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MEDITATION

Holding Fast Our Profession

Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.
Heb. 4:14.

Seeing then . . . let us hold fast!

Doctrine and exhortation follow each other in regular sequence in this profound and beautiful part of Holy Scripture.

And while the exhortatory passages with which the epistle is interspersed occupy the position of inferences from preceding didactical expositions, they, at the same time, frequently are transitions to further instruction in the truth of the Christian profession to come.

Thus it is in the section that is introduced by the words that constitute the basis of our present meditation.

Seeing then . . . let us hold fast!

Already, in the preceding part of the epistle the believers had received sufficient instruction to know and to acknowledge that they have a great high priest, that is passed in the heavens, Jesus the Son of God. For this had been the chief theme of all the author had written thus far. They were now in a position to see, by faith, that their high priest was far exalted above all the shadows of the old dispensation could ever offer. And in that position they were even now quite receptive for the exhortation not to turn back from the reality of the new into the shadows of the old dispensation, but to hold fast their profession.

There was, indeed, need of this earnest exhortation. For there was, under the pressure of temptation and persecution, a tendency to look back, and once again to cling to the tabernacle and temple made with hands.

And always the Church in the world is in need of hearing this same exhortation: let us hold fast our profession!

Within and without, the enemy of that profession ever tempts and presses us to abandon it.

But we have a great high priest, that is gone into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God. Of Him much was already written in the preceding section, and of His glory and greatness much more is still to be said.

Upon Him believers must constantly fix the eyes of their faith.

Seeing Him thus, as the great high priest, beholding Him with the eye of faith, they will not waver, though all hell rise up against them!

They will surely hear and heed this exhortation:
Hold fast your profession!

Your *profession*!

Wonderful gift of God's grace!

But at the same time, sacred obligation before the face of Him that is the Author of it, and the glory of Whose grace is the end of it!

Your profession is that which, in the fellowship of the saints, it is given you to know of the marvellous works of God, of the glory of His grace in the Beloved, of the blessedness of salvation, redemption, the forgiveness of sins, the covenant-fellowship with the Triune. It is that which, through the Word, the Spirit of Christ dwelling in the Church, revealed to you concerning the things which eye hath not seen, neither ear heard, nor has ever arisen in the heart of man.

And it is that glorious truth, that knowledge of the God of your salvation, and of His everlasting covenant, as your *profession*.

It signifies that, in fellowship with the Church in the world, you embrace that truth by a true and living faith; that, spiritually, it has become flesh of your flesh, bone of your bone; that it controls and dominates your whole existence, your very life in the midst of the world; and that now you become a living witness of

Him Who called you, to speak of His name and glory, of the wonder of His marvellous grace; and that this testimony of your mouth is sealed and adorned by a walk worthy of God Who called you into His kingdom and glory!

Your *profession*!

That is Christ, and yourself only in relation to Him.

For the sum and substance of the profession which the Spirit, through the Word of God works in the Church, and, in fellowship with her, in the heart of every believer, is that Jesus is LORD!

Marvellous profession!

He, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph the carpenter, Who was born in the stable of Bethlehem and found His first bed in the manger; Who in all His life never rose above the humiliating level of that stable, and of that manger; Who had no form or comeliness, no beauty that men should desire Him; Who was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, before Whom men hid their faces; Who, as far as this world and His position in it was concerned, never had a name, or power, or glory; Who was a servant of servants, and Whose life ended in the shameful death of the accursed tree; Whom even now, and throughout all the ages, all men, exactly as men, despise and reject . . .

That Jesus is LORD!

That is the heart of the Christian profession!

It means that He is *the* Lord in Himself, the very Creator of the world, Who in Himself has all power and authority over heaven and earth, and all they contain; that He is the only begotten Son, Who is eternally in the bosom of the Father, God of God, Light of Light. It implies that this Lord of all assumed the form of a servant, and in that form voluntarily emptied Himself completely, descending in the deep and dark vale of the shadow of death, of the agony of hell, because He had taken upon Himself the iniquities of His own, and with them, and for them, walked as the Servant of Jehovah, in perfect obedience of love, to bring the perfect sacrifice that would forever blot out the guilt of sin. It signifies, too, that God raised Him from the dead, giving Him testimony that He is righteous; and that He exalted Him at His own right hand, far above all principality, and power, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come!

That is the Christian profession!

It is the profession in word, and the manifestation of this profession in deed, that this Jesus is *our* Lord, that we belong to Him, body and soul, for time and eternity; that His mind is our light, that His will is our law, that we delight to keep His commandments, with all our heart, and mind, and soul and strength, personally, and in every relationship of life, in the

home and on the street, in the church and in the factory, always and everywhere. For Jesus is Lord over all, and another lordship next to Him is not to be acknowledged.

Not *a* Lord, but *the* Lord is He!

Lord universal and absolute!

And your profession means that you are, and insist on being, His servants in word and in deed.

Radical profession!

Hold it fast!

For to persevere in that profession is a matter of life and death!

For "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God raised him from the death, thou shalt be saved." Rom. 10:9.

Hold fast, therefore, your profession!

O, to be sure, that means that you are zealous concerning the truth as it is in Jesus, revealed in the Holy Scriptures; that, as a church, and as individual believers, you strive for the purity of the faith once delivered to the saints, and that you persistently refuse to be tossed about by any and every wind of doctrine.

It signifies, too, that you appropriate this pure revelation of the living Lord by a true and living faith, and that, by this faith, you cling to it, so that your mind is constantly enlightened by it as by a certain, spiritual knowledge; so that your will is wholly controlled and determined by it, you put all your confidence in Him Who is your Lord, and you are dominated by a sincere resolution to do His will, and to walk in the midst of the world as before the face of your Lord, without wavering.

It implies, finally, that you let your light shine, never hiding it under a bushel, that you confess the name of your Lord, as a church in the preaching of His Word, as individual believers in all your walk and life, so that always and everywhere, and come what may, you actually love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your mind, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, forsake the world, crucify your old nature, and walk in a new and holy life. It implies that, in the midst of the world, you reveal yourself as being of the party of the living God, revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord!

Hold fast your profession!

Preserve it, cling to it tenaciously, by faith, confess it, enact it in and before the whole world!

And take it very seriously!

For it is, indeed, a matter of life and death, not only of real, of eternal life and eternal death, but also of life and death in this world! In the holding fast of your profession, you must be wholly, prepared fully and unconditionally, without wavering or compromise,

to accept the word of your Lord: he that will save his life shall lose it, and he that shall lose his life for my sake shall save it unto life eternal.

For, even as the lordship of Him Whom you profess is the most absolute and intolerant and uncompromising lordship conceivable, so that it brooks no other lordship anywhere, so your profession of that lordship is most radical: it knows of no adaptation, of no compromise.

Say not in your heart that for the sake of your earthly life, job or position, safety or well-being, you may be excused for adapting your confession to circumstances, for compromising with the world; that you must live, and have a place in the world, and have food, and clothing, and shelter, and that, therefore, you may hide your light, keep silent about your Lord, accommodate your way of life to the demands of the world. For the moment you permit such considerations to influence your profession, you are lost. You are attempting to save your life, and will surely lose it.

It must be either or: Christ or Belial.

You profess or you deny.

Hold fast, therefore!

For there is another lordship in the world: the lordship of the man of sin, of the son of perdition, of the beast and of the false prophet. It, too, is intolerant: it stands radically opposed to the lordship of your profession. It, too, aims at universal control, and it cannot rest until all the inhabitants of the world wonder after the beast, and worship it. It will oppose you, seduce you by its false philosophy, even under the cloak of religiousness; it will tempt you to become unfaithful to your profession, by offering you the privileges of the kingdom of this world, by threatening you with its furious wrath, by casting you out, so that you can neither buy nor sell unless you openly acknowledge its lordship, by putting the sword of the world-power to your throat . . .

The power of that lordship is even now operating in the world, mightily striving to realize itself, and to reveal itself in its ultimate manifestation.

And soon, presently, it will rise up out of the turbulent sea of the restless, sin-motivated, wrath driven, warring nations . . .

Hold fast, therefore, your profession!

Yield not to the lust of the flesh, to the desire to save your life, to the seducing pleasures of the world; and be not afraid of its fury and implacable hatred.

Through the Word of God, in the power of the Spirit, by prayer and supplication, persevere!

The time is at hand!

Hold fast!

Seeing then! . . .

Looking unto Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our profession!

Without that look, that look of faith, that constant look upon Him, you will surely be swallowed up by the waves of temptation and tribulation; but seeing Him, you will be safe and steadfast, without fear of wavering.

He is your High Priest!

Your Lord, Whom you profess, is your High Priest, Who sacrificed Himself for your sins and your transgressions, and Who obtained for you the forgiveness of sins, and perfect righteousness. He is your Intercessor with the Father, Who is acquainted, by deepest experience, with all your infirmities, with your sins and weaknesses, with your trials and temptations, with all your suffering and death, and Who constantly prays for you with a prayer that is never denied. He is your all, in Whom are all the spiritual blessings of salvation, and who constantly fills you with them!

And He is great!

He is Jesus, the revelation of the God of our salvation!

He is the very Son of God, infinite in power and glory, the Lord of all in Himself. All things are of Him, and unto Him. Even those mighty forces of darkness in the world, that rise up against Him, to deny and oppose His lordship, are of His own design, and, therefore, all their raving and fury can only serve His purpose.

And He is passed into the heavens!

For this Jesus was, indeed, the servant of servants in the days of His flesh. Despised He was and rejected, and nowhere was He permitted to have a place in the world. This Jesus did, indeed, leave His earthly life on the accursed tree, a cast away; and the world appeared to have the victory over Him. But God did not leave His soul in hell, and did not permit His holy One to see corruption. He justified Him. He raised Him from the dead, and gave Him life and glory. He exalted Him in the highest heavens, and put Him at His own right hand in heavenly places. He made Him Lord of all!

Seeing then . . . hold fast your profession!

Seeing the Lord whom you profess is so great a Lord, God's anointed Lord, hold fast your profession of Him with fear and trembling, lest in any way you deny His glory!

Looking upon Him, Who has the victory, and Who holds all the powers of darkness in His mighty hand, fear not!

Hold fast your profession, even unto the end!

The victory is yours!

H. H.

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EDITORIALS**Ecumenical Synodical Problems**

A word may still be said about the contents and meaning of the decisions of the "Ecumenical Synod" in re the controversy in the Netherlands.

If these decisions are considered in the abstract they are rather harmless, i.e. one might subscribe to them without much trouble of conscience.

This is especially true of the first of the two decisions in question.

The delegates from the Netherlands presented to the assembly in Grand Rapids the question: "Even if the Synod of the Reformed Churches (of the Netherlands, and in its decisions concerning the recent controversies, H.H.) might not be right would this justify a rupture in the Church?" And to this question, thus presented, entirely in the abstract, that is, without any reference to what actually took place in the Netherlands in recent years, I would be inclined to reply with an unqualified *No*. And if asked for a reason for such an emphatically negative reply, I would maintain that in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands sufficient liberty of doctrine should have been left, particularly on the question of the covenant of grace, to leave room for both factions that are now separated, at least, until, in the way of free discussion, it had become quite evident that one or the other was definitely in conflict with the Confessions.

But what if no such room were left?

What if the Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands made its decisions *binding* upon those who could not, or, granted that they misunderstood their real meaning, thought that they could not agree with them? In that case, no room was left for them in the church, not even for a time. A minister of the gospel must teach and preach, even during the period that he awaits the outcome of his protest against or appeal from a certain doctrinal declaration. And it is quite impossible for him to teach anything, even temporarily, that is contrary to his convictions. Ergo, if a synod makes binding decisions that are, according to his convictions, contrary to the Word of God and to the Confessions, and if, moreover, such a synod demands that, pending his protest or appeal, he acquiesce in, and conform himself to its decisions, there are but two ways open for him to follow: 1. He must, for the time being, refrain from preaching, or, 2. He must continue to preach, but now outside of the church represented by the synod that made such decisions. The first he cannot and will never do, if he is convinced that he is lawfully called to preach the gospel.

There is no other way open to him, therefore, than to break with that particular institute of the church that is bound by the decisions.

And I am convinced that this is exactly what occurred in the Netherland Reformed Churches.

I, too, believe that the rupture in the Reformed Churches of the old country is deplorable, and that it should never have taken place. But I am also convinced: 1. That the Synod of 1936 should not have taken up the controversial questions the way it did, but should have left them to the free discussion of the church as an organism. 2. That in 1942-43, 1945, and 1946, the Synod should not have formulated *binding* decisions in the matter, especially not in a time when most church papers and other periodicals were suspended by the enemy, but should rather have issued a Testimony to the following effect:

"Brethren, we all want to maintain the Reformed truth as embodied in our Confessions. In the controversial matters concerning the covenant, it would seem that the Confessions offer no clear and deciding statements. To us it seems that, at present, the time is not ripe for Synod to make such a statement or such declarations as would justify one current opinion and condemn the other or all others; and, besides, circumstances are very unfavorable for such action on the part of your Synod. We earnestly exhort you, therefore, to continue your study of these matters, and to discuss them in the spirit of brotherly love."

And so, I believe, that Synod, by making binding decisions, and that, too, in spite of hundreds of petitions to the contrary, itself made the rupture unavoidable.

In some such fashion the "Ecumenical Synod" should have advised the delegates from the Netherlands, as I see the situation. And it could have served the cause of the unity of the Church, if it had advised the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands still to confess that they erred in making such binding decisions, and to retract them *as such*.

Instead it gave an answer which is true enough in itself, which also leaves the impression that it condemns the action of the "Liberated Churches," but which has no concrete bearing on the case in question, viz., "in case one is convinced that a Synod makes an unwarranted doctrinal pronouncement, he is not justified to bring about a rupture unless he has exhausted all the possibilities provided by the Church Order for procuring a revision and the Church insists on maintaining a position contrary to his conviction concerning the truth."

With this we can all agree.

It hardly requires an Ecumenical Synod to establish so self-evident a truth.

But it has no bearing on the controversy in the Netherlands. Also the "Liberated Churches" will sub-

scribe to this statement. But they insist that when the broadest gathering of the churches had spoken, and emphasized that its decisions were binding, and deposed officebearers that could not accept its declarations, "all the possibilities provided by the Church Order for procuring a revision" has been exhausted.

The same is true of the second decision of the "Ecumenical Synod" concerning the controversy and schism of the Netherlands, viz., the brief statement that "the 'Declaration of 1946' is in conformity with the Scriptures and the Creeds." In general, we might well subscribe to this, although we would prefer to express ourselves somewhat more definitely. (Cf. for this "Declaration of 1946" the Standard Bearer of April 1, 1946).

But, first of all, with a view to the schism in the Netherlands, what sense does it have to speak about 1946 without its connection with 1942-43? And, secondly, why did not the Ecumenical Synod express itself concretely on that "Declaration of 1946" as a *binding* decision, leaving no room for other views? It is plain enough for anyone that is at all acquainted with the controversy, that when this "Declaration of 1946" states that the children of believers "are sanctified in Christ, so that they partake of the promise," they repudiate the view of the "Liberated Churches," and imply an interpretation of "sanctified in Christ" and of "partaking of the promise" to which the latter would not subscribe, and which is also contrary to the views of the late professor Heyns.

Hence, we wrote, that the Ecumenical Synod, by implication condemned the latter.

But, in the light of the above mentioned facts, the statement that the Ecumenical Synod adopts the judgment of its Committee, viz., "that the 'Declaration of 1946' is in conformity with the Scriptures and the Creeds," though it leaves the impression that it justified the action of the Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, and condemns the stand of the "Liberated Churches," is of very little value, when considered from the viewpoint of its real bearing upon the situation of the churches in the old country, and upon its recent history.

PROPER SCOPE OF ECUMENICITY?

As was inevitable, this question, too, was before the "First Ecumenical Synod of Reformed Churches."

This first Synod was composed of delegates from only three Reformed Church groups. And the question arose what churches should be invited to similar synods in the future, and, in close connection with this, the question as to the basis of such synods was discussed.

The following conclusions were adopted:

"1. The foundation for the Ecumenical Synod of Reformed Churches shall be the Holy Scriptures of the old and New Testament as interpreted by the Confessions of the Reformed faith; namely, Helvetica Prior, Heidelberg Catechism, Confessio Gallicana, Confessio Belgica, Scotica Prior and Posterior, Westminster Confession, Canons of Dort, and the Thirty Nine Articles. It should be understood that these Scriptures in their entirety, as well as in every part thereof, are the infallible and ever-abiding Word of the living Triune God, absolutely authoritative in all matters of creed and conduct; and that the Confessions of the Reformed faith are accepted because they present the divine, revealed truth, the forsaking of which has caused the decline of modern life. It must be emphasized that only a wholehearted and consistent return to the Scriptural truth of which the gospel of Jesus Christ is the core and apex, can bring salvation to mankind and effectuate the so sorely needed renewal of the world.

"2. Because of the diversity in the forms of government of the Reformed Churches, uniformity of Church polity cannot be stressed as a fundamental requisite, except as the principles of this polity are contained in the Reformed Confessions, as for example the headship of Christ and the marks of the true Church: the pure preaching of the gospel, the Scriptural administration of the sacraments, and the faithful exercise of discipline.

"3. All Churches which, in the judgment of Synod, profess and maintain the Reformed faith will be invited to participate in the Ecumenical Synod, on the basis mentioned above. Moreover, they will be kindly requested to express their explicit agreement with it, and all delegates to the Synod will have to express their adherence to the confessions of the Reformed faith and to the aforesaid statement.

"4. A statement with regard to the history and the organization of this Synod as well as the character, authority, and purpose of future Ecumenical Synods should accompany the invitation of the various churches."

Later, when the Synod convened in closed session to carry out the decision under 3 above, and to determine which churches would "in the judgment of Synod" be eligible to an invitation to the next Ecumenical Synod, it appears that no agreement, or, at least, no conclusion could be reached.

I am sorry that the deliberations on this question were carried on in closed session, for it would have been interesting to learn just what judgment the delegates expressed concerning the different churches they discussed.

However this may be, the outcome was that the

selection of delegates from other churches was finally left to the judgment of the individual synods represented in the first ecumenical synod.

H. H.

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

Part Two.

Of Man's Redemption

Lord's Day XXI

1.

The Idea Of The Church (cont.)

However, the Church is not a mechanical, but an organic unity. It is a spiritual organism. The difference between a mechanism and an organism is that, while both are constituted of parts through which the whole functions, the former is assembled from previously prepared parts, the latter grows from a common principle of life. A watch is a mechanism, a tree is an organism. The church is the spiritual body of Christ, it is the olive tree of which He is the root; believers are branches of the vine which is Christ, members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. Rom. 11; John 15:1-5; Eph. 5:30. The saints, therefore, must grow up in Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ. Eph. 4:14. And from Christ, "the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." Eph. 4:16. Christ is first. He is the head. In Him is all the life of the whole body, of every one of its members. Even though it is true that the church is *gathered* out of the whole world, and though this gathering, through the preaching of the gospel, called individual men into the fellowship of the church, the fact is that this is accomplished only through Christ's entering, by His Spirit and Word, into the hearts of those that are given Him by the Father. From Him as the head of the body the members receive their life, and in virtue of His abiding in them they continue to live. Even as the branches live in and out of the vine, so believers live only in fellowship with Christ. His mind is their mind, His will is their will, His resurrection-life is their life, His glory is their glory. Apart from Him they are nothing, and can do nothing. By Him their

existence as members of the church is determined as truly as Adam's existence was determined by God's act of creation.

Thus the whole, in all its parts, and through all its organs, is adapted to serve its purpose. That purpose is indicated in Scripture by such terms as the temple of God, the city of God, the people of God, the royal priesthood, or kingdom of priests. They express that the church is designed to be the dwellingplace of God, and that she must serve the purpose of reflecting the glory of God's grace in Christ. The church is the reflection of God's own covenant-life of friendship. With her the triune God establishing His most intimate fellowship, that she may know Him, taste that He is good, be consecrated to Him in holy service, walk in His light, and shew forth the praises of Him that called her out of darkness into His marvellous light.

That is the idea of the church.

She is the body of Christ, that beautiful, complete, harmonious, spiritual organism of which the living, resurrected and glorified Lord is the one dominating principle, and all the redeemed elect are members; and that serves the purpose of reflecting the fulness of the glory of God's grace in the Beloved.

2.

The Election Of The Church.

The church is realized, so the Catechism teaches us, by the act of the Son of God, whereby He gathers, defends, and preserves her, and that, too, out of the whole human race.

She is, therefore, not a new creation in the sense that she is called out of nothing. Historically speaking, another organism, that of the human race, precedes the organism of the body of Christ, and for a time, from a natural viewpoint, the church is part of that other organism. Just as the kernel of wheat is, temporarily, organically one with the chaff, but is ultimately separated from it, so those that constitute the members of the body of Christ are, for a time, organically one with the original, natural organism of the race, and are separated from the latter by the wonder of grace. Moreover, that it is in the way of redemption, through the blood of Christ, and by deliverance from the power of darkness, sin and death, that the church is separated from the "world" and called out of the human race, presupposes that the original organism of the human race was marred and spoiled through sin, wholly lost in corruption and death. And that the church is *ecclesia*, the fathering of those that are *called out*, implies that not all the members of the original organism are ingrafted into the new, spiritual organism of the body of Christ.

The church is that spiritual organism which, through redemption, regeneration, and calling, through the Spirit and word of the Son of God, is gathered out of, and separated from the organism of the whole human race, lost in sin and death, and that in such a way that a large part of the original organism is lost.

This fact raises two questions.

The first is: who determines the number of those that are gathered out of the old organism into the new, as well as the individuals that are privileged to belong to this number?

And the second question is this: what is the relation between the church and the old organism of the race as originally created in Adam, between redemption and creation, between grace and nature?

The first question concerns the difference between Calvinism and Arminianism, the Reformed conception of the church and the view of those who make the work of salvation dependent on the will of man.

Arminianism, no matter what form it may assume, is essentially humanism, pelagianism, individualism, nominalism. It teaches that the idea, and the scope of the church, the number of its members, and the individuals that enter into the fellowship of the body of Christ, are determined by the will of man. God is dependent in His choice on the choice of man. For the Arminian does, indeed, speak of divine election, but to him it means that God chose that He foresaw as believers and faithful in Christ. God saves those that are willing to be saved, He rejects those that reject Christ. Arminianism is man-centered. Man's freedom must be maintained, and that, too, at the expense of God's sovereignty. His salvation, rather than the glory of God, is the purpose of all things, the important thing that matters. Hence, we said that Arminianism is individualistic: the church is a mere multitude of individuals, called into existence by the efforts and will of man. Those that become members of the church cannot be conceived as component parts of a preconceived, predetermined, and well planned whole, for it is the will of individual men that determines its scope. When, not the architect, but the dealer in building material determines, how much and what kind of building material shall go into a structure, the result can hardly be a harmonious whole. According to the Arminian conception the matter is even worse with respect to the house of God, for it is the building material itself that determines its idea and size. Hence, the church on earth is really a society for the salvation of as great a number of men as possible, possible, that is, through the efforts of men.

The Reformed conception, however, is theocentric: it revolves around the proper conception of God as revealed in the Scriptures; the purpose of all things, also of the calling of the church, is the glory of God in His

self-revelation. It is, moreover, organic: the whole is not determined by the individuals, but the latter are determined by the former. The whole church very really exists, the idea of the church is there, before she is gathered out of the whole human race. She is in the mind and will of God, in His eternal counsel. With God the church is eternally. He has engraved her in the palms of His hands, her walls are continually before Him. Isa. 49: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." The whole of the redeemed, sanctified, and glorified church is with God eternally. He determined the idea of the church, the purpose and scope of the church, and He alone determined who shall enter into her blessed fellowship, and what place they shall occupy therein. And He also determined, with equal freedom and sovereignty, who shall not enter into the fellowship of Christ, but perish in the way of sin and death. And this eternal determination He also executes in time. Those whom He gave to Christ in His sovereign counsel, He also draws to Him in time. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." John 6:37.

Such is the Reformed conception.

The Heidelberg Catechism offers no special exposition of the doctrine of sovereign predestination. In fact, the only place where it is at all mentioned, is in the fifty fourth question and answer. We must remember that this part of our confessions was composed about half a century before the Arminian controversy. Yet, it must be admitted that it mentions the doctrine of election in a most proper and beautiful connection, that is, as a part of the truth concerning the holy catholic church. And it emphasizes this truth in a threefold way, viz., first, by ascribing the gathering in of the church out of the whole human race to the Son of God alone, without mentioning the work of man; secondly, by directly stating that the church that so gathered is "chosen to everlasting life; and, thirdly, by teaching the preservation and perseverance of the saints in the words "and that I . . . shall forever remain a living member thereof."

The Netherland Confession mentions this truth in Article XVI as follows: "We believe that all the posterity of Adam being thus fallen into perdition and ruin, by the sin of our first parents, God then did manifest himself such as he is; that is to say, merciful and just: Merciful, since he delivers and preserves from this perdition all, whom he, in his eternal and unchangeable counsel of mere goodness, hath elected in Christ Jesus our Lord, without any respect to their works: Just in leaving others in the fall and perdition

wherein they have involved themselves."

And our fathers of the seventeenth century, realizing the fundamental and central importance of this truth of predestination, when it was undermined by Arminius and his followers, called together a national synod, and invited delegates of Reformed Churches in other lands, to defend this truth, and preserve it in the *Canons of Dordrecht* for generations to come.

In these Canons, the Reformed Churches confess:

"That some receive the gift of faith from God, and others do not receive it, proceeds from God's eternal decree, 'For known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world', Acts 15:18. 'Who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will,' Eph. 1:11. According to which decree, he graciously softens the hearts of the elect, however obstinate, and inclines them to believe; while he leaves the non-elect in his just judgment to their own wickedness and obduracy. And herein is especially displayed the profound, the merciful, and at the same time the righteous discrimination between men, equally involved in ruin; or that decree of election and reprobation, revealed in the Word of God, which, though men of perverse, impure and unstable minds wrest to their own destruction, yet to holy and pious souls affords unspeakable consolation." I, A, 7.

And again:

"Election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, before the foundation of the world, he hath, out of mere grace, chosen, from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault, from their primitive state of rectitude, into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ, whom he from eternity appointed the Mediator and Head of the elect, and the foundation of salvation.

"This elect number, though by nature neither better nor more deserving than others, but with them involved in one common misery, God hath decreed to give to Christ, to be saved by him, and effectually to call and draw them to his communion by his Word and Spirit, to bestow upon them true faith, justification and sanctification; and having powerfully preserved them in the fellowship of his Son, finally, to glorify them for the demonstration of his mercy, and for the praise of the riches of his glorious grace; as it is written: 'According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.' Eph. 1:4, 5, 6. And elsewhere: 'Whom he did predestinate, them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified them he also glorified.' Rom. 8:30." I, A, 7.

And concerning the truth of reprobation, the Canons teach:

"What peculiarly tends to illustrate and recommend to us the eternal and unmerited grace of election, is the express testimony of Scripture, that not all, but some only are elected, while others are passed by in the eternal decree; whom God, out of his sovereign, most just, irreprehensible, and unchangeable good pleasure, hath decreed to leave in the common misery into which they have willfully plunged themselves, and not to bestow upon them saving faith, and the grace of conversion; but permitting them in his just judgment to follow their own ways, at least for the declaration of his justice, to condemn and punish them forever, not only on account of their unbelief, but also for all their other sins. And this is the decree of reprobation which by no means makes God the author of sin (the very thought of which is blasphemy), but declares him to be an awful, irreprehensible, and righteous judge and avenger thereof." I, A, 15.

And the same truth is confessed in other symbols of Reformed origin.

It is the truth of God's sovereign grace.

Quite properly, this doctrine has been called the *cor ecclesiae*, the heart of the church.

True, heretics of every color have opposed it. They pointed to some individual, aphoristic passages of Scripture, preferably to those that contain such terms as "world", "all", or "all men", and wresting them from their context, gave them a universal content, in order to instill into men's minds the error that God, on His part, is gracious to all men, and willing to save them all. Mostly, however, they argued against this truth by means of mere human considerations, and accused those that maintained this truth that they made God the author of sin, present Him as a wanton tyrant, denied that He is merciful, had no place for the truth of man's responsibility, and the like.

Against all such proud opposition to the truth of God's sovereign grace, the Scripture's condemnation is sufficient: "O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" Rom. 9:20.

And the doctrine of sovereign predestination is so thoroughly the current teaching of Scripture, and so intimately related to the whole system of truth concerning our salvation, that the denial of it distorts the whole, and every part of it.

In a discussion and exposition of the Catechism such as this, it would require far too much space to elaborate upon this, and to quote at length from Holy Writ to prove its being founded on the Word of God.

A few passages may suffice.

That, in the old dispensation, God chose the nation of Israel in distinction of all other nations, to reveal Himself to them alone as the God of salvation, and to

establish His covenant with them, is a well-known fact, which cannot be explained except in the light of the truth of God's free, elective, sovereign grace.

That even in the nation of Israel, God's sovereign predestination made distinction and separation between the carnal and the spiritual seed, so that there always was only "the remnant according to the election of grace" that was saved, is the plain teaching of Scripture in the ninth chapter of the epistle to the Romans.

There the apostle writes about the "Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all God blessed for ever, Amen." And yet, "they are not all Israel, which are of Israel." Not the children of the flesh, but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. And what determined whether, among the people of Israel, some were carnal, others spiritual children? Only God's sovereign predestination. For "when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."

H. H.

IN MEMORIAM

On September 27, 1946, it pleased the Lord in His infinite wisdom to suddenly take out of our family circle, our dear husband, father and brother,

BEN PASTOOR

at the age of 76 years.

Our comfort is that his desire was to serve the Lord, whom we know doeth all things well.

Mrs. Ben Pastoor

Mr. and Mrs. J. Klaver

Mr. and Mrs. S. De Young

Mr. and Mrs. B. Pastoor

Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Pastoor

11 grandchildren,

and 3 brothers:

Cornelius Pastoor

Gerard Pastoor

Herman Pastoor

806 Sherman St., S. E.
Grand Rapids, Mich.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Ark Of God Delivered

No sooner had the Ark arrived in Gath than there occurred there, too, a new revelation of the wrath of God over the unrighteousness of the Philistines. "The hand of the Lord was against the city with a very great destruction: and he smote the men of the city, both great and small, and they had emerods in their secret parts." So had the plague followed the Ark to Gath and broken out in that city. Still the Philistines persisted in saying that it was a chance that happened to them. This is indicated by the fact that the matter is put to a second test. The Ark of God was removed to Ekron, but over the protests of the Ekronites. They cried out, did the men of Ekron, "They have brought about the Ark of the God of Israel to us, to slay us and our people." And "they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, Send away the Ark of the God of Israel, and let it go again to its own place, that it slay us not and our people." And verily "there was a deadly destruction throughout all that city; the hand of the Lord was very heavy also there". And it was the same plague. Thus in every city where the Ark of God was imprisoned, there rioted that plague, there reigned supreme death and destruction. And as to the city last smitten, its "cry went up to heaven."

And the Philistines, in all likelihood the Philistine lords, called for the priests and the diviners, saying, "What shall we do to the Ark of the Lord? Tell us wherewith we shall send it to its place?" These lords are now ready to release their hold on this symbol and to admit defeat. The evidence that they were being judged and destroyed by the Lord was now too overwhelming. They resolved to send away the Ark to its place, not because they had undergone a change of heart but because they perceived that they were doomed to extinction, should they persist in fighting God. It was to save themselves from this doom, that they finally bowed their stiff necks, and conceded that Jehovah is *the* God. For once more they put the matter to a test. For the third time they demand of God that He prove to them that it is He by whom they were being smitten. Though rationally convinced, they continued to ask for signs. For, being depraved men, they did not want to believe, nor did they. It was in their unbelief that they asked the priests and the diviners to give counsel.

And the priests and the diviners did give counsel. The Ark, they said, must not be restored empty but with gifts. These gifts are to be a trespass offering,

because the anger of the God of Israel must be appeased. "Then," said these diviners, "ye shall be healed, and it shall be known to you why his hand is not removed from you." The Philistine lords inquire what they should send, and received the answer: "Five golden boils and five golden mice." The number five is expressly fixed on with reference to the five princes of the Philistines. And then these Philistine priests and diviners give utterance to a remarkable admonition. They say, "And ye shall give glory unto the God of Israel: peradventure he will lighten his hand from off you, and from off your gods, and from off your land. Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? when he had wrought reproachfully among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed?"

This might be the speech of a living faith in God and of a true contrition of heart, as far as the form of the words are concerned. But actually it is not, as it proceeds, does this speech, from hearts that still are hard, hearts still untouched by the redeeming grace of God. This is evident from the remainder of the counsel. Their counsel is to the effect that a new cart and two hitherto unyoked milch cows are to carry back the Ark with the presents. The calves were to be taken along, but afterwards to be carried from the drawing cows, back into the house, that is, into the stall. "And send it away that it may go," said the diviners, "and see if it (the Ark as drawn by the cows) goeth by the way of its own coasts to Bethshemesh, then he—the Lord—hath done us this great evil; but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that smote us; it was a chance that happened to us." So do these priests and diviners advise that the matter once more be put to a test.

This final test was truly ingenious in a sinful way. The cows that drew the Ark were not led or driven by human hands but allowed to wander where they would, and their calves were brought home from them. The Philistines thought to make it as difficult for God to prove that His hand was upon them as they knew how; for they did not want to be convinced. But the Lord in His wrath once again spoke to them. The cows took not the straight way to the way of their calves, after which their animal flesh was yearning, but as driven by the unseen hand of God they took to the straightway to the way of Bethshemesh, of the land where dwelt the people of Israel, lowing as they went—for their flesh yearned after their young—turning not aside from the right or to the left. What astonishing new evidence that the plagues came from God! And the Philistine lords saw; for they followed the Ark as drawn by the cows even to the borders of the Israelite territory, hoping against hope that the cows would stray from that straightway in search of their young. This, to be sure, would have been the normal

thing for these animals to do. But they kept steadfastly to the way that led to Bethshemesh. And the Philistine lords returned to their country and continued to make war against the people of Israel, thus indicating that even with this new evidence of God in their hearts they persisted in saying, to their own ultimate destruction, that it was a chance that had happened to them, that is, that the plagues came not from the Lord. The obstinacy of the Philistines (of man apart from Christ) is truly amazing. It has but one possible solution. The Lord sovereignly hardened their hearts. To end with this obstinacy in the Philistines is to be utterly unable to account for it. Yet, even as hardened by the Lord, the Philistines set free the Ark, and thereby confessed, that they were in the grip of the Almighty, as to their heart, and mind, and will, and whole being; thus confessed, with the plagues of God laid upon their heart, that God is God and none else. And through their expiatory sacrifices of golden mice and emerods, they also confessed that they were sinful and that God was righteous, yet not as truly humbling themselves under God's mighty hand, but as moved by a carnal fear. As is evident from verse nine, these diviners meant not to present the Philistines' being smitten by the hand of God as a fact but as a possibility. And therefore it was advisable to do everything to appease the wrath of God. The plagues might have come from Him. And the case of the Egyptians was referred to in order to strengthen the exhortation. The Ark of the Lord was in the country of the Philistines seven months, chapter 6:1. The seven months was a time of uninterrupted plagues.

The Ark of God in Kirjathjearim

So had the Lord driven the kine by which the Ark was being drawn in the straight way to the way of Bethshemesh. And they of Bethshemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley, when they lifted up their eyes and saw the Ark and they rejoiced to see it. The cart came into the field of Joshua, a Bethshemeshite. Here by a great stone the animals were stopped not by human hands but by the Lord Himself. The Bethshemeshites bestirred themselves. Coming forward, the Levites took down the Ark of the Lord, and the coffer that was with it, and put the jewels of gold, contained therein, on the great stone. The Bethshemeshites clave the wood of the cart, and offered the kine a burnt offering unto the Lord. More burnt offerings were offered and sacrifices sacrificed the same day unto the Lord. But the joy of the men of Bethshemesh was suddenly turned to mourning, when

the Lord smote of their number 50,070 people, chapter 6:19.

(Some interpreters have great difficulty with the text at verse 19, "And he smote the men of Bethshemesh, because they had looked into the Ark of the Lord, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and three score and ten men. . . ." These interpreters cannot see why the clause "and he smote" is repeated, and why the text has "the people" again after the "men of Bethshemesh". But certainly the reason is obvious. These repetitions are necessary for a correct understanding of the text, the first section of which sets forth the reason of the divine visitation (they looked at the Ark of God), while the second indicates the number that were slain. Further, assuming that the text is here defective, these interpreters adopt the reading of the Septuagint, "And the children of Jeconiah among the Bethshemeshites were not glad that they saw the Ark, and he smote them," namely, these sons only, whose number is given as 70. But this is a sheer interpolation. Nothing is said in the context about the race of Jeconiah. Finally, the reading 50,070 is held to be corrupt on the ground that the words "fifty thousand men" are wanting in Josephus and in some Hebrew MSS. So these words are eliminated from the text and the words "three score and ten" retained and made to apply to the sons of Jeconiah, who suddenly died, it is said, because they rejoiced not with their brethren, when they saw the Ark, thus died because of their unsympathizing and therefore unholy bearing toward this symbol of God's presence among His people.

But certainly the words "fifty thousand men" must be retained. The statement that the Lord smote this number of men agrees with the notice that "the people lamented because the Lord had smitten many of the people *with a great slaughter*". The correctness of the statement is also born out by the action of the terrified Bethshemeshites, according to which they had the Ark removed out of their midst and conveyed to Kirjathjearim. This terror and the action it inspired must remain unexplained, if the Lord smote only seventy persons and smote them because they rejoiced not when they saw the Ark. For the Bethshemeshites on a whole did rejoice. Why then should the death of the seventy have caused them to fear for their lives? To eliminate from the text the words "fifty thousand men" is to reduce the entire passage—the verses 19-21—to a collection of meaningless statements).

The Lord then slew 50,070 of the Bethshemeshites. Why did He do that? The reason given is that they

looked into or *at* the Ark. The Hebrew preposition allows either of these readings. But the reading "and they looked *at* the Ark" is doubtless the correct one. It is favored by the context. With so many of their number dead, the men of Bethshemesh in their terror asked, "Who is able to stand before the Lord? and to whom shall he go up from us?" The scope of the revelation of divine wrath in their midst amazed them, which would be hard to explain on the ground that they had actually been guilty of removing the mercy seat—the Ark's lid—and peering into the Ark. Had this been their offence they would have been too aware that the death that stalked among them was just retribution for them to be surprised. Besides, their saying, "Who is able to stand before the Holy God" indicates that in their minds they had offended by approaching the Ark and thus by entering the Lord's presence to offer offerings on the great stone; that, in a word, the Lord was angry with them because in large numbers they had crowded about the Ark, fixed their gaze upon it, and rejoiced in its presence. But they could know from their law that they had done a thing forbidden on pain of death. The fundamental passage to which we must go back is Numbers 4:20, "but they—the common Levites—shall not go in to see when the holy things are covered, lest they die." During the period of Israel's wanderings, when the camp set out, the priests only went into the tabernacle and covered the Ark of God and the other furniture of the sanctuary. This task had to be performed by the priests as unassisted by the common Levites. No one but they might look at the uncovered Ark, much less touch it. When the camp set out, it was hidden from view by its covering. The ground of this prohibition to touch and to look at the Ark lies in the opposition that exists between man, guilty and by reason thereof impure and depraved and the righteous and holy God. Only the justified and the pure of heart in Christ can see God, dwell with Him and not be consumed but live.

But of this the people of Israel and in particular the Bethshemeshites were unmindful. They were doing evil in the Lord's sight. They had forsaken Him, Who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, followed other gods, of the gods of the people, that surrounded them, provoking the Lord to anger. And the Lord's anger was kindled and He delivered them into the hand of their adversaries so that they could no longer stand before their enemies, and they were greatly distressed. Besides the incursions of the enemy, there was the internal strife by which the nation was being torn. Chaos reigned supreme. Every man was doing that which was right in his own eyes. Such was the state of affairs during all the period of the judges. The Lord had over and over scourged Israel through the agency of the adversary and as

often delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them. And yet they would not hearken. The days of the judges were evil days. And the night that had settled on the nation was never darker than when this period was drawing to a close. Lawlessness and idolatry abounded. The nation was being oppressed by the Philistines. The sacrifices at the sanctuary were being corrupted by wicked priests; and the Lord was silent; and the faithful in Israel were troubled. Then the Lord raised up Samuel, and there were again visions breaking through and spread abroad. Israel again had a prophet, and his word came to all Israel, and the Lord let none of his words fall to the ground, so that all Israel knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet unto the Lord. And though their hearts were far from God, the apostate nation was reassured, and concluded that their salvation was nigh. And though they repented not, their expectation ran that high, that they even had dared to risk a war with the Philistines. But the Lord smote them before their enemies. And because He "greatly abhorred Israel" on account of their high places and graven images, "He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh and delivered His strength into captivity and His glory into the enemy's hand." But the Lord delivered His Ark. He stretched out his hand and smote the Philistines with His wonders and after that they sent away the Ark to his place and thereby confessed that Israel's God is the Lord. And when the Bethshemeshites saw the Ark, they rejoiced to see it. Yet they had reason to hide themselves in the dens and the rocks of their mountains; for the Lord was again among them—the Lord, Who is a consuming fire—and they had not put away the strange gods from among them and prepared their hearts unto the Lord to serve Him only. In a word, they had not repented. True, they did offer burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices that same day unto the Lord. But to what purpose was their sacrifice, if they repented not. It was a worship without a soul, dead formalism, iniquity. They must put away the evil of their doings from before the Lord's eyes and realize that obedience is better than sacrifices. But the Bethshemeshites, like all the people of Israel at that time, were without spiritual discernment; for they were carnal. And in their carnality they again imagined that the Lord was for them in their sins. Had not His hand been heavy on the Philistines? And was not the Ark again in their midst? And so these sinful and impenitent men, as vainly imagining that they could stand in their sins before the face of Holy God and live, rushed into the presence of His throne—the Ark—and made merry. Their behaviour was an insult to God. It bespoke an esteem of the Lord as low and contemptible as that of the Philistines. Such reviling of God's name could not go unpunished, even though in this case the revilers were Israelites. For

God is no respecter of persons. So the Lord smote "many of the people with a great slaughter." Fifty thousand and seventy of their number—men of Bethshemesh—were overthrown.

The men of Bethshemesh were afraid. If previously they had rejoiced at sighting the Ark, now the presence of this symbol in their midst filled them with a great dread. "And the men of Bethshemesh said, Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?" Who? "He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart . . ." he shall abide in God's tabernacle and dwell in His holy hill. Ps. 15. But of this the men of Bethshemesh—and not only these men but likewise the people of Israel in general—were willingly ignorant. So, instead of putting away Baalim and Ashtaroth and serving the Lord only, thus instead of forsaking their abominations and prostrating themselves before the Lord in true contrition of heart, they cry, "Who is able to stand before the Lord," as if they did not know. And rather than repent of their sins and exhort their people—the people of Israel—to do likewise, in order that they might be able to stand before this holy Lord God, they resolved to rid themselves of the Ark. For they also said, "and to whom shall he go up from us?" And they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjathjearim, saying, The Philistines have brought again the Ark of the Lord; come ye down and fetch it up to you." They refrained from revealing the judgment by which they had been overtaken in connection with the Ark, and their reason for not wishing to keep it. That the men of Kirjathjearim, as a result of receiving in their midst the Ark of God, might be visited by a like catastrophe, seemed not to trouble the Bethshemeshites. They were bent solely upon self-preservation; and this they sought not in the way of repentance but in the way of ridding themselves of God.

The men of Kirjathjearim came and carried the Ark into the house of Abinadab in the hill, and sanctified Eleazer his son to keep watch and guard over the Ark, the purpose being to render it inaccessible to the multitude in order to prevent a reoccurrence of the catastrophe that had struck in Bethshemesh in connection with the Ark.

Though the Ark of God was again with Israel, the night that had settled upon the nation continued. Firstly, the Ark was not carried back to the holiest place of the tabernacle in Shiloh but stationed in the house of Abinadab and there rendered inaccessible even to the highpriest. This was a real calamity for every God-fearing Israelite. For the Ark was Jehovah's throne and, as sprinkled with the blood of the atonement, the seat of divine mercy. It was thus the outstanding symbol of the covenant and the chief instrument of its working. But the Ark was now in Kirjathjearim. The believers would go to the taber-

nacle—God's house—but without finding God there; and the highpriest could make no covering for the accumulative sins of the nation on the great day of atonement. For Jehovah was not there in the Holiest place to smell the sweet savor of the priest's sacrifice and to bless by the mouth of the priest the worshipping multitude without. The Lord had withdrawn from His people; He was holding them at arms length, so to speak, hiding from them His face. The whole worship in connection with the Ark was not; and it was not during the entire judgment of Samuel; for the people of Israel must learn that obedience is better than sacrifice. Secondly, the oppression of the Philistine domination continued uninterrupted. For though the Philistines had brought back the Ark, they had ceased not to persecute God's people. Indeed it is expressly implied in verse 9 of (chapter 7) that their dominion had continued.

The loss of that worship, God's hiding His face from His people, and the weight of Philistine rule was the cause of much sighing and lamenting among the faithful in Israel. But the nation failed to put away the strange gods from among them, and prepare their hearts to the Lord to serve Him only. Seeing their tears and hearing their groaning—"all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord" (verse 2)—Samuel "spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, if ye are returning unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you and prepare your hearts unto the Lord and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hands of the Philistines." The children of Israel did so. Gathering them all to Mizpeh, Samuel prayed for them unto the Lord. And they "drew water, and poured it out before the Lord, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the Lord." This public confession of sin by the whole nation took place some twenty years after the resting of the Ark in the house of Abinadab. A new day had dawned for the nation.

G. M. O.

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress,
Helpless look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the Fountain fly,
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.

While I draw this fleeting breath,
When my eyelids close in death;
When I rise to worlds unknown,
See Thee on Thy judgment-throne;
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.

THROUGH THE AGES

Frederick II, and The Papacy

In the preceding article under the above caption we witnessed the opposition of Frederick II to the world pretensions of the papacy. The papal contestant in this struggle with whom we were last occupied is Gregory IX, who, as was stated, died contending for the states of the church in Italy to which Frederick was laying claim. After a papal vacancy of twenty months, Gregory was succeeded by Coelestin IV, who outlived his election less than three weeks. The next pope, Innocent IV (1243-1254), continued the conflict with great vigor. His first move was to escape by flight from Rome, before whose gates the troops of Frederick stood victorious. According to a precontrived plan, the pope was transported by a fleet to Lyons, a city near France, where he could act as freed from the weapons of Frederick. There he put the emperor once more under the ban. Next, he convoked the council, that Frederick had prevented him from holding in Rome. Before the council which is known as the First Council of Lyons, the pope presented many and grave charges against the emperor, the most serious of which was heresy. The emperor was cited to appear upon the council to defend himself, but he declined appearing as a thing beneath his dignity and that of the empire. The pope now pronounced sentence of excommunication and deposition on the emperor, who was little impressed. Hearing of what had been done, he placed the imperial crown on his head and said, "I still possess this crown; and without a bloody struggle I shall not let it be plucked away from me by the attack of any pope or council." In a circular letter, addressed to all the princes, he denounced the doings of the pope. "Would that we had learned a lesson," said he, "from the example of the monarchs before us, instead of finding ourselves compelled to serve, by what we must suffer, as examples of those who come after us! The sons of our own subjects forget the condition of their fathers, and honor neither king nor emperor the moment they are consecrated as priests. What have not all the princes to fear from this prince of the priest—meaning the pope—if one of them takes such liberties with the emperor! The princes have none to blame but themselves; they have brought the mischief on their own heads by their submissive obedience to these pretended saints, whose ambition is large enough to swallow up the whole world!" He urged them to come to his aid in dispossessing the clergy

of its vast estates, which was only a source of corruption to the church.

So had the frieze contest for the earth between papacy and emperor begun anew. In this contest the pope ceased not to encourage the powerful princes of the church—bishops and archbishops—to attack the emperor. The lay rulers, bent on advancing their own interests, remained neutral, aiding with their arms neither the pope nor the emperor. And the vassals of Frederick became daily more doubtful. It was evident that the downfall of the Hohenstaufen house was approaching. But the spirit of Frederick, now an old man, was still uncurbed and haughty. Innocent had said, "It is evident to the whole world that the emperor's sole object is the extirpation of the church and of the true worship of God from the earth, that he alone may be worshipped by fallen man." Frederick held an imperial diet at Verona and denied the charge. To the king of England he wrote, "Our majesty is uninjured by the pope's anathema. Our conscience is pure. God is with us. Our sole aim has ever been to bring the clergy back to their primitive apostolical simplicity and humility. They were formerly saints, healed the sick, performed miracles; now they are led astray by their own wantonness, and the spirit of covetousness has stifled in their hearts that of religion."

In Italy, too, the pope continually sought to undermine Frederick's power and that of his sons by the formation of conspiracies, which being discovered, were crushed in the bud. Hatred hardened every heart; mercy was unknown. The faction loyal to the emperor, including his two illegitimate sons, Conrad and Enzo, bathed in the blood of their enemies, shed on the scaffold and on the battlefield. But in 1249 Enzo attacked Bologna and was taken prisoner. Frederick offered a huge ransom for his restoration to liberty, which was refused by the citizens; and in his twenty-fourth year this youth, already famed for his mental qualities, beauty and valor, ended his life in a dungeon. Frederick took it so to heart that his health began to fail. One blow followed another. He was abandoned by Peter de Vineis, his shrewdest counsellor. "Alas!" he exclaimed, "I am abandoned by my most faithful friends. Peter has deserted me and sought my destruction. Whom can I trust? My days are henceforth doomed to pass in sorrow and suspicion!" In 1247 the pope once more pronounced sentence of excommunication upon him. But he once more aroused himself. Assembling a fresh army of Moors from Africa, he kept the field, until suddenly laid low by illness at Firenzuola, and there he died on the 13th of December, 1251. His head had worn seven crowns, that of the Roman empire, that of the kingdom of Germany, the iron diadem of Lombardy, and those of Burgundy, Sicily, Sardinia, and Jerusalem. The tidings of the death of the emperor caused the pope to

jubilantly exclaim, "Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad."

Though Frederick lay in his tomb, the papacy still was ill at ease. There were remnants of the Hohenstaufen house to be dealt with—Conrad IV, Frederick's eldest son and successor, Manfred, Enzo and Henry. The pope denounced them as "the viperous brood", and "the poisonous brood of a dragon of poisonous race," and decreed their ruin. Re-entering Rome, after an absence of seven years, he renewed his war against Frederick. His first act was to offer the crown of Sicily to Edmund, the son of Henry III, king of England. Then he passed sentence of excommunication upon Conrad, who had descended to Italy to make good his claim to his inherited crown. The following year Conrad died, suddenly, at the age of 26. His only son, Conradin, was then but two years old. That same year Henry, to whom the throne of Sicily had been destined by his father, suddenly expired. Their death was attributed to poison, and the crime was said to be committed by the papal faction. The death of the two brothers was soon followed by that of pope Innocent, 1254. They buried him in Naples. According to the standard of men, he was one of the few great popes. The burden of his taxations were crushing. On this account he is charged with having made a slave of the church and turning his court into a money-changer's table. To his relatives, weeping at his death-bed, he administered the rebuke, "Why do ye weep, wretched creatures? Do I not leave you all rich?"

Innocent was succeeded by Alexander IV, 1254-1261. Under his mild reign, Manfred established his sovereignty in Sicily. But Urban IV, 1261-1264, a Frenchman and the son of a shoemaker, gave the Sicilian crown to Charles of Anjou, brother of Louis IX of France, basing his right to do so on the inherent authority of the papacy to give and take away kingdoms as it chose. Clement IV, 1265-1268, proclaimed a crusade against Manfred and crowned Charles in Rome. In the ensuing war, Manfred was killed.

The sole male survivor of the Hohenstaufen line was Conradin, the son of Conrad and the grandson of Frederick II. Though still a youth, he sought by force of arms to establish his sovereignty in Italy and for this was excommunicated by the pope. His army was completely put to the rout, and he was taken prisoner, given a mocked trial and sentenced to die. On the scaffold erected in the market-place at Naples, he addressed the people, saying, "I cite my judge before the highest tribunal. My blood, shed on this spot, shall cry to Heaven for vengeance. Nor do I esteem my Germans so low as not to trust that this stain on the honor of the German nation will be washed out by them in French blood." With Conradin the male line of the Hohenstaufen came to an end. Thus the preposterous claims of the papacy survived also

the blows struck again and again by this family. The empire lay prostrate in the dust before the papacy. Yet in the meantime Europe had grown up. The multitude largely had lost its fear of the pope's thunderings. It means that the hour of the papacy as a temporal power had struck.

G. M. O.

IN HIS FEAR

Christian Instruction

As God passes the creatures, one by one, before Job's eyes, God recites various of their native peculiarities. God begins with the earth's foundations, then proceeds to speak about the sea, hemmed in by bars and doors. Then God continues with mention of the rain, snow, hoar-frost, sleet and hail. From there God mounts upward to heaven to discuss the constellations, the lightning, etc. Then God has Job inspect the wild goats and the wild asses. Afterward God passes the unicorn before his eyes, the peacock, the hawk, the eagle and the horse. God had only begun this process or Job fell upon his face in deep humility. But God had only just begun. He continues with mention of the mighty beast, the hippopotamus and then finally the leviathan or crocodile, a creature which God describes in great detail. When the last creature has passed before Job's eyes we find him lying upon his face and saying, "I am vile" and "I abhor in dust and ashes".

Conclusion.

Evidently, therefore, the elements of creation, from the stars to the clouds, and from there on down to birds, the animals and the sea, are adapted to an instruction which has for its effect that the man of God, on the one hand senses the majesty and greatness and the sovereignty of God, and on the other hand becomes keenly aware of his own nothingness. It has for its effect that the man of God finds himself an ash-pile and, in deep humility, worships the Creator-Sovereign.

Creation, in the hands of the Creator-Sovereign-Teacher serves to display God's wisdom and sovereignty, while it at the same time gives conclusive evidence of man's nothingness in contrast.

If creation is adapted to this, it is because God Himself has made it so.

If creation is adapted to this, it must constantly serve that end.

And when our Christian Schools deal with these elements of creation, Paul in Rom. 1 emphasizes what we saw also in the book of Job, namely, that the universe of God's creation is a most elegant book, in which all creatures, great and small, are as so many characters leading us to contemplate the invisible things of God, His power and His divinity. And so strong is the revelation which proceeds from it that it is sufficient to convince even the natural man and to leave him without an excuse.

When the door goes open and we look into that marvellous thing called the universe; when we inspect the various parts of that universe, when we observe the ways of God within that universe and when we penetrate into the elements and metaphysics of that universe, the total effect of it must be that we worship the Creator-Sovereign.

What other purposes christian instruction may have, this is the primary purpose.

The Essence of Christian Instruction.

Christian instruction is essentially the process of reverently inspecting the mighty works of God in His universe. And the purpose of it is that we shall fall down before Him in worship for His beauty, majesty and greatness.

We learned this from the book of Job.

Let us cite just a few more Scripture passages which bear this out.

First of all, there is Ps. 78:4 which speaks of the praises, the strength and the wonderful works of the Lord. His strength is displayed in His wonderful works, and this display of strength invokes praise to God. His works praise Him, as in fact all creation praises Him. David speaks of the creatures as "His servants" (Psalm 119:91). Besides that, in Psalm 78 the psalmist commands that one generation shall declare His mighty works to the next generation, in order that they may set their hope in God and not forget His works.

Again, in Ps. 104 there is an enumeration of God's creatures and of God's ways, and the psalmist says: O Lord, how manifold are Thy works, the earth is full of Thy riches. And a little farther, as a result of this contemplation, he says: I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live, I will sing praises to God while I have my being. And almost in the same breath, he says, Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. In other words, they who will not fall down in worship when they see so great a display of wisdom, they have no right to live . . . let them be consumed.

Finally in Ps. 95 the psalmist starts out with, "O come, let us sing unto the Lord", and then, "for the Lord is a great God", then he descends into creation and says: "The sea is His and He made it, His hands

formed the dry land" and after this he says: "O come let us worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker."

Sundry Requirements.

If therefore we shall have schools where the mighty works of God are reverently inspected, we need schools where His works are inspected in the light of Scripture. We know nothing but what God has revealed unto us in His Word. In His Word His works are

interpreted. How then shall we imagine that *Christian* have christian instruction in public schools

School But likewise how shall we have christian instruction in christian schools unless they found their instruction upon the Holy Scriptures? Whether it be in geography, history, science or whatever, it must continually be a reverent inspection of God's works with a call to fall down and worship Him that sitteth upon the throne. But just therefore, behind the christian instruction must lie a sound interpretation of Scripture. If not, the connection between God and His works is distorted. Besides, God does not want to be worshipped in any other way than He has commanded in His Word.

In the second place we must have teachers who themselves have the true fear of God in their heart and confess Him for what He has revealed of Himself in His Word. If they shall reverently inspect God's mighty works, they must possess reverence. And certainly

it is true here, that the fear of God *Christian* is the beginning of wisdom. It is lamentable

how poorly equipped sometimes our *Teacher* are when it comes to these things. Too much I fear people have said that ministers need courses in theology, but teachers need courses in normal training. If a teacher shall reverently inspect God's mighty works he must be well versed in the true doctrine of Scripture in order that he can rightly interpret God's works.

Further, if we shall have such a school and such teaching it stands to reason that the school board has a high calling. Naturally the parents themselves do all in their power to obtain a *God-centered instruction* in the school. But the School Board is chosen to watch

over these things and is directly responsible *Diligent* that such instruction be given. How much

of the time of an evenings meeting is taken *School*

up by these most important matters? *Board* So often the finances, the new building project, the next drive, how to get the bus repaired, etc., take up almost all the time. Monthly reports are often neglected or lightly skipped over. Certainly the School Boards have to see to it that the instruction given in the school is God-centered.

No amount of christian instruction however can lead the wicked to worship God. For in his heart he

hates God. But in the generation of the Covenant the "man of God" is present, even though at present he appears as a little child upon the school benches. The

A little one is the "man of God", as yet undeveloped. In his heart is the grace of God.

God He grows in grace as he is instructed concerning God. And his instruction is the means whereby he develops into one who worships God, fit for every good work. There is also a man of sin in our generations. He also must receive this God-centered instruction. He must also be taught God's mighty works and be called to worship God, the which, when he refuses to do, reveals himself as truly profane.

The essence then of christian instruction is that it is a process in which we reverently inspect God's mighty works in His universe, and are thereby continually called to fall down and worship Him that sitteth upon the throne.

(To be Continued)

M. G.

FROM HOLY WRIT

James 1:2-4: — "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

How beautifully and practically James begins his epistle! He is writing to the twelve tribes scattered abroad, the Jewish Christians in the Dispersion, scattered abroad because of persecution. And this church of God is a picture of the persecuted church of God throughout the ages. James is surely true to life, the life of the people of God in the midst of the world, when he takes as his point of procedure the persecution and harrassed position of the church of God here below. It is therefore striking and worthy of note that the writer of this particular part of the Word of God addresses the church as in the Dispersion, for such is indeed the position of the people of God in this life. How well the church understands the holy writer when he, in this text, speaks of divers temptations! James immediately, therefore, seeks practical contact with his readers. He has something to say to them, he would speak to them a word which is of immediate and vital concern to them, a word which is directed to their immediate needs. He exhorts them to count it all joy when they fall into divers temptations, inasmuch as the trying of their faith worketh patience.

Only, they must permit patience to have its perfect work, in order that they may be perfect and entire, wanting or lacking nothing.

How tactful is James when he addresses his readers as "My brethren"! This expression refers to the bond, the spiritual bond, which unites them. James and the persecuted Christian Jews are one in the Lord, one in faith and hope and love and suffering. By calling them his brethren, who are persecuted for the sake of Christ, James would share their lot, declares himself in immediate sympathy with their resolve and determination to reject all the glories of Egypt for Christ's sake. And this was not merely an idle gesture on the part of James, a formal address which he uses at the beginning of his epistle. They *are* his brethren. He really shares their affliction and revilement. Fact is, he himself suffers martyrdom in the same cause of Christ.

Verse 2 speaks of our "falling into divers temptations." In connection with the word "temptation" it is well to distinguish between temptations and trials, "verzoekingen" en "beproevingen". Three things must be borne in mind in connection with this distinction. In the first place, the original word for "trials, beproeven" always has in the Scriptures a good connotation, is never used in an evil sense. Secondly, the original word for "temptations, verzoekingen" is used occasionally in a good sense in Holy Writ, but usually it has an evil connotation, and is the Scriptural word for temptations. Thirdly, the distinction between "trials" and "temptations" is purely one of motive and design. We cannot distinguish between them as far as the outward means are concerned which may be employed. It is for this reason that trials can be temptations at the same time. The same means are often employed in both instances. Sickness, persecution, ridicule, yea, every form of misery and distress may be a trial and a temptation at the same moment. It is not the outward means or form which determines whether anything is a trial or a temptation. God always "tries, proves", never "tempts". The devil always "tempts" and never "proves". "Trials" always purpose, intend to purify. Gold or silver, e.g., is tried for the purpose of separating the pure from the impure. Hence, Satan never proves, because his purpose is never to purify. Temptations, on the other hand, always have an evil purpose. It is invariably the design of temptations to lead one away from the living God and from the path of His covenant.

It is evident from the text that we must distinguish between "temptations" and "trials" in the above sense of the word. Fact is, James himself makes this distinction. In verse 3 he speaks of the "trying" of our faith. James, therefore, uses both words in this passage. To understand these temptations we must bear in mind the position of the church of God in the

midst of the world. The church of God is always in the "dispersion". At the time of this epistle these Christian Jews had been driven abroad by various persecutions. The church of God is always in the world but never of the world, hated and despised by the kingdom of darkness. And it is the calling of the church of God to proclaim the virtues of Him Who called her out of darkness into His marvellous light. She must be the party of the living God. This does not mean that we must separate ourselves locally from the world or from the spheres of this earthly life. Then one must needs go out of the world. But it does mean that we must separate ourselves spiritually from those who are not the party of the living God. At all times we must conduct ourselves from the principle of regeneration. And this we must do antithetically, loving God and the things which are above but also hating whatever is not of His church and covenant. This church of God is consequently hated in the midst of the world. Every means is employed to destroy this Cause of God. For it is the object of all temptations to frustrate the Cause of God, to silence all praise and testimony of Jehovah, to bring to nought the Kingdom of God and of His dear Son. It is well to remember that this is Scripture's description throughout of His Church in the midst of the world. Today the reality of the antithesis is being denied or adulterated. It is taught, on the one hand, that we must serve God alone, but also, on the other hand, that we can and must associate with the world. Notice, however, that James, in his practical approach to the church of the living God here, immediately places temptations upon the foreground. This is surely worthy of note. He certainly could not have had any synthesis in mind when he addressed this epistle to the church of God in the dispersion.

The holy writer speaks of "divers" temptations. He refers to every kind or form of temptation. The attack upon the church by the forces of evil occurs in various forms and with various means. The general suffering of this present time, sicknesses and diseases, can be a form of temptation when they are used as means by the powers of sin within and without to lead us away from the path of God's covenant. Then again the church of God is attacked by the devil as an angel of light. He puts on the garment, the appearance of a friend. He will offer you the friendship or the riches of the world in exchange for the denial of the Name of Christ. Or, he will subtly and very cleverly distort the truth, as is done in many pulpits and institutions of learning today. But the devil also attacks the people of God as a roaring lion. He will avail himself of this weapon as a last resort. He will ridicule and persecute the confessing believer of Christ's Name, will shed the blood of the saints, will use force to destroy the church of God. Divers

temptations endanger the Christian in his journey through this world.

Notice, finally, in connection with these temptations, that James speaks of "falling" into divers temptations. We must, of course, distinguish between this expression of James and the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer: Lead us not into temptation. In the sixth petition the child of God prays that he may not be led into temptation in the sense of succumbing to it. The idea cannot be that we may never be tempted but that we may not succumb to the siren song of the evil one and thereby yield to enticements of evil within and without us. However, this also necessarily limits the expression in this verse of James 1. To fall into temptations and actually rejoice in the midst of them can therefore never signify that we rejoice in yielding to the tempter's voice and a walk in sin. This is never a cause for rejoicing but always for sorrow and repentance. To *fall* into temptations, therefore, signifies that we are completely surrounded by these temptations. But the word also conveys to us the meaning that the Christian does not seek temptation. He does not walk or run into them. He falls into them. And this is due to his position, as a child of God, in the midst of a world which lieth in darkness. The child of God is constantly the object of attack by forces within him and without and who have set themselves uncompromisingly against him.

In the midst of these divers temptations, now, we are exhorted to rejoice. What an amazing exhortation! This is an amazing word of James, not only because we are exhorted to rejoice in our temptations, but because we must count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations. This is exactly what the holy writer means. The Christian must regard, must evaluate, count his position in the midst of divers temptations as all joy, that is, as pure joy, unadulterated joy. Let us understand this. James does not merely write that we must rejoice in the midst of temptations. This, although already amazing and wholly foreign to the world's conception of joy and happiness, would not be too difficult to understand. This could simply mean that we, in the midst of all our sorrows and troubles, also have reasons to rejoice. To rejoice in the midst of temptations would not necessarily mean that we rejoice because of these temptations. Placing over against all our griefs and sorrows and pains the blessings which the Lord has given us, we rejoice in the midst of temptations because we, in spite of all these temptations, still have abundant reasons for rejoicing. And it is also an undeniable truth that it occurs oftentimes that we exaggerate our woes to such an extent that we have no eye for the other. However, this the holy writer does not say or mean here. We must count, reckon our falling into temptations as joy, yea, as all joy. It is pure joy. Examin-

ing and evaluating our position in the midst of temptations we see nothing but joy, nothing but reasons for rejoicing in our otherwise dangerous and hazardous position in the world. The joy of the Christian is experienced by him not merely as over against the forces of evil. We must not have a dualistic conception of things, not of our temptations either. The Lord reigneth! And the Christian's joy embraces temptation itself. Why we must rejoice is revealed unto us in verse 3.

(To be continued).

H. V.

PERISCOPE

The Conference

Introduction

The Second Annual Conference between the ministers and students of the Protestant Reformed Churches and the Reformed Churches in the U. S., met in Hull, Iowa, from October 1 through October 3. The Conference was well attended; we noticed especially a goodly number of lay-members from both denominations. But since this represents only a small portion of the total membership we will expend our space in the next few issues to give a rather detailed review of the proceedings. Our people have shown their interest, if not by attendance, through their financial and moral support and hence, will also be interested in the lectures and discussions.

The Conference was officially opened on Tuesday evening. A capacity audience had gathered in the Hull Church auditorium. Our chairman, the Rev. G. Vos, lead us in opening exercises and spoke a word of welcome to the delegates and large number of visitors present. He expressed joy at seeing such a large group present; feeling that it boded well for the success of our meetings. After stating that the committee had chosen the general theme of "The Church" for our discussion he turned the floor over to the Rev. H. Hoeksema, who was chosen to develop the first aspect: "The Idea of the Church".

Resumé

"The subject of the Church is of especial importance in our times. On the one hand this subject and truth are ignored and on the other hand, if treated at all, is distorted and corrupted. Many false ideas of the Church are rampant. If one but reads the religious page of our daily press on Saturday evenings,

it is apparent that the Church has corrupted itself.

"The subject given to me is 'The Idea of the Church'. In development of this theme I would call your attention to the following elements:

- I. The Church as Such
- II. The Church in God's Counsel
- III. The Relation of the Church to All Things.

"By Idea of the Church is meant that which belongs to her essential character, to her being and essence. Not, therefore, as she becomes an object of our experience or as we see her but the Church as she is the object of faith. To the Idea belongs not the visible local manifestation but what we believe her to be according to the confession: I believe an Holy Catholic Church. We do not see her catholicity on earth, for we see several churches and denominations of groups of churches which are mutually exclusive. But in spite of this division, we confess ONE Holy Catholic Church. The same is true of the holiness of the Church. This is not an object of our experience but, on the contrary, we see her as very unholy; at times more so than the very world round about her. Yet, in spite of this perception, we believe an *Holy* Church—a Church without sin and consecrated to God. Again, the Church as we see her is earthy, but in reality she is essentially spiritual and heavenly. That Church is not an object of our experience for she is essentially invisible and never becomes visible. Even though we may notice where she is, her head and members are hid from our eyes. Of that Church, as a matter of faith and not experience, as eternally in God's counsel and engraved on the palms of His hands, as she shall appear in glory, we speak when we concern ourselves with the Idea of the Church.

"From this it follows that we can say nothing of ourselves concerning that Church; whatever man says of it is sure to be a lie. The empirical method cannot be followed and if it is we would come to the conclusion that the Church is an institution to save souls. Or, if we look about us and consider the Church from our experience, we would come to the broader conclusion that the Church is a social agency instituted to promote the well-being of mankind and the improvement of the world. Nor will a philosophic contemplation of the subject cause us to arrive at the correct answer. The philosophy of the last few centuries in its attempts to describe the Church has only further corrupted her. The Church belongs itself to those things which eye hath not seen nor ear heard and have never entered the heart of men. Hence, only one method can be used to determine what the Church is: we must let God answer through His revelation.

"The names by which the Church is called in the Bible are not of a great deal of help in this connection. Israel of the Old Testament is called: "the gathering",

"the congregation", "the congregation of Jehovah". In the New Testament the most common word is *ekklesia* which again means "gathering", but with this distinction that it is a "gathering called out of another whole". The distinctive nature of the Church as a congregation is thereby emphasized.

"Of more importance and shedding more light on the question as to what the Church is are the expressions in Scripture which describe the Church. There are several of these: "a generation", "a holy nation", "a people", "a peculiar people", "the people of God", "a holy priesthood", etc. So too, there are figures in Scripture which express the idea of the Church. These include: "the body of Christ", "the vine and the branches", and the "olive tree". Hence, the idea of the Church as such is that she is a living entity, a whole, of which Christ is the Head and believers are members. But there is more, Scripture is filled with figures which represent the idea of the Church. Among these are "the Temple" for she is called the "Temple of God" and again "the household of God", and "Jerusalem—the city of God".

"Taking note of these descriptions we may deduce the following notions. In the first place, according to Scripture the Church is a completeness. She is a whole representing one idea and designed to serve one purpose. And a whole of such a nature that every member in the whole takes his own place to serve the whole. In other words, the Church is not just an arbitrary number of saved people without any relation to one another and the whole, no more than a pile of building materials are a building, but a finished whole to which nothing can be added or detracted without marring the idea of the whole. In a temple, for example, each part occupies its own place. Nothing can be added or taken from the completed form without disturbing the beauty and harmony of the whole. The same is true of the human body. A body is not a number of member parts without relation to one another, but together they make up the one body which all the members serve. So also the Church is not a multitude of individuals without form but a union of a certain number of members all of whom serve the purpose of the whole.

"In the second place, the purpose of that whole is to serve as the dwelling place of God. God dwells there. There He establishes His covenant, reveals to her His secrets, she tastes that He is good and reflects the glory of His grace in the beloved. The Church must serve as the dwelling place of the One God through the One Christ in the One Body. That is the purpose of the Church and another purpose there is not. That purpose, to be the dwelling place of God and the reflection of the fulness of His glory in the Beloved, is reached because God in His Son dwells there.

"From this it follows that the Church is an *organic* whole, not a mechanical whole. A watch, for example, is a mechanical whole while a tree is an organic whole. In a mechanical whole the parts are there before the whole, and the whole is an assembling or putting together of the parts. An organism, on the other hand, grows from and is controlled by a living principle within. The Church is an organic whole of which Christ is the dominating living principle. And though we speak of gathering the Church, men never do, for she only comes into existence when Christ grafts her members into Himself and maintains her life. His life and mind and resurrection and glory are hers. She only *lives* in spiritual fellowship with Him as branches of the vine.

"We conclude, therefore, that the Church is the body of Christ, i.e., she is one harmonious, beautiful whole, of which whole, Christ is the Head and dominating principle of all the redeemed elect members whose purpose is to show forth that they are members of Christ and partakers of His grace to the praises of Him that called them out of darkness into His marvelous light and thus a reflection of God's glorious virtues.

"This Church consists of saints, not men. The members are redeemed individuals gathered out of the whole human race. This means that there is another whole from which the whole of the Church is taken—the whole of the human race. This implies that temporarily there is the one organism of the human race. The race is one organism as the wheat and the chaff are one organism. Historically speaking, the race was first and the Church is gathered out of that race. The first organism became wholly corrupt and out of it God calls the other whole—the Church.

"Two questions present themselves here: who determines who, and how many, of the old organism become members of the new and, in the second place, in God's counsel what is the relation between the old human race and the new Church? The first question concerns the difference between Calvinism and Arminianism. The second deals with the distinction between supra and infra-lapsarianism.

"The first question is answered in the Heidelberg Catechism which declares that the Son of God gathers His Church. God determines who and how many shall be members and no one else. It is not determined by the will of man. Arminianism is always humanism and implies that *man* determines whom God shall choose. Because that is the case the Church of Arminianism can never be an organic whole. Arminianism is humanistic and individualistic. It can never become organic. Arminianism will never get to a body but the gathering will be a crowd; never a Church—a Temple. Scripture, however, reveals that the Church is a whole and that the whole exists before the parts,

in the mind of God. And that not vaguely or ideally but forever—eternally the Church is there. She stands before God eternally as Righteous, Called, Justified, Sanctified and Glorified. According to His own plan God calls out of the whole race those whom He has eternally chosen to be members of that Church. Nothing of man ever enters into the calling and formation of that Church of Christ. It is of God alone!

"The second question deals with the relation of the old organism of the human race and the new organism of the Church. The new organism of the Church is called out of the old human race. Historically the race is first, the Church second. History is *infra*.

"But what is the relation in the counsel of God? Various figures may be used to present various answers. Is it thus that it is as of a vase that is broken and some of the pieces are gathered and saved? Was the original creation the vase which was broken and the Church the pieces which are gathered and saved? This is rank Arminianism and denies the sovereignty of God. Or is the relation like to a burning house from which some of the furnishing and as much as can be salvaged from the ruins are the redeemed Church? The Scriptural idea that the Church is an organism condemns this view, as also the fact that this gives the victory to the Devil. Can it then be likened unto a tailor who desires to make a beautiful suit of clothes from a certain amount of cloth that he has, but now an enemy comes and cuts up the cloth so that the tailor can only make a pair of trousers and must be content with that? Then the fall was an accident. God had purposed something else and is now repairing a ruined work the best He can. Thus the Church is repair work, the original plan was marred and again the enemy wins. Nor can the relation even be likened unto a broken vase which is completely and perfectly restored so that the damage is not even perceptible. There is still no answer to the question of why sin and the fall at all and the Devil still determines God's work. The only possible answer is, that in the Counsel of God, the Church is the original and all the rest is a means to the formation of that Church. God never meant anything else! Sin is no accident! We are talking of GOD!

"Thus we also come to the answer of the relation of the Church to all things. It is not as humanistic modernism would have it that the Church shall inherit *this* world. *This* world is not the inheritance of the Church. This world cannot be an inheritance. The curse of death is here. Rather, the relation is such, that temporarily they are organically one. As the chaff and the wheat are temporarily one organism so the Church and this world. The chaff serves the wheat as the world serves the Church. That is the present relation of the Church to all things.

"Be not afraid! The chaff may cause the Church

tribulation at times but when both are ripe, in the day of Christ, they shall be separated forever; the wicked shall perish and God's elect shall be presented unto Him. The Church is heir of all things for Christ has been appointed Heir of all things. Unto Him all things are made and the Church is heir with Him of the glorious inheritance; so that the One Heir through many Heirs shall be able to possess all things! But that inheritance lies on the other side; it is prepared through the great and final catastrophe!"

Discussion

The Rev. W. Korn: "I was greatly edified by this splendid lecture. In connection with the remark that for the present the Church and the race are one organism a question arises in my mind. What about the words of Christ: Ye are in the world but not of the world? We know that the Church is in the flesh but God upholds the Church from eternity as the 144,000 of Israel in Revelation—a complete and separate Church."

The Rev. H. Hoeksema: "The Church is *in* the world but not *of* the world. She is in the world and organically one with that world from a natural point of view, and at the same time spiritually out of and not of the world. Strictly speaking, the Church is not *of* the world at all. In time she is of the world for she has her origin in the one human race. That accounts for the antithesis. Believers and the world are one. They dwell on the same earth and have many things commonly but even while that is so the Church is not *of* the world. She is essentially different and if she is not there is no antithesis."

The Rev. G. Lubbers: "The speaker said that the fashion of this world perishes and that nothing of it enters the new creation. What does he have in mind when he speaks of world? Are not the reprobate element a part of the world of creation and is not then something of creation destroyed?"

The Rev. H. Hoeksema: "The question means whether all of the world perishes or does some belong to the inheritance. By this world I mean the fallen world of mankind. The terrain on which mankind lives; this cursed creation. That which belongs to this cursed and sinful creation shall be taken away that the essence may remain."

The Rev. G. Lubbers: "Then the reprobate world doesn't mean much, absolutely, except as a means to the glorification of the Church. How can we say then that this world is my Father's? What is the meaning of this world?"

The Rev. H. Hoeksema: "The chaff has meaning but it does not inherit anything."

The Rev. A. Petter: "The speaker said that the Church was not visible at all. The Bible declares that the Church has works whereby she is known and exhorts her to let her light shine. She has a holy walk which is a manifestation of the Church."

The Rev. H. Hoeksema: "The Rev. Petter forgets that we are speaking of the *Idea* of the Church. The Church becomes manifest, but we do not see her as the body of Christ. We do not see the connection and spiritual operation between that Head and the members. The time will come, in perfection, when we shall see Christ face to face and everywhere. As to the *idea*, the Church is invisible".

From the Audience: "What is the relation between the Church and the Kingdom of God? Is the Kingdom of God broader?"

The Rev. H. Hoeksema: "As far as the scope and membership and subjects are concerned they are identical. The members of the Church are the subjects of the Kingdom. The head of the Church is the King of the Kingdom. The viewpoint is different. The term Church refers to the organism while a kingdom is a commonwealth. In the organism of the Church all the spiritual blessings of the Kingdom of God are bestowed upon her members; the blessings of faith, righteousness, and all those mentioned in the sermon on the mount, in other words, all the blessings which are in Christ. When we receive these spiritual blessings we become citizens of the Kingdom and serve God. Hence, although the scope is the same the viewpoint is different."

From the Audience: "Would it be wrong to say that the Church is the proclaimer of the Kingdom of God?"

The Rev. H. Hoeksema: "No, provided the statement is not meant as exhaustive of the task of the Church."

Since the hour was late the discussion was terminated at this point. The Rev. D. E. Bosma closed the meeting with prayer.

W. H.

NOTE: If we misquote any of the brethren in this or the following articles we would be pleased to hear from them to make corrections and apologies.

W. H.

To live apart from God is death,
'Tis good His face to seek;
My refuge is the living God,
His praise I long to speak.

Contribution

THE CONVICTING OFFICE OF THE SPIRIT

(With Respect To Righteousness)

The second point with respect to which the Holy Spirit will convict the world is that of righteousness.

Here again we have the same indefinite form of expression that we encounter in the other two members. However it is here especially evident that the relation must be expressed by "concerning", or "in respect to" for it is evident that the world is not convicted of its own righteousness but that it is compelled to concede to righteousness in some respect, which must now further appear from the course of the Saviour's statement.

But what righteousness is this, or whose? We must here assume a change of acting or existing subject, since in the former the world was the acting subject of the sin, whereas that same subject cannot be the acting subject in the case of the righteousness.

We shall therefore try to determine and define this righteousness from especially the "because" clause that is attached to it. That clause says, "because I go to the Father, and 'ye see me no more'".

Now just as the Saviour stands prominent in the ground for the conviction over the world's sin, so He stands here in the ground of the conviction concerning righteousness. It is a righteousness that is especially demonstrated and proved by His going to the Father.

Remembering now that we do not yet especially in John's Gospel have the idea of righteousness used in the legal sense, as it is in the Epistles of the Apostle Paul, we are naturally lead to take it here in a more broad ethical sense, which looks at the actions or life's attitude of some one. In this connection then at the righteousness of Christ as He is viewed by God with respect to His purpose and work. And then He is viewed as the great Servant of the Lord, who came into the world at the command of the Father, Who undertook the task of representing the cause of God's covenant here, who proclaimed the will of God, revealed it in word and deed, suffered to fulfill the needs of his brethren which the Father had given Him to redeem and bring into a reconciled state. And in this all he never gave any occasion of offense to any of the enemies of the cause of God. He would indeed say, "The Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things that please Him". And with respect to His conduct among men He could say, "Who of you convicteth Me of sin?"

Thus His righteousness here means that His entire mission has been fully and perfectly carried, that He has no delinquency with His sender in respect, whether in state or condition, and therefore is justly entitled to

be removed from this earth with its accursed condition and to be transported into the paradise of God as a fitting abode for the faithful servant.

From this point of approach we may now also, because of the very indefiniteness of the expression, add that it includes the righteousness of the Father in rewarding His Son even though His cause was according to any human judgment a complete failure and a false pretense that ended in utter frustration and disgrace. The righteous Father does not forsake the righteous. And in the third place it applies to those who identified themselves with that righteous Servant and His cause. Also their trust has been approved and their identification of themselves with the Servant of the Lord and His cause, implies His acceptance of them and their participation in His justification.

Now in respect to this righteousness conviction will be wrought in the heart of the heart of the unbelieving world.

In distinction from the previously mentioned factor of sin, there is now a considerable advance. The fact of sin was established. But the question of the outcome of that sin was still not considered, whether it would ever be visited and eradicated was left unexpressed. Only the fact of its existence was definitely and convincingly demonstrated.

Now in contrast with all this sinfulness there is the emphatic statement and proof that Christ was righteous. And He is not only a righteous man, but a man sent of the Father on a Mission, whereby He was to break that sinpower under the auspices of the God of righteousness. And of this Sender under whose auspices He undertook the Mission, He receives the visible approval of the Resurrection and exaltation to heavenly glory.

The undeniable fact of this exaltation is emphasized by the statement, "Ye see Me no more". This is not a loose form of saying that the world does not see the Saviour any more, but sets his departure against the background of the fact that His intimate followers now see a sudden change in His position. He as the righteous One is thereby set definitely apart from all the other relatively righteous ones. To the Jews He had once said, "I go my way and ye shall seek Me, and shall die in your sins," and "when ye have lifted up the Son of Man then shall ye know that I am He, and that I do nothing of My self, but as My Father hath taught Me I speak these things" (John 8:21-28). But in a similar sense this applies to the disciples, "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me, and as I said to the Jews, Whither I go ye cannot come, so now I say to you." John 13:33).

He stands alone as the righteous One distinct from the world, but also, and that the more remarkable, also from His own righteous ones. He goes alone to receive the reward of perfect righteousness.

Now this fact is used to convince the world that the Saviour was the righteous one and that God has a representative of righteousness in this world. The cause of the Son of God has His Divine approval and shall surely triumph. No one will be able to deny this in his own conscience. Let us notice that of this righteousness the visible proof is held forth here, more than the righteousness itself, which, of course, is based on the cross. This visible vindication no one can deny. In the entire history, Jesus holds the entire stage. The Baptist is only a forerunner who drops from the stage as nothing but a servant or Bridegroom's attendant; the disciples and apostles direct all their light to illuminate Him as the one central figure. The resurrection and ascension of the Servant of Jehovah stand as a mountain peak in the midst of history. He and His cause is justified before the eyes of all men.

Also here we must not let appearances deceive us. Men may deny it. Men may live as if they never heard or took notice of these tremendous things. Men may so fill their lives with the things of self and the world that the mountain peak of God in the flesh is obscured by one dust-speck of self-interest obstructing the vision. But hereby the power of rational judgment and evaluation is not put to nought. The fact of the justification of Christ remains.

Now also this conviction is wrought through the Apostolic testimony and the preaching of the Church. Therefore let us beware that we do not proclaim a Gospel of man, of morality, of earthly peace. But let us say with the Apostles: Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made to be both Lord and Christ this Jesus whom ye have crucified.

We come now to the third point in respect to which the Holy Spirit as the Advocate of the cause of Christ will bring conviction. And we immediately stand here again before the question, what world or from what aspect the world is there considered as the object of the conviction. And we may state here with increased confidence that we have a clear indication of that object in especially this member of the threefold expression, which can according to the connection mean nothing less than a condemnatory decision. For the passage says that He will convict the world of judgment, which strongly indicated that it is the evil lost world that is convicted.

The suggestion does, indeed, occur that this is a judgment in the sense of a neutral decision which is pronounced with respect to each and every man and is favorable or unfavorable, depending upon the relation of each man to the Saviour. And this suggestion is sometimes supported by the consideration that the form of the word used to express the judgment is a neutral form, like our word "judging", and the Holland "oordeelen", expressing nothing about the nature of

the judgment as to whether it be favorable or not.

However we must observe on the one hand that the absence of the perfective or intensive preposition in the world does not at all indicate that it is neutral, no more than the Dutch "oordeelen" or "geoordeeld" in this passage are neutral in contrast with "veroordeeld" with its intensive preposition. This is evident already from the fact that the same word is used in speaking of the sentence upon Satan without any intensive or perfective preposition, which nevertheless plainly means the condemnation of Satan as is clear by a comparison with the words of the Saviour in John 12:31: "Now is the judgment of this world; now is the prince of this world cast out", . . . which, of course, indicates his legal eviction.

We also have an example of the use of the simple verb-form for a condemnatory judgment in John 3:17-19, which also both the English and the Dutch translators understood as condemnatory. So many other places in the New Testament. See Rom. 2:27; 3:8.

And a third indication that it is condemnatory sentence over an evil world appears from the fact that it is exactly Satan who is here mentioned as the one whose fate serves as a ground. Were this series not a climax ending in an adverse judgment we might rightly expect some order such as the following: of sin, of righteousness, and of glory; or, of sin, of righteousness and of equity. But on the contrary the viewpoint is plainly that of the thorough triumph over and destruction of the opposition against the cause of the Son of God as His people represent it in the world. It is of this utter frustration that Satan is the firstfruit and fitting sample.

Now of this evil world it is said that it is convinced of judgment. And we shall now more specifically have to see what this judgment is. In the first place it appears that the emphasis is not on the condemnation as such but on the sureness of judgment, of the crisis, of the settlement. The issue is between the sin of the world and the righteous Son and servant of God in this world. And the issue will surely be brought to light. There is here a question between sin and righteousness and since God is the Righteous Judge there must come a decision and then of course in the favor of right. Of this judgment, that is, of its sureness, the Holy Spirit working through the Apostolic preaching convinces the world.

Again the question may arise, how is that conviction or assurance worked. And it must be admitted that commentaries do not usually give an answer to this question. For, to be sure, the simple statement is enough to establish the fact, yet the mind naturally asks for a concrete illustration if one is possible.

But following the text we must conceive of the men of the world as carrying in their hearts the conviction that, just as surely as they are sinners and they know

it, and as surely as Christ is the righteous party in His whole conflict with sin and sinners in God's world, so they are convinced in their hearts of God's righteous decision between these two, and that this decision of God implies a thorough and final settlement of the case in condemnation.

Men, so the text tells us, are convinced of this judgment. It will help us now further to understand the implication of this when we see the ground of this conviction, namely, that the prince of this world is judged.

And, even though, the church suffers tribulation in this world, she can be of good cheer, whereas the world is always overcome. For Christ is glorified and the Spirit is in the world to establish His triumph, not only in the obedient church, but also in those who to the end would oppose Him.

A. P.

— NOTICE —

CONCERNING THE ACTS OF OUR SYNODS

Copies of the Acts of our Synod of 1946, one for each Consistory member, have been mailed to the Clerks of all of our Consistories. Clerks please notify undersigned if you have not received them.

If there are others who are interested in procuring a copy of the Acts of our Synod of 1946, they can be had for the price of 50 cents per copy.

Copies of the Acts of our Synods from 1940 to 1945 can be had for 25 cents per copy. Please send in your order or contact the Stated Clerk,

D. JONKER

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IN MEMORIAM

The Priscilla Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan hereby wishes to express their sincere sympathy in the death of one of its members

MRS. A. WYCHERS

May the Lord comfort the bereaved family and give them grace to believe that He doeth all things well.

The Priscilla Society,

Mrs. Wm. Stuursma, Pres.

Mrs. H. Velthouse, Sec'y.