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MEDITATION

Gerechvaardigd Uit De Werken

Maar wilt gij weten, o, ijdel mensch! dat het geloof zonder de werken dood is? Abraham, onze vader, is hij niet uit de werken gerechvaardigd, als hij Izak, zijnen zoon, geofferd heeft op het altaar? Ziet gij wel, dat het geloof mede gewrocht heeft met zijne werken, en het geloof volmaakt is geweest uit de werken? En de Schrift is vervuld geworden, die daar zegt: En Abraham geloofde God, en het is hem tot rechtvaardigheid gerekend, en hij is een vriend van God genaamd geweest.

Jak 2:20-23.

O, ijdel mensch!

Ijdel, omdat ge meent, dat ge scheiding kunt maken tusschen het geloof en de werken!

Ijdel, omdat ge in de verbeelding leeft, of wilt leven, dat een geloof, dat geheel geen vruchten voortbrengt, u zalig zou kunnen maken!

Tot zulk een ijdel mensch is hier het woord van Jakobus gericht, het Woord van dezelfde Schrift, die ons overal met nadruk leert, dat geen zondaar ooit door de werken gerechvaardigd kan worden voor God. Die Schrift, dat Woord van God, dat niet liegen kan, leert ons hier, en met niet minder nadruk, dat Abraham, onze vader, uit de werken gerechvaardigd is geworden.

Op twee dingen dient dan ook scherp te worden gelet, om deze paradox te verstaan: op het verband, waarin deze nadruk op rechtvaardiging uit de werken voorkomt; en op het geheel eigenaardig werk van Abraham, waarop hier wordt gewezen, en waaruit hij gerechvaardigd werd: de offerande van zijnen zoon Izak.

Naar het verband richt zich dit woord tegen de houding van den ijdel mensch, die door een dood geloof meent zalig te kunnen worden.

Zulk een dood geloof is onvruchtbaar, het is werkloos.

Het gelooft wel vele feiten, zooals ook de duivelen gelooven, dat God een eenig God is, maar het is geen geestelijke kracht, geen levende energie der ziele, waardoor deze zich vastklemt aan den God der belofte, den God onzer volkomene zaligheid, als ziende den Onzienlijke. Het is geen levensband aan Christus, waardoor de ziel aan Hem verbonden is, ééne plante met Hem is geworden, zoodat zij alles, wat in Hem is, en wat tot de zaligheid van noode is, uit Hem trekt, ook genade voor genade. Het is geen waarachtig vertrouwen, waardoor de zondaar van alles afziet, om alleen op Christus te zien; waardoor hij eigen gerechtigheid volkomenlijk als een wegwerpelijk kleed verwerpt, om louter op de gerechtigheid Gods in Christus zich te verlaten. En daarom draagt het ook geen vruchten, geloof en bekeering waardig. Het is ijdel, dood, onvruchtbaar. Het is als een doode paal in den grond, als een doode tak in een boom. Het werkt niet op Christus, uit Christus, door Christus, en tot Christus.

Hebt gij dan maar de werken, ik heb het geloof!

Zoo spreekt deze ijdele mensch.

En tot dien mensch komt nu het Woord Gods: Toon mij uw geloof uit uwe werken, en ik zal u uit mijne werken mijn geloof toonen.

En ook: Abraham, onze vader, is hij niet uit de werken gerechvaardigd, als hij Izak, zijnen zoon geofferd heeft op het altaar?

Dat een mensch gerechvaardigd wordt door en uit het geloof alleen, zonder de werken der wet, dat moet hij hooren, die op zijne werken boogt als grond voor zijne gerechtigheid voor God.

Dat een mensch gerechvaardig wordt door een geloof, dat werkt, en dat uit de werken volmaakt wordt, dat moet hij verstaan, die ijdellijk zich beroemt op een dood geloof.

Wilt gij weten, o, ijdel mensch! die daar roemt op de wet, en meent, dat God u op grond van uwe werken rechtvaardigen zal, dat uwe werken zonder geloof dood zijn? Abraham, onze vader, heeft hij verkregen naar

het vleesch? Want als hij uit de werken gerechtvaardigd is, zoo heeft hij roem, maar niet bij God. Want wat zegt de Schrift? En Abraham geloofde God, en het is hem gerekend tot rechtvaardigheid. Rom. 4:1-3.

En wilt gij weten, o, ijdel mensch, dat geen dood geloof u kan zalig maken? Abraham, onze vader, is hij niet uit de werken gerechtvaardigd, als hij zijnen zoon, Izak, geofferd heeft op het altaar?

Ga dan heen, en doe gij desgelijks!

Offer uwen zoon, Izak, op het altaar, dat is, werp u onvoorwaardelijk op den God uwer volkomene zaligheid, die de dooden levend maakt!

Dan toont gij uw geloof uit uwe werken. Dan wordt het openbaar, dat gij wel waarlijk een levend geloof hebt.

Dan wordt uw geloof volmaakt uit de werken.

Uit de werken gerechtvaardigd!

Gerechtvaardigd!

O, wondere zaligheid!

Als wonder Gods ervaren, en als nimmer te waardschatten rijkdom van zaligheid, door hem, "die niet werkt, maar gelooft in Hem, Die den goddelooze rechtvaardigt." Rom. 4:5.

Zoo toch spreekt ook David van dit wonder; en zoo zingt de gemeente van den nieuwen dag het hem nog altijd na:

Welzalig hij, wiens zonden zijn vergeven;
Die van de straf voor eeuwig is ontheven;
Wiens wanbedrijf, waardoor hij was bekleet,
Voor 't heilig oog des Heeren is bedekt.
Welzalig is de mensch, wien 't mag gebeuren,
Dat God naar recht hem niet wil schuldig
keuren,
En die, in 't vroom en ongeveinsd gemoed,
Geen snood, bedrog, maar blanke oprechtheid voedt.

Gerechtvaardigd!

't Wil immers zeggen, dat ik, die tegen alle geboden Gods gezondigd heb, en wiens conscientie mij aanklaagt; ik, die in mijzelven hoegenaamd geen grond voor rechtvaardigheid kan vinden, die mijzelven verdoemelijk voor God weet te zijn; dat ik voor de vierschaar van den levenden God, van den Rechter van hemel en aarde, Die doodt en levend maakt, sta, dat Hij over mij een oordeel velt naar 't heiligst recht, en dat Hij mij nu vrijspreekt van alle schuld, volkomen rechtvaardig verklaart, als hadde ik nooit zonde gehad of gedaan, en verklaart, dat ik des eeuwigen levens waardig ben!

O, diepte van Goddelijke genade!

Wonder Gods, maar dan ook van God alleen! Hij rechtvaardigt de goddeloozen en maakt de dooden levend!

Hier blijven alle mijne werken, als pleitgrond in

Gods oordeel, volkomen buiten rekening!

Neen, duizendmaal neen, God heeft ons niet op grond onzer werken, of uit onze werken, gerechtvaardigd. Hij is immers de God, die den goddelooze rechtvaardigt!

't Is en blijft, van 't begin tot 't eind, Zijn werk alleen!

Want immers, rechtvaardigmaking wil zeggen, dat God Zijn volk voor de grondlegging der wereld verkoren heeft in Christus, ze aan Christus heeft gegeven, in Christus heeft aanschouwd, in Christus, Die Hijzelf tot een Hoofd en Middelaar gesteld heeft, de Eerstgeborene aller creatuur, en de Eerstgeborene uit de dooden; en dat Hij, de Heere, de Rechter van hemel en aarde, in Hem ons heeft gekend van alle eeuwigheid als in dien Christus gerechtvaardigd. En als de Schrift ons hier in Jakobus leert, dat wij uit de werken gerechtvaardigd worden, dan heeft zij zeker niet het oog op die eeuwige genadedaad God, waardoor Hij ons in Christus als gerechtvaardigd heeft gekend voor de grondlegging der wereld.

Gerechtvaardigd!

Wonder Gods, maar dan ook van Hem alleen!

't Wil immers zeggen, dat in de volheid des tijds God zelf, God, Die den goddelooze rechtvaardigt, tot ons is gekomen in Zijnen Zoon, ons vleesch en bloed heeft aangenomen, onze zonden heeft gedragen, en voor eeuwig heeft weggedragen op het hout, zoodat Hij voor de Zijnen eeuwige gerechtigheid en het eeuwige leven verwierf, en er geen verdoemenis is voor degenen, die in Christus zijn; eene daad der rechtvaardigmaking, die in de opstanding van Jezus Christus aan het licht is getreden. En als Gods Woord ons hier leert, dat Abraham uit de werken gerechtvaardigd is, dan wil dat zeker niet zeggen, dat eenig werk, dat hij mag hebben verricht, de reden of grond zou zijn, waarom God Zijn Zoon voor ons den dood deed ingaan, om Hem om onze rechtvaardigmaking op te wekken.

Wonder Gods!

Louter openbaring van den God, Die den goddelooze rechtvaardigt.

Dat houdt immers ook in, dat God de Zijnen in den tijd ook tot Christus trekt, hen door het geloof aan Hem verbindt, zoodat ze één lichaam met Hem worden, en dat Hij alzoo door Zijn Geest en Woord hun de gerechtigheid Gods in Christus schenkt, zoodat ze jubelen in de verlossing, en vertrouwen, dat al hunne zonden eens en voor eeuwig zijn uitgedelgd, en dat ze vrede hebben met God door Christus Jezus hunnen Heer. En als de Heilige Schrift ons hier in Jakobus leert, dat een mensch uit de werken gerechtvaardigd wordt, dan kan het niet de bedoeling zijn, dat God hem op grond van eenig werk, van welken aard ook, het geloof schenkt en Hem Christus inlijft.

De rechtvaardigmaking is en blijft een wonder Gods!

Ze is genadewerk van Hem, Die de dooden levend maakt, en de dingen, die niet zijn, roept alsof ze waren. Van Hem, Die den goddelooze rechtvaardigt. Zonder de werken!

Gerechvaardigd uit de werken!

Neen, niet *om* de werken, ook niet om de werken des geloofs.

Want, in de eerste plaats, rechtvaardigt God den goddelooze, en kan geen goddelooze ooit eenig werk des geloofs verrichten; in de tweede plaats, gaat de rechtvaardigmaking, in objectieven zin, aan het geloof vooraf, en zou het laatste dus nooit de reden kunnen zijn voor de eerste; en eindelijk, ligt de reden louter en alleen in Gods vrijmachtig welbehagen.

Om 't eeuwig welbehagen!

Daar ligt het Goddelijke motief; verder vermogen we in dit heilgeheim niet in te dringen.

Gerechvaardigd uit de werken!

Neen, ook niet op grond van onze werken. Want, nogmaals zij het gezegd, God rechtvaardigt den goddelooze, en geen goddelooze zou op grond van zijne werken ooit voor God gerechvaardigd kunnen worden. De grond ligt eeniglijk in het werk Gods, dat Hij in Christus heeft volbracht, in Zijne volkomene en vrijwillige gehoorzaamheid der liefde, waardoor Hij in onze plaats Zichzelf offerde, en Zich tot in den dood des kruises vernederde.

Om Christus' wil alleen!

Gerechvaardigd uit de werken!

Neen, dat wil ook niet zeggen, dat de goddelooze van God het geloof ontvangt, en dat hij uit dat geloof in staat is gesteld om goede werken te doen, zoodat hij nu op grond van die goede werken des geloofs gerechvaardigd kan worden voor God. Want de ongerechvaardigde goddelooze heeft recht op niets, is verdoemelijk voor God, zoodat de rechtvaardigmaking in objectieven zin wel aan de gave des geloofs en aan alle werken des geloofs vooraf moet gaan.

Niet de werken, ook niet de werken des geloofs: Christus' volkomene gehoorzaamheid alleen is en blijft de grond onzer rechtvaardigmaking.

Uit de werken!

En ook niet *uit* die werken des geloofs, die als goede werken, als vruchten der heiligmaking uit dat geloof voortkomen, wordt een mensch, in subjectieven zin, en voor zijn eigen bewustzijn, verzekerd van zijne rechtvaardigmaking. Want niet uit de werken, maar uit het geloof alleen, zijn wij gerechvaardigd, en hebben we vrede bij God. Wel leeft dat geloof in den weg der heiligmaking, en kan er buiten dien weg van geen zekerheid des geloofs sprake zijn. Maar toch is het niet uit die werken, maar uit het geloof alleen, dat de zondaar zich als gerechvaardigde voor God kent.

Maar wel gerechvaardigd, voor eigen bewustzijn, uit die werken, waardoor het geloof volmaakt wordt,

zijn einddoel bereikt, waardoor de goddelooze zichzelf als verloren kent, zijn eigen werken als verwerpelijk veroordeelt, Christus kent als de volheid van zijne ledigheid, den rijkdom voor zijne armoede, en waardoor hij zich nu onvoorwaardelijk aan Hem overgeeft, zich aan Hem vastklemt, op Hem vertrouwt voor tijd en eeuwigheid, en zich werpt op den God der volkomene zaligheid, Die den goddelooze rechtvaardigt, de dooden levend maakt, en de dingen, die niet zijn, roept alsof ze waren.

Dat zijn de werken des geloofs.

Daardoor wordt het geloof volmaakt.

En daardoor juist wordt het onderscheiden van een dood geloof, dat ook de duivelen hebben.

Of zegt de Heiland het niet Zelf: "Dit is het werk Gods, dat gij gelooft in Hem, Dien Hij gezonden heeft"? Joh. 6:29.

En is het niet juist daarom, dat de Schrift hier in Jakobus wijst op het werk des geloofs van Abraham, dat hij Izak, zijnen zoon, offerde op het altaar?

O, er waren wel andere werken, ook werken des geloofs, waarin het geloof van Abraham vruchten had gedragen! Had hij niet land en maagschap verlaten, om in tenten te wonen in het land Kanaän? Had hij door het geloof geen koningen verslagen? Waarom dan juist dat ééne feit, deze ééne daad des geloofs van Abraham genoemd?

Daarin werd zijn geloof, juist als geloof, openbaar. In die daad zag hij van alles af, om zich onvoorwaardelijk te werpen op den God der belofte, die de goddeloozen rechtvaardigt!

In Izak zag hij de vervulling van Gods belofte, den dag van Christus. Lang had hij op hem gewacht. Zeer had hij begeerd Zijnen dag te zien. Op hoop tegen hoop had hij geloofd, en zich vastgeklemd aan Gods belofte. Zijn eigen lichaam was reeds dood; de moeder in Sara was reeds gestorven. Maar hij had zich vol vertrouwen geworpen op God, Die de dooden levend maakt. En de belofte was vervuld. Zijn oog aanschouwde haar, o, ja, van verre; maar in Izak zag hij toch het wonder Gods, en aanschouwde hij het wonder, dat God den goddelooze rechtvaardigt. En nu kwam tot het Woord Gods: Offer mij uwen zoon! Zelf moest hij met eigen hand het eenig zichtbare teken van de vervulling der belofte vernietigen! Zou God zijn gena vergeten? Nogmaals moest hij afzien van alles, wat zijn geloof kon steunen, om alleen op God zich te verlaten, op den God der belofte. . . .

En aan God klemde zijn geloof zich vast!

Overleggende, dat God machtig is, hem ook uit de dooden op te wekken!

Zoo werkt het geloof! Alleen op God, maar dan ook volstrekt alleen vertrouwt het.

En zich verlatend op God, Die den goddelooze rechtvaardigt, wordt het zalig.

Gerechvaardigd uit de werken!

H. H.

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EDITORIALS

Ecumenical Synodical Problems

The confessional basis adopted by the First Ecumenical Synod is rather comprehensive. No less than nine confessions are mentioned. Although this is not very clear from the conclusions that were adopted with respect to this matter, we suppose that the meaning is, not that all the churches which, in the future, are to send delegates to similar synods must subscribe to all these confessions, but that those churches are to be invited that subscribe to and stand on the basis of one or more of these reformed symbols. Thus, I presume, we must also understand the statement that "all delegates to the Synod will have to express their adherence to the confessions of the Reformed faith and to the afore-said statement."

This last statement does, indeed, declare that all the delegates will have to express their agreement with all the confessions that are mentioned under "1". But this would be a practical impossibility. Not only would such a provision require that all the delegates be acquainted with all the confessions, something which, I am bold to say, was not true even of the delegates to the First Ecumenical Synod, and can hardly be expected of elder delegates to future synods of a similar nature; but would also be impossible, with respect to detail at least, because these confessions do not agree in all respects. To mention only one item, the Helvetic Prior has it that all heretics, that reject the admonitions of the church, and become hardened in their evil way, shall be punished by the magistrates: "sollen durch die oberste Gewalt gestraft und unterdrückt werden" (the Latin has: *coërcendos per magistratum*). The provision made by the First Ecumenical Synod in regard to this matter will have to be taken, therefore, *cum grano salis*, i.e. with a grain of salt.

We would put a question mark behind the closing statement of the first paragraph of these conclusions, that a return to the Scriptural truth can. . . . "effectuate the sorely needed renewal of the world."

What did the Synod mean here by the term "world"? And what is meant by the "return" of the world to Scriptural truth? Did the "world" ever embrace the truth of the Word of God? And again, what is meant by the "renewal" of this "world"? Did the Synod take this word seriously, i.e. in the Scriptural sense of regeneration and conversion? Or did it speak rather loosely and generally? Does the Synod expect a renewal of the "world" without regeneration and conversion? If not, does it expect that the "world" will be regenerated, and embrace the gospel? It might

have given rise to a very interesting discussion had the Synod given itself definite account of its own words.

But we will pass this up.

Of more interest to us is the decision of Synod with regard to invitation of delegates to future ecumenical synods.

The Synod decided that "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."

Frankly, I think this is a serious error. I refer particularly to the phrase "in the judgment of Synod". As was stated in our previous issue, this decision was not carried out, but so altered that the individual synods represented in the First Ecumenical Synod will determine what churches shall receive an invitation. In our country, for instance, the Christian Reformed Synod will determine the matter with respect to delegates from churches in the United States.

A mistake I consider this for several reasons.

First of all, if this decision is carried out, it will put the delegates that will be invited to future synods in the position of those that have been *judged and approved* in relation to the different synods as the *judges*. And this is not an enviable position. The invitations that will be sent out to other churches in our country, will now have to assume the following form: "The Synod of the Christian Church(es), having investigated whether your church professes and maintains the Reformed faith, and having reached a favorable verdict, invites you to send delegates to the next ecumenical synod."

Secondly, what makes it worse, is that the Synod also adopted the suggestion of its committee that "All Churches. . . will be kindly requested to express their explicit agreement with it (i.e. with the confessional basis that was adopted, H.H.), and all delegates to Synod will have to express their adherence to the confessions of the Reformed faith and to the aforesaid statement." To this we have, of course, no objection. But the trouble is that by the first part of its decision in regard to this matter, i.e. by the decision that the individual synods shall first sit as judges, the Synod virtually declared that it did not and would not trust the declaration by the churches themselves that they agreed with the Reformed confessions. The Synod virtually declared: "Your own word and declaration that you agree with the basis we adopted is not to be trusted; hence, we will first assure ourselves that you are going to speak the truth."

Thirdly, I seriously doubt that the individual synods are capable of carrying out this decision, and will have the courage of their conviction. Will the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church(es), for instance, have the courage to sit as judge over the Reformed Church of America, and express a fair and true, and well

motivated judgment? Will it have the courage to answer the question whether this church "professes and maintains" the Reformed faith, in all its pulpits, and in its schools? We will see.

Fourthly, I am afraid that, instead of fairly judging whether or not a certain church "professes and maintains the Reformed truth," it will be strongly tempted, to say the least, to be guided by other considerations that are quite irrelevant to the matter, but that are rooted in recent history. Thus, for instance, with regard to the situation in The Netherlands, it may be considered questionable whether the Synod of the Reformed Churches will let itself be guided purely by the question concerning adherence to and maintenance of the Reformed faith, when it faces the question whether or not it shall send an invitation to the Reformed Churches (maintaining Art. 31) or the "liberated Churches." And as to the situation here, will it not be extremely difficult for the Christian Reformed Church(es) to permit itself to be guided only by the question concerning the "profession and maintenance of the Reformed faith" in determining whether it shall invite the Protestant Reformed Churches?

Fifthly, and finally, if the various synods fail to judge purely on the objective basis of the confession, and permits other considerations to enter in and to determine their decision in this matter, the result will be that the future ecumenical synods will be mutual admiration societies, the membership of which is determined by personal likes and dislikes rather than by the Reformed character of its constituency.

Hence, I believe that this decision is an error.

It would have been quite sufficient to establish the confessional basis for future synods, demand that all participants express agreement with it, and leave the decision as to whether they would join the movement and send delegates to the Churches themselves, with this provision that invitations be limited to those churches that officially stand on the basis of the Reformed faith.

However, as matters now stand, if the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church(es) faithfully carries out the decision of the First Ecumenical Synod, and judges the Churches that are to be invited to future ecumenical synods strictly on the basis of the question whether they profess and maintain the Reformed faith, she will have to send an invitation to the Protestant Reformed Churches. If she fails to do this, she is motivated by other considerations. This may be said without fear of contradiction.

For the Protestant Reformed Churches stand on the basis of the Three Forms of Unity, pure and simple and unadulterated.

And they maintain this confession in all their preaching and teaching, as well as in their church polity and discipline.

And the Christian Reformed Churches themselves are convinced of this.

Even in 1924, when a desperate attempt was made to brand us an un-Reformed, the best the Synod of Kalamazoo could do was to formulate three points of doctrine that are evidently not in the Confessions, neither based on it; and judge us in the light of those points rather than in that of the Three Forms of Unity. But even so, that same Synod was compelled to declare that we were Reformed in regard to the fundamentals as contained in the Confessions.

That decision still stands. It was never retracted. Anyone may read it in the Acts of Synod 1924.

Moreover, the Protestant Reformed Churches now have a history of more than twenty years behind them, a sufficiently long period to determine whether or not they *maintain* the Reformed faith. They preached and taught openly. They wrote and developed their views in papers and pamphlets and books that were spread over the entire United States and in the Netherlands as well. And there is abundant proof for the contention that everywhere they gained the reputation of being Reformed.

The Christian Reformed Churches are not ignorant of these facts.

Hence, we claim without boasting, and without fear of contradiction, that, on the basis that was adopted by the First Ecumenical Synod, the Synod of the Christian Reformed Churches will have to invite our Churches to send delegates to the next Ecumenical Synod.

Mark you well, I am not soliciting or begging for the honor.

Nor am I suggesting that we should or would accept such an invitation. This would be a matter for discussion at the proper time.

But I do state that, on their own basis, they cannot avoid to send the Protestant Reformed Churches an invitation.

We will see what happens.

H. H.

IN MEMORIAM

It pleased the Lord to take from the midst of the church militant unto Himself in the church triumphant, our beloved sister fellow-member,

MRS. ADRIANA FEENSTRA

at the age of 64 years. We rejoice that we do not grieve as the world that has no hope grieves.

May the Lord comfort the bereaved children and relatives by His Spirit and grace.

Th Holland Ladies' Aid of Redlands,

Rev. P. De Boer, Pres.

Mrs. P. Kooiman, Sec'y.

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

Part Two.

Of Man's Redemption

Lord's Day XXI.

2.

The Election Of The Church (cont.)

According to the flesh, both Ishmael and Isaac, both Esau and Jacob were children of Abraham. Yet, only the children of the promise are counted as the seed: "In Isaac shall thy seed be called"; and again: "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Not the will of man, neither the worthiness of man, but God's sovereign predestination makes the distinction between children of the promise and children of the flesh, even in the historical line of the covenant.

The question might arise, and frequently does arise, in the heart of man, whether, in making this distinction between men, there is unrighteousness with God. And the apostle, too, considers this question. But he answers it, not in the way of human argumentation, not by drawing the Lord of heaven and earth before the bar of human justice, but by appealing once more to the Word of God Himself. "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Here again, the words refer to the people of Israel, as they were encamped at the foot of Mt. Sinai, in the wilderness, had committed the wanton sin of making and worshipping the golden calf, and were threatened with God's wrath and destruction in the desert. Moses could not understand this. Was not Israel the people of God? And had not God promised to lead them into the rest of the land of Canaan? How, then, could they, or many of them perish? The divine answer is that God is sovereign to save whom He will, even out of Israel. He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and compassion on whom He will have compassion. And the apostle concludes: "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." Rom. 9:14-16.

But even here the apostle does not close his inspired contemplation of the mystery of God's sovereign predestination.

God is and remains free and sovereign, not only to bestow His mercy and compassion on whomsoever He will, but He is equally the sovereign Lord in regard

to reprobation. "For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." More clearly and forcefully no mere human philosophy of predestination could possibly express it. Pharaoh, in all his pride and rebellion against the Lord, may not for a moment imagine that he is sovereign, and that even his opposition to the Word of God and refusal to let Israel go, can possibly thwart God's purpose. On the contrary, in his vain rebellion he serves God's purpose. That purpose is that, through Pharaoh's perversion and obduracy, God might show His power, and His name might be declared throughout all the earth. And it is for this very purpose that God raised up the wicked king. And again, the apostle concludes, this time emphasizing both aspects of sovereign predestination: "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." Rom. 9:17, 18.

How many and who of all mankind shall constitute the membership of the Church is determined by free grace, according to sovereign election.

That is the clear and current teaching of Holy Writ.

Consider the remarkable words of our Saviour in Matt. 11:25-27: "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."

Notice here that Jesus "answered" although there is nothing in the context to which this reply of the Lord would seem to refer. Besides, He is addressing His Father. To what, then, is this thanksgiving an answer?

The Saviour had been laboring in Galilee. He had preached the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, and performed many wonderful works. And as He now surveys the field of His labors, and takes inventory of the fruit upon His work, He recognizes a twofold effect of His preaching. There were those that received the gospel, and were eager and even impatient to see the kingdom of heaven come and to enter it: "from the days of John the Baptist even until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." vs. 12. And there were others, who never entered in, no matter who preached, and in what form the gospel of the kingdom was delivered to them. These are compared to "children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented." vs. 16,

17. John had come and preached the gospel to them as the last of the Nazarites, neither eating nor drinking; and they had not received his gospel, saying that he had a devil. Christ had come, the Nazarene, eating and drinking, for He had power to overcome the world; and again, they refused to enter into the kingdom on the pretext that He was a glutton and a winebibber. Before John they piped, and he would not dance; before Jesus they mourned, and He would not lament. And each time they found an excuse to reject the gospel. And the Lord had concluded His survey by pronouncing His terrible woe over "the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not." vs. 20ff.

Now, evidently, in this twofold result of His labors, the Lord recognizes a "word" of His Father to Him, and to this He replies in His thanksgiving. While He preached and labored, there had been a twofold operation of God's power, a revealing and saving operation, but also a hiding and hardening operation of the Father: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth that thou hast *hid* these things. . . . and *revealed* them." And a special cause of thanksgiving it was for the Saviour that the gospel had been *hid* to the wise and prudent of this world, and that it had been revealed unto babes. Moreover, this result the Lord traces to the good pleasure of the Father, the sovereign dispensation of Him Who is the Lord of heaven and earth: "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight." Ultimately, it is the good pleasure of the Father that determines who shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Consider, too, John 6:37: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." These words are directed to, and spoken in contrast with the unbelieving multitude of Capernaum, that had been wonderfully fed with five loaves and two fishes on the preceding day, but had not seen the sign, would have nothing of the bread of life, and would, presently, leave the Lord to walk no more with Him. In the preceding verse the Lord said to them: "Ye also have seen me, and believe not." However, although they all leave Him, their unbelief cannot have any effect upon the final fruit of His labors, for all that the Father gives Him shall surely come, and will surely be received by Him. The Church, in God's election, is one whole, a completeness, a body, not one of whose members may be lost. Hence, the Lord says: "all that", not: "all those" the Father giveth me." And the gathering of every last one of this whole depends not on the will of man, but on the good pleasure of the Father, Who gives His own to Christ.

The same contrast and emphasis on God's election is found in John 10:26-30: "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My

sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one."

Notice the first verse of this passage. We would, probably, be inclined to turn cause and effect mentioned there about, and read: "Ye are not of my sheep, because ye believe not." The Saviour, however, ascribes the fact of their unbelief to their being not of His sheep. His sheep shall surely believe. They are those that are given unto the Good Shepherd by the Father, from before the foundation of the world. They hear His voice. They surely follow Him. They may not, they can never perish, for they are preserved by the mighty power of the Father through Jesus Christ His Son. It is the eternal good pleasure of the Father that determines our being Jesus' sheep.

Much more can be quoted.

Unto the disobedient, "the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: *whereunto also they were appointed.*" And in contrast with them, they which believe, are "*a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.*" I Pet. 2:8, 9.

The Church appears in God's eternal counsel as perfected, called, justified, and glorified; 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." Rom. 8:29, 30.

And the spiritual blessings of salvation are bestowed upon the Church according to the scheme and standard of election: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 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." Eph. 1:3, 4.

And throughout the first part of this same chapter, as the apostle mentions the glorious blessings of salvation believers have in Christ, the adoption of children, redemption, the forgiveness of sins, the gathering together of all things in Christ, he repeatedly and strongly emphasizes that they all have their ground and fountain in God's sovereign predestination, vss. 5, 11, the good pleasure of his will, vs. 5, the good pleasure which he hath purpose in himself, vs. 9, and the purpose of him who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will, vs. 11.

But why quote more? The doctrine of God's sovereign predestination, the truth that the Church is the gathering of those chosen unto everlasting life, as the Catechism teaches us, runs like a golden thread through the whole of Holy Writ.

Moreover, this truth occupies such a central place in the entire system of the Christian faith, that one cannot deny or distort it, without perverting and pulling awry the entire structure.

It is the *cor ecclesiae*, the heart of the Church.

When, in the beginning of the seventeenth century, the followers of Arminius that undermined the truth of sovereign predestination made an attempt to restate the truth on this point, as they would have it, it was inevitable that they should find themselves involved in a departure from the Reformed truth along the entire line. When they had so restated the truth of election that God's determination was based on and motivated by man's will to believe and to persevere, they were compelled to make a similar restatement with respect to Christ's atonement, man's depravity, his conversion, and the perseverance of the saints. And they adulterated the pure truth of the Christian faith in every part.

The denial of sovereign election involves a denial of particular atonement, that is, of the truth that Christ shed His lifeblood only for those whom the Father had given Him. And the denial of particular atonement must ultimately lead to a denial of the truth that Christ's death is vicarious, a payment for the guilt of our sins. For if Christ actually shed His life-blood for all men, head for head, and soul for soul, in the sense that, by His death, He blotted out the guilt of all men's sins, then all are redeemed and justified, and all must be saved. If, however, Christ died for all, and all are not saved, as, in fact, they are not, it follows inexorably, that the death of Christ was not vicarious, that by His death He did not pay the price that made them all righteous before God. Hence, some other theory of atonement must be invented, such as the governmental theory, or the moral idea, or the mystical conception of the power of the cross.

Again, if one denies absolute predestination, he is bound to change his conception of the depravity of the sinner. He cannot be wholly without any capability to do good. For he must have the power to determine his own salvation. If God chose those unto salvation of whom He foreknew that they would believe in Christ, man must have the will to believe. There must be some good, some positive inclination left in him whereby he is capable, of himself, to turn to Christ and to accept the gospel. And thus the plain teaching of Scripture that man is, by nature, nothing but an enemy of God, minding the things of the flesh, dead through trespasses and sins; and that he is incapable of coming to Christ unless the Father draw him, is distorted.

It follows, too, that a new theory of regeneration and of the conversion of man must be invented. For, according to the Scriptural and Reformed presentation of the truth, the sinner is saved by the power of free and sovereign grace. Not man, but God is first. But if sovereign election is denied, and to man is ascribed the power to believe in Christ, or the will to believe, God's saving grace must wait for man's determination. Man must give God "the green light." If he gives the red light, God cannot pass. Hence, all the hawking of Christ in modern preaching, and the attempts to persuade the sinner to come to Christ. Deny election, and you must deny sovereign grace. Yet, Scripture teaches us plainly that it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

And if man is first in his regeneration and conversion, he must needs remain first all the way of salvation, even to the hour of his death. Then the true relation between preservation and perseverance is inevitably perverted. According to the Scriptural presentation of the truth on this point, God is first along the whole line: the saints persevere because of and through God's power of preservation. They are preserved in the power of God, and no man can pluck them out of the Father's hand. And the assuring and comforting knowledge of this preservation does not render them passive and careless, but on the contrary, it is in and through that power of God that they fight the good fight, walk in the sanctification of life, and persevere unto the end. But if you distort the doctrine of election, and so present it that God chose those that would believe in Christ and persevere unto the end, you must needs pervert the relation between preservation and perseverance in such a manner that the latter is first, the former follows. God preserves those that persevere in desiring the grace to persevere. Man is first in the matter of his salvation, to the very end.

Thus all certainty is lost.

Man stands in the center of things, and God is dependent upon him.

The whole system of truth is perverted.

And it is evident that the doctrine of sovereign predestination is of fundamental and central importance. It is the *cor ecclesiae* indeed!

The second question we mentioned in this connection is: what is the relation between the church and the old organism of the human race?

This question concerns the old controversy between the infra- and supralapsarian conception of predestination.

In its pure, abstract form, this question is of little interest to us, and we shall but briefly present it. It concerns the question as to the order of the various steps or decrees in God's eternal good pleasure. All

Reformed theologians were agreed on the main elements of the doctrine of predestination. They all proceeded from the principle that in all the works of God, and, therefore, also in the eternal counsel of the Most High, the purpose is the will of God to glorify Himself. They also agreed that, in the decree of predestination, there are two elements or parts: election and reprobation. Some, indeed, preferred to speak of reprobation as a "passing by", a non-election, while others, more boldly, spoke of predestination unto damnation. But essentially this makes no difference, and all agreed that Scripture teaches a double predestination, election and reprobation. All were agreed, too, that predestination is free and sovereign. The motive of neither election nor reprobation may be found in man, but is solely in God's own good pleasure. God did not choose the elect on the basis of foreseen faith, nor reject the reprobate on the ground of foreseen unbelief. His decree is free and sovereign.

But there was often a sharp controversy between them, when they confronted the problem concerning the order in the decrees of God. And this difference of view is expressed in the names: *supralapsarian* and *infralapsarian*.

H. H.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

Ebenezer

So had the Lord driven the kine by which the Ark was being drawn in the way to the way of Bethshemesh. But when the Bethshemeshites saw the Ark, they rejoiced to see it. But, as we stated, they had reason to hide themselves in the dens and the rocks of their mountains; for the Lord was again amongst them—the Lord, who is a consuming fire—and they had not put away the strange gods from among them and prepared their hearts to serve the Lord. In a word, the nation had not repented. The people of Israel at this time, definitely the Bethshemeshites were carnal. And in their carnality they again imagined that the Lord was for them in their sins. And so these sinful and impenitent men, vainly imagining that they could stand in their sins before the face of God and live, rushed into the presence of His throne—the Ark—and made merry. As was said, their behaviour was an insult to God. So the Lord smote "many of their number with a great slaughter." 50,070 of their number—men of Bethshemesh—were overthrown. They said, "who is able to stand before this holy Lord God

and to whom shall he go up before 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. As was stated, the men of Kirjathjearim came and carried the Ark into the house of Abinadab in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep watch 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.

It is plain that at this time the people of Israel were deathly afraid of the Ark, afraid of God. If only the Lord had remained in the country of the Philistines. But now that He had come back to them, they knew not what to do with Him. They would rid themselves of God, if only they knew how. Doubtless they would have conveyed the Ark to some desert place far beyond the borders of Canaan, had they dared. But they dared not. To do that would be to invite a disaster even worse than that which had struck in Bethshemesh. So they imprisoned the Ark in Kirjathjearim. This is the meaning of their conveying the Ark into the house of Abinadab and sanctifying Eleazar his son to keep watch and guard over this symbol. Eleazar must see to it that no company of men come near the Ark to touch and to look at this symbol or to carry it into the tabernacle in Shiloh. For who was able to stand before this holy God? He who walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness, he shall abide in God's tabernacle and dwell in His holy hill, Ps. 16. But instead of working righteousness, rather than put away their idols—Baalim and Ashtaroth—in order that they might stand before this Holy God and live, they sought to preserve their lives in the way of imprisoning the Ark in the house of Abinadab. They were not better than the Philistines. For the Philistines, too, as terrorized by the plagues of God that had rioted among them, had sent away the Ark to its place but without repenting. There was not one who wanted God. All were afraid of him and with reason. Their works were evil and they willed not to repent; and God sheweth himself merciful with the merciful; upright, with the upright; and pure with the pure; but with the froward, he will shew Himself froward, Ps. 18:25, 26.

But if the people of Israel imagined that they had freed themselves of God by imprisoning His Ark in the house of Abinadab, they were soon made to perceive that they were mistaken. The revelation of His wrath over their unrighteousness—their idolatry and lawlessness—continued through the oppression of the Philistine domination that continued uninterrupted. For though the Philistines had brought back the Ark, they had not ceased to persecute God's people, the people of Israel. But the Philistines were the rod of

God's anger smiting the nation on account of its apostacies, and driving home to its heart that the only way out of its troubles was the way of return to the Lord.

The strokes of God, as blessed to the hearts of His believing people, was the cause of much sighing and lamenting among the faithful in Israel. "All the house of Israel lamented after the Lord," humbled itself under His mighty hand that was heavy upon His people through the agency of the oppressing Philistines. Seeing their tears and hearing their groanings, 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 just that. Gathering them at 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." As was said, 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. During all these years the hand of God was heavy upon the nation through the oppression of the Philistine dominion.

Apparently the people of Israel were inviting certain disaster, when they gathered together in Mizpah. For hearing of it and concluding that the assembly was seditious as to its character, the Philistines deemed it expedient to inflict terrible punishment. And the people of Israel, being in an unarmed condition, were unable to defend themselves. But they had assembled to prostrate themselves before the Lord in true contrition of heart and therefore the Lord would not fail to come to their rescue according to His promise. The Philistines bestirred themselves. They went up against Israel. Seemingly the vast and defenceless assembly of Israelites in Mizpah was doomed. Only a miracle could save them, a sudden divine interposition. The people of Israel were afraid, for though they believed, their faith was not perfect. There being not a weapon among them, their only hope was God. And knowing that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much, and knowing Samuel to be such a man, they pressed him not to cease to cry unto the Lord for them, that He would save them out of the hand of the Philistines. But as there could be no deliverance from oppression without forgiveness of sin, and no forgiveness without shedding of blood—the blood of Christ—and without the expression, on the part of those for whom the forgiveness was merited, of true contrition of heart and the resolution to forsake sin and to be wholly consecrated unto the Lord, Samuel took a suckling lamb, and offered a burnt offering wholly unto the Lord, as he cried to the Lord for

Israel. While he prayed and offered, the Philistines drew nearer and near to battle. Then the Lord answered and sent salvation. He thundered with a great thunder upon the Philistines and thereby spoke to them, telling them in their hearts that He was angry with them, the persecutors of His people, and that now their hour had struck. Such was the speech that rose from the blinding flashes of lightning and the terrific peals of thunder that followed one after another. And this speech was in their hearts, as put there by the Lord. Confused and confounded, the Philistines were smitten before Israel. Beholding the salvation of their God, and in consequence thereof confirmed in their trust in God, the men of Israel advanced from Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines to a plain named Bethcar.

The victory over the Philistines was gained without arms; it was the immediate gift of the wonder-working power of God's grace; it was the answer to the repentance of His people, their putting away their idols and their returning to Him by the power of His grace as operative in them; and thus it was indeed the answer to the effectual fervent prayer of righteous men in Israel, of the righteous Samuel. And as long as he lived, he ceased not to pray for Israel, effectually and fervently, thus pray that the nation keep covenant fidelity and be wholly consecrated unto the Lord their God, putting away from them the not-gods of the heathen, and that the Lord in the way of this godly conversation, and in the way of this conversation only—so pray the righteous—bless His people and be their sun and shield against the adversaries, according to His standing promise. And the Lord heard and answered. Having been subdued, the Philistines "came no more into the coasts of Israel: for the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel," he being a righteous man, who prayed the prayer of the righteous. "And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even unto Gath. These two cities were not restored, but are mentioned to indicate on the Philistine side the direction and limit of the scope in which the people of Israel regained their lost cities and territories. The meaning is, "Israel recovered their cities which lay on the Philistine borders, reckoning these borders from Ekron to Gath." Finally, there was also peace "between Israel and the Amorites." The name "Amorite" is employed in the Scriptures as the designation of the heathen inhabitants on both sides of the Jordan. The implication of the statement last quoted is that they had been making war on Israel before Samuel. According to Judges 1:34, it was the Amorites who had driven the Danites back out of the plain into the mountains.

The Philistines having been discomfited, "Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and

called the name of it Ebenezer—meaning, the stone of help—saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." We will see that this was a remarkable statement for Samuel to make, when we view it in the light of the dreadful history of those twenty years. The Lord had helped His people hitherto, that is, not only recently when discomfiting the Philistines by His thunderings, but through all the years of that dreadful night. When the Philistines put to the rout Israel's army and slew many thousands of its footmen, when they captured the Ark of God, and during all the time of Israel's groaning under the pressure of their dominion, God was at work helping not certainly the Philistines but His people. The Lord had blessed those strokes unto the hearts of His people. Courage revived. The idols in Israel were destroyed. And the people of Israel again served the Lord only. That was essential. It was the thing that was primary with Samuel and not the lifting of the Philistine yoke and the physical well-being of the nation. If Israel wanted the not-gods of the heathen instead of Jehovah, wanted to serve those gods and lay Jehovah's gifts before their shrines, let the Philistine oppression continue by all means. That was Samuel's attitude in his prayers and sermons to the people. This is clear from his saying to them, "If ye do return 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." Israel did repent. Then the Philistine yoke was lifted. The Lord had helped. The people of God had been blessed in their affliction and reverses and the Philistines cursed in their triumphs and success of arms. Rightly considered, their military achievements were catastrophic defeats, for the Lord was against them; and the reverses of God's people were glorious triumphs, for the Lord was for them. We should mark this by all means. That a man succeeds in any field of endeavor, is prosperous and eats his bread to the full is no certain indication that he is the object of God's favor. The Lord may be prospering him in His wrath as He prospered the Philistines in His wrath, when He made them to triumph over Israel. On the other hand, that a man is poor and afflicted and underfoot, is no certain indication that the Lord is against him. The only certain indication that a man is loved of God is that he fears the Lord, thus that Christ is his portion. That man is always blessed, thus blessed in affliction as well as in prosperity. All things work together for his good. And thus the only certain indication that a man is hated of God is that the man is ungodly, does not repent and perishes in his sins, because God hates him from everlasting. That man is always cursed, thus cursed in his prosperity as well as in his adversity. All things are against him, the reason being that God is against

him. Verily, this is the doctrine contained in that confession of Samuel, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us," thus helped us through all the ages of the past and thus will help us through all the ages to come. This certainly is the thrust of the statement. For God is faithful. His love of His people is unchangeable. For with Him there is no shadow of turning. He is for His people now and everlastingly.

By his fervent and effectual prayers and thus not by force of arms, Samuel had overcome the world as encountered by the faithful in the godless sons of Eli, who had corrupted the sacrifices; in the apostate church; in the not-gods of the heathen, before whose shrines those apostates were prostrated; in the Philistines, who reviled God and persecuted His people. Eli's wicked sons had been destroyed, the gods of the heathen had been put away, the Philistines had been discomfited, and Israel delivered in the way of repentance and return to the Lord. Thus great things had been accomplished through Samuel, his prayers and prophesyings and all his labors. The Lord had helped and this in answer to his prayers, in fulfillment of His prophecies—for he spake the word that the Lord had put into his heart—and in recognition of his labors. Thus Samuel had overcome indeed. And his victory was his faith, which is but another way of saying that his victory was solely God—the God and Father of Christ—the help of this God, and thus a help merited by Christ and bestowed as a free gift. Having thus overcome, Samuel, so we read, judged Israel all the days of his life. And he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places. And his return was to Ramah; for there was his house; and there he judged Israel; and there he built an altar unto the Lord, chap. 7:15-17.

G. M. O.

THROUGH THE AGES

The Empire and the Papacy at Peace

In the previous article of this rubrick we witnessed the conclusion of the struggle for world dominion between the papacy and the Hohenstaufen family. We saw that the claims of the papacy survived also the blows struck again and again by this house; and my closing remark was that the struggle ended with the Holy Roman Empire prostrate in the dust before the papacy. The term "Holy Roman Empire" is one in the need of some explanation. *Empire* is a term used to

signify the dominions governed by a person bearing the title of emperor. The first succession of great empires known to the historian was formed of the Babylonian and Assyrian powers, the Medo-Persian, and the Macedonian. They included the greater part of the ancient civilized world before Christ. The Macedonian power was superseded by the Old Roman empire, founded by Julius Caesar and Augustus. In 393 A.D. it was divided into two parts, the Western, ruled from Rome by one sovereign and the other or Eastern half from Constantinople by another, although the whole was still regarded as forming a single Roman state. But actually the Old Roman empire had come to an end, so that there were now the Eastern Roman empire, which lasted a thousand years, and the Western Roman empire, which soon expired, the reason being that it was unable to resist the invasions of the German tribes. In 451 the German kingdoms that resulted from these invasions voluntarily passed under the jurisdiction of the emperor of Constantinople and the Western Roman empire came to an end.

This state of things continued until Charles the Great, who succeeded his father Pepin in 768, brought under his rule all Western Europe, that is most of the countries that had been included in the Western Roman Empire, and thus established the Roman-Germanic or so-called Holy Roman Empire. It was called *Holy* because Charles wished to unite all Western Europe into a Christian Empire. It was called *Roman* because Charles claimed to be the successor of the Caesars of the Old Roman Empire. The object was to make Rome again the capital of an undivided Roman empire, rather than creating a separate Western empire. But as the Eastern Empire continued to exist, the result of the step really was to establish two mutually hostile lines of emperors, each claiming to be the successor of Augustus and Constantine.

The territorial extent of the Western (Holy) Roman Empire that was founded by Charles varied greatly at different periods of its history. At the time of Charles the Great it embraced the northern half of Italy, France, Western and Southern Germany, and a part of Spain. Under Otto the Great (936-973) it was spread over the whole of Germany, Holland and Belgium, the south-east part of northern France, and laid claims to the adjacent kingdoms of Hungary, Poland, and Denmark, and the greater kingdoms of France, England, Spain, and northern Italy. At the time of the Reformation all claims over the districts outside of Germany were dropped. From the 15th century on it had the same bounds as modern Germany, except that it did not include East Prussia.

From the time of Otto the Great there was an unbroken succession of German kings who took the name of the Emperors of the Old Roman Empire, and were acknowledged in the countries of Western Europe and

by the Roman Catholic Church as the head of the whole Christian community. Their jurisdiction was, however, practically limited to Germany and Northern Italy. It was especially the strong emperors of this so-called Holy Roman Empire that opposed the claims of the papacy to supreme magisterial power over the kingdoms of the earth. Frederick II of the Hohenstaufen line was such an emperor. But as we have seen his war with the papacy ended in his destruction and in that of his house; and the empire, definitely Germany and Italy, had become so weak that the encroachments of the papacy could no longer be resisted. In its long struggle against the pope, its strength had been broken, and the Italian states and German territorial rulers became practically independent princes, sovereign in their own territories, and often more powerful than the emperor. By 1648 it was really no longer an empire at all, but a loose federation of many large and small principalities, united under the presidency of a ruler who bore the title of emperor but had no actual power. Yet it lasted on till the year 1806, when Francis II, king of Hungary, resigned his imperial title, and withdrew to his own kingdom. With him the Holy Roman Empire ended.

As was stated, with the death of Conradin I, the male line of the Hohenstaufen dynasty became extinct; and the electoral princes of Germany elevated Rudolf of Hapsburg to the imperial throne of the Holy Roman empire. Hapsburg is the name of an old German family, native of Switzerland, and the first mention of which is in a document of 1099, where the name Werner, count of Hapsburg, occurs in connection with the consecration of the monastery of Muri. This family, that took its name from an old Swiss castle, now in ruins, has given sovereigns to Germany, Spain and Austria, and continued to recent times to be a reigning dynasty. Rudolf, crowned emperor October 24, 1273, was a just ruler and without ambition to extend his jurisdiction. Moreover, being a religious tempered man, he was loyal to the Roman hierarchy. He refrained from controlling the election of bishops in his realm, protected the rights of the church and dropped all claim to the states of the papacy in Italy. In a word, he was a man according to the papacy's heart. Gregory, elected pope in 1271, was pleased with him. In a tone of conciliation he wrote, "It is incumbent on princes to protect the liberties and rights of the church and not to deprive her of her temporal property." But he added, "It is also the duty of the spiritual ruler to maintain kings in the full integrity of their office." In comparison with many of his predecessors, Gregory was a man of peaceful spirit. Men said that he was a saint; and he is one of the two popes of his century so canonized. But he did not hold himself aloof from politics. That would be expecting too much of the best of popes, seeing that all held the view that Christ

had instituted the papacy to rule the world. Gregory secured the election of Rudolf, and had thereby gained a brilliant victory.

So there was now peace in the relations of the papacy and the empire (Holy Roman). But what pope should not be able to get along well with a man like Rudolf? The era of good feeling continued all the days of Rudolf, who died in 1291. In fact, not once again did men witness a fierce struggle for power between a Holy Roman emperor and the papacy such as that in which Frederick II and some of his predecessors in the imperial throne had engaged the popes. The reason is that since the days of the Hohenstaufen the empire was too greatly emfeebled by internal wars and disorders to defy through its emperors the popes of Rome in their preposterous pretensions. The title of Holy Roman emperor was born by members of the Austrian house of Hapsburg from 1273 to 1740, but the emperors had power as rulers of their hereditary estates rather than as occupants of the imperial throne in Germany, and therefore were powerless to suppress the incessant wars between the German princes and the cities and the discord of the lower nobility. As to their mode of living these nobles were veritable highway robbers. This state of things in Germany continued to the time of the Reformation and even beyond that time.

From 1438, the year of the accession of Rudolf to the imperial throne, to 1294 there reigned successively no less than eight popes, Gregory X, Innocent V, Adrian V, John XXI, Nicolas III, Martin IV, Nicolas IV, and Coelestis V. The combined reigns of Innocent, Adrian, and John lasted only eighteen months. Innocent died before he was consecrated. It was during the pontificate of Gregory that the Council of Lyons, also known as the Fourteenth Ecumenical Council, held its sessions. It is remembered chiefly for the futile attempt to unite the Greek and Western churches. Nicolas III was a firm administrator, who managed to frustrate the attempt of the ambitious Charles of Anjou to seize the Greek crown. Martin IV, a Frenchman and a man of lowly birth, is conspicuous as the tool of a monarch, this Charles of Anjou. In southern Italy the ruling positions were everywhere held by Frenchmen, who were thoroughly hated by the Sicilians. Rising up, they massacred all the Normans on the island with the Sicilian wives of the Normans. It is estimated that at from eight to twenty thousand of their number fell. The massacre ended Charles rule on the island, and Peter of Aragon was chosen king in his stead. Martin placed Sicily under the papal ban, and imposed upon Christendom a tribute of one tenth for a crusade against Peter. The ambition of Nicolas IV was to restore to Christendom the holy places of Palestine, but he died ere his plans could be executed.

The pontifical throne was vacant for twenty seven months, when Peter de Murrhone, who wanted to be known as Coelestin V, was raised to the papal dignity. His brief reign, it lasted less than a year, forms a curious chapter in the history of the papacy. The college of cardinals, as they could agree on no one else, chose this man, who formed a strange and direct contrast to his predecessors. Peter de Murrhone was a pious monk—an anchorite, in fact—who from his twentieth year—at the time of his elevation to the papal throne he was seventy nine—had led a solitary life, devoted to prayer and religious contemplation. There was a story in circulation about him that he had succeeded in the unprecedented feat of hanging his tub, wherein he was wont to sit, on a sunbeam. Against his wishes, he was made to exchange the contemplative life for a sphere of action of the most enormous extent. As pope he wore the monkish dress under the papal robe. In appearance, he formed a striking contrast to that of the other popes of this time. Seated upon an ass, led by the kings of Sicily and Hungary, he made his entry into Rome. Thousands flocked about him to obtain his blessing. But when this feeble old man was set down in the midst of the vast business of his office, he proved woefully incompetent. In his simplicity, he gave his ear now to this counsellor and then to that. He subscribed to rolls of parchment that he had not even read or that had not been written on, and which therefore could be filled at pleasure. The cardinal resolved to get rid of him, and he, too, longed to be restored to his former solitude. Despairing of the wickedness of the papal court, he exclaimed, “O God, while I rule over other men’s souls, I am losing the salvation of my own”. But it was difficult to see how a pope could be divested of his office. But Peter was assured that it was allowable. He published an ordinance to that effect, and subsequently abdicated and returned to his quiet, and was succeeded by Coelestine VI. With the commencement of the reign of this pope, a new era for the papacy was at hand.

G. M. O.

SION’S ZANGEN

De Heere Regeert

(Psalm 93)

De Heere regeert, Hij is met hoogheid bekleed, de Heere is bekleed met sterkte, Hij heeft Zich omgord, ook is de wereld bevestigd, zij zal niet wankelen.

Ziedaar, het begin van een psalm die de majesteit, bestendigheid en de heiligheid des Heeren bezingt.

De Heere regeert!

Die regeeren wil moet met hoogheid bekleed zijn, een hoogheid die in zijn wezen schuilt en bewezen wordt naar buiten door de daden. Het gaat niet aan voor den nieteling om te regeeren. Doch hier is sprake van den Heere!

De Heere is hoog verheven! Hij zit boven alle rumoer der aarde en van het heelal. Hij is onmetelijk ver verheven boven al wat schepsel heet. Trachten we om daar eenigzins in te komen, dan duizelt ons verstand. Hij is zóó hoog verheven, dat we ons zelfs niet een idee kunnen vormen van Zijn troon. En als ik in dit verband spreek van Zijn troon, dan bedoel ik niet de troon Gods die in den hemel der hemelen prijkt, want die troon behoort bij de schepping. Ik bedoel de hoogheid Gods waarvan we lezen: “die een ontoegankelijk licht bewoont”! God is zóó hoog verheven boven de aarde, den hemel en het geheele heelal, dat er nooit iemand zal zijn die Hem daar zien zal. Verder nog: niemand zal zelfs kunnen indenken hoe het er uitziet in het ontoegankelijk licht van die grooten God.

En dat komt omdat God de “geheel Andere” is. Hij is God, ongeschapen, ongeworden, ongemaakt, uit en van Zichzelf bestaande, de geheel eenige God. Wij zijn gemaakt, er was een tijd, dat we er niet waren. Doch God is er altijd geweest. Denkt daar eventjes over na, en het begint U te duizelen. Daar fluisteren we van een nooit begonnen eeuwigheid.

O God! Hoe wonderlijk en groot en hoog verheven zijt Gij! Ook weet het onze ziel zeer wel.

Die God heeft alles geschapen: een tweede reden waarom Hij regeeren kan en mag en moet. Alles, letterlijk alles is Zijn eigendom. Na het scheppen van de dingen is God nooit van den troon gestegen. Hij blijft tot in alle eeuwigheid op den troon. Hij bezit alles. Dus heeft Hij alleen het zeggen over alle dingen.

Bovendien, na het scheppen der dingen regeert God door de Wijsheid van Zijne wondere Woord der voorzienigheid. O die voorzienigheid is zulk een wondere openbaring van Gods wondere en alwijs almacht. God spreekt en er is oorlog, er waait een zachte koelte en er is een mensch die zijn spieren rekt en uitstrekt in het pure genot van kracht te hebben. Hij is het die U ter zijde loopt, neen, die in U overal werkt, krachtdadiglijk werkt om U op te houden, om U het wezen te geven, om U te doen denken, spreken, doen en leven. Niemand en niets kan zich verroeren zonder die alomtegenwoordige en almachtige kracht van Gods voorzienigheid.

En al die waarheden moet ge nu eens in verband zetten met Gods wonder-wijze plan der verlossing, het plan om Zijn volzalig verbondsleven aan den mensch te geven in creatuurlijke mate. Zet die grootheid en hoogheid, die schepping, die voorzienigheid in verband

met Jezus van Nazareth! Zoo krijgt ge een grootheid en hoogheid en heerlijkheid van God die U zal doen jubelen van geluk. Zegt het vlak voor het kruis van Jezus: De Heere regeert! Hij gaf Zich een schoon kleed van hoogheid, daar, daar vlak bij het kruis, in de zware droppels bloed, in het vreeselijke lijden van Jezus, in de rauwe kreeten van den Zoon van God. De Heere regeerde daar en Hij zal U zijn wonderlijk Koninkrijk toonen. De stijl en de trant zijn pure, onbegrijpelijke liefde. Om dat lieflijke Koninkrijk tot volle openbaring te brengen kwam Hij als de Hoog Verhevene en toonde Zich als Schepper, Onderhouder, liefderijke Verzorger. Straks komt de voleinding en dan zullen alle schepselen het luidkeels roepen tot in alle eeuwigheid: De Heere, o ja, de Heere regeert! Sommigen zullen het roepen al weenende, sommigen zullen het roepen al jubelende; dat zal er aan liggen of ge een bok dan wel een schaapje van Jezus' kudde zijt!

Vreeselijke, doch ook lieflijke gedachte!

Ja, om dat alles te doen zien moet er een aarde zijn. Op die aarde, als op een tooneel, zal dat Koninkrijk van den regeerende Koning komen met kracht en met heerlijkheid. Daarom staat er: "ook is de wereld bevestigd, zij zal niet wankelen". Die wereld mag door vreeselijke tijden en keerpunten en crisis gaan, ze blijft echter vast en bestendig. Tot het heerlijke einde blijft ze staan. En als alle burgers van dat Koninkrijk gekomen zijn tot hun plaats in de heerlijke paleizen, dan zal die wereld door de laatste crisis gaan, al brandende versmelten, om plaats te maken voor de eindelijke wereld van Gods geneugten.

"Van toen aan is Uw troon bevestigd; Gij zijt van eeuwigheid af!"

Daar hebben we al iets van gezegd, dwaas die we zijn. Hoe zullen we iets zeggen van datgene wat we niet kunnen benaderen. Laat ons de woorden dan net maar naspreken, verder zal het niet kunnen. God is van eeuwigheid af aan. Hoe wonderlijk! Hoe vreeselijk van vermogen!

De rivieren verheffen, o Heere! de rivieren verheffen haar bruisen, de rivieren verheffen hare aanstoting!"

Eerlijk, geliefde lezer, ik kan er niet bij! Hoe durft iets zich toch te verheffen tegenover zulk een Hoogheid en Heiligheid als God die Heere is? Eenzelfde verwondering beluisteren we in den tweeden psalm, waar de psalmist in verwondering uitroept: Waarom woeden de heidenen en bedenken de volken ijdelheid?

Stelt het U voor, dat een klein diertje, zooals een worm zich in het harnas zou jagen tegenover de leeuw? Zou dat groote beest, zou de koning onder de dieren niet lachen van spot en hoon? En toch het kan er niet bij vergeleken worden als de dwaze mensch zich zet om te strijden tegen God! Het is de dwaasheid

en de drieste domheid gekroond. Stelt het U voor, dat er een "Super-mensch" zou zijn, die, als generaal van een vechtend leger, de macht en de kracht had om gedurende den strijd, telkens weer aan oorlogsmateriaal te schenken aan het leger, dat hem bestreed? En zoo is het met God en de boozen.

Ge gelooft toch wel, dat het in dit vers gaat over de boozen die zich tegen God keeren? Leest slechts Openb. 17:1, 15; in verband ook met Jeremia 51:13 en Jesaja 57:20.

Welnu, God is het immers die de vijanden het aanzijn, het leven, de kracht en macht en alle dingen schenkt? Ziet ge dan niet hoe dwaas het is zich te verheffen tegen God? Ge zijt het toch verloren vooraleer ge begint?

En toch de rivieren bruisen en verheffen hare baren tegen God. Wilt ge kommentaar op die woorden? Ziet dan om U heen in de tegenwoordige wereld rondom U. Het is bijna alles een schuimen van zijn schande tegen God en tegen Zijn Gezalfde. Het is een vloeken en een razen tegen God en Zijn Christus. Wie die God vreest wordt niet moede en mat van al het bruisen der goddeloozen? Als het dat alleen maar was, dan konden we duidelijk zien, dat het einde nabij is. We kunnen er soms niet bij, dat God het kan uitstaan. We zouden geneigd zijn om telkens uit te roepen met den psalmist: "Dat gij zijn ongerechtigheid nog langer kan verdragen!"

En toch, Gods Woord zegt het ons: "Indien ge tegen Hem zondigt, wat doet ge Hem?" Vreeselijke ironie. Ge kunt God niet genaken met al het vloeken en razen. Al wat we doen is een gat slaan in ons eigen hart en ons rijp maken voor de hel. God is alleen God en Hij is hoog verheven. Hallelujah!

Daarom vervolgt de zinger: "De Heere in de hoogte is geweldiger dan het bruisen van groote wateren, dan de geweldige baren der zee."

Onze jongens die terug kwamen van die geweldige wereld oorlog vertellen ons, dat het zoo moeilijk was om den vijand uit het gebied te verjagen, omdat ze vaak hooger lagen dan zij. En vanuit de hoogte regeerden ze het slagveld. En dan vielen er duizende van onze jongens.

Welnu, God is in de hoogte. Hij beheerscht het slagveld. En ook veel meer dan er ooit een veldheer geweest is die als overwinnaar uit den strijd weerkeerde. Hij is zóó hoog verheven, dat Hij alles bestuurt: in Zijn Eigen leger onder Christus, en in het leger van den duivel en zijne trawanten. De Heere regeert! Alle kracht om te strijden tegen God met ons denken en spreken, met ons handelen en wandelen, met het buskruit en het geweer, met alle dingen, zie het komt alles van God.

Zijt ge daarom in het leger van God, dan zegt die Vader in Christus Jezus: Gij zijt meer dan overwinnaars!

De dichter is kalm geworden. Het wordt nu heel stille. Als ge het gezien hebt, dat God die de Heere is, voor U en door U strijdt tot de zekere zegepraal, dan wordt het stil in Uw hart. Dan zijt ge niet meer bevreesd en bang.

Luistert slechts naar den dichter: "Uwe getuigenissen zijn zeer getrouw, de heiligheid is Uwen huize sierlijk, Heere, tot lange dagen!"

Wat een prachtig slot!

Ja, hoe zouden al de dingen weten die we nu aangetaald hebben, en waar deze psalm van spreekt, als het niet was vanwege de getuigenissen Gods. Als we die niet hadden en als de Heilige Geest ze niet op ons hart gebonden had, zouden we van de zegepraal van dien Koning niets weten.

Doch nu hebben we het profetische Woord, dat zeer vast is. En we doen goed om er acht op te nemen.

Er was een boek, dat we het boek der natuur noemen. Adam kon het lezen. Doch later werd hij steekblind en moest God hem en ons een ander boek geven: den Bijbel. Eigenlijk is dat Boek Jezus. Het boek des levens. De openbaring van het Eigen Hart van God. In dat boek staan heerlijke dingen. Iets ervan hebben we nu gezegd.

Het hart van die getuigenissen is dit: Des Heeren heiligheid is Gods Huize sierlijk! Wat schoone taal. God zegt hier dit: De heiligheid van God, die Zijn Huis om- en doorstraalt, staat schoon, lieflijk, heerlijk.

O ja, het zal doen zingen tot in eeuwigheid.

Alles, letterlijk alles, heeft de Heere gedaan in den tijd, omdat Hij Zijn heerlijkheid en lieflijkheid wou toonen. Dat is Gods heiligheid. Het positieve element van die deugt Gods is immer, dat Hij Zichzelven toegewijd is. Hij wil hebben, dat millioenen van menschen en engelen zullen weten hoe lieflijk Hij is.

Daarom is er de wereld, de mensch, de duivel, de zonde, de smart, de ellende, de bange smarten van Jezus!

Daarom komt er een Koninkrijk, waarin Jezus Koning zal zijn en het volk Gods onderdanen. De Engelen Gods zijn dan de dienaren. En de verdere schepping in die nieuwe wereld zal zijn tot eeuwige blijdschap van Gods volk, dat zich in zijn beurt in God zal verblijden.

Lezer en lezeres, daar zult ge Uw wensch verkrijgen, door 't licht dat van Zijn aan'zicht straalt!

G. V.

Know that the Lord is God indeed,
Without our aid He did us make;
We are His flock, He doth us feed,
And for His sheep He doth us take.

IN HIS FEAR

Christian Instruction

The Covenant.

We believe that our gracious God, in His sovereign good pleasure has entered into covenant with His people and has established with them that everlasting Covenant of Grace which God one time promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God will be their God and they shall be unto Him a people. There you have the two sides to that glorious Covenant. He will be God unto them. That is, all that which belongs unto Him as God, which characterizes Him for what He has revealed Himself to be, all His God-ness will become the experience of His people. His goodness, righteousness and mercy and kindness, His people will taste it all. Ps. 34:8 will go into fulfillment, "O taste and see that the Lord is good", and, as Peter says concerning the new-born babes, "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious". The Covenant is therefore an Economy in which God causes His people to taste His goodness and grace, His friendship and His fellowship. Centrally God does this through Jesus Christ crucified and through His Spirit and Word.

The other side of this same Covenant is that "they shall be unto me a people". Signifying that this people becomes God's private property and God is jealous of their affection, service and worship. The covenant people is the Bride of Christ. They must not go a whoring, nor bestow their time and affection upon some other than their proper Man, which is God in Christ. They shall be unto God a people in that they shall respond with lives of new obedience to His Word and reveal themselves as the wife of the Bridegroom Christ.

The Covenant and Our School Children.

Against the background of that Covenant we have in our Baptism Form a Prayer with Thanksgiving. The prayer that God may look upon our children, that is, bestow upon them His divine attention, take them out of our earthly family into His divine family. Further, that they may be piously and religiously educated grow up in Christ Jesus, daily follow Him, joyfully bearing His cross, live in all righteousness under their only Teacher and manfully fight against sin, Satan and his whole dominion.

Concerning our baptized children we therefore have the calling to educate them piously and religiously, in order that they may rise up in the midst of this world to reveal themselves as of God's party to fight the good fight of faith and receive the victory of grace.

Time will reveal that not all who are baptized are members of this multitude which shall attain the victory, but those things belong to the inscrutable wisdom of the sovereign God. We are called to educate them piously and religiously. And we rest assured that this pious education will reveal that in our generations there is the "man of God".

Our Children In This World.

Hence the instruction our children receive must serve to prepare them to take that place in this world which the Covenant assigns to them. And if we ask what this place is, the answer is: their place is to live in obedience under their only Teacher and to reveal themselves as of God's party in this world.

Our children are not called to bring about a new world-order, to form bulwarks for democracy, to rebuild the world, to claim the world for Christ or to develop a Pro Rege. No, they are first of all called to live in new obedience and righteousness under their only Teacher, to fight the good fight of faith and to reveal themselves as of God's party in this world. God's party has always been in this world. Since the days that Cain's children went off to develop the world and Seth's children went out to build an altar and call upon the Name of the Lord, since those days, God's party has been in the world and they were a different party. They led a distinctly different life. God's party is in the world. And there they are called to reveal themselves as of God's party. Whether this type of education develops a new world-order, forms a bulwark for democracy, rebuilds the world, or whether it ends the world in confusion and destroys democracy. . . . essentially that makes no difference. They need the God-centered, covenant-inspired type of education. They must be taught to live in righteousness under their only Teacher.

Antithesis.

As our Baptism Form expresses so beautifully and as the Scripture teaches on almost every page, next to this Party of the living God there is another party. There is what the Baptism Form calls "sin, satan, and his whole dominion." In the face of that fact this world and world-life becomes for the children of God a battle-field and they are called "manfully to fight". Christ has the victory. Already in the Garden of Eden, when this warfare was first announced and brought into being, God rises up to announce that in Christ the seed of the woman will conquer over the seed of the serpent. God hath the victory. But for us the victory lies on the other side of a battle-field. Battle-field? Yes, so God has ordained it. One time creation was organically united under one head, namely Adam. But sin came. Creation became divided against itself. In that creation there are who hate God, who live out

of the principle of sin and use this creation in the direction of sin. But in that creation there are also who have been touched by the grace of God have been renewed and love God, and use creation in the direction of God. These two never get along with each other. Everlastingly they pull in opposite directions. After sin came into the world there is no such thing any more as a quiet development of creation. Everything is warfare. Whatever is developed with a view to this war between light and darkness. Into such a world come our children.

Under their only Teacher they must learn the art of this holy warfare. Warfare against their own sinfulness, against sin, satan and his whole dominion, and thus reveal themselves as obedient children, not fashioning themselves after the world, but after God, and revealing themselves as Party of the Covenant God.

The Fear of God, Beginning of Wisdom.

The beginning, that is the fundamental principle, of living in righteousness under this only Teacher is the Fear of God. That is the beginning of wisdom. Not mere history, geography, physiology or what have you will equip him to rise up in this world as the man of God, but the constant instruction in the fear of God, as it touches him in history, physiology, geography, etc. He needs to be educated in the fear of God. His fear of God needs to be developed. By the grace of God that fear is present, that fear has to grow, it has to become keen, strong, unmoveable. History has to develop that fear of God in his heart, geography and physiology—yea, all serve the development and strengthening of that fear of God.

This fear is composed not of terror nor dread for God, but of amazement at Him, of wondering at Him of feeling reverence and awe for Him. When Job inspected the mighty things of God's hands he fell down in fear of God, amazed at His greatness, keenly aware of his own significance.

This fear and reverence becomes the principle out of which true wisdom proceeds. With this fear in their hearts our children learn the things our schools have on their curriculum, but through it all they acquire wisdom, and become equipped to stand in the midst of this world, wherever God calls them, and show forth that they are of God's party. God's covenant is with them that fear Him.

Therefore the instruction in Christian schools must revolve around the fear of God, be God-centered, covenant-directed and be a process in that pious and religious education for which we prayed when we had our children baptized.

(To be Continued)

M. G.

FROM HOLY WRIT

James 1:3,4: — "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."

Verse 3 gives us a two-fold reason for the thought which had been expressed in the second verse. James had exhorted the church of God to count it all joy when they fell into divers temptations. Of course, the people of God do not consider these temptations all joy because of the temptations themselves. It is for this reason that we do not seek temptations. To the contrary we fall into them. And we must count as all joy, not the temptations as such, but the fact that we fall into them. We rejoice in these afflictions because they are a means to an end.

The church of God is exhorted to rejoice in the midst of temptations not, first of all, because they are of short duration. It is, of course, true that they are of short duration. In I Peter 1:6 the apostle speaks of our being in heaviness through manifold temptations but for a season. There this brevity of our afflictions is held before us as a cause of great rejoicing. However, this is not mentioned in this text of James. Neither does James exhort us to rejoice in temptations because of the glory which awaits us. This, too, appears in Holy Writ as a cause for the Christian's joy. In Romans 8 the apostle Paul declares that our suffering is not to be compared with the glory that shall follow. And in II Cor. 4:17, 18 the same apostle expresses the inspired word that our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. It is indeed true that the eternal hope of heavenly glory sustains the child of God, enables him to walk the path of affliction and suffering to the end. Otherwise, he would surely be the most miserable of all creatures, possessing nothing in this world and without hope for the future. Also this, however, is not in the mind of James as a reason for our rejoicing in the midst of divers temptations.

The first reason for rejoicing advanced by James is that these temptations work "the trying of our faith." This is evidently the meaning of this text. It is true that the writer speaks of patience as the result of this trying of our faith. Yet, it is plainly the teaching of the text that these temptations, first of all, work this "trying of our faith." The translation, "trying of our faith", does not exactly represent the original thought of this portion of Scripture. The translation as such is clear. The "trying of our faith" refers to the process by which faith is tried. But the holy writer

does not refer to this idea. Fact is, the trial of our faith does not always and necessarily result in patience. At times temptations result in the weakening of the conscious believing of the Christian. James, in this text, does not have this in mind. He is not speaking here of the "trying of our faith" but of our "tried faith." The underlying idea of the expression is that faith has a character which can endure temptation. When faith has endured temptation it shall have been "tried" in the sense of "approved", even as gold, having endured the test of fire, bears an approved, a purified character. Besides, we must also notice here the use of the word "tried, approved". The change is made in the text from "temptation" to "tried, approved." The reason for this is plain. The devil tempts, exclusively. He always purposes evil. But while the devil tempts, the Lord, through these temptations, is proving, purifying His people. And the text refers to this approved faith, which is faith that has endured the trial.

Faith is the living, spiritual bond which unites us with Christ Jesus. By faith we know, taste the fullness of the grace which is in Him. He only is our life. We have been implanted into Him. Faith is that spiritual power whereby we, essentially but also consciously, live out of Christ, even as a tree lives, through its roots, out of the fatness of the earth. Moreover by faith we are also united with all the brethren, love them, seek their fellowship, fight with them against the common spiritual enemy, and separate ourselves from the world. And finally, faith is also a hearty confidence in God through Christ Jesus. To believe means that we, upon the basis of the cross, with our eye fixed upon the eternal glory, have the confidence that God is faithful and will never forsake the work which He has once begun.

What, then, is approved faith? Faith itself, we understand, is pure. Faith is the living and spiritual bond which unites us with Christ. It always knows and eats and drinks the Christ. It always trusts. Faith as such is pure. However, our believing, our conscious believing is not always pure. It is often mixed with human ingredients. We rely upon God but also upon ourselves. We seek then the things which are above but also the things which are below. We often mix our own righteousness with the righteousness of God. Hence, we do not always reveal the true character of faith. Our believing must be purified. This approved state of our faith is realized by means of temptations. Thereby we learn to realize our own unworthiness, to love God and hate sin and the world. We learn to rely on Christ and on Christ alone and not on ourselves, to believe in God alone. Whatever is then of ourselves and of the world falls away. God and His Kingdom become our all. Purified faith implies that our believing has been purified of all elements which

are foreign to the true character of faith.

The second reason why we must rejoice in the midst of divers temptations is that this approved faith works patience. Patience is not indifference as expressed in the saying, "Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die." Neither is patience to be confused with Stoicism, the attempt to harden oneself so that we become immune to suffering and pain—this is fundamentally rebellion against God. And, in the third place, patience is not forced subjection, so that we submit ourselves to the rod of affliction because we are powerless to resist. Patience is a work of the grace of God. It deals, as the text suggests, with suffering and affliction. Patience is that power of grace, whereby the Christian, not indifferently or passively as a Stoic, but willingly and joyfully bears all temptations, for God's sake, so that we do not succumb to the wiles of the devil, but endure them, having our eye fixed upon the glory above, knowing that all our present trouble must work together for our good and the glory of God's Name.

This patience is the result of approved faith. James uses a word here which does not merely mean "to work". Literally, he writes that this approved faith works completely, accomplishes thoroughly this patience. The meaning is plain. Patience is the necessarily accompanying fruit of approved faith. We are placed before a choice. We renounce the things of this world and cling unto God and His promises in Christ Jesus. And the peace which passes or transcends all human understanding fills our heart, our hatred of sin grows, our reliance upon God becomes more steadfast, our joy in God's love more intense, our security in God is confirmed and re-established. Our ability to suffer for the sake of God and of Christ is strengthened. Approved faith works patience.

We understand that when James writes, "*Knowing* this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience," he does not refer to intellectual knowledge. Mere intellectual knowledge of the Scriptures and of the Scriptural truth that approved faith works patience will not enable the child of God to rejoice in divers temptations. This knowledge of our text is experimental knowledge. Only then will this rejoicing occur when, in the midst of temptations, we experience that our faith is actually being purified and that this approved faith works patience.

In verse 4 James answers the question how this rejoicing because of its result according to verse 3 can actually be experienced by the child of God. We read here: "But let patience have a perfect work." The church is admonished to let the virtue of patience be complete unto the end. The virtue of patience must be practiced fully, completely, unto the end. This is the meaning of the expression "perfect work". Patience, we have remarked, is the willingness and the joy of

the Christian to bear and endure all suffering for God's sake and the glory of His Name. How often does it not happen in our lives that we do not practice the virtue of patience to the end, that we break it off, become very impatient. We refuse, then, to suffer for Christ's sake, we seek God and Mammon, heaven and the world. We refuse to forsake all for the sake of God and His Kingdom. We will not walk patiently, but seek now and then the things below. However, we are exhorted to let the virtue of patience have a perfect work. We must exercise it continuously.

And notice, in this connection, the "but" which introduces verse 4. How well the holy writer knows that we are prone to be very impatient. And we are warned to bear constantly in mind that patience must be exercised to the end.

Patience must have a perfect work in order that we may be perfect and entire, wanting or lacking nothing. The meaning of the words "perfect" and "entire" is plain. Any doubt as to the meaning of James certainly must disappear in the light of the last words of the text: "wanting nothing." The word "entire" refers to the Christian in his entirety, refers to all the parts whereof he is constituted. To be "perfect" and "entire" means, therefore, that we must be perfect in all our parts. This is literally explained by the holy writer in the words that follow: lacking nothing. The Christian's walk as a friend of God in the midst of the world must be such that, in all his walk, in every part of that walk, he may never fall short of his calling to conduct himself as of the party of the living God. It is plain why James adds these words in verse 4. We must surely let patience have a perfect work. Approved faith will work patience, but the virtue of patience must be exercised to the end. Patience is not only the Christian's willingness to bear and endure suffering, but it is also our unspeakably blessed assurance of victory. If our patience "breaks down" it will be impossible for us to experience that approved faith works patience, inasmuch as both, patience and a living faith, are not being practiced by us. Hence, to rejoice in the blessed patience of the Christian we must also exercise it to the end. To do that, however, we must be perfect and entire, lacking nothing. There is a reciprocal relationship here. We must be patient to the end that we may be perfect and entire. Only when we are thus patient can we be perfect and entire. But it is also true that to be patient unto the end, we must in nothing fall short of our calling as a Christian. Always to be patient surely implies that we do not "break down" anywhere along the line, but that we steadfastly continue to be God's friend and an enemy of the world. This is a difficult calling, possible only by grace.

PERISCOPE

The Conference

Second Session. . . .

The second session of the Conference, on Wednesday morning, was opened by the Rev. W. Grossmann, pastor of the Reformed Church at Hosmer, South Dakota. He introduced the first speaker of the day, the Rev. H. Veldman. In further development of the general theme, "The Church", Rev. Veldman spoke on: "The Tension of the Church"; which subject had been assigned to him by the Conference Committee.

Resumé. . . .

"The doctrine of the Church is a fascinating subject. We believe her to be a unified whole yet instead of being characterized by unity we see dissension throughout the history of the Church. Instead of One Holy Catholic Church we see an apparently hopeless segmentation. The Doctrine of the Church is also an important subject. Both the Belgic Confession, Article 27, and the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 21, emphasize this truth.

"The Tension of the Church is, therefore, also an important and fascinating subject. The Church in the world is always under strain; without relief. From her position in the midst of the world there follows a resulting tenseness. We wish to call your attention to "the Tension of the Church" as we speak of:

- I. The Idea of the Tension,
- II. The Reality of this Tension,
- III. The Purpose of this Tension.

I. The Idea: "What is the meaning of the word "tension" in our subject? Webster defines tension as a "stretching or degree of stretch or strain". Hence, tension is synonymous with strain. Webster further speaks of tension as "mental strain or stress" and "strong intellectual effort". In our subject it refers to the new life of the Church which seeks the Cause of God and Christ standing always opposed to evil in the world. This struggle is never relaxed. The tension of the Church is, therefore, the tremendous strain to which the Church and her members are always subject; the strain under which the Church labors. She is always in a strait betwixt two. The greatest tension of the Church and of the Child of God is the conscious spiritual strain under which she labors and to which she is constantly exposed.

"The Church is the Body of Christ, as revealed to us in Scripture and the Confessions and expounded in last night's lecture. The gathering of the Church is

presented as the exclusive work of the Son of God by His Word and Spirit. The Church is, therefore, a spiritual entity; reborn from above. By that same Word, the Son also gathers the people of God. They are consciously called into being as having been chosen from eternity. This calling also determines the tension. We can only speak of tension in the Church; there is no tension in the natural man nor in the modern Church.

"Two outstanding phenomena must be borne in mind in considering and understanding this tension. In the first place, the Church of God is a spiritual-heavenly entity. 'But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.' I Peter 2:9; 'For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.' Phil. 3:20. The Church of God is born of God and partakes of the Divine nature. She has her source in heaven and as such is a heavenly-spiritual entity. The Child of God receives his life from God. Possessing the life and heart of the heavenly Jerusalem, the Church expects a fixed heavenly City. But, in the second place, that Church is such a spiritual entity in the midst of an utterly sinful and corrupt world.

"There is still more, the members of the Church are sojourners on the face of the earth. They are also spiritual only in beginning and are yet in the midst of sin and corruption. They are Children of God but only in principle. They are Saints but also sinners; Light in the midst of darkness; Righteous but also unrighteous. Not only the Church in the world but also we ourselves have conflicting forces.

"We make the following conclusion, therefore, the tension of the Church is caused by, and follows from, the essential spiritual-heavenly identity of the Church, and its members, and her temporal position in the midst of the world. Consequently, her tension is the strain and pressure under which she labors.

II. The Reality: "First of all this tension as experienced in the life of the individual Christian. The Child of God is in a state of tenseness. 'For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.' In this passage from Romans 7 the subject is the same: the Child of God in the consciousness of himself as a new man in the old flesh. He rejoices in complete victory, yet groans under the burden of a fearful struggle. The result is a state of tension. We should note here that he is not a dual personality but *one* person. In the second

place, the Christian does not speak the language of a defeatist here. Though it is true that he does not realize the complete and perfect victory, he has that victory in principle. Hence, there is within him a resulting tension. One power draws him heavenward while another power draws in the opposite direction; he stands betwixt both.

"Besides this spiritual tension within him there is also pressure from without, for he is yet of this earth earthy. He is a heavenly citizen dwelling as a stranger on earth; still wandering in a desert land. Though born from above he is yet earthy. He is of flesh and blood and bound below with many earthly relationships; consequently the tension. As he speeds toward the end of his earthly existence the New, Heavenly Life draws him closer, but the tension continues to the end.

So, too, there is a tension in the Church on earth. She is called to reveal herself as the Body of Christ. But within the earthly manifestation the carnal church attacks the Body and puts pressure on her to forsake her calling. The carnal element does not want the pure preaching of the Word and resists the application of Christian Discipline. So the Church of God labors under the attacks of the carnal church and is in tension; realizing her own weakness.

"This Church, too, is in struggle with the world round about her. Outside of the Church is the world; under the influence of, and controlled by the devil—the mass of the world that lieth in darkness. The Church finds conflict everywhere in that world; in social, political and economic spheres, for she and it operate from diametrically opposing principles. This conflict exerts pressure on the Church. In the midst of the world she is called to fight and fighting realizes her state of tension.

III. The Purpose: "This tension of the Church must have a purpose; a Divine purpose. Why must the Church of God throughout the ages be always subjected to tension? It is not of the struggle with the world that we here speak. God has willed that His Church shall exist in an evil world. That struggle with the World is according to the Sovereign good-pleasure of God, for the condemnation of the world and revelation of the fact that the victory is ours; that the Church always has, and did have, the victory. The Lord is King and always was! The question, rather, concerns the Child of God as he must constantly experience tension in his own spiritual life and in the struggle with the old man that is in league with the forces of darkness.

"Once again we would emphasize that there is no dualism in the Child of God. It is not so that there are two forces contending within him, over an issue the outcome of which is in doubt. This is impossible, he has the victory. Nor is this an attempt on the

part of God to save what He can; nor even the revelation that God saves His own in spite of opposition. God saves His people through the enemies!

"What then is the purpose? The purpose is that God has willed to call eternal attention to the fact that His grace is imperishable and sovereign, so that the Child of God may sing the praises of God and God alone! This truth must be indelibly marked in his consciousness: 'He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord!' Salvation is of grace alone! If left to himself the Child of God would never run the course to the end. The purpose is to witness to our proneness to sin and to testify of our Only Deliverer: Jesus Christ our Lord. In Him alone do we have the victory!

Discussion. . . .

The Rev. J. Howerzyl: "Is the tension due only to the evil that is yet present? If the Christian life is from above and his citizenship is in heaven and he lives in a strange land, is everything pertaining to that strange land necessarily evil? How must we conceive of the things of this world—as all evil?

The Rev. H. Veldman: "The primary cause of the tension is sin. But the earthy character of the Child of God as a heavenly citizen in an evil world aggravates the situation."

The Rev. D. E. Bosma: "In Gen. 3:15 we read, 'and I will put enmity between thee and the woman', enmity is the root of tension. When Eve took of the forbidden fruit there was a resulting tension between herself and Adam. Eve tried to solve this tension, to make peace without tension, but her attempt to solve, in giving to Adam also, resulted only in greater tension. God solves all tension and injected the tension of enmity for Christ's sake. Christ alone finally solves the tension."

The Rev. H. Veldman: "Although I did not mention Adam and Eve I did state that there is a Divine purpose. It must be attributed to God alone."

The Rev. D. E. Bosma: "Isn't it true that *all* men are trying to dissolve the tension?"

The Rev. H. Veldman: "We speak of the tension of the Church; the strain under which she labors due to her earthly-carnal character while at the same time as the product of the work of the Son of God the Church strives against this pressure of the world."

The Rev. M. Gritters: "Would it be correct to speak of tension also in the world? Scripture speaks of the 'perplexity of the nations'. I believe we can speak of tension here and if so what is the relation between this tension in the world and the tension of the Church?"

The Rev. H. Veldman: "There is a tension in the world, due to God's wrath, which it seeks to escape, but no spiritual tension in the world or modern church. If we speak of tension in the sense in which I have, there can be no tension in the world, in that sense. If we mean simply strain it is true that there is strain in the world, but again, that pressure in the world against the wrath of God is not in the Church."

The Rev. J. Blankespoor: "Is there a tension in Christ? This seems to follow from the fact that Christ is the Head of the Church and the Church means nothing without Him. How can we speak of tension in Christ?"

The Rev. H. Veldman: "We can speak of such a tension in Christ as revealed in the Garden of Gethsemane, for example. Christ was not subject to sin but, though absolutely sinless, as far as His human nature was concerned, it recoiled from the prospects of what lay before Him. He was Holy and the contemplation of what lay before Him filled Him with horror, not rebellion. This was not due to any imperfection. Every moment He subjected His will to God's way. There was no strife between them at all."

The Rev. J. Blankespoor: "The tension of Church is due to the fact that the Church is born from above, which life the believer possesses in the midst of a sinful world and sinful human nature. Is the tension of Christ the same then?"

The Rev. H. Veldman: "No, it is not the same; not as in Romans 7. Christ is Holy and Perfect. They are not identical. The relation between the two is such that because of Christ's tension the Church is in tension."

The Rev. A. Petter: "Can we say the tension is expressed in Paradise in words: 'Ye shall be as God'. This is the striving of sinful men overagainst God's Word: 'I will put enmity'. Men strive to be as God but God maintains the principle that He is God by putting enmity between the two seeds. Christ is brought into that tension. He was perfected through suffering. He learned obedience. He learned obedience that brought salvation to all who obey Him. Even Christ had to learn obedience in a new sense that God is God alone, and through the solving of the tension became the Author of a new redemption."

The Rev. H. Veldman: "I wish to make it clear that when the subject was assigned to me I stood before the question, to what does it refer? From a grammatical point of view the subject pre-supposes that the Church is the subject of the tension."

The Rev. L. Vermeer: "Is there tension in the Church Triumphant? We read of the souls under the

altar which cry: 'How long Lord'. Is this part of the tension of the Church? Can we speak of a tension in the Church victorious that is related to the tension of the Church in the world?"

The Rev. H. Veldman: "Yes, before the judgment day; I think that is correct."

The Rev. W. Grossmann: "Is the victory in hating evil? What do you understand by evil: sin or sinfulness?"

The Rev. H. Veldman: "I would refer to Romans 7. Superficially we judge this to be the talk of a defeatist. Yet, underlying all, the Apostle hates evil. The Child of God continues to have the upper hand. That is the point: he hates evil. That, too, is a work of grace and is the victory."

The Rev. W. Grossmann: "Is the evil the body of death which we are?"

The Rev. H. Veldman: "Paul declares: 'Who shall deliver me?'. We are not delivered from the body of death until we die. In Romans 8 Paul carries the Christian to the end of time; to the glory of being more than conquerors. We have that victory in Christ. The body of death is sin within me and this body in this life as it is in the service of sin. Our complete and final deliverance from the body of this death is effected in the day of Christ."

The Chairman, the Rev. G. Vos: The Rev. Grossmann asks if sin is the body of this death. Does the Apostle in Romans 7 identify the word sin and the body of this death?"

The Rev. H. Veldman: "The body of this death is sin within me."

At this point the Rev. H. Hoeksema mounted the platform and turned to Romans 7. He spoke at length on this passage, somewhat as follows: (We would suggest that you follow the text as you go along.—W.H.) "The question is one of exegesis of Romans 7. It is a two-fold question. In the first place, whether in Romans 7 evil is the same as the man of sin." He then read and commented on verses 15ff. "Note that the Apostle is not talking of the man of sin but of the action of the man of sin. He is not speaking of the man of sin but of the deed which is accomplished and done by the man of sin. The Apostle speaks of the evil act arising from sin dwelling in him. Sin is the power which causes the act. The act is sin. The evil is not the man but the act."

"In the second place, it is implied in the question, whether this evil is the same as the man of sin that I am. I am not the man of sin in Romans 7. The Apostle makes a plain distinction between himself and the man of sin. 'I delight in the law of God',

that is me, the Christian, not the man of sin. 'But I see another law in my members. . . . who shall deliver *me* from the body of this death?'. Again a distinction is made here between the *me* and the body of this death. *I* will be delivered from the body of this death; the *I* remains. Hence, the *I* is evidently the new man in Christ and the man of sin is not identical with the Christian. In Romans 7 the apostle speaks of the act of sin which he commits in the body of death. That the Apostle hates and that is the victory."

Dr. K. J. Steube: "I am under the impression that the speaker explained tension as something between the Church and the world. The theme speaks not of tension *between* the Church, but *of* the Church. The idea being that the Church has tension. The question is how to account for it. The Church is the Body of Christ. He is the Head and we are the members. Hence, the tension of the Church is the tension of Christ, because, we as His members have tension. This is true from the beginning on, and the question is, where does it arise. It arises from the enmity expressed in Gen. 3:15.

The Rev. G. Lubbers: "It seems to me that the tension is not an outgrowth of something else. Tension is a formal term. There will be no tension in heaven. There all tears shall be wiped away, the enemy shall be gone and we shall be free to express a perfect covenant life. Is not the tension of the Church the life of heaven expressing itself and meeting the foe in this world? The speaker spoke of the Church standing betwixt the two. Is this due to her present position in the world?"

The Rev. W. Korn: "Regarding the exegesis of Romans 7: if the *I* of Romans 7 and the body of death are the same and the body of death is everlastingly destroyed than *I* pass away too."

The Rev. H. Hoeksema: "I understand that Korn agrees with me. I have a few questions, Mr. Chairman: Is the cause of the tension negative or positive? Is it due to sin or due to my position in Christ? In the second place, What is the calling of the Church in view of the tension? Must she simply suffer, be apologetic, polemic, or what? And finally, is tension something in between?"

The Rev. H. Veldman: "The cause is positive-Christ. I did not face the question of our calling."

The Rev. R. Veldman: "What is the tension of the Church Triumphant? Is there tension in the Church Triumphant in the same sense as presented in the paper? Is anticipation tension? Is there tension in God?"

The Rev. H. Veldman: "The Church looks for deliverance-complete and final-in the judgment day."

The Rev. Prof. G. M. Ophoff: "I would like to return to Romans 7. Isn't the ego responsible for what he does in the body of this death. Are there not two ego's here from an ethical point of view, the new creature in Christ and the old man of sin? The *I* that sins and the *I* that hates what it does? If we do not maintain this then we are no longer responsible for what we do."

Here a discussion followed between the Rev. G. M. Ophoff and Rev. H. Hoeksema regarding definition of terms, especially of the term: responsibility. It was agreed that responsibility meant accountability and liability of the individual rational-moral creature.

The Rev. H. Hoeksema: "In the ultimate sense all the responsibility for our sins has been borne by Christ. The Christian does not answer in the final judgment nor in time except by that act of faith whereby he confesses his sins and becomes a justified sinner. The justified saints cast their responsibility on Christ. Individually we are not accountable before God's judgment seat. The very fact that as soon as the Christian discovers sin, he hates and confesses it changes his whole attitude in respect to sin and responsibility. Paradoxically speaking, he is not sinning when he sins because he hates what he does. The I-ego—the new man in Christ—certainly overcomes even his responsibility. He is justified. The act of faith whereby he hates his sins and confesses and repents of them makes him *all* new, even in respect to his sin. The Christian does not sin like the natural man but hates his sin and is no longer responsible for it. That is Lord's Day 23. That is the paradox: even though he commits sin as a responsible being yet he is justified in Christ."

The Rev. G. M. Ophoff: "We must guard against anti-nomianism."

The Rev. Hoeksema: "Then we do not hate sin. I have quoted the example before of the drunkard who lies in the ditch. Some men come along with a wheelbarrow and while they put him in it the drunk says: 'Be careful I am a Christian'. That is not Christianity. In Romans 7 the *I* that sins is the same *I* that hates sin. The Christian is one ego in two natures: the old body of death and the new man in Christ. The new man has the victory and does not say: 'I will have nothing to do with my sin', but he hates his own sin. That act of hatred and repentance and longing for deliverance makes him a new creature even in sin. The new man in Christ makes him a constant enemy even of his own sin."

W. H.

Note: In connection with our review of the Conference proceedings we would urge our readers to read

the two splendid articles on the Conference which appear in the October 17, issue of *Concordia*. Many of the practical questions and values are treated there.

W. H.

Contribution

(Continued from last Issue)

THE CONVICTING OFFICE OF THE SPIRIT

(Convinced by the Judgment of the
World-ruler)

The question should be faced: How is the conviction carried to the conscience of men that the unbelieving world shall be judged and sentenced?

In answering this we must of course remember that if the sentence of the world-ruler is to serve as ground for the conviction in men's hearts that the world faces sentence, then that sentence over the ruler must be an evident, a tangible fact. And this leads us to look for that historical fact.

It is most safe to turn to the life of Christ for the appearance of this sentence over Satan and then we find that Christ Himself points this out.

On one occasion the enemies accuse Christ of casting out demons through the prince of demons. But the Saviour shows the absurdity of this charge for it would simply imply that Satan's kingdom is divided against itself, internally torn apart by revolution and anarchy. But such a kingdom is of course doomed. The only other alternative is that He by the finger of God casts out demons. But that is a sign, which God indicates by His finger, that the Kingdom of God has come. For no conqueror can so dispose over and deal out the previous holdings of another unless he has first thoroughly vanquished, bound and evicted him. Christ's dealing at will with Satan's former victims shows that Satan has lost control (Luke 11:14-23).

We have another statement on the subject which points more to the history of the New Testament Church. Some Greeks had come to the disciples desiring to see Jesus. In this the Saviour sees a foretaste of His glory and the glory of the Father as that shall shine in the great multitude of the redeemed.

But this glory can come only through the way of suffering and the resultant defeat of Satan, and so the Saviour triumphantly announces: "Now is the judgment of this world, now is the prince of this world cast out, and I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all unto me." A first fruit of the Gentiles has already presented itself. It is only a first fruit and it foreshadows the whole redeemed church, because Satan's claim on them has been completely broken; he is cast out and condemned. (John 12:20-26).

This same idea is presented in the dialogue of the Saviour with the Seventy upon their return from the preaching tour in Galilee. "Lord," they say, "even the demons are subject to us in thy name."

But, he answered, I saw Satan as lightning fall out of heaven. . . . behold I give you authority over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. But above all they must rejoice in the positive fruit, namely, that their names are written in heaven (Luke 10:17-23).

Also here the fact that the disciples were able to cast out some demons if need required, is the proof of something far greater. It is the proof of the fact that the great ruler himself of that evil kingdom has been shorn of his power and evicted from his usurped domain.

To these historical instances we may of course add the fact of the whole New Testament triumph of the Gospel. Always we see there the powerlessness of Satan to hold his dominion.

Now this historical, visible defeat of Satan is to the world a proof that he has been condemned and his condemnation is the firstfruit and sample of the utter destruction of his whole kingdom and of all those who own him allegiance.

In conclusion we must recall that this is of great importance for the church.

The Saviour had said, The Holy Spirit as Advocate shall testify, and ye shall also testify. Thus it is through the Apostolic church that this conviction is worked. (John 15:26, 27).

That testimony is not without content, but it takes its content out of the Apostolic preaching.

And so it implies first that the Spirit will provide an infallible record in the Bible of that sin of unbelief toward the Servant of Jehovah, of His complete justification in the resurrection and exaltation, and of Satan's futile efforts to retain his dominion.

Secondly, it implies that the Spirit will always have a church in this world that is of God's party. He forms her by regeneration out of the kingdom of Satan and nothing can stop her appearance from generation to generation.

And, thirdly, He enables that Church to bear witness. He gives her conviction and desire and power to speak in His name and for His cause, and it is especially in time of suffering and persecution that her voice becomes very clear. For His promise to her is not that she shall be spared from suffering but that she shall be partaker of His triumph.

Thus by that testimony the Triune God through His anointed Servant in the Spirit as Advocate not only triumphs in the redemption of His elect church, but also continually in the victory of His Son over the hearts and minds of the wicked.

A. P.

Report of Classis West – Convened Sept. 25, 1946 at Oskaloosa, Iowa

Classis West convened on the morning of September 25, 1946, at nine o'clock in the Protestant Reformed Church of Oskaloosa, Iowa.

After the meeting was opened with the usual devotional exercises conducted by the Rev. L. Vermeer, the credentials were presented, showing all the delegates from the various consistories present.

Thereupon the Rev. P. Vis took over the presidency for the day. He first of all extended a word of welcome to all the delegates, and particularly to the Rev. A. Petter who was attending our Classis for the first time as delegate from Orange City, and also to the Synodical delegates for Examination, the Revs. J. Heys, B. Kok and R. Veldman from Classis East, who were meeting with us for the examination of Candidate James Howerzyl, pastor-elect of our Oskaloosa Church.

Advisory vote was extended to these three brethren from Classis East.

The main matter on the agenda was the examination of Candidate James Howerzyl, which Classis took up at once in the morning session.

Candidate Howerzyl preached a sermon on John 3:16, followed by an examination in the various branches as drawn up by the Classical Committee as follows:

Rev. G. Vos examined the candidate on the first two loci of dogmatics.

Rev. J. Blankespoor examined him on the next two loci.

Rev. C. Hanko examined him on the last two loci.

Rev. P. De Boer conducted the examination in Controversy.

Rev. L. Vermeer took the examination on Knowledge of the Confessions.

Rev. P. Vis carried on the examination on Knowledge of the Scriptures.

Rev. Petter concluded the examination with questions on Practica.

Each examiner was given twenty minutes.

After the examination was completed the Synodical delegates for Examination presented their vote of approval, and Classis expressed that the Candidate James Howerzyl has proven to be spiritually and intellectually qualified to be admitted to the ministry of the Word in our Churches, and advised the consistory of the Protestant Reformed Church of Oskaloosa, Iowa, to proceed with the ordination.

The candidate was informed of this decision by the Rev. G. Vos, who was appointed by the chair to extend this information to him with a few well-chosen words. The Rev. P. De Boer led the assembly in prayer to our God, thanking Him for His gift to His Church. The entire assembly then arose to sing the doxology in the Dutch language. After which opportunity was given to all present to extend their congratulations and wish the candidate the Lord's blessing.

The Sermon Committee reported to Classis that the next sermon book is not yet ready for publication, but will be published in the near future. The committee also informed Classis that they had sold a number of copies of volumes III and IV, and that they still have thirty copies available for those who are interested at \$2.00 per volume, or \$4.00 a set.

Since the two previous Synods referred the matter of the revision of our present Psalter back to the Classes for further study, Classis West decided to refer this matter back to the various consistories, that they may study the changes that have already been suggested, and present their advice at our next Classis meeting.

A consistory came to Classis with the information that one of their members had now complied with a requirement

made by this Classis in March, 1943. Classis decided that it could not enter into this matter, because this consistory did not come with any definite instruction or request, and also because this party should present his own case to the Classis by way of his consistory.

Three brethren were chosen to be proposed to our next Synod as Synodical delegates for Examination from Classis West. The three brethren chosen are: the Reverends A. Cammenga, G. Vos and J. Blankespoor. Their respective alternates are: the Reverends P. Vis, L. Vermeer and A. Petter.

The Reverends P. De Boer and L. Doezeema were chosen as church visitors for the churches of California. The Reverends L. Doezeema and C. Hanko were chosen for Manhattan. The Reverends J. Blankespoor and A. Petter were chosen for the churches in the mid-west. The Rev. P. Vis will serve as alternate for the last two.

Upon a request of the Mission Committee, Classis decided to supply the pulpit of our Hull Church for the Sundays of October 6 and 13, since the Rev. A. Cammenga would be serving the Mission Committee by preaching elsewhere at the time.. Rev. P. De Boer was appointed for the Sunday of October 6 and Rev. G. Vos for October 13.

At the close of the meeting the gathering sang Psalter No. 276, and Rev. G. Vos led in thanksgiving and prayer.

REV. C. HANKO, Stated Clerk

Report of Classis East – Convened Oct. 9, 1946 at Grand Rapids, Michigan

This meeting of Classis was held at Fuller Ave., on October 9, 1946.

Rev. H. Veldman, who presided at the last meeting of Classis, led in the opening exercises. Psalter No. 239 was sung after which Rev. H. Veldman read a portion of Ephesians 4 and led in prayer.

After the credentials were read and received, showing that all the churches were represented by their delegates, Classis was declared constituted.

According to rotation Rev. R. Veldman is called upon to preside. He asks the delegates present for the first time to sign the Formula of Subscription.

The minutes of the preceding Classical meeting are read and approved. The stated clerk reports that he had carried out the work assigned to him at the last Classis.

Classis granted the request of Grand Haven for Classical appointments, which stipulated that a few Sundays should be left open for student supply. The chair appointed the following committee to prepare a schedule for classical appointments: The Revs. H. Veldman and G.

Lubbers and Elder W. Wierenga. Later in the day they presented the following schedule, which was adopted by Classis:

October 13, Rev. G. Lubbers.
October 27, Rev. M. Schipper.
November 3, Rev. R. Veldman.
November 10, Rev. J. De Jong.
November 17, Rev. W. Hofman.
December 8, Rev. J. Heys.
December 15, Rev. M. Gritters.
December 22, Rev. H. Veldman.
January 5, Rev. S. Cammenga.

Seeing the preceding Classis did not finish its study of the Psalter Revision Committee's Report as it is found in the Acts of Synod of 1945, this matter was again taken up at this meeting of Classis.

Various decisions were taken recommending some and rejecting others, of the revisions suggested by the Committee.

Various suggestions were made by Classis. Among other things, Classis advised the Psalter Revision Committee to investigate all versifications of the Holland Psalms as they are found in the Psalter Hymnal.

Rev. S. Cammenga was appointed to thank the ladies for their catering services.

Classis decided to hold its next meeting again at Fuller Ave., the second Wednesday in January, January 8, 1947.

The questions of Article 41 of the Church Order were asked of the consistories. The minutes were read and approved. Upon motion Classis decides to adjourn. After the singing of Psalter No. 252, Rev. B. Kok leads in prayer.

D. JONKER, Stated Clerk.