viewpoint are you preaching on it at present?' The same holds for many other questions."

We cite this because if the minister was present to answer the question: "Do you faithfully explain God's Word so that the congregation is built up through your preaching?" a wonderful opportunity would be given in the light of the above for the church visitors to ask many things relating to the work and preaching of the minister in the congregation. And the same is true of the questions that would then be directed to the elders and deacons, but this is especially important with regard to the matters of the preaching. The more these things are broadened out the more fruitful they will become not only for the consistory members themselves but also for the entire church and we visualize an opportune way to accomplish this by changing some of the current practices of church visitation. If, for example, the church visitors could do a little investigative work, they might have asked in 1953 a certain minister who had been in the ministry for nearly twenty-five years, to explain why he still used the literal themes and divisions in his Catechism preaching that Rev. Hoeksema had given him in his student days? And the irony of it was that while he was doing this he was most vigorously propagating slander against the Professor whose material he was using for his sermons. The evidence and proof of this I have preserved in my file to this day. No doubt many more things would have been uncovered in those days if the church visitors had had authority to interrogate ministers, elders and deacons personally on matters relating to the prescribed questions.

G.V.d.B.

Announcement

The Free Christian School at Edgerton, Minnesota, will be in need of a teacher for grades 1, 2, 3, and 4 for the term 1960-1961.

Please mail applications to

H. MIERSMA, Woodstock, Minnesota

Proverb selected for this issue: Buy the truth, sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding. Prov. 23:23.

"It should be borne in mind, that, in those who have just learned Christ, the same cannot be expected, as from those who have been instructed from early youth; that the deepest motives of conversion, as a rule, remain hid from others, and often even from those who experience it; and the sense of guilt is not the cause, but is the fruit of faith."

H. Bavinck, *Geref. Dogmatiek,* Vol. IV

ALL AROUND US

More Comment On The Liberated-Synodical Merger.

The reader may recall that in the February 1st issue of *The Standard Bearer* we called attention to the first of two articles written by Dr. R. Danhof in *The Banner* in which he told of the "Renewed Attempt at Merger in the Netherlands." Dr. Danhof informed his readers that the Christian Reformed Church in America assumed a "lay hands off" policy with respect to the Netherlands situation. It was in connection with this revealed policy that we made the following statements:

"It would stand to reason that the Christian Reformed Church would assume a 'lay hands off' policy, because they had already placed themselves in the precarious position of jumping in the frying pan or to the fire. They would maintain the friendly and sisterly relation of long standing with the Gereformeerde Kerken (Synodicals), while at the same time they were busy swallowing up the Dutch immigrants from the Liberated Churches into their own church which came to this country or to Canada. It would not do for the Christian Reformed Church to show partiality to either group."

When we penned the above quoted paragraph the thought was in our soul that there might be readers of *The Banner* who, after reading Dr. Danhof's articles, would nevertheless feel that partiality was being shown. That our suspicion was not unwarranted is plain from a letter addressed to the Editor of *The Banner* in the department "Voices in the Church," in the March 11th issue.

Rev. Harold Hollander of Orangeville, Ontario, who Dr. Danhof informs us is Stated Clerk of Classis Toronto, comments on the articles of Dr. Danhof, and the latter makes his reply.

Rev. Hollander, it appears, feels that Dr. Danhof may have left room for misunderstanding "between the 'Liberated' people (both in Holland and U.S.) and ourselves." By "ourselves" he means the Christian Reformed Church. Rev. Hollander remarks that the articles of Dr. Danhof "although intended to be factual, and perhaps purposely vague as to the problems involved, contain a statement which is liable to promote further misunderstanding . . ." To elucidate, Rev. Hollander continues:

"To understand this, we must remember that the controversy revolves especially around the promise of the Covenant. Does the covenant promise made to the children of believers contain also the promise of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, or doesn't it? How is it to be explained that among the children of believing parents there are the Ishmaels and Esaus and others who received the sign and the seal of the covenant, but in whom, to all appearances, the covenant is not realized?

"The majority of leaders in the Gereformeerde Kerken were of the opinion that this problem can best be solved by distinguishing between the *outward* and *inward* aspects of the covenant. All children of believing parents are *outwardly* in the covenant, but only the *elect* children are inwardly (and really) in the covenant.

"There was a minority of leaders who had objections against this view. For, this would mean that baptism did not have the same meaning for children of believing parents. This minority preferred to believe that the covenant promises are the same to all the children of believing parents. They preferred to explain the problem of the Ishmaels and Esaus by pointing to faith and repentance as the *condition* upon which the promise would be realized. They believed that this was a Reformed view, and pointed to Lord's Day 45 which says that 'God will give His grace and Holy Spirit to those only who with hearty sighing unceasingly beg them of Him and thank Him for them.'

"Thus there were two views in the Gereformeerde Kerken, even since 1905 when the Conclusions of Utrecht had been drawn up. The Conclusions of Utrecht had straddled the issue. But in 1942 the Gereformeerde Synod declared that the view of the minority might no longer be taught. Ministers who failed to fall in line were deposed for insubordination. Many serious minded people, alarmed with growing 'covenantal complacency' in the Gereformeerde Kerken, went along with their ministers to form the 'Liberated' Church.

"Although the Christian Reformed Church calls the Gereformeerde Kerken a 'sister church' as before, and although we have never applied that term as yet to the 'Liberated Churches,' *we have never made a pronouncement as to who was right. We still have the Conclusions of Utrecht which allows both positions; we have never adopted the formulations which were made in Holland in '42 and '46.*

"I regret that Dr. Danhof states that the Gereformeerde Kerken did not adopt a new doctrinal position in '42. *Although no new doctrine was added, the doctrinal position was changed in that the minority view might no longer be taught.*

"I hope that the statement of Dr. Danhof will be taken as the opinion of one man (although he happens to be the Stated Clerk of Synod) and not the official position of our church."

To this Dr. Danhof makes the following reply:

"Brother Hollander introduces matters in his document which I purposely avoided in my brief historical review of the split which occurred in the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands and the repeated attempts to effect a merger. The problem raised by him concerning the 'Ishmaels and Esaus' in the covenant of grace, and the distinctions such as 'outward and inward' aspects of the covenant were not within the scope or purpose of my articles. To discuss the

dogmatic distinctions raised by him would require a series of articles.

"The statement to which brother Hollander offers objection is against my contention that the Synod of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands in 1942 *added no new doctrine* (Italics mine). For the historical accuracy of this I refer him to Acts of 1942, Art. 158, dealing with the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace, '. . . overeenkomstig hetgeen de Synode van Utrecht uitgesproken heeft.' When the Synod of 1946 once again undertook to reformulate the decision of 1942 it is again stated '. . . dat de zakelijke inhoud der betreffende uitspraken van 1905 en 1942 . . . niet prijsgegeven mag worden' (Acts 1946, Art. 197).

"The chief objection of brother Hollander is expressed in the words, 'Although no new doctrine was added, the doctrinal position was changed in that the minority view might no longer be taught.' The Synod of 1942 undertook, because of much agitation against point 4 of the Utrecht Conclusions adopted in 1905, to reformulate a decision in agreement with the content and spirit expressed by the synod of 1905. The decision of 1942 was declared binding. It meant that all office bearers were expected to submit to this decision of synod. A minority was unwilling to submit to this decision, and as a consequence suspension and deposition from office followed. Does brother Hollander mean to infer that after the synod of 1942 made a decision a group opposed to the decision should be permitted to propagate their own views? The Form of Subscription and Article 31 of our Church Order prescribes the proper method of appeal for a minority group in disagreement with a decision of a Synod.

"The closing paragraph of brother Hollander seems to imply that my position as stated clerk has some undefined relation to the articles which I submitted. I can assure him that this is not the case. I did not speak for the denomination but for myself. I assume he did the same, though he is stated clerk of Classis Toronto. However, as stated clerk of the church, I can assure him that the decisions of the Synod of 1908 are the official position of our church and are binding upon all office bearers."

From Dr. Danhof's answer to Rev. Hollander we draw the following conclusions:

1. That he handily avoided an answer to Rev. Hollander's request that he express who was right in the Netherlands controversy, and also whether the Liberated Churches should be considered sister churches. This he did by informing Rev. Hollander that the problems involved would require a series of articles. The thought came to us that two articles on a certain subject is already a series. Would it have been too much to write one or two more articles? Especially where he might properly enlighten his readers in the doctrinal issues involved? It would be interesting to know what Dr. Danhof would reply to the question: How is it to be explained that the Christian Reformed Church continues to call the Synodicals sister churches, while the Liberated Churches have not been so called? It would be interesting, too, to read Dr. Danhof's answer to the question: Which doctrinal position do you sustain, that of the Synodicals or of the Liberated? And again, in view of the fact that many in the Christian Reformed Church are under the influence of the Heynsian conception of the covenant, how is it to be explained that the Synodicals and the Christian Reformed are called sister churches, whereas the Liberated Churches hold to the Heynsian conception?

2. That he correctly points Rev. Hollander to the Reformed principle that the decisions of synod are settled and binding, and may not be militated against except through the legal way of appeal. This principle is often forgotten, especially when a church is in the throes of a controversy; but a principle, nevertheless, which must be religiously adhered to lest the church be cast into a state of chaos and anarchy. When the minority group becomes unwilling to submit, it stands to reason that suspension and deposition must follow. If, on the other hand, the synod refuses to honor appeal, and deposes those who raise their voices in opposition to the decision of synod, the church becomes hierarchical. We have the impression that in the controversy of 1942 both groups in the Netherlands made themselves guilty; the one, by refusing to go the legal way of appeal; and the other, by hierarchically deposing ministers and their consistories, much like the Christian Reformed Church did to our leaders in 1926.

3. That, if we have understood his answer correctly, Dr. Danhof also gives Rev. Hollander warning that as office bearer and stated clerk in the Christian Reformed Church he had better remember the above stated principle lest his defence of the Liberated bring him into trouble. Very diplomatically he reminds Rev. Hollander of the decisions of the Synod of 1908. This must mean decisions of the Christian Reformed Church under whose jurisdiction Rev. Hollander also stands. Should Rev. Hollander in his defence of the Liberated militate against the position of the Christian Reformed Church, he can only expect his church to impose proper discipline upon him. That seems to be the implication of Dr. Danhof's closing remarks.

4. That Dr. Danhof certainly gives evidence that his articles written on the church merger in the Netherlands were written with a definite purpose not to become involved in the Netherlands controversy. This, we believe, was also on the side of diplomacy. As we stated in our former article, we believe that because of circumstances it would not be a point of wisdom for Danhof to commit himself or his churches to either side in the controversy. He could not do it with respect to the Synodicals, lest he evoke the ire of the Liberated who are being swallowed up by the Christian Reformed Church both in Canada and the United States. He could not do it with respect to the Liberated, lest he spoil the sisterly relation subsisting between the Christian Reformed Church and the Synodicals.

M.S.

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NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

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

March 20, 1960

Classis West met in Oak Lawn, Ill., March 16, and decided, upon the suggestion of Classis East, to send up the news of Classical meetings to the church news editor to appear in his column. The following items were furnished by the Stated Clerk: Rev. G. Van Baren presided, functioning in that office for the first time. Rev. H. H. Kuiper, president of the previous Classis, functioned as clerk. The meeting lasted from 9 A.M. to 10:15 P.M., and was marked with a good spirit throughout. Classis approved the action of consistories in two censure cases, one of which was the erasure of a baptized member. Another case was returned to the consistory as not having been completed at that level.

Rev. H. Veldman was re-elected to the office of Stated Clerk for a term of three years. Revs. J. A. Heys and G. VandenBerg were elected Church Visitors with Rev. G. Van Baren as alternate.

Classis elected the following as delegates to the forthcoming synod: Ministers, *Primi,* Revs. J. A. Heys, H. H. Kuiper, G. Vanden Berg, H. Veldman; *secundi,* R. C. Harbach, G. Van Baren. Elders, *primi,* J. Flikkema, W. A. Griess, H. Huisken, C. Vander Molen; *secundi,* J. Blankenspoor, G. Grunnink, G. Huber, R. Regnerus. It was decided that the first alternate minister delegate would serve as secundus for the first two primi delegates, and the second alternate to serve as secundus for the last two primi delegates; further, that each elder delegate should call on his alternate if necessary.

Classical appointments are as follows: For Hull, March 20, 27, April 3, Rev. H. Veldman; May 1, G. Van Baren; May 8, B. Woudenberg; May 15, G. Van Baren; June 5, B. Woudenberg; June 12, J. A. Heys; June 19, G. Vanden Berg; July 10, 17 and 24, H. H. Kuiper; Aug. 7, B. Woudenberg; Aug. 14, J. A. Heys; Aug. 21, G. Van Baren; Aug. 28, Sept. 4, 11, R. C. Harbach. For Pella, April 3, G. Vanden Berg; June 19, B. Woudenberg; July 31, G. Van den Berg; Sept. 11, J. A. Heys.

Classis decided to request Classis East to provide classical appointments for the congregation of Randolph; and, if the neighbor Classis cannot meet the request, the consistory of Randolph shall apply to the Classical Committee for assistance in this matter. Classis also decided to adopt a set of rules for parliamentary procedure, and to request Synod to incorporate these rules in a new Church Order book, together with a constitution for the Classical Committee. The ministers were requested to furnish two more sermons, for reading services, by July 1. A decision was made to recommend to Synod that subsidy be granted to the congregations of Redlands, Lynden, Loveland, Doon, Hull, Edgerton, Randolph, and Oak Lawn. All the consistories but two, were represented by two delegates.

REV. H. VELDMAN, *Stated Clerk*

The Protestant Reformed Music Festival (the first of its kind) is now history. The program featured over 130 participants, groups and individuals representing every phase of church and school music as we know it. If such a festival is to be repeated, as we sincerely hope, it might be better that a whole evening be devoted to it instead of rendering one after a Sunday evening service; the hour got quite late for the many school-attending children in the audience. The Young People's Society of our Southeast church sponsored the event, furnishing music that admirably served to complete a Sunday of praise worship.

Holland gave their new pastor a congregational welcome Friday evening, March 11, in the auditorium of their new meeting place. (This is located on West 12th St., *not West 14th,* as reported in the last issue.) Rev. Lanting writes that it was a very enjoyable evening for the congregation and for him and his family.

Edgerton plans to install Rev. Woudenberg Mar. 25, and after the service a congregational welcome will be given, D.V.

The Program Committee of the Ref. Witness Hour has the following to report: A new Radio Choir has been organized and by this time has been "on the air." They hope, D.V., to furnish the musical portions of the Ref. Witness Hour for many of the Sunday programs. The choir and accompanist, under the capable direction of Mr. Roland Petersen, is composed of musical talent from our various local congregations. The Radio Committee is eagerly awaiting your comments regarding this newly organized group. The committee and choir have labored quite some time in the realization of this endeavor and requests the "listeners' reaction." The Committee also reports that on Resurrection Day, April 17, special music has been provided to commemorate this glorious and blessed event. Be sure to listen to this program — Rev. H. Hoeksema will speak on the theme, "The Living One." Send your comments to: The Reformed Witness Hour, P.O. Box 8, Grand Rapids 1, Mich.

Rev. H. Hoeksema's lecture on "The Infallibility of the Scriptures" was given March 17 in the auditorium of First Church in Grand Rapids. Immediately after the lecture the ushers collected questions from the audience, which were then answered by the speaker. The entire meeting lasted three hours, from 8 to 11 P.M., with interest running high to the very end. It was very gratifying to the sponsoring Men's Society to see such a large audience willing to attend a serious lecture, and to be willing to stay so late to hear their questions answered. We hope that the success of this venture will give them courage to sponsor another lecture in the Fall, probably on a topic suggested by one of the questions, "The so-called findings of Science, in the light of Scripture."

. . . . see you in church. J.M.F.