

THE STANDARD *Bearer* A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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MEDITATION

Today's Need of Exhortation

Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.
Heb. 3:12, 13.

Take heed!

While it is called TODAY!

Pay very close attention, be exceedingly circumspect, watch your every step, be careful how you hear, what you speak, whither you go! And watch and exhort one another constantly!

For, brethren, we are in the house of God, and over that house none less than the Son of God is appointed Lord and High Priest. He is the Son over His own house, far more glorious than even Moses, so much more honorable, in fact, as he that builded the house has more honor than the house!

And it is still Today!

And while it is Today, we cannot afford to live in the house carelessly, as if all were well, just because we are in the house of the Son of God as it is established in the world. On the contrary, there still is much flesh in this house of God. Not all are Israel that are of Israel. And even those that are really Israel are not wholly spiritual, but largely carnal. And nowhere does the wrath of God burn more fiercely against the attitude and works of the flesh than here, in the house of His Son

Take heed, therefore, lest there be in any of you that evil manifestation of the flesh that is highly displeasing to the Lord!

Wherefore

Because you see the terrible example of those that were in the house of God Yesterday, and departed from the living God

For such is the connection of the twelfth verse, of the entire exhortation in our text: the *wherefore* of the seventh verse introduces it, and all that lies between the *wherefore* of that verse and the exhortation of verse twelve is a parenthesis, supplying the contents and meaning of the wherefore, pointing us to the dreadful example of those that were in the house of God Yesterday, but in whom was found an evil heart of unbelief, and who were hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Wherefore:

As the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the days of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their hearts; and they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest

Therefore, since Today ye have before you the terrible example of Yesterday

Since you see how dreadful it is for the flesh to be in the house of the Son of God as it is established Today

If you will hear his voice, harden not your heart!

Beware! Take heed! Walk circumspectly!

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling!

And exhort one another daily!

While it is Today!

Take heed!

For you are in the house of God!

And the Lord of this house, that is appointed over all its economy and activity, with Whom, therefore, in that house ye have to do, is the Son of God!

On this falls all the emphasis, as is plain from the context. Ye, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, must consider, must have regard to, the apostle and high priest of our profession, Christ Jesus. For, in this one respect, he is comparable to Moses, the great mediator of the old dispensational house of God, that He was wholly faithful to him that appointed him. But, as to the rest, He is far more glorious than Moses. Moses, after all, though, for a time, he was appointed over the typical house of God, belonged to, was part of the house God built. But this man, Christ Jesus, is the Son. He is the builder of the house. He is worthy of so much more honor than Moses, as "he who hath builded the house hath more honor than the house." Moses was a servant, He, however, is the Lord. Moses was only a steward; but in Christ Jesus you stand in direct contact with the Lord, the Son over His own house. The house is His!

That house is His Church!

It is God's holy covenant of friendship, according to which He dwells with His people under one roof, opens to them His heart, makes Himself and all the mysteries of His counsel of salvation known unto them, is their friend-sovereign, and they are His people, His friend-servants, called out of darkness into His marvellous light, in order that they should be a kingdom of priests, wholly consecrated unto Him, and showing forth, in all their conversation and walk in the midst of this world, His marvellous praises! And the builder of this house is God Himself, represented by His Son, Jesus Christ, the absolute Lord over His own house.

Hence, always, in that house, the Voice of the Son of God is heard!

Take heed, that ye refuse Him not that speaketh in the house of God!

He speaks, the glorious Lord! As ye live in that house, you live in the sphere where that Voice is constantly heard!

He speaks of salvation, of blessed promises, of glorious benefits of grace, which He bestows, by sovereign good pleasure, upon the dwellers in His house. For, this Lord over His own house speaks in the name of the Triune, Who doeth all His good pleasure. He proclaims that God the Father establishes an eternal covenant of grace with the indwellers of that house, adopts them for His children and heirs, cares for them, leads them, averts all evil or turns it to their profit. He assures His people that the Son washes them in His blood, incorporating them into the fellowship of His death and resurrection, so that they are freed from all their sins, and are forever righteous before God, heirs of eternal life. He promises them that His Spirit will dwell in them, apply unto them all the blessings of salvation in Christ, actually make them children of God and heirs of eternal salvation, sanctify them, preserve them even unto the end, until they shall appear

wholly perfected and cleansed in life eternal, among the assembly of the elect!

Blessed Voice of the Son of God!

Blessed, because It speaks of unspeakable bliss and glory!

Blessed, because It speaks with power, and with authority. It realizes what it expresses, It does what it declares, It fulfills what it promises, sovereignly, freely, unconditionally. It never fails! It cannot be made of none effect! His faithfulness is not put to nought, not even by the unfaithfulness of men!

But hearken!

For He still speaks! Exactly on the basis of His glorious promises of salvation, through the very power of them, as the fruit and manifestation of their realization, He continues to address those that dwell in His house.

He proclaims the other part!

Your part!

The part unto the which you are not only obligated, but also enabled through the realization of His part: the establishment and perfection of His eternal covenant with you.

And of this part the Voice in the house of God speaks constantly also: Love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength; trust in Him completely, put all your confidence in Him only; forsake the world, crucify your old nature, fight the good fight of faith even unto the end, walk in a new and holy life!

Take heed!

Beware, lest your deceitful flesh induce you to imagine that you really heard the first part, and that, therefore, all is well; but that, having heard it, you turn away your ear from the second part

Today, if you will hear His Voice, harden not your heart!

Attend unto the Voice!

Exhort one another!

Taking heed unto yourselves, also admonish one another in the house of the Son of God, where the Voice is constantly heard!

Constantly, daily, exhort one another, while it is called Today!

So admonish one another that, as far as you can ascertain, there is not found among you anyone in whom there is an evil heart of unbelief, and that none of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin!

An evil heart of unbelief is simply a wicked, unbelieving heart. The heart is the very center of all our life from an ethical spiritual viewpoint. In an ethical sense it is that from the heart are the issues of life. A heart of unbelief is

a heart that is motivated by unbelief with relation to the Voice that is heard in the house of God. And unbelief is not a certain intellectual doubt, "honest", innocent in its helplessness; but is rebellion against the living God, enmity against the Most High, conscious and wilful rejection of the Word of God. Unbelief is, therefore, disobedience, the wilful transgression of the law, that inner disposition of the heart in virtue of which one despises and tramples under foot the holy things of God's covenant. Hence, it is evil, and it manifests itself in seeking and striving after evil things, after the fleshpots of Egypt, the treasures and pleasures of sin, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life

Take heed, lest there should be found any such one, revealing an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God!

And be diligent in daily exhortation, lest in the house of God any should be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin!

O, especially in the house of God, sin is extremely subtle in its approach, deceitful in its devious ways, so that, before you are even aware of it, you become hardened to the Voice! For, in the house of God, the Voice is heard. And because that Voice is heard there is a deeply penetrating judgment, distinguishing the light from the darkness, and implacably condemning the latter. When you sin in that house, you sin in the bright light of that all discerning Voice. Hence, sin is doubly deceitful. When, in the house of God, your flesh lusts after sin, and you feel that the particular evil after which you lust, can be committed only in the exposing light of the Voice, sin is ready to offer a thousand excuses! It whispers to your deceit-loving fleshly nature, that, after all, "it is not so bad," or that "others do the same thing, and much worse," or "that you are not yet perfect, and that it is to be excused if you yield to infirmities of the flesh," or that "you cannot go out of the world, that you must live, and maintain your position, even if it means that you deny the faith"

And, before you know it, giving heed to these deceitful arguments of sin, you become hardened.

At first, you clearly heard the Voice, and, disregarding it, you were filled with fear and trembling. Then, gradually, as you continued to walk in your evil way, it seemed as if the Voice did not speak so definitely any more, was silenced, left you in peace

You are being hardened: O, dreadful, and inescapable judgment of the Voice!

Exhort one another daily, lest this should happen to anyone of you!

Let your voice be constantly in the exclusive service of the Voice! Exhort one another incessantly, through the preaching of the Word, in the catechism room, through the official admonitions of the watchmen

over the house of God, in your personal fellowship and contact with one another

Let your daily exhortations, in the service of the Voice, be such that no one with an evil heart of unbelief be known in your communion, that no one be permitted to become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin in the house of the Son of God!

By your daily exhortations, through the power of the Voice, the fornicator in God's house must either repent or be expelled!

The matter is extremely serious!

Take heed, therefore! Be constantly on the alert against any manifestations of the flesh!

And exhort one another!

Today!

While it is called **TODAY!**

O, let your deceitful heart not corrupt the naked truth of this tremendous word: Today!

Let the deceitfulness of your flesh not induce you to deprive this word of its deep seriousness. Do not understand it to signify that, after all, you have a day, and all through *your* day it matters little what your attitude toward the Voice may be, as long as you finally heed it, before evening, and before the night of death spreads its horrible wings over your earthly existence.

Today definitely does not mean: "accept Jesus, please, before it is too late!"

On the contrary, every moment of today it is too late to disobey the Voice! *Today* refers to this entire new dispensation, and that, too, in distinction from *Yesterday*, and the *day before Yesterday*. There was a Day before the flood: at that time it was *Today*, and the Voice spoke: "Today, harden not your heart." There was a Day of Abraham, of Moses, in the desert, in the land of Canaan; and always it was *Today*; and always the Voice spoke: "Today, if ye will hear His Voice, harden not your heart. And still it is Today. But *Today* all things have been fulfilled. The shadows have fled away, the dawn of reality is come. And with increasing emphasis, with new seriousness, the Voice now speaks: "Love the Lord your God, crucify the flesh, forsake the world, harden not your heart as in the provocation!"

That means, too, that it is not yet *Tomorrow*, the Day of final and glorious perfection! Tomorrow, you need take heed and exhort one another no more!

But Today, there is still much flesh in the house of God as it is manifest in the world.

Hence, while it is called Today, and it is not Tomorrow, take heed!

Lest the flesh corrupt the house of the Son!

Exhort one another!

H. H.

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EDITORIALS

The Conclusions and The A-Group

That the editor of The Banner revealed a serious lack of understanding of the whole situation in the Netherlands when he wrote that the Christian Reformed Churches (Church, according to him), by adopting the Conclusions of Utrecht, took a stand *contrary to Heyns*, we proved, not by way of sophistic argumentation or specious reasoning, but by the following historical facts:

1. The *Acta Synodi* 1908 plainly reveal that the Conclusions of Utrecht were not considered to be a definite statement of doctrine contrary to Heyns, but a compromise declaration in which all could acquiesce.

2. That same Synod of 1908 appointed Heyns professor *ad vitam* (for life), by an almost unanimous vote; and that, too, in spite of the fact that they were well acquainted with his covenant views. He had taught these views already for some years in the Theological School; and had fully expounded them in the early numbers of "*De Gereformeerde Amerikaan*." This appointment proves:

(1). That the Synod had complete confidence in the teachings of Heyns: they appointed him *for life*!

(2). That the Synod felt convinced that Heyns subscribed to the Conclusions of Utrecht.

(3). That Heyns himself actually subscribed to them: he accepted the appointment.

5. Heyns belonged principally to what was known as the A-group in the Netherlands. Even in the Netherlands he was plainly recognized as such. Prof. H. Bouwman (A) recommended highly his "*Gereformeerde Geloofsleer*." The Rev. Vonkenberg (B), in the "*Gereformeerde Jongelingsblad*", condemned it as un-Reformed.

4. The Conclusions of Utrecht 1905 were considered by the A-group in the Netherlands as expressing themselves in their favor, and rather contrary to the extreme B-views.

All these grounds for my contention that the editor of The Banner fails to understand the situation are simply historical facts which the Rev. H. J. Kuiper can never contradict. If his Churches (Church, according to him) mean to follow the historical line they cannot possibly condemn the Liberated Churches in the Netherlands, nor agree with the stand of the Synodicals that

leaves no room for the Heynsian conception of the covenant.

But how about the dogmatical line?

Were the men of the A-group, perhaps, in error when they interpreted the Conclusions of Utrecht as favoring their view?

They were not.

Far from taking a stand "contrary to Heyns" and the A-brethren in the Netherlands, these Conclusions definitely favor them, and their general tendency is such that they raise a warning finger and administer a mild rebuke to the extremists of the supralapsarian or B-group. That this is true the editor of *The Banner* knows very well. Or did he forget that the Synod of the Christian Reformed Churches (Church, according to Kuiper), that adopted the fundamentally Heynsian Three Points, appealed to those same Conclusions of Utrecht against our allegedly one-sided views?

O, how plain it is that the historical line of the Christian Reformed Churches (Church, according to Kuiper) is fundamentally Heynsian!

But let us take a look now at these Conclusions to ascertain whether they actually favor the A-group and the Heynsian conception of the covenant.

They expressed themselves on the following questions:

Infralapsarianism (A) and Supralapsarianism (B).

Justification by faith, in time (A) and Eternal Justification (B).

Mediate Regeneration (A) and Immediate Regeneration (B).

Baptism on the ground of the Promise (A) and Presupposed Regeneration (B).

In regard to the first question, that of Supra- and Infralapsarianism, the Synod of Utrecht 1905 declared: 1. That the Reformed Confessions are infralapsarian; 2. That the Reformed Churches always left room for the Supra conception, and that, therefore, the brethren that favor this view must not be troubled. 3. That, however, in preaching and teaching, extremes should be avoided, and one should abide by what the Confessions teach. Briefly: the supralapsarians could be tolerated, but let them be careful! This point was definitely in favor of the A-group.

On the question concerning eternal justification, the Synod declared: 1. That the term "eternal justification" is not found in the Confessions; 2. That, on that account, the doctrine of eternal justification need not be condemned; 3. That we all believe that Christ was made surety for His people in the "covenant of redemption," and that, through His suffering and death, He reconciled us with God; but that it is in harmony with the Word of God and the Confessions to maintain that one is justified by faith only; 4. That extremes on both sides must be avoided. This point is more of

a compromise than the first; yet, the warning against extremes was chiefly meant for the B-group. The declaration favors the A-group.

Concerning the question of mediate or immediate regeneration, the Synod declared: 1. That the term "immediate regeneration" can be understood in a good sense as meaning that neither the preaching of the Word nor the Sacraments in themselves work regeneration, but that this is wrought by the almighty operation of the Holy Spirit; 2. That this operation of the Holy Spirit, however, may not be divorced from the preaching of the Word; and that, although in the case of infants the Confessions do not express themselves as to the manner of their regeneration, the gospel is a power of God unto salvation, and in the case of adults, the regenerating operation of the Holy Spirit accompanies the preaching of the Word; 3. That, in regard to the question, whether regeneration is wrought in the world of heathendom, apart from the preaching of the Word, nothing can be said, and we must leave the things that are hidden to the Lord. This declaration definitely favors the A-group.

Now we come to the last of the Conclusions, that concerning presupposed regeneration.

But let us, at this point, ask the question, whether, in view of the plain fact that the preceding three declarations are rather tolerant toward the B-group or supralapsarians, but definitely in favor of the A-group or infralapsarians, it is probable that the Conclusions, in their last declaration, depart from this A-line, and adopt the view of the B-group in regard to presupposed regeneration?

To ask the question is to answer it.

But let us look at this last declaration a little more closely.

Its opening sentence reads as follows: "And, finally, as regards the fourth point, that of *presumed regeneration* (onderstelde wedergeboorte), the Synod declares that, according to the Confession of our Churches (mark you well, here the Christian Reformed Synod in 1908 adopted the term "Churches"; yet, Church it must be, according to Kuiper, H.H.), in virtue of the promise of God, the seed of the covenant must be considered (te houden is voor) as regenerated and sanctified in Christ, until, as they grow up, the opposite appears from their doctrine or walk."

Now, did not the Synod, in this statement adopt the doctrine of presupposed or presumed or presumptive regeneration? According to the Synod of Utrecht 1942, as is evident from the "Prae-advies" and the "Toelichting," they did. The editor of *The Banner* agrees with this. Personally, I would never subscribe to an ambiguous statement like this, for the sake of effecting a compromise. Yet, the A-group were right when they denied that the doctrine of presumptive regeneration was adopted by this statement, even though

the statement was open to misinterpretation. This will be evident from the following considerations.

The doctrine of presumptive regeneration as taught by Dr. A. Kuyper and his followers in those days, proceeded from a certain conception of the sacraments. According to this view, sacraments sealed actually present, internal grace. Hence, wherever grace was not present in the heart, there could be no sacrament. Applied to the baptism of infants, this meant that there could be no real baptism, unless there were, in the heart of the infant that was baptized, the internal grace of the power of faith or regeneration. Hence, infant baptism presupposed regeneration in the heart of the infant.

The opening statement of the fourth conclusion, however, states something entirely different. It speaks, not of a doctrine of presupposed regeneration, but of a judgment of love. This judgment of love means that, unless in their doctrine or walk they show the opposite, all the members of the Church in the world must be considered as true children of God, and addressed, and treated as such. Now, of infants we know, not that they are regenerated, but only the promise of God. They cannot yet reveal whether or not they are regenerated. Seeing, then, that we have nothing concerning them but the promise of God, we must, according to the same judgment of love that is applied to the adults, consider them as such. This judgment of love, therefore, was not based on any theory concerning baptism and internal grace, but on *the promise of God only*. (See for a similar explanation of this "houden voor" H. Algra, "Zand in de Greppel," p. 31).

This view of the meaning of the opening statement of this fourth declaration is corroborated by the statements that follow it. They may be looked upon as limitations and explanations of the first sentence. And unless the interpretation of "houden voor", "considered as regenerated," as given above is adopted, the fourth of the Conclusions would involve us in hopeless contradictions. These limiting statements may briefly be summarized as follows:

1. The ground of baptism is the promise and the command of God, not presumptive regeneration.
2. The judgment of love mentioned in the first sentence does not mean that each child is truly regenerated.
3. Sacraments are visible signs and seals of an invisible, internal reality. Baptism ob-signates and seals the washing away of sins, etc. as benefits which God bequeathed (*geschonken heeft*) on us and our seed.
4. God regenerates our children before, during, or after baptism, according to His sovereign good pleasure. That each elect child is regenerated before baptism cannot be proved.

Especially this last limitation, proposed at the time by Prof. Lindeboom, makes it quite impossible to inter-

pret the opening sentence as teaching presumptive regeneration.

And herewith I close my reply to the editor of The Banner, for the time being.

I sincerely hope and trust that he may see and acknowledge his error, not for any personal reasons, but for the truth's sake.

When one occupies the responsible position of editor of an official church-paper, he ought to acquaint himself thoroughly with the material about which he writes, before he attempts to instruct others about it.

And this, in my opinion, the editor of The Banner failed to do.

H. H.

Freedom From Condemnation

(Continued)

Secondly, these words take us to the fulness of time, to the incarnation of the Son of God, to His suffering and death on the accursed tree, to His resurrection and exaltation at the right hand of God. For that Son of God, Who from eternity was ordained to be the Representative and Head of His people was sent of the Father into the world, and assumed our flesh and blood, came in the likeness of sinful flesh. He came into our state. He took the position of sinners in the judgment of God. All our iniquities God imputed to and loaded upon Him, and He assumed the responsibility for them voluntarily. And in that position He voluntarily assumed the burden of God's wrath against sin, went to the place of judgment, died the accursed death of the cross, poured out His lifeblood unto death as a sacrifice for sin, descended even into the darkness of the desolation of hell, willingly, voluntarily, in love to the Father; and thus He brought the sacrifice of atonement and reconciliation, blotted out all our sins, removed the sentence of condemnation that was against us, and obtained for us perfect and everlasting righteousness. And God raised Him from the dead, and exalted Him to highest glory at His own right hand. And in that resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of all His own, we have God's own verdict, upon Him and His people: there is no condemnation! There is no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus, because through His perfect sacrifice God Himself removed the cause and ground of their condemnation, and prepared for them a perfect and everlasting righteousness.

Thirdly, these words imply that marvellous work of God's sovereign grace whereby He ingrafts us into Christ Jesus, so that we become one body with Him. For it is by faith that we are ingrafted into Christ Jesus. And faith, too, is the work of God's grace,

His gift to us. For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Eph. 2:8.

And by faith we are in Christ in a twofold sense. First of all, it is through faith that we become member of the legal corporation of which Christ is the representative Head, instead of which He died and rose again, and for the which He obtained everlasting righteousness and life. It is by faith that we know and are certain of our belonging to Him with body and soul, in life and in death; that we are His and that He is responsible for us also before the tribunal of God. It is by faith that we lay hold on God's own sentence of justification in the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. It is by faith that we appropriate the words of our text as our own, and that we triumph over the condemning sentence of our own conscience, and of all our experience, and say: there is no condemnation for me, for I am in Christ Jesus! Therefore being justified out of faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ!

And, secondly, by that same faith, implanted into our hearts by the Spirit of God, we also live out of Christ in newness of life, in all our walk and conversation in the midst of the world. That is why the apostle can add: "that walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Sin hath no more dominion over them, and this becomes manifest in their walk. And thus they become assured of their being in Christ, and of their being free from condemnation. Clinging by faith to Christ as the God of their salvation, and being justified by that faith, and walking in newness of life, not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit of Christ, they are assured of righteousness in the midst of sin, of God's wondrous favor in the midst of wrath, of eternal life and glory in the midst of death and shame! They know that there is no condemnation for them for ever and ever!

H. H.

IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory of the Grand Haven Prot. Ref. Church, in conjunction with our Adult Society and Ladies Aid, extend our sympathy to our fellow office bearer, Deacon Ralph De Young, in the passing of his mother,

MRS. JENNIE DE YOUNG (Fisher)

on January 13, 1946, at the age of 76 years.

May the Lord comfort the bereaved, and give an increased measure of faith that looks unto the coming of His eternal kingdom.

Rev. A. Petter, Pres.

A. Peterson, Clerk.

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

Part Two.

Of Man's Redemption

Lord's Day XVIII

3.

The Blessing's Of Christ's Ascension.

In answer to the question: "Of what advantage to us is Christ's ascension into heaven?" the Catechism mentions a threefold benefit resulting from the glorification of our Lord for the Church on earth: He is our advocate in the presence of His Father in heaven; His presence in heaven is, to us, a pledge of our future glorification; and from His heavenly glory He send us His Spirit as an earnest, so that, principally, we are with Him in heaven, and seek the things which are above by the power of that Spirit.

A few words must be said about each of these spiritual blessings.

That Christ is our advocate in the presence of the Father in heaven is a truth that stands closely related to what Scripture calls His intercession. About this intercession of our High Priest we wrote in our exposition of the twelfth Lord's Day, the thirty first question, in connection with the name Christ and the offices of our Saviour. We need not repeat here what was said in that connection.*

However, although the ideas of advocate and intercessor are closely related, they may also be distinguished.

The former is a more specific and limited notion than the latter. An intercessor (*Fürbitter*) is one who prays in behalf of another (in the Bible only the verb occurs: *entunchanein hyper tinos*); an advocate (*Fürsprecher*, *Parakleitos*, I John 2:1) is one who pleads in behalf of someone. The former, therefore, is the more general notion: the intercessory prayer of Christ covers all our needs, and results in the bestowal of all spiritual blessings upon the Church. The latter, however, the idea of advocate, a paraklete, is more limited: as our advocate Christ pleads for us, as in ourselves we are sinners and damnable before God, to obtain our justification before the bar of the Judge of heaven and earth.

Thus the term advocate or paraklete occurs, with reference to our glorified High Priest in heaven, in I John 2:1. The apostle had written about the message

* Cf. Vol. III, The Death of the Son of God, p. 114 ff.

he heard of Christ, "that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." Hence, if we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But walking in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin. Walking in the light, we do not say that we have no sin, for then we only deceive ourselves; but we confess our sins, and thus, by faith, lay hold upon the faithfulness and justice of God, according to which He forgives us our sins, and cleanses us from all unrighteousness. Thus the apostle had written to believers, in order that they might walk in the light, and fight against sin: "My little children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not." However, aware of the fact that our old nature is still with us, and that, no matter how faithfully we fight the good fight of faith, sin always cleaves to the best of our works, the apostle continues: "And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

It is plain, then, that the plea of Christ as our advocate in the presence of the Father concerns, particularly, His people in the world, for whom He died and obtained the forgiveness of sins and eternal righteousness; who also have been, in principle, delivered from the power and dominion of sin; who earnestly desire to be completely delivered from all corruption and unrighteousness, and who walk in the light; but who find that they are still in the body of this death, so that there are still many sins, against their will, remaining in them. Any of these sins would make them damnable before God, and would be sufficient to deprive them of the blessed fellowship with the Father, were it not for the fact, that they have a Paraklete, an Advocate with the Father in heaven, Who constantly pleads their cause, defends them, and obtains from the Father the sentence of their perfect justification.

And what we said of Christ's intercession in our discussion of Lord's Day 12, naturally, also applies to His pleading in our behalf as our advocate with the Father in heaven.

On the one hand, we dare not deprive this activity of our heavenly Paraklete of all reality. When the Scriptures teach us that Christ is our advocate with the Father, we may not understand this as a mere, figurative expression, denoting no more than the permanent effect of His atoning sacrifice and work of obedience in our behalf. On the contrary, it means: 1. That the Son of God, and that, too, in His glorified human nature, is really in the presence of, before the face of the Father. 2. That His plea, in behalf of His still sinful people in the world, is a real activity on His part, so that He appeals to the justice and faithfulness of God, on the basis of His own work of atonement, for their perfect justification. 3. That this work of Christ in heaven, as our advocate with the Father, con-

stitutes a real element in the economy of redemption, so that it is only in the consciousness of this function of Christ that we approach God through Him, and obtain the assurance of forgiveness and righteousness.

On the other hand, we may not so present this activity of Christ in heaven that it becomes derogatory of God's perfections. All that is earthy and imperfect must be eliminated from Christ's activity as our advocate with the Father. His plea in our behalf is not occasional, but constant. Above all, it is constantly perfect, both as a plea, and as to its result: the plea for our justification by our advocate in heaven is constantly granted. We may not thus present this activity of Christ, as if God were filled with wrath against His sinful people, about to inflict eternal death upon them; and that now Christ must persuade God to refrain from His wrath and to bestow upon His people righteousness and life. On the contrary, even as the Mediator in heaven constantly pleads in behalf of His people, presenting to the Father the ground of His perfect work of atonement, so the Father is constantly delighted with this plea for forgiveness and righteousness, and beholds His people, in the light of this plea, with an eye of everlasting mercy and eternal love.

Christ is our advocate with the Father.

And in the faith that He pleads in our behalf, we have confidence to approach the Father, confessing our sins, trusting that God is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Such is the first advantage of Christ's ascension.

The second benefit mentioned by the Heidelberger in this connection is "that we have our flesh in heaven as a sure pledge that he, as the head, will also take up to himself, us, his members."

We have our flesh in heaven!

By the term "flesh" here must be understood our entire human nature, as to soul and body. Christ, in His incarnation, assumed our human nature, in the likeness of sinful flesh. As such, that nature was wholly unfit to enter into heavenly glory. For, not only was it of the earth earthy, but it was also corrupt through sin, under the wrath of God, lying in the midst of death. Nor did we have the right to be delivered from the corruption of our nature, and to enter into heavenly glory. Heaven was closed to us. That nature, although without sin, yet as it was earthly, and in the likeness of sinful flesh, Christ assumed. And in that nature He obediently suffered all that was required to satisfy God's justice, to merit for us righteousness, and to obtain the right to heavenly glory. And He, the Son of God, glorified that nature in Himself. He took it through death into the glory of the resurrection, and having thus glorified it by His resurrection, He took it into heaven, into the sanctuary of God.

For His ascension does not mean that He put aside our human nature. The human nature is not and never

shall be separated from the divine.

Our flesh, therefore, is in heaven.

It is not in heaven as "flesh", in the form in which He assumed it, and in which we know it, but in its glorified form. It has been changed into the image of the heavenly. For "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." But it is, nevertheless, our flesh, the real human nature, which He took into the highest heavens, when He ascended up on high.

And it is *our* flesh, *our* nature, He took into the heaven of glory.

For Christ is our head.

His entrance into heaven does not mean that someone succeeded to glorify his own human nature, and to obtain for himself a place in glory. On the contrary, it is Christ that ascended up on high. He occupies a central position. His ascension is of central significance. He is the head of the body, the Church. As such He represents all the elect. As the head of His own in the forensic sense of the word, He entered into death, bore all our iniquities on the accursed tree, blotted out all our sins, and obtained eternal righteousness. His righteousness is our righteousness. His death is our death. His resurrection is our resurrection. And so, in that legal sense of the word, His ascension is our ascension.

That He ascended up on high means that we have the right, in Him, to follow Him in glory.

Still more.

He is also the head of the body in the organic sense. We are members of His body. And we can never be separated from Him, our Head. That He went to heaven means that, centrally, we are in heaven. He will not return to us. But He will draw us unto Himself, that we may also be where He is. And so, we look up toward heaven, by faith, in the consciousness of our inseparable union with Christ our Head, and confess with the Heidelberg Catechism "that we have our flesh in heaven as a sure pledge that he, as the head will also take up to himself, us, his members."

This can never fail.

By His own word, He left us this pledge of His ascension. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto me," John 12:32. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also," John 14:1-3. And so we lay hold upon the hope that is set before us, "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither our forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Heb. 6:19, 20. And "our conversation is in

heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his most glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself," Phil. 3:20, 21.

We have our flesh in heaven, a sure pledge that He shall take us with Him into His own glory.

That pledge shall be fulfilled, first, when the earthly house of this tabernacle shall be dissolved, and we shall have an house of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; for then we shall, as to our soul, ever be with Him. And, in its ultimate realization, the pledge shall be fulfilled when He shall come again, in the glorious resurrection, in the heavenly creation, where the tabernacle of God shall for ever be with men.

That is the second advantage of the ascension of our Lord, mentioned by the Heidelberg Catechism.

Yet, there is a sense in which we may rejoice in our present being in heaven with Him. For so the Scriptures declare: "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, quickened us together with Christ (by grace are ye saved); And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," Eph. 2:4-6.

This is true, because He, the heavenly Lord, sent unto us the earnest of His Spirit. The Catechism mentions this as the third benefit of Christ's ascension: "He sends us his Spirit as an earnest, by whose power we seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, and not things on earth." For Christ, when He ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, full of the riches of grace for all His people, received the Spirit, that through Him He might bestow all the blessings of salvation upon His people. And on the day of Pentecost, He poured out that Spirit upon and into His Church. Through that Spirit He dwells in them, and works in them the first-fruits of salvation.

It is the Spirit of the heavenly Lord.

And through that Spirit, we become partakers of His heavenly life. All that are regenerated by the Spirit of Christ, partake of the life of their heavenly Lord. That life is resurrection-life. It is the life of heaven. In virtue of that life, they are even now citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, not only because they have citizens' rights, but also because, in principle they partake of the life of that city.

Because of this principle of heavenly life, wrought in them by the Spirit of their heavenly Lord, they even now "sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

And they have become strangers and pilgrims in the earth.

The life of the believers in the world, therefore, is

a continuous tension: the tension of hope. In hope they groan. For not only the whole creation, "but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it," Rom. 8:23-25. And again: "For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."

Our life here, in virtue of the firstfruits, the earnest of the Spirit, is in constant tension.

For, on the one hand we are of the earth earthy. We have our earthly house, our earthly body and soul, our earthly relationships and friendships. And we are strongly, with a thousand ties, attached to the earth and to the things that are earthy. We do not desire to be unclothed. Yet, on the other hand, there is our heavenly Lord, Who gave us His heavenly Spirit, and Who made us partakers of His own heavenly life, ever drawing us unto Himself, so that we are strangers in the earth, and even now our conversation is in heaven. In virtue of this drawing power of our heavenly Lord, through the Spirit He hath given us, we long to be with Him, to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.

And the latter is victorious.

A tension is the life of the believer, not as if he were betwixt two equally strong powers of attraction. On the contrary, in virtue of the new principle of heavenly life, he is very really a citizen of heaven. He longs for deliverance. But it is the tension of a new, victorious life in the midst of the death; the drawing of His heavenly Lord he experiences while he is still in his earthly nature. To be with Christ, he knows, is far better!

Thus, that Spirit of Christ, is an earnest to us.

He is the firstfruits of the final harvest. Just as the firstfruits which Israel brought to the Lord in the temple was part of the harvest, and a pledge that the full harvest would presently be reaped and gathered into the barns; so the firstfruits of the Spirit are an earnest of our final salvation, when we shall receive the full adoption unto children, and be for ever with Christ our Lord in heavenly glory.

And so, by the power of that indwelling Spirit we do, indeed, seek the things which are above, where Christ is sitting on the right hand of God. His heavenly Lordship we seek to realize even in our earthly life. For, while we are still present in the body, and, therefore, absent from the Lord, yet longing to be present

with Him, we seek to be pleasing to Him. We hear His voice, we love His good commandments, we fight against sin, within and without, and we daily put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and holiness. We labor to enter into the rest. And while confessing that we are sojourners and strangers in the earth, we declare plainly that we seek a country, the heavenly country of our heavenly Lord, the city that hath foundations, whose builder and artificer is God.

And thus, in the sound sense of the word, the ascension of our Lord means that the life of those that are His is, even while they are still in this world, other-worldly.

Their conversation is in heaven.

H. H.

THROUGH THE AGES

Gregory VII

The last event narrated in the previous article was the elevation of Hildebrand to the papal throne under the name of Gregory VII. We also took notice of Hildebrand's conception of the relation of church and state. The Roman pontiff alone, he held, can with right be called universal. He alone can depose and reinstate bishops. It may be permitted him to depose emperors. He himself may be judged by no one. He may absolve subjects of their fidelity to wicked rulers. On these principles, it was observed, Hildebrand, as pope, reigned and strove for nothing short of world dominion.

We must now attend to the acts of this pontiff by which he sought to secure the power and freedom of the church. Firstly, during his entire reign he made relentless war against clerical marriage. His motives were these. A priest must rise above his carnal passions in order that he may be wholly consecrated to the church, as burdened by no earthly cares and command the respect of all men by his angelic purity. Further, Hildebrand concluded, that he could free the church only in the way of separating the priests from their wives. An unmarried clergy has no other interests but the church, so he reasoned, and stands by the pope like an army. What is more, a married clergy, through its offspring, might develop into a hereditary caste appropriating church property and thus impoverishing the church. Synod after synod was held, denouncing all carnal connection of priests with women, however legitimate, as sinful. All future priestly marriages

were forbidden, and of the married priests it was demanded that they put away their lawful wives or cease to function as priests; and the laity was commanded to forsake their services. A letter from Gregory's pen, addressed to the whole church, declared that "if there are presbyters, deacons, and sub-deacons, who are guilty of living with women as their wives, we forbid them, in the name of God Almighty and by the authority of St. Peter, entrance into the churches, until they repent and rectify their conduct."

The publishing of these decrees was followed by violent reaction on the part of the married clergy, the great majority of whom, at that time, were married. Hildebrand was denounced as a madman as his mandates as heretical; it was maintained that they militated against the Scriptures, which indeed they did, and did violence to the laws of nature. Hildebrand was accused of wanting to compel men of flesh and blood to live like angels and was warned that, by his doing, he opened the door to sex immorality among the clergy. They told him that they were resolved to forsake their office rather than their wives. As to the bishops, some held with the married clergy, while others agreed with the Hildebrandian policy and principles. But on the whole they refused to cooperate with the pope in enforcing his decrees. So Hildebrand stirred up the laity against the married priests. The pope ordered the lay rulers to disregard the bishops and to use force in compelling the rebellious priests from officiating. He thus pitted the laity against the clergy and thereby violated the principle of the absolute rule of the hierarchy. But to him the end sanctified the means. The immediate result of this reform was frightful. The married priests were maltreated by the laity, reduced to poverty and driven into exile. Their wives were insulted as harlots and their children branded bastards. Many of these women died from hunger or grief, or committed suicide in despair. Eventually, Hildebrand's priestly celibacy triumphed in the whole Roman church but at the cost of priestly chastity. Holy matrimony was displaced by licentiousness among the clergy. So Hildebrand sacrificed the private morals of the priests to his worldly ambition.

This ambition — the ambition to bind the kingdoms of the world to his throne — Gregory (Hildebrand) shared with all the popes of the centuries subsequent to the fourth. But in Gregory it was exceptionally conspicuous. He twice deposed Henry IV of Germany and freed his subjects from the obligation of submitting themselves to his rule. The concluding part of his second excommunication of Henry IV reads, "And now, O ye princes and fathers, most holy apostles Peter and Paul, deal ye with us in such wise that all the world know and understand, that, having the power to bind and loose in heaven, you have the like power to take away empires, kingdoms, principalities, duches, mar-

quisates, earldoms, and all manner of human rights and properties . . . having such mighty power in spiritual things, what is there on earth that may transcend your authority in temporal things? And if ye judge the angels, who are high above the proudest of princes of the earth know and feel how great you are — how exalted your power! Let them tremble to despise the command of your church!

"But upon the said Henry do judgment quickly, that all men may know that it is not by fortune or chance, but by your power, that he has fallen! May he thus be confounded into repentance, that his soul may be saved in the day of the Lord!"

As according to Roman Catholic doctrine, the pope of Rome is the successor of Peter, Gregory was very actually addressing these words to himself as well. They are words ridiculously arrogant. And the conception of papal power which they set forth is a theory premised on the lie that especially the apostle Peter was vested with all power on earth in state and church and that this power was delegated to the popes of Rome. Only men with hearts foolish and with foolish hearts darkened by sinful pride would conceive of such a thing and conceive of it as being true of themselves. The popes were men with such hearts. And the most outspoken of their number, the one who surpassed them all in hierarchical arrogance and severity, was this Gregory VII, unless it was Innocent III. Gregory always acted as though he had received all the kingdoms of the earth as his inheritance for him to take away and to bestow upon whomsoever he chose. He acted as though he had authority over all things in state and church, over kings and nobles as well as over bishops and abbots. Sardinia and Corsica he treated as though he were their temporal and spiritual lord. He wrote to the spanish princess that Spain belonged to no mortal man but to St. Peter and thus to Gregory VII. He informed Philip I, king of France, that every house in his realm owed him tribute and he threatened this king to free his subjects from allegiance to him in case he did not desist from simony. He admonished the king of Denmark to acknowledge the dependence of his kingdom upon Rome, and promised the king's son a certain rich providence in Italy, should he come to make war against God's enemies. At the bidding of Gregory, the son of the king of Russia went to Rome to receive his crown from the pope. Solomon, the king of Hungary was rebuked for having received his crown from the Germans as a thief instead of having sought it from the Roman see. Gregory conferred upon the duke of Dalmatia the title of king on the condition that he pay tribute to the popes, and he told William the Conqueror that he was indebted for his elevation to the throne of England to the blessing of the Roman see. But the king replied that he owed his crown to God and to his own sword, not to the pope.

This politico-ecclesiastical system of Gregory was not prepared certainly by the church father Augustine. Augustine's mistake was that he identified the church of Christ on earth with the historic catholic church and recognized no other except as a schismatic branch of it. But Augustine had little to say about popes and absolutely nothing about the theory of the Lordship of Peter over the kingdoms of the world and of his right to depose temporal sovereigns. This was the very own theory of Gregory and of his spiritual kin. He wrote to the king of Aragon that Jesus, the king of glory, had made Peter lord over the kingdoms of the world. And upon this lie he constantly acted.

But Gregory was not only a papal absolutist with few equals among the popes, but he was also a so-called moral reformer. It is especially his zeal for (would-be) moral reform that has induced historians to give him such pre-eminence in history. Of that zeal it is said that it entitles him to real respect. And modern historians agree in giving him credit for the honesty and courage of his convictions and concede the purity and loftiness of his motives and aims both as a papal absolutist and reformer. But it is doubtful whether this should be conceded. Convictions are gendered not by love of false theories but by the love of the truth. Gregory's convictions were not convictions at all but fixed ideas conceived and born in carnal lust of power. And his courage was not courage at all but rather the stubbornness of a man who was determined to be prevented by nothing in the achievement of a worldly ambition. His aim was to annex the world to his throne and also the church. That aim was not lofty but sinful. And what moved him was the love of that aim. Hence, his motives were as impure as his aims were sinful. And as to his zeal for moral reform, he is not entitled to any real respect for that zeal. His relentless war against priestly marriage was an outrage. And in his attempt to remove the evil of simony, he was prevented by his love of riches and lust of power to get at the real cause of this abuse. And what are we to think of his inventing the interdict for the aggrandizement of the church and of his using excommunication to frighten men into kissing his toe? And in these doings he was all the while playing upon the superstitious fear of men for the thunderings of the pope — a fear that was born from the false belief that the pope of Rome has the power to put a man in heaven or to assign him to everlasting desolation as he chooses. And Gregory knew or could know that his claims to the "estates of the church" reposed upon literary fictions. To ascribe lofty aims and pure motives to such a man comes pretty close to ascribing lofty aims and pure motives to Satan himself. The case is somewhat different, of course, if Gregory erred in good faith. But this is inconceivable.

But we must now attend to the reform scheme of

Gregory by which he aimed to remove the evil of simony, and to free the hierarchy from the overlordship of the temporal rulers. This reform scheme, as put into action, is known in history as "the war over investiture". Throughout the church, the state dominated the clergy by appointing the bishops and abbots (the heads of monastic orders) and by investing them with their office. The latter was done by a ceremony that consisted in the bestowal of the staff and the ring. The staff was the insignia of the spiritual authority of the bishop and the ring symbolized his spiritual marriage with the church. But the appointment of bishops to their office by the king and the smaller rulers was attended by a great evil. In the appointment, the king was led by political or social consideration. Or, to replenish his depleted purse, he would sell the office to the highest bidder and this without any regard to intellectual or moral fitness. Thus, the right of investiture, as exercised by the lay rulers, went hand in hand with the sin of simony, which is the abuse of buying or selling the office for a price. Gregory (Hildebrand) tried with all his might to remove this evil by forbidding the king and all laymen to have anything to do with the appointment of bishops and with their installation. A synod held in November, 1075, positively forbade bishops, abbots, and other ecclesiastical appointments from the king or any temporal lord. But these prohibitions, as enforced by excommunication and the interdict, did not strike at the underlying cause of the abuse, which was this. Through the years, the Roman hierarchy had grown enormously rich. It had become the owner of great treasures in money and gold and of many houses and much land. In the early feudal age it had most of the non-land wealth in Western Europe. It owned in addition fine church buildings—chappels, abbeys, cathedrals, cloisters, libraries—merchandise of all kinds and descriptions, fine cloth embroidered with gold, besides numerous chests of treasures. These treasures were in turn converted into real estate so that the church eventually came to own half of all the landed property. And the wealth of the hierarchy—the church—was always increasing. Now it is not wrong, certainly, for a church to own property. However, this enriching of the Roman hierarchy was the fruitage of sin indulged in by bishops and monks. They were playing upon the superstition of the people, upon the false belief that in giving their property to the church the faithful merit with God and heap up treasures in heaven. And this belief had become the unofficial doctrine of the hierarchy and was being preached by its teachers. And the generosity it inspired was inexhaustible. The faithful gave throughout their lifetime, rich and poor alike; and when death drew near they gave all. There were few who were willing to die unconfessed and without having made a valid will bequeathing all or most of their property

upon the church; that is, the hierarchy. And the church, which ceaselessly received, never alienated; both civil and ecclesiastical laws forbade. For all practical purposes, the extensive lands of the church were owned by the bishops, who received payments from the peasants by whom these lands were cultivated. In the feudal epoch, the bishops leased their lands to others who thereby became tenants or vassals of the bishopric. Every tenant who held land paid to the bishop two tithes: the great tithe consisting in one-tenth of all grain, wine, and large animals raised by the farmer; and the lesser tithe comprising the same amount of vegetables and smaller animals such as chickens and doves. The lands and its tenants that belonged to the bishopric formed the domain of the bishop. There he ruled not only as an ecclesiastic but as a civil magistrate as well, performing all the duties that belong to that office. It was this enrichment of the hierarchy that formed the source of the abuse known as simony, of the sin of buying and selling the office of bishop. This office had become a lucrative position for which unscrupulous men were willing to pay a big price. They loved this office for its great prestige and wealth. And this wealth continued to grow through gifts, acquisitions, and usurpations. The bishops always became greater land proprietors and governed whole communities formed of the tenants and serfs by whom their land was tilled. And it was upon these earthly interests—upon their lands and the yield thereof—that the bishops concentrated all their affections and attention. So had the enrichment of the church, and this through means that were foul, worked the secularization of the hierarchy. The god-fearing among the bishops had understanding of this. Augustine asked his people to take back their church property and to support the clergy and the poor by free gifts.

It was this very enrichment of the hierarchy that caused the king to insist on appointing the bishops and investing them with their office. The bishops jointly possessed half of the land of Europe and had under their temporal rule half of Europe's population. It was only by appointing the bishops and by installing them in office, that the king could bring the bishops and their vast domains under his jurisdiction. For it was the age of that form of society and government known as feudalism. According to this theory of government all the chief rulers were the vassals of the king and received their land from him as his grants together with his protection thereof and they in turn promised to be faithful to him as their lord and to serve and aid him. The bishops, too, sought and received protection of the king—a protection that the pope could not give. Thus, in their capacity of temporal rulers, they with their domains and the masses of men under them *belonged* under the temporal jurisdiction of the king.

It is clear what action Gregory would have taken

had he truly been grieved about the prevalence of simony among the bishops, had he hated this sin with a holy hatred. Firstly, he would have abdicated as a temporal ruler, turned over his vast domains to the lay rulers and instructed his bishops to do likewise. Secondly, he would cease laying claim to spiritual jurisdiction over the whole church to become a common pastor and urge all his bishops to do likewise. Thirdly, he would preach a pure gospel and urge his bishops to do likewise. Then the flow of wealth into the church would cease and there would be no more cause for simony. For the clergy would no longer be telling men to buy the favor of Heaven and of the church by their gifts. But Gregory took no such action. For what he hated was not simony but those lay rulers for bringing his bishops and their temporal domains under their jurisdiction. He insisted that those bishops and domains belonged to him. He wanted them for himself. He wanted the whole earth and its fulness for himself. So he commanded the king to cease appointing bishops. That was his prerogative, not the king's. For investiture, the installation of bishops, he said, was a purely spiritual function and secular princes have nothing to do with the performance of functions that have something sacramental about them. They even commit sacrilege by touching the garments of the priest. What hypocrisy! Of course, that would be true, if he and the bishops were spiritual rulers in the church and nothing more.

Perhaps it would be asking too much to say to Gregory that he should part with the vast domains of the Roman hierarchy. But if he were unwilling, he should depose himself as spiritual shepherd and continue solely as a temporal ruler. But Gregory wanted to be both. He insisted that the office of pope included both. He insisted that he was the spiritual father of the whole church; besides, that all the kings of the earth were his vassals; that the domains of the church were his absolute possession and that therefore they should be freed from the overlordship of the lay rulers and be brought solely under his jurisdiction. Verily, this man Gregory wanted the earth.

G. M. O.

IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies Aid of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan, wishes hereby to express its sympathy with Mr. T. A. Van Putten in the loss of his wife,

MRS. H. A. VAN PUTTEN

who was a loyal and faithful member of this Ladies Aid. May the Lord prove again that He giveth grace for every trial.

Mrs. W. Hofman, Pres.

Mrs. Geo. Ramaker, Sec'y.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Canonical Significance of the Book of Ruth

The significance of our book lies in its aims. One of its aims is to demonstrate that true faith and love is valid before God without respect to race, and that therefore believing Ruth, though a Moabitess, was accepted of God and His people. Thus our book is a plainest commentary on the words of the apostle at Romans II:28, 29 that "he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God". In the Old Dispensation the Jews were not God's people, but God's people were Jews and the Ruths and the Rahabs, in a word, as many of the heathen as it pleased God to transport out of the darkness of heathendom into the light of His Kingdom. Though there is no ground in Scripture for saying that their number was large, yet they were there. And the law made provision for them. So at Exodus 12:48, "And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover of the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof. One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you." The coming to the light on the part of these "strangers" was pre-indicative of the calling of the Gentiles in fulfillment of the promise of God to Abraham that in him are blessed all the families of the earth. The evidence that Ruth was truly converted to God abounds. The love which she portrayed was genuine. It was the reflection of the love of God shed abroad in her heart by Christ's Father. And the tie that binded her to Naomi was spiritual. And her faith was richly rewarded. Boaz fulfilled to her the law of Israel, and married her. And from her sprang the son, of whom David, king of Israel, was the grandson. God blessed her in superabundant measure because she confessed His name in love. But the aim of the book is not to glorify David's great Son, the Christ of God. For how could His descent from one such as she—a heathen apart from God's grace—redound to His praise. But the fact of Christ's descent from her approves the faith by which she acted.

It is possible to determine, approximately at least, the time in which the book can have been written. It is not likely that the book was written after Solomon.

At Kings XI:1 Solomon is rebuked for having married many wives of Moab, Ammon, Edom, Zidon, and Heth, "nations concerning which Jehovah said to the sons of Israel, ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in to you." To Rehoboam's dishonor the sacred narrator relates that his mother Naamah was an Ammonitess (I Kings XIV:21). It was, doubtless to accentuate the depravity of the heathen that the Book of Chronicles, ch. XXIV:26, informs us that one of the murderers of king Joash was the son of a Moabitess and that the other sprang from an Ammonitess. Ezra says (chap. X:10), "Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives;" and he wrote down the names of those whom he commanded to separate from their wives. Nehemiah (chap. XIII. 1ff) adhered strictly to the law that "no Ammonite or Moabite should come into the congregation of God forever." It is said that these negations of the heathen refute the view that the book of Ruth, written in praise of a Moabitess who did enter the congregation of God, was perhaps composed after the time of Solomon, or during the exile, or when the spirit of Ezra or Nehemiah was in the ascendent. But the fact is that these negations do not refute this view. As far as these negations are concerned, the book might have been written after Solomon. Ezra and Nehemiah, certainly, were as ready to receive a truly converted heathen as were the believers who accepted Ruth. Ezra and Nehemiah were not bigoted Jews, but true servants of God who knew that turning away a heathen who truly wanted Israel's God was as contrary to the law as admitting a heathen who clave to his idols. Yet everything is against the view according to which the book of Ruth was written after Solomon. The primary author of the Scriptures is the Spirit of God. Why should He have brought our book into being many centuries after the events which it narrates took place? The book contains valuable instruction for God's people. If so, why should the Spirit have waited so long a time in giving this book to the church? Thus in all likelihood the book was written shortly after Ruth's decease, perhaps during the time of David. The book itself suggests that it may have been written by David. We call attention to the following. David was not only a warrior king, who fought Jehovah's wars but also a prophet. He was one of those holy men through whom God prepared for the church the infallible Scriptures. From the very beginning of his public career he displays the faith of a true Israelite. Yet he was distrusted by Saul, who drove him into exile. It is a noteworthy thing that, in his hours of distress, he had many heathen as his benefactors. With a view to placing his kin beyond the reach of Saul, and doubtless mindful of the fact that his great-grandmother was a Moabitess, he went to the king of Moab and said, "Let my father and my mother, I pray thee, come forth and be with you, till I

know what God will do with me" (I Sam. XXII:3). Accordingly he leads his father and mother thither. And they remained in Moab until David received the kingdom. At a later time, he remembers the kindness that the king of Ammon had shown him (II Sam. X:2). While he was hiding in the cave of Adullam, many warlike people attached themselves to him, from whom he recruited his "mighty men" and later his bodyguard. Their names Kerethi and Pelethi (II Sam. VIII:19) indicate that they were foreigners. He dwelt a long time in the Philistine city of Gath (I Sam. XXVII); there, too, bands of brave men collected about him, and they were for him in his last great distress, brought on by Absalom (II Sam. XV:18). Uriah, who fell by David's sword, was a distinguished person in Israel. And he was a Hittite or descendant of Heth (II Sam. XI:3). The warriors of David included other foreigners. There was an Ammonite named Zelek (II Sam. XXIII:37). It was in the house of a Gittite, that is, a man from Gath, that David placed the ark. In the hour of Absalom's revolt, it was foreigners who remained true to him. An Ammonite provided him with provisions in his flight (II Sam. XVII:27). Hushai the Archite (of Arke, in Phoenicia) did him well by destroying the counsel of the traitor Ahithofel (II Sam. XV:32). Remarkable was the faithfulness of Ittai, the man of Gath. David said to him (II Sam. XV:19ff): "Wherefore goest thou also with us? return to thy place, and abide with the king, for thou art a stranger, and also an exile. Whereas thou camest but yesterday, should I this day make thee go up and down with us? seeing I go whither I may; return thou and take back thy brethren; mercy and truth be with thee." David here speaks like Naomi. The answer of Ittai shows that he, like Ruth, had come to trust under the wing of Israel's God. "As Jehovah liveth, and as the lord my king liveth, surely in what place the lord my king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be." "And David said to Ittai, Go and pass over". David, the man according to God's heart, the anointed king of Israel, loved by heathen men. Here, too, the tie that binded was spiritual. Never again in Israel's history do such attachments come to view. The conclusion is warranted, therefore, that the book of Ruth, the aim of which is to set forth a Gentile's love of God and His people, was written during the reign of David. The book may have been written during the summit of David's glory, when he had peace on all sides. At that time a contemplative view of David's history gave rise to the book.

The position of the book in the Canon. The Septuagint attached the book closely to the book of the Judges. This is correct, as, according to the first verse, the events which it narrates took place when the judges ruled. What is more, the book is also a genealogical narrative introductory to the history of David.

But Jewish tradition assigned it to a place between Job and the Proverbs and thus gave it an independent position, the reason being that they had respect to the Messianic doctrine contained in it and which gives to it a higher idea, of which the birth of David is the crown. The book recognizes that also spiritual Israelites like Ruth could become children of the kingdom. And its Messianic doctrine is that "All the families of the nations shall bow down before thee; for the kingdom is Jehovah's and he rules among the nations" (Ps. XXII:27, 28). It is especially in the Psalms that the relation of the Gentiles to the kingdom of Christ is unfolded.

G. M. O.

IN HIS FEAR

Indoctrination

The Church must indoctrinate her covenant seed, 'the man of God'. And to indoctrinate her means 'to instruct in doctrine'. The Standard Dictionary gives the following description or definition of the word 'doctrine'. "*Doctrine*, that which is taught or set forth for acceptance or belief; that which is held to be true by any person, sect, or school, especially in religion."

From the foregoing it is plain that a doctrine may be false or true, sound or unsound. Naturally, when we say that it is the task of the Church to indoctrinate the man of God, we mean that the Church must indoctrinate the covenant seed in the sound doctrine. And 'sound doctrine' is for us doctrine based upon, in harmony with, expounding the truth of Scripture. Still more specifically we may state that indoctrination means for us instruction in the doctrine of the Protestant Reformed Churches. As Churches the Lord has entrusted to us the precious heritage of the Reformed fathers, the doctrine of the Reformed Church. Hence, we claim and are convinced that the doctrine of our churches is the true doctrine of the Reformed fathers. We are not a departure or deviation from the Reformed truth but we are historically Reformed. Not as though we would subscribe to every statement some Reformed father has made in the past. For example, we believe that John Calvin was a Reformed man who taught Reformed doctrine. However, that does not at all imply that we can agree with every dogmatical statement which was made by this great Reformed theologian. There is also such a thing as development in the truth and the doctrine of the Reformed fathers. If this were not true, Reformed doc-

trine would be stagnate, and consequently every departure in detail would be a departure from the Reformed truth. No, but when we claim to be Reformed, also historically, we mean this in the progressive sense of the word. There is such a thing as development, clearer insight, purer conception, more proper emphasis, better definition, etc. Calvin is further advanced than the fathers of the Reformation. If this were not so it simply would imply that the work of the Holy Spirit was standing still. No, but there is progress, development of dogma and doctrine in the church. Take e.g. the doctrine of the covenant. We do actually claim that with respect to this doctrine we as Protestant Reformed Churches are historically Reformed, but we do not hesitate one moment to also state that according to our conviction we understand the doctrine of the covenant better and clearer than our fathers ever did. We have built upon their foundation but we certainly believe that we are further advanced than our fathers, and also have eliminated doctrinal conceptions of our fathers in re the covenant which we firmly believe are not Scriptural. Think e.g. of the so-called 'covenant of works' taught by many of our fathers, although never incorporated unto our confessional standards. But a repudiation of the wrong conception of our fathers, on the basis of Scripture, is not a repudiation or a deviation from the Reformed truth, but it is a purifying of the Reformed doctrine from errors and wrong conceptions which historically had crept into the church through the teachings of some of her most eminent fathers.

The same holds true for the doctrine of grace. Also in this fundamental doctrine we are further advanced than were our Reformed fathers by and large. And that we are further advanced and have a clearer insight than many of the fathers is due to the development of Reformed doctrine, the continued operation of the Holy Spirit in the Church, and all this in close connection with the necessity of combating the error of those who depart from the Reformed line of truth. But, you say, suppose that our fathers had room for the doctrine of common grace, and suppose one finds even statements to verify and prove this claim (which might not be too difficult a task), does it follow from this now that we, Protestant Reformed Churches, have departed from this 'doctrine' of the fathers? The latter of course is indeed the claim of the Christian Reformed Church. They tell us that they do acknowledge and have developed this precious truth of the fathers, but we deny it. What must be our answer? In the first place, suppose it is true that our fathers generally taught common grace. That in itself is no reason why we should teach it. If our fathers were wrong in this respect, let us be honest before God and our conscience and repudiate this doctrine, mark it as unsound and false if we are convinced, on the basis of Scripture,

that our fathers were wrong in this respect. However, we do not admit, but on the contrary emphatically deny, that the doctrine of common grace finds its historical roots and foundation in the Reformed fathers. To confess the theory of common grace is not a development of the main, Reformed, historic line of the fathers. Historically common grace is not Reformed. The basic line and conception of Reformed doctrine has no room for common grace. The development of the organic, Reformed line of the fathers must needs lead to the purging of heretical statements by some of the fathers and a very emphatic *denial* of common grace. The true, basic Reformed line and the doctrine of grace, as taught and confessed by our fathers, does not blossom out in a theory of *common* grace but *particular* grace. That is the historic line of Paul, Augustine, Calvin, the fathers of the 16th and the 19th century. It is historically not Reformed to confess common grace, and it certainly is not confessionally Reformed, the very term is of Arminian origin and the word 'common' is a much favored word in their dogmatical vocabulary.

I am afraid we have drifted away a little from the original intention and purpose of this article, although it is a very small matter to come back on the right track. What we have written so far certainly must have made it crystal clear to any Protestant Reformed person who reads these lines that as churches we have a very particular task with respect to the indoctrination of the 'man of God' in the midst of our church. As churches we must indoctrinate our children in specific Protestant Reformed doctrine. The latter does not mean that there is no room for teaching Bible history. There certainly is. But even so the teaching of Bible history is based upon and rooted in doctrine. Teaching Bible history, which is very important, is not a teaching of bare facts but the facts are interpreted, explained, and they can not be disassociated from Scripture as a whole and from doctrine. Any teacher who teaches Bible history but has no definite doctrinal conception, has no foundation to stand on and must of necessity be a poor Bible history teacher. And especially is this true of the church. The church can not be satisfied with mere 'facts' of history. It must teach its seed the contents of Scripture, the doctrine of Scripture. And your particular doctrinal conception of the Word of God determines the kind of doctrine you teach 'the man of God'. And our children need Protestant Reformed doctrine because we believe that our doctrine is the doctrine of Scripture and that as churches we have the purest knowledge and conception of the truth of the Word of God. To impart to 'the man of God' that truth, our truth, God's truth, the doctrine of our church, is the task of the church. It is her God-given task which she may not shirk. And it is also absolutely necessary for the very existence and future of our churches. If as churches we neglect to

indoctrinate our children in our *specific* Reformed doctrine we are definitely lost.

There are a good many people, and, alas, we have them in our own circles, who are afraid of 'doctrine'. The complaint is often made, although not always audible: "Doctrine is too deep, too heavy, too solid, youthful minds cannot understand it, assimilate it, grasp it, why bother the children with doctrine." Such reasoning is very foolish. In the first place you *always* indoctrinate no matter what you teach. There is not such a thing as instruction in the Word of God, the truth of Scripture without at the same time indoctrinating. The church always indoctrinates, but that indoctrination may be false, unsound, shallow, superficial etc. But indoctrination it is. And we must insist that as churches we indoctrinate sound, true, specific Protestant Reformed doctrine. And Protestant Reformed doctrine is never superficial, it is not shallow because the Word of God is not shallow. Hence, whenever our people complain about too much doctrine it often means, whether this is realized or not is a different matter, it often means, I said, that they complain against Protestant Reformed doctrine as such. Of course, I don't mean to say that we must indoctrinate the 'man of God' without any regard to sound laws of pedagogics. We certainly must reckon with age, mental capacities, etc. etc., of the pupil, but we must by all means indoctrinate in the Protestant Reformed doctrine. Besides, we should start at an early age.

Of course in this work the church needs above all the wholehearted cooperation of the home, but the church does the indoctrination, it is her very solemn calling and task. And it is only through the indoctrination that the church can remain doctrinally, but also spiritually strong, maintain and preserve her specific characteristics and soundness. For the child of today is the man of tomorrow and the youth of today is the mature member, elder, deacon, minister, professor of dogmatics tomorrow.

Now the church indoctrinates and must indoctrinate 'the man of God' through the office of the ministry of the Word. This leads us to the subject of the preaching of the Word and the catechizing of the covenant youth. But our space for today is about filled, hence, in a following article we hope to say a few more things about the subject matter we touched upon in this last paragraph.

J. D.

Forever praise and bless His name,
And in the Church His praise proclaim;
In Zion is His dwelling place,
Praise ye the Lord, shew forth His grace.

FROM HOLY WRIT

" . . . Having made known to us the Mystery of His will . . . (namely) to sum up all things in Christ . . . even, in Him."

—Eph. 1:8-10.

The conclusion at which we arrived in our former article was, that the phrase "in all wisdom and prudence", in verse 8, does not refer to the manner of God's dealing with us, to Divine virtues that prompted Him to cause His riches or grace to abound to us. It rather must be understood to designate the content, or at least a phase of the content, of the riches of grace, that God causes to abound to us in the Beloved.

Just what this riches of wisdom and prudence refers to, we intimated in our former article in our attempt to show to what this phrase refers. However, we did not show yet what place this "wisdom" and "prudence" have in the Divine scheme of all the work of God in Christ Jesus in this present world. This consideration must needs wait till we consider this just enumerated scheme of the work of God. We must consider the implication of the "Mystery of God's will", the reuniting of all things in Jesus Christ. As soon as this latter is rather clearly established we will be in a position to show how and why God has ceased, in this scheme of His work, all wisdom and prudence to be ours in such an abundant measure.

Before attempting to analyze and thus grasp the content of the various concepts in the verses 8-10, we must look rather carefully at the sentence construction in the text. Correct exegesis is at bottom, at least in a good measure, a matter of grammar. And this axiom may be considered to apply particularly in these verses.

Let us look at the text. Of course, you have a Bible at hand? What do you notice in verse 9? First of all, that the first part of the sentence reads as follows: "Having made known to us the Mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure", does this modify the participle "having made known the Mystery of His will", does it refer to the "making known", telling us the Divine Standard, the measuring-rod of God according to which He imparted the knowledge concerning the "Mystery of His will"? Or must we conceive of this phrase as modifying the infinitive phrase "to sum up in one Head all things in Heaven . . ."? If the latter, the phrase tells us that the work of God in connection with His entire handiwork, His Universe is executed according to His eternal good pleasure.

The second question that calls for an answer is: What is the relationship between "The Mystery of His

Will" and the infinitive phrase "to sum up all things in Christ"? We believe that to this question we must reply, that in the latter clause we are told what the content is of the Mystery of God's will. The technical-grammatical term to express this relationship is: apositional infinitive construction. The idea is: The Mystery of His Will, *namely*, to sum up all things in Christ! Those of us, who have not forgotten all the grammar we learned, even in grammar school, will remember that we have this idea of aposition also with adjectives modifying nouns. Thus in the sentence: Roses, red and white were plentiful. Again, you will remember the apositional relationship of nouns. Thus: "John, the blacksmith worked all day. The noun, "blacksmith" is the same man as John, only it tells us something about the man which the name John does not. And so it is also here in this sentence under consideration. The clause: "To sum up all things in Christ" tells us the specific content of the "Mystery of His Will".

We now proceed one step forward. The next question is: If the phrase: "According to His Will" refers to the infinitive phrase "to sum up all things in Christ", and should it not modify the participle "having made known", what is then its relationship to the concept "Mystery of His Will"? To this we reply: it is then apositional, that is, it then modifies the clause "to sum up all things in Christ" and thus it modifies the manner in which the content of the Mystery of God's Will is brought about historically.

We might simplify this somewhat involved discussion by calling attention to the resultant meanings arrived at in the two divergent renderings of the text. Attend to the following:

1. If "according to His good pleasure" refers to the "making known" then the sense of the text may be paraphrased in the following propositions.

- a. God made the Mystery of His will known to us to cause the riches of His grace to abound to us in the very specific blessings of "wisdom and prudence".

- b. This act of Revelation, of imparting knowledge of the Mystery of His will was performed by God most emphatically *according to the good pleasure* of His will. Paul would then state this very specifically.

- c. But this would then not be the sole purpose of this modifying phrase in the text. The Apostle makes this "good pleasure" the antecedent of the relative clause that follows, namely, "Which He hath purposed in Him (Himself) to sum up all things in Christ". Grammatically, the "good pleasure" must then be considered to be presented as not only the determining factor of the fact that the Mystery is made known and of the manner of its revelation, but also as determining the content of the Mystery.

Now we may immediately remark, that it is a very

biblical axiom that both the content of the Mystery of God's will, and the making known of this content, are executed by God according to His sovereign good-pleasure. Thus we read in verse 11 of this same chapter: "Who (God) worketh all things according to the counsel of His will". We surely must conceive of both the content of the Mystery and of the making known of the Mystery as falling under the "all things" that are worked, energized by God.

However, the fact, that it is thoroughly Scriptural to say that God makes the *content* of the Mystery of His will *known* to us according to His good pleasure, does not yet imply that such is the teaching of the Apostle in this particular phrase. Fact is, that we are strongly to deny this. We would call your attention to the following in the text, which we believe supports our contention, that the Apostle here does not explicitly teach that God makes the Mystery of Salvation known according to His good pleasure.

First of all, let us notice, that to assign such a two-fold grammatical function to the phrase "according to His will" is very unnatural. Its construction and resultant meaning is forced. It seems to me that it is an attempt to read too much "theology" into this particular phrase.

Secondly, be it pointed out, and that most emphatically, that we feel that to make "according to His good pleasure" modify "making known" is at variance with the logical line of the Apostle's reasoning. The point that the context makes is that God has caused all wisdom and prudence to become our possession. But how? By making known to us how God makes known the Mystery of His will? Is that important here, even though, be it repeated, it is in itself a biblical truth? To ask this question is to answer it. What is the issue then that is of importance? What the Apostle is attempting to tell us, and indeed does teach us, is, that God has given us this wisdom and prudence in making known the fact that He would reunite all things in heaven and on earth in the fulness of time, and that, too, *according to His good pleasure*. And this latter observation is, to our mind, the determining factor.

To bring out clearly the teaching of this text we would paraphrase its meaning in the following propositions. This will at once give us a certain line of reasoning to follow in our discussion of the various concepts in the text, and thus we will the more easily be able to gain the conception of the text as a whole.

Attend to the following:

1. God has made known, revealed to us the Mystery of His will.

2. The Mystery of His will consists in: to sum up, to reunite under one Head all things that are in heaven and that are on earth.

3. That this uniting into one of all things in heaven and on earth is performed by God according to estab-

lished plan. This plan, although designated by various terms in Holy Writ generally, is here called: His good pleasure.

4. Finally, that in this making known of the Mystery of His will thus conceived, God has caused all wisdom and prudence to become ours in a large measure, and that, too, in the riches of His grace.

Having thus determined the grammatical relationships of the clauses in this portion of Holy Writ, we can now proceed in attempting to determine the meaning and implication of the various concepts given here.

The first concept that calls for explanation, is, undoubtedly, "The Mystery of His will". What especially calls for study and comment is the term "Mystery".

Of this term Dr. Hermann Cremer in his "Biblical Theological Lexicon" makes the following comment both as to the etymology and as to the current usage of the term in Classical Greek. Says he: "Musteeron (Mystery, G.L.) from muoo, to close, to shut, e.g. the lips, the eyes; . . . it is also used of closing wounds. Hence, too, a locking up, or that which serves for locking up, and what obstructs, hinders, excludes perception or communication — *mystery*. In Classical Greek (the term is) usually in the plural, (ta Musteeria) as denoting secret politico-religious doctrines, the Mysteries, especially of the Eleusian mysteries, wherein some *secret* information, *which has in turn to be kept secret*, was communicated to the initiated".

As to the idea of the term in its current usage in Classical Greek, Dr. Cremer draws the following conclusions. Says he, "Mystery does not properly denote that which is wholly withdrawn from knowledge, or cannot be known, but a *"knowledge of hidden things* which is in itself to be kept secret, or which is unknowable without special communication of it." And to prove this observation, he quotes the remarks of a scholiast (an ancient annotator of classical texts) on Aristophanes and Diagoras.

This data and these conclusions from the usage of the term in Classic Greek does not, it is true, teach us anything positive as to the proper Biblical conception of "Mystery", more particularly, as we meet the term in the writings of Paul's epistles. Yet from this we do learn some important matters. By way of contrast, we learn, that, as we trust will become evident in our study of this term from the Scriptures, in the mouth of Paul, who spoke by revelation, the term receives a new content and is set in a new and different thought-world. But even so, this does not mean that the term in Scripture looses its fundamental etymological meaning that it has in Classic Greek. The fundamental, the formal notion of the term remains, namely, that it refers to *something hid*, which *cannot be known unless it first be revealed*. In Holy Writ the superstitious elements fall away that in the Greek Mysteries were

associated with the term. The term, so to speak, becomes sanctified in the service of God and His church.

Here in the book of Ephesians we meet quite often with the term "Mystery". Thus in chapter 3:3: "How that by revelation He made known unto me the Mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge of the Mystery of Christ". Again in 3:8, 9 we read: "Unto me who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and make all men see what is the dispensation of the *Mystery*, which from the ages hath been hid in God, Who created all things in Jesus Christ."

From these passages, especially when compared with Col. 1:26, 27, we can gain a rather clear conception of what Paul understands under this term.

Paul speaks here of certain matters which were "from the ages hid in God, creator of all things"; but now they are no longer hid, they have been made known, yea, so known, that they can be openly preached in all the world. The logical content of the mysteries are now through the preaching a matter of public knowledge!

The apostle seems to draw the following lines in this matter.

1. That the subject matter of the Mystery is centrally: Christ, the Christ of God conceived of as the Anointed of God to be the True Prophet, the Great High Priest after the order of Melchisedec, and the King at God's right hand having all power in heaven and on earth. Thus Paul says in Col. 1:27: "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this Mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." All the Mystery of God is contained in the Christ; outside of Him there is no Mystery known. All that was formerly hidden is known in Him. Compare Heb. 1:1. And again says Paul: "To make known the unsearchable *riches of Christ*". Hence, centrally, Christ is the content of God's Mystery. All that was hidden in God, and that has now been made known, is embodied in Him!

2. Shall man, any man know this Mystery, then it must be revealed, uncovered to him. This was uncovered by the Son of God in the flesh, who yet is in the bosom of the Father. John 1:18.

(To be continued)

G. L.

Exalt the Lord, His praise proclaim,
All ye His servants, praise His name:
Who in the Lord's house ever stand,
... And humbly serve at His command.

PERISCOPE

A BEAUTIFUL CONFESSION:

"Dear Miss Wayne; I am 16 years old and a senior in High School. Above all else I am a Christian and I love the Lord Jesus Christ with all my heart.

"Because I am a Christian, I do not like to see remarks and statements made which deny my Lord. In your column, Thursday, December 20, you made this statement: "We are all God's people and there are many, many fine and beautiful paths to Him". I do not wish to present any denominational creed, but I do want to point out your errors from the Bible, which I believe to be the very Word of God.

"In the first place, in regard to your statement, "We are all God's people". In the Gospel of John I read this, and I quote: "But as many as received Him to them gave He power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name". As an intelligent woman, Miss Wayne, surely from this verse alone you can see that a Unitarian who denies the virgin birth of Jesus Christ and His atoning blood could not be a child of God.

Secondly, in regard to your second statement: "There are many, many fine and beautiful paths to Him". In John 14:6 I read: "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." It is seen easily that one who denies Jesus Christ cannot come to God when He is the only way. In the verse following the one just quoted, I read: "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also". Therefore in the light of these precious words from the Gospel of John alone, you can see that we are not all Sons of God and that there are not many ways to God. In closing I would like to add a word of personal testimony. It is this: I believe in Jesus Christ; His virgin birth; His sinless life; His blood shed for the penalty of my sin; His bodily resurrection; His exalted place even now at the Father's right hand; His soon return in power and great glory. Thank God, I am a true child of His".

Signed: "Betty."

* * * *

A WICKED ANSWER:

"You write a very interesting letter, Betty. I read it and I felt very, very sad, because one of the things that holds this sorry old world from the real brotherhood of man is the unwillingness of nice persons like you to permit any other person to have his own inter-

pretation of the great mysteries of life. There is real intolerance born. And we've got to go a long, long way, toward the other fellow's viewpoint, even though that viewpoint differs greatly from your own, if we ever do achieve the real brotherhood of man on earth.

By the way, my dear, away deep in the interior of China today lives a humble woman. I do not know her personally. I merely know she's there, and there are a good many like her. She has sons and daughters and she loves them very dearly, much as I love mine, or your mother loves hers. She is also a poor, benighted, heathen Chinese, and nobody ever told her about Jesus or any of the other great leaders who lived and died and made this world a better place. You see, fate evidently decreed this Chinese woman must live and die and never know the story of Jesus as you and I know it.

Now it happens that you and I believe the story of Jesus, of His divine birth, of His life on earth, His crucifixion, and His resurrection unto eternal life. You say, however, that in your wisdom no person is a son of God unless he believes every word in the Bible and that there is only one way to God. SO THERE YOU AND I MUST GO OUR SEPARATE WAYS. I believe in Jesus, but the Jesus I believe in wouldn't condemn that Chinese mother and her children to eternal damnation just because fate decreed she should never hear about Him. I find myself even reluctant to anticipate even a brief sojourn in a bright heaven that does not admit all the struggling people of the earth. I expect to walk the pearly streets along with all colors and creeds and all manner of men who live the good life. WE HAVE NEED OF REAL TOLERANCE IN THIS OLD WORLD. Alas, those who think they have it most, very often have it least".

"Priscilla Wayne."

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COMMENTS:

The Miss Priscilla Wayne, quoted above in answer to the letter of "Betty", is a daily columnist and writes books and articles as a leader of young people. She and the equally wellknown Dorothy Dix agree quite well in their philosophy of life. And her answer to "Betty" we term typically modern and wicked. She condemns "Betty" and parts company with her, when the latter gives simple witness to the truth of Scripture, and confesses that truth, over against the lie that we are all God's people. Notice that she is so "tolerant" (?) that she can not even tolerate the company of Betty who professes openly that she is a Christian. She, though professing to believe in Jesus, nevertheless reveals a wicked attitude. She actually does not believe in Jesus, for she refuses to believe His

plain words. It is not a question of having her own "interpretation of the mysteries of life" as she calls it, but it is a question of refusing to believe the interpretation of the mysteries of life, which Christ Himself gives us in His Word. She is an enemy of the truth. She is dangerous and deceitful, for she professes to be in the camp of believers, thereby deceiving others, and yet she is really in the camp of the opposition.

We also have admiration for "Betty" who is not ashamed to openly profess her faith, despite her youth. We believe that such personal testimony should have a larger place in the lives of our youth too. When the apostle Peter admonishes the church of God to be ready at all times to give "account of the hope that is in you", he does not mean that we should merely reveal who and what we are by simply stating that we belong to a Protestant Reformed Church, for that is not a personal testimony. We should state the truth as our churches officially confess it, to be sure, but we should also testify that THAT truth has made us free, and has opened our eyes to the marvels of God's grace, also in us personally. We believe that such personal testimony would cause us to be strengthened in our faith and also to receive greater blessing upon the cause of propagating the truth outside our own midst. Such inward zeal for the testimony of the truth is also the requisite for true Missionary activity, which is so much lacking in our churches and yet to which our churches are committed. Certainly the truth is always intolerant, for God is intolerant. It brooks no opposition. It lays the enemy of the truth low. And we give personal testimony of that truth, we will certainly hear the response of those who love not the truth: "so there you and I must go our separate ways". But in and through it all we may believe: "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

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SUFFERING AS A CHRISTIAN?

"Being a Christian does not exempt one from suffering. It may add to his suffering, for men often must suffer for no other reason than that of their loyalty to the right. The Apostle Peter enjoins us, saying, "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed". It is one kind of suffering in which he can take satisfaction. It is proof of his worthiness, admits him to the household of the faithful and establishes a peculiar fellowship with Christ. Then too it identifies him with the best men and women in the world, past or present. Their names adorn and glorify the pages of both Old and New Testament. They are the constructive geniuses of all ages and surely it is

a blessed achievement to be enrolled in that company. In suffering as a Christian we have the comfort that is peculiar to the Christian. We have the assurance that God is pleased and honored and that though "weeping may endure for the night, joy cometh in the morning." There is inward joy in suffering as a Christian, and the sufferer can look the whole world in the face and hurl defiance at the forces of evil that lift up the unholy hands against him. In this way the person who suffers as a Christian differs from the one who suffers as a worldling or as an evil-doer. The godless man has no compensation in his suffering, no comfort, no assurance. The bitterness of shame is added to it and the groaning of his soul is without response. Be not ashamed to suffer as a Christian" — Religious Telescope.

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SINGING IN CHURCH SERVICES:

In "The Religious Digest" we came across an article about church music, which we give to our readers, believing it to be worth while to put into practice what is told there. We quote the following: "In conclusion, may we think upon THE PURPOSE OF MUSIC. 1. It is not for entertainment. 2. It is not to start the service. 3. It is not to fill in time while waiting for someone. 4. It is not to drown out the noise while the people are being seated. 5. It is not to take the place of something left out of the program. 6. It is not something to do as a custom or habit without any particular reason. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE? 1. a medium of adoration, praise, thanksgiving, worship, and supplication. Col. 3:16, 17. 2. As a medium of speaking to one's self messages of comfort, courage and exhortation. Eph. 5:19. 3. As a medium of teaching and admonishing one another." Col. 3:16. End of quotation.

Some of you have perhaps read of the incident where the pastor announced Miss Crosby's hymn, "Jesus Keep Me Near The Cross", but said, "We will omit the second and third stanzas". The author was in the audience. She sprang to her feet, saying, "Pastor, you cannot cut out the second and third stanzas of that hymn: that would spoil the sense and the scene of the whole song, for the three stanzas present a complete story". Well, we do not sing hymns in our Sabbath worship. Nor would we like to see anyone suddenly speak out to the pastor as he is conducting the services. But we do believe that our music and our singing on Sundays in Church worship, could be improved on a lot. Our ministers should choose their song numbers to fit into the message of the text. A word or two by him concerning the song about to be sung would not be out of place, for it would tend to draw the attention

of the audience to the message of the song. We must not forget that also the songs we sing have messages for us. We should remember that, for instance, the doxology or song of praise, is not sung merely to give opportunity to put on our coats and wraps, etc. In some Holland church a song is sung after half the sermon is finished for the purpose of waking any sleeping members. This is not as it should be. Our Sunday worship should be a **COMPLETE MINISTRY**, in the word of God expounded, but also in the songs we sing, as well as in the offerings given from a thankful heart. That is why we believe that not a few chosen singers should constitute the body of singers, but the whole church of God, young and old, should join in: "Sing a song unto Jehovah, for the wonders He has wrought".

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VARIOUS NEWS ITEMS:

The Hungarian Reformed Churches still enjoy religious liberty, according to Rev. Ladislaus Ravaz, president of the general synod of the Hungarian Reformed Churches. That is primarily due to the fact that there is balance of power between the various political parties. But though the Communists have refrained from attacking the church for political reasons, poverty has brought the church under government care and control, and as soon as the Communists are able to completely control the government, it will mean the suppression of the church. The Hungarian Reformed Church is therefore seeking outside aid so that it may exist more independently. The immediate need is for 150,000 Bibles as well as church periodicals, and the church will need outside help, he said, in rebuilding 532 churches and 2,160 parish buildings which were damaged during the war. The poverty of the people is unbelievable, he stated, adding that he personally is receiving only the equivalent of \$1.50 a month.

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A CHRISTIAN BOYCOTT:

"Members of the Christian Listeners Association, one of the biggest groups of its kind in Denmark, now numbers 70,000 with 554 branches throughout the country. The association is said to exert a considerable influence on programs of the Danish State Broadcasting Company. At its annual meeting in Copenhagen the group passed a resolution expressing the desire that radio programs should be free from vulgar language and abuse of God's Name." — *The Religious Digest*.

THE BIBLE FOR THE BLIND:

"The King James Version of the Bible is now complete on records for the Blind. The Old Testament is on 129 records; the New, on 40 records. The cost of this work, begun in 1934, has been shared by The American Bible Society, and The Library of Congress. The cost to blind readers is but a small portion of this amount." — *Alliance Weekly*.

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ARMY CHAPLAIN CASUALTIES:

"The Army Chaplain Corp suffered 387 casualties during the war, 149 of them fatal, according to a report released by the Office of the Chief of Chaplains. The report also announced that up to Dec. 1, 1281 chaplains had been rewarded a total of 1685 decorations, including 26 from foreign powers." — *Religious News Service*.

International Political Economy

In this much abbreviated survey we first will say that this subject has nothing in common with **INTERNATIONAL COMMERCE**, nor even with International diplomacy, for International politics attacks the roots of Nationalism, willing to exchange its solid rock foundation with a sand support, while diplomacy and commerce do not interfere with political Nationalism.

Surely, it is God who formed the nations, and it is His most vehement opponent, Satan, who schemes to reset nationalism into Internationalism under a so-called Super Government headed by the Superman of Nietzsche.

Satan is a lewd and a shrewd observer, and he knows that it is easier to control the several nations under one head and one law, than the many under several heads and several laws.

As long as the nations obey God in honoring political nationalism, so long Satan cannot become their chief ruler in full, although he is the acknowledged prince; as yet he has not attained to his full kingship, which he shall possess in the future.

As long as the nations hold to their national political independence, conducting their own government under their kings, presidents and potentates; so long Satan will find it impossible to introduce his selected one, upon which he will bestow the confederated nations and their glory, for that is delivered unto him, and he gives them to whosoever he will.—Luke 4:6.

As long as the nations cling to their own national God blessed privileges, mainly consisting of individual-

ism; so long Satan will not be able to give the kingdoms nor his authority to that man, his adopted son, the Biblical Antichrist.

Rev. 12:12 informs us that the devil is raving mad, because he knows that he has but a short time, of supreme control, when he has succeeded to unite the nations as a great God-opposing force into a super state headed by his chief, clothed with his power and authority.

When this task is perfected then woe unto the earth when it shall find itself under absolute sway of a human being who has cast off all influences and restraint of a righteous God.

Sacred and profane history record that about five centuries after the great catastrophe of the deluge, a human being, NIMROD, held the yet undivided nations together in a sort of Socialistic Dictatorship, glorying Humanism under the shade of the famous tower of Babel, purposely erected to oppose God and His command to scatter over the earth.

Satan seemingly imagined that his short time had arrived, not knowing that God had yet a future glorious world plan.

God came down and sent them all over creation, each nation to its own by Him appointed country, creating and establishing NATIONALISM with its bright colors and open and hid blessings.

As said, that was about four thousand years ago.

Five great World Empires, Assyria, Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece and Rome tried to fuse the nations again into one great supreme world empire, and failed.

But behold today; try to comprehend the spirit and the trend of our time, and be astonished and observe the general world movement on foot to press the nations once more together into a titanic, gigantic, energetic super-state.

Political Nationalism is dying, and World Safety is sought in a political international combine, calculated to bring PEACE to a world perishing in bloody wars, depopulating the earth, slaughtering its manhood, burning cities and countries.

The so-called Christian nations ought to remember that God alone is able to give PEACE to the nations, and peace to the individual conscience. But who among them seeks peace from above? Not one! God is driven out of His creation, thanks to the three evil spirits of Revelation 16.

June 1945, there were 43 nations assembled at San Francisco, America. America is still the outstanding nation with an apparent inclination for Christian love, charity and sentiment, and yet, even as hostess, she lacks the courage of opening the gatherings with prayer recognizing the KING of PEACE, seemingly being afraid to offend the none-christian nations.

There is no true, honest, sincere and humble chris-

tian spirit at San Francisco. No! there is not, but the bold spirit which held the yet unborn nations together under the power of a socialistic dictatorship of 4000 years ago, is openly and secretly operating at that great city of America. This spirit under the gracious pretention of PEACE is inducing the nations to abolish NATIONALISM and bend their tired shoulders under the oppressive yoke of a political-socialistic-communistic-international-totalitarian dictatorship, admirably called a SUPER-GOVERNMENT, never mentioning its evil inspired anti-christian head. Read Psalm 2.

Why are these nations now assembled at America? For good and valuable reasons. 26 years ago America refused to have anything to do with such a political international world program, absolutely refusing to loose its much appreciated national political independence, but today a secret and hidden force is driving her into such an unnatural world combine. Will America, without GOD be able to withstand now this spirit?

Behold her ally. England deliberately cut her own throat. She wanted to defeat Germany. She won. But, at what price? It was Germany which for generations held back the Asiatic heathen hordes. But the buffet State is gone and England finds the Russian communistic borders extended to its own English Canal.

The gates of hell cannot conquer the *City of God*.

J. J. H.

South Holland, Ill.

This contribution could not be published earlier because of lack of proper space. —ED.

IN MEMORIAM

On Wednesday, December 26, 1944, it pleased Almighty God to remove from our midst a sister-member,

MRS. SARAH PRINCE

at the age of 64 years.

Once again as Congregation we were reminded of our human frailty and thank our Heavenly Father for the assurance of salvation.

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

The Consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church, Holland, Michigan.

W. Hofman, Pres.

R. Bouwman, Clerk.

Wachter: Wat Is Er Van Den Nacht?

Jesaja 21:11

En Babel's ruwe torentrant
Indrukkende het hemelland
Was half gemuurd. En van haart poort
Werd 't volk gejaagd door 't wereldoord.

En Farao ter koningstroon
Van Mizraim, in spot en hoon
Was met zijn leger, in het wee
Verdronken in de Roode Zee.

En Israel's stammen, tien in tal,
Met haar Samaria in gal,
Was door Assyria's heerschappij
Gedreven in een slavernij.

En Salem met haar Hiskia,
Bespronken door Assyria,
Zag Godes wraak in 't bange uur,
Met 's vijand's dooden bij haar muur.

En Nineve, ja, Nineve,
Lag ook vergruizeld in haar wee;
't Welk ook aan Babel, in 't verschiet,
Bedreigd was met een eeuwig niet.

Daarom, O Wachter: trouw en schoon,
O Wachter Gods: Wat van den troon,
Der wereld in haar wereld macht,
O Wachter, wat van deze nacht?

Zoo rees uit Seir eene stem,
Weergalmend' te Jeruzalem;
O Wachter, Wachter, hoor mijn klacht,
Wat wordt er van de wereltnacht?

—Jesaja sprak. Het Godlijk Woord
Werd door de Seir man gehoord.
—De morgen brak, en toch de nacht
Heerscht onverbroken in haar kracht.

—En sedert dat de Seir-stem
Weerklonk in 't oud Jerusalem,
Wordt steeds de zwarte donkerheid
Op Terra-Firma uitgespreid.

Ja, Babel viel. De Meed en Pers,
En Griekenland zoo wijs als versch,
En Rome, ijzersterk in kracht;
Verdwenen in de donk're nacht.

En zet u starend' speurend' blik
Eens op de wereld, in haar schrik;

En merk 't gedoe, de bitt're gal
Der hoornen van het TIEN getal.

En sla hun felle woede ga
Hun somb're haat met geen gena;
En zie hoe 't vuur van oorlogsmet
Hun steden der beschaving plet.

Bemerk de jeugd. De teed're jeugd,
De vrucht van vader-moeder-vreugd.
Heo wreed men hen ter slachting voert
Door d'oorloghel die 't al beroert.

—Ja, Seir man; Zwaar drukt de nacht
Der wereld in haar wangedracht.
Maar ach, hoe donker men 't ook ziet:
Oneindig Duister is 't verschiet.

Straks blaast Chicago met een knal
Voor eeuwig weg uit het heelal.
En d' atombom, Gods vloek, vervaard,
Verscheurt de hemel en de aard.

—Ja, Man van Seir; uw 'errein
Zal eeuwig donker, duister zijn,
Daar geen aurora, hemel-zoet,
Ooit U met eenen morgen groet.

—De Morgen kwam, zei de Profeet
Tot Seir vol van wereldleed.
Reeds bij dat Eden rees het licht,
't Gevallen menschedom in 't gezicht.

De *Vrouw*, God's Kerk, zoo rein en schoon,
Met sterren voor haar schedel-kroon,
De maan aan hare voeten, zacht,
Is met de ZON BEKLEED in PRACHT.

De KERK in 't reine Zongewaad
Zit in het LICHT der dageraads.
En nimmer scheurt de donkerheid.
Haar uit haar CHRISTUS MAJESTEIT.

Zij wijkt van al dat donker-aardsch,
Maar houdt haar oogen hemelwaarts,
Van waar zij in het wolkgebied
Eerlang haar HEILAND weder ziet.

Dan stelt Hij haar bij 't englen-koor;
Als ZIJNEN BRUID den VADER voor.
En eeuwig jubelt zij ZIJN lof
In 't Paradijs, het Hemelhof.

J. H. Hoekstra,
South Holland, Ill.