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MEDITATION

The Crucifixion

"And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left." — Luke 23:33

In these few words you read the reward which Jesus received of His own: numbered with the transgressors!

You believe that the Jews were His own, do you not?

Attend unto the testimony of God who cannot lie: "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." John 1:11.

They were His own, bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh. He was the special Gift to the Jews, the chosen people of God. Many years before His advent was prophesied; His picture was drawn with many particular details.

But when He came, they received Him not.

This scandalous conduct was symbolized when there was no place for Him at His coming: there was no room for Him in the inn. And when He first appeared in His own city they would cast Him headlong unto the rocks below.

The end fits: He is crucified.

By His own.

His own had plotted against Him. Remember the deal which the leaders had made with Judas? The price of a slave: it fits.

His own had come in the dead of night and with sticks and swords had captured Him.

His own pronounced Him guilty unto death.

And the *bathos* of their rejection of Jesus was reached when they came to the judge of the Gentiles and delivered Him over to His will.

And even when he, that is Pilate, would let Him go, they screamed their denunciation of this Roman: You are not a friend of Caesar if you let Him go! Crucify Him! Crucify Him!

And His own prevailed! Jesus is given over to be crucified.

Jesus is crucified.

It was the form of capital punishment reserved for dangerous criminals such as murderers, robbers, and the like.

And it carried with it the idea of the curse of God. Listen to this revelation: "And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree: His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance." Deut. 21:22, 23.

So Jesus was the accursed of God.

Listen to Paul: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written: Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree." Gal. 3:13.

This curse of God is symbolized very plainly in crucifixion. It expresses that such a one is cast out from the earth: there is no place for such a one among men on earth. And such a one is not received in heaven either. There is no room for the crucified one in all the world, in the entire Universe. Both God and man reject Jesus Christ the Righteous.

Yes, both God and man reject Jesus.

But oh what a difference in this dual judgment.

The judgment of man is wholly unrighteous.

It is motivated by hatred and enmity against God.

You see, Jesus declared the Godhead among men. And they had understood that very plainly.

He gave Divine answers on earth. He wrought Divine works on earth. He healed the sick and possessed; He raised the dead. And He forgave sin.

He was really the sweetest revelation of the Godhead. All God's virtue and loveliness was reflected in the person and works of Jesus.

Moreover, there was no one who could lay a finger on Him. He went through the land doing good. And that's all He did. He never once did evil. Even the devil will testify to that. When Judas was about to hang himself he cried: I have shed the innocent blood!

That is also the reason why they had such an awful time convicting Him. Before the Sanhedrin they have to look

about for false witnesses. You do not act that way when you have a just cause against an evildoer. Merely let the facts speak for themselves. And before Pilate it is worse. The heathen Pilate said three or four times: I find no fault in Him and would let Him go. Look at the priests and scribes and lawyers: they go about the crowd and stir them up to raise the hue and cry: Crucify Him! They threaten Pilate with expulsion by the great Caesar.

Oh, yes, Jesus was indeed innocent. He was innocently condemned to death.

And the motive was hatred against God.

How different, how beautifully different is God's judgment.

God reveals in the condemnation of Jesus His infinite and eternal love. He is giving His only begotten Son so that whosoever believeth on Him would have eternal life.

* * *

Jesus Christ is crucified by God!

Look on that twisting and turning form. If you believe, you see there the outpouring of God's holy and eternal wrath over the Church, but visited in its Head. God has loved you, my brother, and my sister, from eternity. He has chosen you unto eternal life. But in Christ your head.

But that same God is filled with holy wrath against your sin that you have committed. Your sin is a monster. It had its inception in Adam and Eve. It became evident when you were born. You appeared in this world as a corrupt and guilty sinner. And from day to day and from age to age that monster of sin became more ugly, more abominable.

And God is God. That means that He must maintain Himself and His adorable virtues. His justice, holiness and truth call for punishment. And the punishment is eternal death, the curse, eternal desolation in hell.

But that entire Church of which you and I are members is in Christ and eternally was in Christ.

He, Christ Jesus, represents the Church of God in this terrible hour on Calvary. That is the reality of Golgotha, the place of the skull.

Even though the enemies are instrumental in the killing of Jesus, and even though they shall eternally carry away their reward for this foul deed, the death of the Son of God is the act of God's indescribable love for His own.

It is the hour of judgment for both the church and the world.

The world is judged, for they crucify the Innocent One out of the motive of hatred and enmity against God.

The Church is judged in its Head, and God accepts the price, that is paid, for it is paid from the motive of loving obedience to the Father.

* * *

Jesus Christ was crucified!

Many questions arise here.

And we cannot find the adequate answer. It seems to me you have to be a God to find the complete answer.

Yet we know something about it.

First, God died. How is that possible? Yes, He died in the human nature. God, as God, cannot die. But every second that Jesus hung on the tree you are permitted, you are commanded to say: There hangs God in human nature. And the Person Jesus hung His holy head, *and gave up the ghost!*

There is indeed one solitary text in the Bible which speaks of the blood of God! "To feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood!" Acts 20 :28b.

I do not understand fully; I cannot comprehend it; but, oh yes, I believe, I believe!

Wondrous Golgotha!

But there is much more.

Here hangs one solitary Figure, but the sins and the guilt of many millions are concentrated on Him. Nowhere will you ever see anything like that phenomenon. One is sent to hell for millions who go free. Concentration of wrath. And therefore no one shall ever suffer like Jesus did. No not even Beelzebub.

Golgotha is the pinpointing of eternal wrath of millions on the head of One. And oh, such a One!

Third, here hangs HOLINESS and RIGHTEOUSNESS! Holiness in hell. Do you understand that? Righteousness is treated as though He were evil and crooked and perverse. But He is L'INNOCENCE in PERSON.

If I were sent to hell I would carry with me the conviction that I belong there, that I fit there. But not so Jesus: O, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?

Do you understand?

And the most difficult question of all: Jesus Christ, the Son of God concentrates eternity in 33½ years. How is that possible? If there had not been a Jesus for you and me, we would have lain under the rays of God's wrath for all eternity. He took our place, so that eternal death is His portion; but attend to this: there comes a TIME that He saith: IT IS FINISHED! There is the mystery.

Yes, I know that theologians tell us that the answer to that question is: Jesus is God and the Almighty and Eternal God sustained Him in His suffering so that eternal wrath could be emptied in time. I know all that, but still I am amazed and do not comprehend. I can but wonder . . . and worship.

But the sweetest story of Golgotha I find to be the motive of Jesus' suffering and death.

It is the motive of loving obedience.

You see, His suffering and death are atonement.

And atonement is more than payment of the debt, of the eternal debt of sin and guilt.

The devils and the reprobates also pay, and they pay eternally, but they never atone.

In order to atone, you have to suffer the wrath of God and love Him even for the manifestation of that wrath!

In order to atone for sin, you must stand on the bottom-

less bottom of hell in the midst of the terrible rays of God's wrath, and there you must say: I love Thee, o my God! That is atonement.

And that is what Jesus did for me!

Is it a wonder that the throngs in heaven sing to Him: Thou hast redeemed us unto God by Thy blood?

And that Jesus is the Gift of God.

Golgotha is the beating of the heart of God's love.

And so we say of the commemoration of that Cross: it is Good Friday!

GOOD Friday!

It opened the floodgates of the love of God for His own! Hallelujah! Amen.

G.V.

THE ADDRESS OF THE REV. H. C. HOEKSEMA
is after April 1:
463 E. 164th Place
South Holland
Illinois.

MY GOD, MY GOD, I CRY TO THEE

My God, My God, I cry to Thee;
O why hast Thou forsaken Me?
Afar from Me, Thou dost not heed,
Though day and night for help I plead.

But Thou art holy in Thy ways,
Enthroned upon Thy people's praise;
Our fathers put their trust in Thee,
Believed, and Thou didst set them free.

They cried, and, trusting in Thy Name,
Were saved, and were not put to shame;
But in the dust My honor lies,
While all reproach and all despise.

My words a cause for scorn they make,
The lip they curl, the head they shake,
And, mocking, bid Me trust the Lord
Till He salvation shall afford.

My trust on Thee I learned to rest
When I was on My mother's breast;
From birth Thou art My God alone,
Thy care My life has ever known.

O let Thy strength and presence cheer,
For trouble and distress are near;
Be Thou not far away from Me,
I have no source of help but Thee.

Psalm 22:1-6

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EDITORIALS

The Future Of Our Churches

3.

Fact is that, from the beginning of our separate history until the present time, no one ever dared to call us a sect or un-Reformed.

In 1924 we did not depart from the truth of the Scriptures and the Confessions. Even the very synod of 1924, that desperately tried to brand us as un-Reformed, failed. For, under the kind providence of our God, they were forced to admit, in spite of themselves, that we were Reformed according to the Reformed Confessions, though it be with a tendency to one-sidedness. In this they condemned themselves.

And ever since we have sounded forth a clear Reformed note in speech and writing. Our books and pamphlets (and there are many of them) have been spread abroad, not only in our own country, but virtually over the whole Reformed church world, in England, the Netherlands, and South Africa. The result is that we were recognized as being Reformed. We were invited to attend the ecumenical synod and we were also asked to cooperate with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands in the revision of the Church Order.

We certainly have survived the stage in which we were in danger of being called a sect because of the evil decisions of 1924 and we are recognized as Reformed Churches.

All this gives us hope for the future.

Yet, after all, the main question is whether we have any basis in the Word of God to believe that, in the future, God will preserve us as churches.

Shall we, as a small group of Protestant Reformed Churches, continue to exist, or shall we finally be swallowed up in one of the larger denominations and dwindle away?

Shall we, in other words, remain faithful to the truth?

That, within the space of thirty years, many already left us, so that we became smaller rather than enjoy a normal growth in numbers, is not important. In the future we may very well have another split. The history of the true church shows that it is very normal that, periodically, schisms occur in the church on earth. This may be expected. The cause, of course, is always the carnal element in the church. That this was the cause of our recent schism is very evident from its entire history. But, once more, this is not important. The thing that matters is that we remain faithful to the truth and that, too, in both confession and walk.

For then we may be assured that God's promises, as they are revealed in the Word of God, are for us.

God's promises are for the elect and for the elect church, and for no one else.

Those promises can never fail. If, in the light of the Word of God, we may be assured that we belong to the church-elect, and that, therefore, the promises of God are

ours, we may be assured that the future is ours, no matter what happens in the history of the church in the world.

Hence, once more, the sole question is whether we belong to the church-elect for whom are the promises; and to that church we surely belong if we are faithful to the truth in confession and life. Only where the truth is preached, maintained over against all gainsayers, and where that truth is revealed in the life of believers, there is the church.

We may read our future in the seven letters to the churches of Asia Minor that are contained in the second and third chapters of the book of Revelation. None of those seven churches exist anymore. But in these seven letters we have a rather clear and definite answer to the question when the church in the world may expect a future, and, therefore, also to the question whether we as Protestant Reformed Churches may expect a future in the favor of our God.

In these letters we are taught that a church is on the way to destruction when she leaves her first love. A church may be very faithful to the truth for a time, so that she opposes and casts out the heretics and even try those that come with the pretention that they are apostles. She may also be very active in all kinds of good works and bear patiently all kinds of suffering in the world for the sake of Christ. Yet, if she loses her first love, if those that love not the Lord Jesus Christ and the brethren, gradually come to have the majority in the church, she is on the way to destruction and cannot have a future. For then the Lord will soon remove the candlestick out of its place. Without the love of the Lord Jesus Christ the light of the truth cannot shine.

From these seven letters, it is also very evident that only the church that is faithful in every respect has a future. The distinguishing marks of the church are usually said to be three: the true preaching of the Word, the proper administration of the sacraments, and the exercise of Christian discipline. Of these, the first is the chief mark for where the true preaching of the Word fails, the other two marks cannot be maintained.

It is remarkable that, in the seven letters to the churches in the book of Revelation, there are only two that appear entirely faithful, to which the Lord addresses no rebuke whatever. They are the churches of Smyrna and Philadelphia. It is also worthy of note that both these churches are apparently small and weak and poor in earthly means. Moreover it is evident that both these churches are characterized by having to endure suffering for Christ's sake. To the church of Smyrna the Lord writes: "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days." And to the church of Philadelphia He writes: "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell

upon the earth." Evidently, from these letters it is plain that it is not a question of large numbers, or of material strength, whether the church in the world shall be able to exist. It is purely a question of faithfulness, even unto death and even in the midst of the suffering — of faithfulness of this present time whether or not the church or a particular church shall have a future. This surely we may apply to our own Protestant Reformed Churches. We may be small in number and we are; we may be weak in material resources, and we are; men may despise us, and they do; but if we are faithful, we know that the grace of our God is still with us, the promises of God are still upon us, and we may expect a future as a church of Jesus Christ in the world.

It is also remarkable that three of the churches mentioned in these seven letters are rebuked because they are lax in discipline, though this laxity has different causes and appears in different degrees: the church in Pergamos, that in Thyatira, and that in Sardis.

Of these three the first is the strongest. It, evidently, had been strong in the truth, had kept the faith, and had been willing to suffer for Christ's sake. But, perhaps, because the days of persecution belonged to the recent past, and because the church in Pergamos dreaded more or less another period of persecution, she began to suffer those that taught false doctrine. For the Lord writes to them: "But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate." It is plain that the fault of the church of Pergamos was that they suffered those that taught false doctrine. They were lax in discipline.

This was also true of the church in Thyatira, although it was for an entirely different reason. In many respects that church presented a lovely picture. The Lord writes of her: "I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first." That, indeed, is a beautiful picture of a church. We would almost expect that the Lord could not have anything against that church for which to rebuke her. Yet he has. At the same time, in that church existed a most horrible condition. This is expressed in the words: "Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols." How, we ask, was this possible in such a lovely church? My answer is that Thyatira was a sort of a mystical church. She lived by feeling. She was not strong in the truth. That is the reason why she accepted evidently the word of the woman that called herself a prophetess. She did not discern the truth clearly, and this was the reason for her laxity in discipline. She suffered the lie of Jezebel in her midst, and also suffered the sin of fornication and of eating meat sacrificed to idols.

All this is a warning to us as churches. We must be strong in the truth, and faithfully expel from our midst the evil ones. Only then we can expect a future as Protestant Reformed Churches.

The third of the three mentioned is the church of Sardis. Next to the church of Laodicea, she is the most miserable of the seven. It can hardly be said that the chief trouble with her is that she was lax in discipline, although this also was true. She is dead, though she has a name that she lives. Perhaps, she still maintained the true doctrine, but if so it was dead orthodoxy of the worst kind. She certainly did not walk in the truth, for her works were not found perfect before God. She is ready to die! A Church may be ever so sound in doctrine, but if that sound doctrine is not accompanied by and manifest in good works of faith, and she does not cast out those that walk in evil ways, she has no future. Let us remember this!

Then, finally, at the end of the series, is the church of Laodicea, the most miserable of all. She is lukewarm, neither cold nor hot, unconcerned about anything spiritual, nauseating to the Lord: he will spew her out of His mouth! She says that she is rich and has need of nothing, but in the meantime she is in want of all spiritual riches of grace. The Lord already stands outside of the church, calling to those that are still faithful to come out and separate themselves from that most miserable church. The Lord preserve us from ever presenting the picture of the church in Laodicea!

Thus, then, is the picture of the church in the world.

Let us study it. And from it let us gather the truth that the promises of God are always upon His elect church, and that, if by the grace of God we walk in the truth and preserve it unto the end, and are faithful to cast out the evil ones, we may expect a future as Protestant Reformed Churches! H.H.

The Letter of the Rev. Kok

Here follows the letter which, soon after his return from the Netherlands, the Rev. Kok read, or had read, to his congregation. The consistory of our church in Holland was kind enough to furnish me with a true copy of the letter and gave me their consent to publish it. Of course, it was public property already for the letter was read by Kok at a meeting of Classis East last year.

August 12, 1949

Beloved Congregation:

With deep and sincere gratitude to our covenant God we have again returned into your midst, and into the midst of my family and loved ones. The Lord gave us a very prosperous and profitable journey to the land of our birth, and for most of us the land of our fathers. It was indeed a wonderful experience for which I shall always feel deeply grateful to you, and to all who have made it possible.

The great joy of returning home, and of coming back into the midst of the congregation, was marred, however, by two things: first, that according to the doctor's report, my throat is still very much inflamed, so that I shall not be able to preach the Word in your midst in the immediate future. This is indeed a great disappointment, especially because I had every reason to hope that my throat would be better upon my return. May the Lord give grace to be submissive to His will.

The second reason why the joy of our homecoming was marred was the article which appeared in the *Standard Bearer* of August 1, in which it is alleged, that the Prof. Holwerda of Kampen, ascribed unto me (and to the Rev. De Jong) statements, which if true, would be a betrayal by me, of our Protestant Reformed Churches and its doctrines. I can well understand that the consistory and congregation were deeply shocked and grieved upon reading this article. To me it was also a shock. I am at a loss to understand how that the Prof. Holwerda, whom I regard as a sincere servant of God, could write as he did, and thus put both the Rev. De Jong and myself under a cloud of suspicion.

The fact in the case are these. We were invited to attend a meeting at Kampen with the deputies for correspondence of the Liberated Churches, together with several individuals who had protested the decision of the Liberated Churches to seek correspondence with the Protestant Reformed Churches, among whom was also the Prof. Holwerda. Let it be remembered that we were merely present as invited guests, not as representatives of the Prot. Reformed Churches.

At this meeting it was our contention that there should be correspondence between the Liberated Churches in the Netherlands, and the Protestant Reformed Churches, on the basis of Scripture and the Three Forms of Unity, and the Church Order of Dordt. It was pointed out that in distinction from the Synodical Churches in the Netherlands, who are bound by the decisions of 1942 and 1946 in re the doctrines of pre-supposed regeneration, and the Christian Reformed Churches here, who are bound by the Three Points of 1924 in re the doctrines of "Common Grace," that we as Protestant Reformed Churches are bound only by the Holy Scriptures as interpreted in our Three Forms of Unity.

From this position it appears that the Prof. Holwerda drew the wholly unwarranted conclusions which he wrote in that alleged letter to an immigrant in Canada, and which was published in the *Standard Bearer*. These unwarranted conclusions are not true, and I deny them with my whole heart. It is not true that the teachings of the Rev. Hoeksema in re election are not held among us in high esteem. Neither that it is our opinion "that most (of the Prot. Ref.) do not think as Rev. Hoeksema and Rev. Ophoff." Neither do we believe that there is "great sympathy for the Liberated in the matter of their doctrine of the covenant," and that "for that

conception there is ample room," in our Protestant Reformed Churches.

I do believe, however, that the Liberated brethren in the Netherlands love the Reformed faith. In re the doctrine of the covenant, in my opinion they have much to learn, but in re the doctrine of 'Common Grace' they speak our language, and express time and again that they have much to be thankful for to our churches.

We sincerely regret that the Prof. Holwerda has so misconstrued our position, and it is our hope and prayer that in due time he will rectify this serious error.

Hoping that this will clarify our position in the midst of the congregation, and praying for the welfare and peace of Jerusalem, I remain,

With Christian Greetings

Bernard Kok

Your Pastor.

Note by the editor:

It is very evident that Kok, in this letter, makes Prof. Holwerda a liar. According to Kok, virtually none of the statements made by the late Prof. Holwerda, are true. He simply invented them all.

At the classical meeting Kok was asked whether he ever informed Prof. Holwerda of this or sent him a copy of the above letter. He replied that he did not. Yet, he piously (?) states in his letter that "it is our hope and prayer that in due time he will rectify this serious error."

It is our opinion that this act of Kok is thoroughly immoral for especially two reasons:

1. He never informed Prof. Holwerda of the whole matter. It is, therefore, an act of backbiting. Besides, I have plenty reason to believe that it is also downright slander. I corresponded with Prof. Holwerda about this matter and he never denied that he had written the truth. Besides, at a certain occasion, Kok and De Jong were in my study. At that time, Kok said that the letter of Holwerda was not quite true. De Jong, however, denied this. Besides, the statements made by Holwerda in his letter to Canada are so definite that they could not have been invented.

2. Morally, the matter becomes even much worse because Kok waited with publishing his letter by reading it to the classis after Holwerda had died, so that he could not have a come-back.

I sincerely hope that some of the Netherlands brethren that were present at that conference of which Kok speaks in his letter, will clear the good name of Prof. Holwerda from this vicious slander and backbiting. Some of them get the *Standard Bearer* and I am awaiting their reaction.

H.H.

(Continued on page 301)

Classical appointments were given to the churches of Lynden and Doon. In connection with Lynden, it was decided to ask that consistory to seek pulpit supply from the East for the summer months of June, July, and August. Rev. Heys will preach there April 17, 24, and May 1, and Rev. Kuiper will spend three Sundays there in the month of May.

We enjoyed this meeting of Classis West. It is true that we are small in number. This situation may be rectified at the meeting of Synod next June. But, although small in number, we are one in the truth once delivered to us, and we may go forward in the assurance that the Lord, Who has called us to the proclamation of this glorious truth, will never forsake or leave us.

Rev. H. Veldman, Stated Clerk.

REPORT OF CLASSIS WEST IN EDGERTON, MINN., MARCH 16, 1955.

Classis West met in classical session March 16, 1955, in Edgerton, Minnesota. We met in the Runals Hall where our congregation conducts its services pending the decision of the court relative the name and property of our church in Edgerton.

Classis welcomed Rev. J. A. Heys into its fellowship. And that brother presided at our classical meeting.

Four churches were represented at this classical meeting. Lynden was unable to send a delegation. The Classis felt and expressed that our churches should send a delegation to our classical meetings if at all possible. Matters come up for discussion which should be discussed by all the consistories, and it is at times difficult to make decisions which involve a certain congregation when that congregation is not represented.

The Classis adopted a proposed constitution for our classical committee. A committee had been appointed which, in conjunction with a similar committee appointed by Classis East, would draw up such a constitution for the classical committee. Having adopted this proposed constitution, the Classis decided to forward it, as revised and adopted (the committee of Classis East had met, drawn up a constitution, and sent it to our committee for approval), to the committee of Classis West.

Edgerton requested Classis West that it be permitted to ask for collections in Classis West to help pay the expenses because of the court trial in Pipestone, Minn., and forward a similar request to Synod for permission to ask a collection in our churches of Classis East. This request was granted.

Routine matters, such as voting for members of committees, synodical delegates, and the approval of subsidy requests were treated and decided at our meeting. The Classis also received the report of its Church Visitors.

Voting for synodical delegates, the Classis decided to elect 3 ministers and 5 elders to represent our Classis at the sessions of Synod next June. This action was taken because of the shortage of ministers in our Classis. We felt that the principle of equal representation of the Classes at the Synod was weightier than the principle that each classis should be represented by an equal number of ministers and elders.

The voting for synodical delegates resulted as follows:

		Elders:	
Ministers:	Primi	Secundi	
J. A. Heys	H. J. Blankespoor	M. Gaastra	
H. H. Kuiper	R. Brunsting	G. Gunnink	
H. Veldman	J. Docter	P. Jansma	
	T. Feenstra	N. Kooiker	
	E. Van Egdome	B. Van Maanen	

The Classis decided to meet, the Lord willing, in Doon, Iowa, Sept. 14, 1955. At the conclusion of the meeting, the chairman, Rev. Heys, addressed a few appropriate remarks to the Rev. H. C. Hoeksema who is leaving our Classis inasmuch as he has accepted a call to our church at South Holland. We are loathe to see the brother depart and wish him the Lord's blessing. Rev. H. C. Hoeksema closed our meeting, after responding to the remarks addressed to him by the chairman.

(over)

OUR DOCTRINE

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

AN EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

PART III — OF THANKFULNESS

LORD'S DAY 45

Chapter 2

The Requisites of True Prayer (continued)

And thus, finally, we will also approach Him in the attitude of confidence, the confidence that He will surely grant us our petitions. For he that cometh unto God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. Heb. 11:6. We shall be able to close our prayers with a real and true *Amen*, confident not merely that He shall give us something, but that He shall grant us exactly what we asked of Him according to His will. And the blessed fruit for us will be that He will abundantly give us His grace and Spirit, and that "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Phil. 4:7.

Chapter 3

The Perfection of the Lord's Prayer

In the last two questions and answers of the present Lord's Day the Catechism refers briefly to the prayer which the Lord Himself has taught us, and quotes it.

All the rest of this work on the Heidelberg Catechism will be devoted to a discussion of that most perfect prayer which the Lord Himself taught us.

Before we enter into a detailed discussion of this most perfect prayer, before we set our feet across the threshold of this holy of holies, and dwell for a moment in every hall and chamber of this sanctuary, we will do well to examine the grandeur and beauty and perfection of the whole. For it is not only from the separate petitions of this model prayer that the Lord Jesus would have His people learn how they should pray. But He also would teach us some of the most fundamental underlying principles of true prayer by the order of the various petitions and by their relation in which they stand to one another.

In Matthew 6:9 the Lord introduces this most perfect prayer in the following words: "After this manner therefore pray ye." This does not mean that in the Lord's Prayer we have a fixed form from which we may never depart in our own prayers. But it certainly signifies that it is a model, the main lines of which we must always copy, and the chief principles of which we may really never violate when we ap-

proach the throne of grace with our petitions. And to discover these we must not be too hasty to analyze the Lord's Prayer and to expound its details; but we must rather tarry a while, to contemplate the beauty and meaning of its contents and style.

And then we may notice at once that this prayer is characterized by simple brevity, on the one hand; yet, by fulness and completeness, on the other hand.

In the immediate context the Lord had taught His disciples that they should not use "vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him." Matt. 6:7, 8. This principle is certainly embodied in the Lord's Prayer. It is so brief and simple that it requires no more than half a minute to recite it, and a small child can very easily learn it by heart. This does not mean that we may not dwell in this holy place of prayer much longer than the time required to recite this prayer. Nor does it imply that we may never employ more words in our prayers. The contrary is true. It is well for us, who are often so occupied with earthly matters that it is difficult for us to enter into the sanctuary and to lift up our hearts to the Holy One, that we take much time to separate ourselves unto prayer. And when we really pour out our hearts in prayer, we may well have need of many more words than we find in the Lord's Prayer to worship and adore and glorify the Most High, and to drink from the fountain of life and all good. But it does mean that we must never assume the attitude of one that presumes to inform God about mundane matters, nor of the headstrong child that seeks to obtain what it wants by its importunity. Your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. Hence, you need not employ vain repetitions in order to explain your needs to Him; neither do you have to persuade Him to fulfill your real needs. Your Father is always ready to grant you that which you ask of Him according to His will.

But while the Lord's Prayer is very brief, it is not lacking in contents on that account. On the contrary, it is a perfect whole. It contains a fulness of petitions. The Christian cannot think of anything more to ask than that which is expressed in this model prayer. Whatever he prays in addition to the contents of the Lord's Prayer, or contrary to it, is certainly not according to the will of God. The marvel of this prayer then is that while it is so extremely simple and brief, it fully expresses all that the Christian in this world needs.

Looking once more at this most perfect prayer, to contemplate its perfection, we notice that the prayer presupposes a certain subject and a certain standpoint of that subject. The subject of this prayer is the Christian. And it is the Christian as he stands in the midst of this present world.

This prayer is frequently uttered in public gatherings, and before mixed audiences in the world. There seems to be a notion that it is especially adapted for this purpose. Nothing, however, could be farther from the truth. It is not the

world of the ungodly, that cannot pray, nor mere man as such that is the subject of the Lord's Prayer. But very definitely it is the redeemed and regenerated and sanctified child of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. From the address of this prayer to the doxology there is not a petition that fits in the mouth of the natural man,—not even the prayer for daily bread. It is the believer that is able to address God as his Father in heaven, that is concerned about the name and the kingdom and the will of God, that is in need of the forgiveness of sins, and that longs for the deliverance from evil, that is the subject of this prayer. It is the Christian that truly acknowledges that God's only is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever that speaks in this prayer. But it is the Christian as he is in this world. In heaven, in the new creation, wherein righteousness shall dwell, we shall certainly also pray. But we shall then be able to pray the Lord's Prayer in this form no longer. Then God's name shall be forever hallowed in perfection. Then His kingdom shall have come in its final glory, and therefore His will shall be done in earth and in heaven without a fault. Then we shall no longer need bread; and we shall not be in daily need of forgiveness; nor shall there be any more evil or danger of temptation. It is in this world only that we need bread, and that we need it for just one day, no more. And it is in this world too that we need the grace of forgiveness and of deliverance from the evil one. The standpoint of him that utters his prayer, therefore, is that of the believer in this present world and in the state of the present imperfection and battle. Let no one deceive himself into imagining that this prayer is especially adapted to be prayed in public gatherings or mixed audiences. On the other hand, let no one assume the position that it requires ultimate perfection to pray after the manner of the Lord's Prayer.

Let us now look somewhat more closely at the structure and composition of this perfect model of prayer, at the number and order of the separate petitions contained in it. We notice that it consists of three main parts: the address, or allocution, the various petitions, and the close, or doxology. The meaning and contents of these several parts we expect to discuss in the future. At present, however, we must examine especially the order of the different petitions. It strikes us immediately that these petitions may be divided into two groups, and that the first of these groups is concerned wholly and exclusively with God and His cause in the world, while the second group has reference to our needs. The first group contains three petitions. And if we may distinguish four petitions in the second group, which is not impossible, we find the number of God Triune and the number of the world, or of the creature, represented here, together symbolizing the perfection of God's kingdom and covenant by the number *seven*. Be this as it may, there is a very definite principle clearly taught in the order of the two groups, the principle, namely, that in our prayer we are concerned with God above all and in the first place, and with

ourselves only in the second place and for His name's sake. Now this is a very important, yea, even the all-important principle underlying all true prayer. All things in heaven and on earth exist for God's sake. The glory of God is the purpose of all that exists in all creation. That, in fact, is the sole purpose. You and I, all men, the righteous and the wicked, angels and devils, as well as all the wide creation, must serve that one and highest purpose. Even all the work of salvation, with Jesus Christ in the center, is aimed at that purpose only. There are even in this respect no two ultimate purposes, the glory of God and the salvation of His people. But the latter is subservient to the former. And it is the sole and full happiness and blessedness of the saved, of the redeemed in Christ Jesus our Lord, that they may forever willingly and consciously serve that purpose of their existence and calling. That, in fact, constitutes their highest blessedness. It is this truth that is embodied in the Lord's Prayer and that is revealed in the order of the two main groups of separate petitions, the first pertaining to God, the second to us.

This form of the Lord's Prayer reveals indeed a most significant and fundamental principle of all prayer. And how deeply and keenly we feel, as we compare our average prayers with this perfect model of the Lord's Prayer, that we have as yet but a small beginning of that new obedience that enables us to pray. And what a close connection there is between a godly life and prayer. For let us not forget that this deepest principle of prayer does not mean that we seek God and His glory, His name, His kingdom, His will, first; and then, next to it, and on a par with it, ourselves. But it implies that in our prayers we make all things subservient to that one supreme purpose, God and His cause, His glory, His name, His kingdom, His will. It means that we desire and seek and ask for our daily bread only in as far it may be in harmony with His will conducive to the coming of His kingdom, and tending to the glory of His name, and that we would rather go hungry in this world than that because of our bread God and His cause should suffer. It implies that we desire earnestly the forgiveness of sin, that we flee from and fight against all temptation, and long for the deliverance from all sin, because sin dishonors the name of God, is in conflict with the righteousness of His kingdom and opposed to the perfect will of our Father in heaven. How often is the disposition of our heart directly the opposite from what this principle of the Lord's Prayer requires it to be. How often are we inclined to seek our own ends regardless of what may become of God's glory, of His kingdom, and of His will. Well may we humble ourselves deeply before the throne of grace, and well may we, after we have heard the Lord Jesus' injunction, "After this manner pray ye," get on our knees and earnestly beseech Him, "Lord, not only give us a model prayer, but above all give us grace to pray."

H.H.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Prophecy of Malachi

Title — THE AUTHOR AND THE SUBJECT OF THE PROPHECY. Chapter 1:1.

1. *The word of the Lord unto Israel by the hand of Malachi.* The word of the Lord comes to Israel, the post-exilic remnant that has returned from the captivity of the Babylonian exile. In the final instance Israel is the church of the elect as comprehending both Jews and Gentiles.

1. The prologue — Jehovah's love for Israel, 1:2-5.

2. *I have loved you said Jehovah. And ye say, wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? said Jehovah: Yet I loved Jacob,*

3. *And Esau I hated, and laid his mountains and his portion waste for the dragons of the wilderness.*

4. *Whereas Edom saith, we are broken in pieces, but we will return and build the ruins; thus said Jehovah of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and the people against whom the Lord hath indignation forever.*

5. *And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The Lord is great from upon and to the border of Israel.*

I have loved you . . . Qal perfect. The tense of the verb looks back to Jehovah's loves of Israel throughout its entire history and all eternity.

In what hast thou loved us? This word expresses the objection. Life had not been easy for the returned remnant. The Samaritans had been bitterly hostile. They had accused the Jews of disloyalty that had resulted in the issuing of a decree forbidding the building of the city walls (Ezra 4:6ff). There had been harvest failures as a result of drought and a plague of locusts (Mal. 3:9ff, Hag. 2:19). The glowing visions of the preexilic prophets were not realized. The nations were not shaken as had been foretold (Hag. 2:6, 7. The preexilic prophets particularly Isaiah). On the contrary, Persia remained supreme, while Judah remained governed by foreigners.

The prophet introduces his reply by another question, *"Was not brother Esau to Jacob?"* Indeed they were twin brothers and the offspring of the same godfearing parents. One would expect therefore that the Lord should assume the same attitude toward both. But such was not the case. *"And I loved Jacob but Esau I hated."* Jacob — the ancestral father and his elect natural offspring. In the final instance Jacob is the church of the elect as comprehending both Jews and Gentiles. Esau — the ancestral father and his offspring the Edomites of ancient times. In the final instance Esau is the reprobated portion of humanity. *"Have loved . . . have hated."* The tense of the verbs (Qal perfect) again carries us back to God's counsel, so that basically the meaning

is; From everlasting to everlasting have I loved Jacob and hated Esau. This amazing discrimination as coupled with the fact that this "Jacob have I loved but Esau have I hated" was said to the mother before the children were born and before they thus had done any good or evil," proves that the Lord has mercy on whom He will have mercy and that He hardens whom He will, that in a word, His loves and hatred are sovereign.

The meaning of the words "love" and "hate" must not be toned down into loving more and loving less. To hate is the opposite of love as is clear from the way the Lord expresses His love of Jacob and His hatred of Esau, the Edomites. He sets Esau's mountains a desolation and his portion for the monsters of the wilderness. Esau's portion — the mountains of Seir that the Lord in His providence but not in His favor had given him for a habitation. It is a matter of record that Esau was driven from his portion by the Arabs and that his mountains became a desolation. But Esau refused to see the hand of the Lord in all this. Continuing defiant, he said, "we are broken in pieces, but we will return and build the ruins." But it would be to no lasting avail. For the Lord said, "They will build but I shall pull down." The meaning is that Edom shall never be rehabilitated. It hasn't till this day. Edom as a nation became extinct.

And they shall call them the borders of wickedness and the people against whom the Lord hath indignation forever. They that thus call are the believers. For they see with their own eyes Esau's permanent desolation. And they say, Let the Lord be magnified from, upon and to the borders of Israel." The meaning is: Let the redeemed of God from one end of Israel to the other magnify the Lord.

This is the prophet's reply to the skepticism of God's people as expressed by the question, "In what hast thou loved us?" That is, what is the proof? This, that in His eternal hatred of Esau the Lord sets Esau's portion a perpetual desolation. This certainly proves that the Lord hates Esau. But how can it serve as proof of the Lord's love of Israel? It is plain that more is implied in the reply of the prophet than is actually expressed.

The Lord expels Esau from his portion and destroys him as a nation and sets his portion an everlasting desolation in order to save Israel from his clutch. But the Lord did not set Israel's heritage a desolation and destroy His people so that they became extinct as a nation. He did lead Israel into the captivity of the exile, that is Judah. But He again had mercy upon His people. After the seventy years He turned their captivity and reestablished them in the promised land of their abode. All this is implied in the prophet's reply to the unbelief of the returned exiles. It proves marvelously the Lord's hatred of Esau and His love of Jacob.

But we cannot end with this prophecy in the remnant of Judah and in the Edomites of the Old Dispensation. Edom typified the reprobated portion of humanity, the world that lies in darkness and for which Christ does not pray. Now

the portion of Esau is this earth in its present state. Though it belongs to God's people by promise, it is in the actual possession of Esau of this present time. But God is always spoiling this earth, Esau's portion, through His curse as operative in flood, storm, earthquakes, pestilence, heat, cold and especially war, thus also through the agency of Esau himself. The nations of the earth make war upon each other, and wars are terribly devastating especially modern war. But now, too, Esau in defiance of Christ is always saying, "we will return and build the ruins." That is what the world said after the last world war. And Europe is today largely rehabilitated. But it is to no lasting avail. For the Lord has said, "They will build but I will pull down." There are new wars in prospect. The Lord will continue to spoil Edom's heritage. At His second coming there will be the final world catastrophe. The elements will melt. All the works of men will be rolled up as a scroll. Edom's portion shall then be that region of eternal torment and outer darkness—hell. At the same time there will be new heavens and a new earth upon which shall dwell righteousness and to be inherited by Jacob, the redeemed of God. And their eyes shall see and they shall say, "The Lord be magnified from upon and to the borders of Israel." But Israel will then be the new earth. And all is the fruit of Christ's atonement.

Of these workings of the Lord the calamities of Esau and the turning of Judah's captivity and the reestablishment of the remnant in the land of Judah were the prophetic types. They prove God's love of Jacob and his hatred of Esau.

II. The Lord rebukes priest and people for profaning His altar. 1:6-8, 10.

6. *A son honors father and a servant his master; if then a father am I, where is my honor? And if master am I, where is my fear? saith Jehovah of hosts unto you O priests despisers of my name. And ye say, In what despise we thy name?*

7. *Ye are offering upon my altar bread polluted, and ye say, In what pollute we thee? In that ye say, The table of Jehovah is contemptible.*

8. *And if ye offer the blind for a sacrifice, it is not evil. And if ye offer the lame and the sick, it is not evil. Offer it now to your governor, will he be pleased with thee or lift up thy face, saith Jehovah Sabaoth.*

Instead of giving Jehovah the honor due to Him as Father and master, priests and people despise His name. This they do by offering polluted bread, that is, blind, lame and sick animals for a sacrifice. The rebuke is addressed to the priests as the soul of national life, but it applies with equal force to the people as it is they that supply the altar. The priests should have refused to accept improper offerings from the worshippers and should have instructed them in their duty. But they do not guard the interests of Jehovah. The law required that the animals selected for the altar, Jehovah's table, be perfect specimens of their kind without spot or blemish. And with reason. The sacrifices by blood were

meant to foreshadow the sinless Saviour in His suffering and dying for the sins of His people. As uncorrupted the sacrifices by blood were the word of God, the Gospel of Christ, the revelation of God in Christ's face, so that in corrupting, polluting these sacrifices priest and people were guilty of corrupting, polluting God's self-revelation, His name. Of that very sin the prophet accuses them.

The priests were appointed to make atonement for sin and to intercede for offenders. And therefore the prophet urges them to beseech the face of the Lord that He may be gracious unto "us" priests and worshipper including the prophet. But he at once assures them that the Lord will not regard their person, hearken unto their intercession, seeing that they corrupt his table.

10. *Who among you that he may shut the doors in order that ye may not kindle my altar in vain. There is not to me pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts. And offering do not I delight from your hand.*

The meaning is this: Would that someone were among you to shut the doors of the temple, so that all worshippers will be excluded and in consequence all sacrifice will cease. That is, it is far better that they close the doors of the temple and extinguish the altar fires than to continue this sort of service. This applies with equal force today. Better no meetings for public worship at all than meetings on which the Gospel of Christ is corrupted and the Lord's name profaned.

11. *For from the rising of the sun and unto the going down great my name among the Gentiles. And in every place incense will be offered to my name and offering pure. For great my name among the Gentiles, saith Jehovah Sabaoth.*

This is a prophecy of the coming of the blessings of Abraham to the Gentiles in the fulness of time. The Gentiles will see all God's marvelous works of redemption presented to them through the Gospel preaching, and they will praise and magnify His name.

12. *But ye are profaning him in that ye say. The table of the Lord is polluted, and his fruit is despised, that is, his food.*

13. *And ye said, Behold, what weariness, and ye snuffed at it, said Jehovah Sabaoth. Thus ye brought the stripped and the lame and the sick; thus ye brought the offering. Should I be pleased with it from your hand?*

They said that the table of the Lord was polluted. They abhorred the sacrifices by blood. The entire ritual wearied them. They snuffed at it, despised it in their heart. The flesh of the animal sacrifice was eaten by the priests and in some cases by the worshippers. They despised this food. This was the posture of their heart with regard to the Lord's table. Hence anything was good enough to be offered unto the Lord. What it came down to is, that they despised the blood of the atonement, that is, they were the forerunners of such despisers. Their attitude was that of those who crucify Christ afresh and put Him to open shame.

14. *And cursed the one deceiving. And there is in his flock a male, and he vows and offers the corrupt thing unto the Lord. For I am a great king, said Jehovah Sebaoth, and my name is feared among the Gentiles.*

The deceiver made a vow that demanded a perfect sacrifice but offered one that was unfit. The Lord curses the deceiver. For He is a great king. His dominion is the whole earth. And His greatness comes out in His ability to efficaciously curse and also to bless, that is, to make alive or to blight and kill by the word of His mouth. And the Gentiles fear Him. This is an extension of the phrophecy of vs. 11 (see above) or it means that the Gentiles tremble with carnal fear at the thought of Him. For His power and divinity is manifested in them through the things made.

Chap. 2:1-5

1. *Now to you is this commandment, O priests.*

2. *If you do not hear and do not set your heart upon it to give glory to my name, said Jehovah of hosts, then I will send among you the curse and I will curse your blessings, and also I have cursed it, for you are not laying my commandment upon your heart.*

3. *Behold, I am polluting to you the seed and will spread dung upon your faces, the dung of your solemn feasts, and one will bear you away to it.*

4. *And ye shall know that I have sent you this commandment that my covenant may be with Levi, said Jehovah of hosts.*

5. *My covenant was with him of life and peace, and I gave them to him for fear, and he did fear me and bowed before my name.*

6. *The law of truth was in his mouth and iniquity was not found in his lips; in peace and uprightness he walked with me, and many he turned from iniquity.*

7. *For the lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and the law they should seek from his mouth: for a minister of Jehovah of hosts is he.*

8. *But ye have turned aside from the way, and ye caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, said Jehovah of hosts.*

9. *Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my word, but have lifted up your faces at the law.*

This commandment (vs. 1) must look back to the mandates implied in vss. 6-14 of the preceding chapter — mandates to the apostate priests that they repent, foresake their abominations and bring the proper sacrifices. If they do not hear and lay it upon their heart to give glory unto Jehovah's name by rendering unto Him the uncorrupted service that is His due, He will then send the curse by which such wickedness is always visited (compare Deut. 27:15-26; 28:15ff). He will curse the blessings, the priestly income implying that the curse shall be in the field of the people and in the fruit

of their land, the increase of their kine and the flocks of their sheep. The curse is already in operation for they are not taking it to heart (vs. 2). He will pollute unto them their offspring, visit the sins of the apostates unto their generations. He will spread the dung of their solemn feasts upon their faces. Dung — that which was left in the forecourts by the animals used for sacrifice on the feastsdays. And one shall carry them away to the dungpile probably as corpses. This seems to be the meaning (vs. 3). So, from their honorable position He will cast them down and their seed and make them base and contemptible before all the people (see vs. 9). When these calamities shall overtake them, they shall know that it was the Lord that mandated them and not a man (the prophet) — mandated them, the tribe of Levi and the priestly Order to which these apostates belonged because He had purposed that His covenant should be not with these apostate priests and their carnal seed but with Levi God's elect (vs. 4). And Jehovah's covenant of life and peace was with him indeed. The Lord gave them to him (life and peace) for fear, that is, that he might fear. And he did fear the Lord and bowed before His name (vs. 5).

He was the perfect priest. The law of truth was in his mouth. It was the duty of the priests to instruct the people in the law of Jehovah. This duty Levi fulfilled faithfully. He gave instruction according to the truth. He did not teach for reward, nor did he call good that which was evil. His life agreed with his words; he gave truthful instruction, and he "practiced what he preached." In a word, he was a friend of Jehovah. He walked with Him in peace and uprightness, by His side like an intimate companion, so to speak. By his teaching and upright walk of life he turned many away from iniquity (vs. 6).

He was what the priest should be. He corresponded to the purpose of Jehovah of hosts concerning Levi the elect. For the lips of the priest shall keep knowledge that it may be possible for the God-fearing to seek it from his lips at all times, he being a messenger of Jehovah of hosts to His people. And Levi did just that. His lips kept knowledge without fail. Never did he spew it out of his mouth because it had become loathsome to him. It was always His meat and drink. Knowledge — the self-revelation of the triune Jehovah in the face of Christ and the knowledge of His will (vs. 7).

It is plain that in the first instance Levi is Christ. This accounts for his being called *the* Levi (see the following verse).

But how different it is with regard to the apostate priests. They turned aside from the way of Jehovah's ordinances for them. They caused many to stumble in the law both by their wrong explanations of it and by destroying its authority through their disregard of it in their own lives. The covenant with the Levi was not with them. It was with the Levi only. The apostates were not included in it. The proof is that they corrupted the covenant of Levi in both its parts, the whole idea of it as presented to them by Jehovah through His

(Continued on page 303)

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Romans 6:22, 23

The passage which calls for our attention in this essay is wellknown to nearly all who have but a scant acquaintance of the Bible. But to simply refresh our memory it can do no harm to quote it here once more. It reads as follows: *"But now having been made free from sin and having been made the servants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

This passage from Holy Writ is often quoted by preachers of the Word of God, but it is not always understood as it was meant by the Holy Spirit, who lead Paul into all the truth. The reason is that verse 23 is quoted as an aphorism, a mere fragment by itself without proper regard for the main subject which Paul is discussing here in the 6th Chapter of Romans. Paul is here not speaking directly about the subject: the great gift of God! This marvelous truth of the great gift of God which is eternal life, however, is brought in to shed light on an other question, which is of the greatest importance. It is the question of the proper spiritual inference that must be drawn from the Gospel truth, that *where sin abounds grace does much more abound!* And then the question arises whether the conclusion is not warranted to say: Let us remain in sin that grace may abound! Such is the vain and foolish contention of the scoffer and the unbeliever. And in this sixth chapter of Romans Paul gives the only possibly reply to this evil and unwarranted conclusion from the doctrine of free, sovereign grace.

What is this answer?

Briefly it is: God forbid!

Why Paul breaks forth in this strong "God forbid" he shows in this Chapter, and particularly in the last two verses of this Chapter, the verses 22, 23, which are quoted above. It is the *nature* of the "gift of God." The gift of God is *eternal life*. And when this eternal life in Jesus Christ becomes our portion it is a spiritual impossibility to remain in sin that grace may abound. A good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and an evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, nor can an evil tree bring forth good fruit. By the fruits we shall be known. And this good fruit of a good tree reveals itself in the "God forbid" when it is stated or insinuated that those who live out of free grace, are men, who love to live in sin that grace may abound. Liberty must never be used as an occasion to the flesh. We are by love to serve one another. Thus we have pointed out in earlier essays on the book of Galatians. And we must here too listen to what Paul has to teach us on this score.

Paul here asks two questions which are decisive in nature.

The first is: shall we remain in sin that grace may abound? And the answer is: impossible. The reason? We who have died unto sin, who have legally been cut off from sin; sin has lost its legal right to have dominion over us. We have the right not to be slaves of sin since we have died with Christ on the Cross and have been raised up with Him in newness of life. We are legally no more under sin, but we are under grace. For Christ was, indeed, delivered for our offenses, but He was raised for our justification. And this means that we are not under the law of such who are legally under sin. Were we under sin then we would be simply under law, where sin abounds, but we would then not be under that dispensation of God where grace does much more abound. Those who thus speak, therefore, about "remaining" in sin know nothing of the things whereof they confidently affirm.

The second is: since we are not under law but are *under grace* it is no longer possible for us to walk *as if we were under sin*. God forbid! O, indeed, when we were "under sin" then we were *in our minds* not at all under the obligation to serve God and walk in His righteousness. But now that has all changed. We are under grace and now we are to place our members in the service of God. We are now no longer free from righteousness in our mind, but we feel the new obligation to serve the Lord in spirit and truth. We feel that if God so (thus) loved us, we ought also to love one another and walk in our new liberty in Christ Jesus.

All things are different for us "now." Heretofore we were slaves of an other master. We were the servants of sin. But now this is different for us. Now we have been made free from sin and servants of God, serving God in a pure conscience.

And since this is the case with us, "we now have our fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life." Verse 22.

What does it imply that we have our fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life?

In the first place this means that our life is fruitful to God since *we are the servants of God*. We have been constituted God's willing servants. Wherefore we are glad and blessed in the keeping of God's commandments hating evil and loving righteousness. The term "fruit" indicates that the positive holiness to the Lord is manifested in our life; the purpose unto which God has created us is thus manifested in us. We manifest the image of God. In this walk we say: it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when it shall be revealed we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is.

In the second place this means that we have our fruit unto holiness. This implies that our fruitfulness is more and more in the direction of holiness; it is a *growth* in sanctification. This growth in sanctification may never be presented as being *self-improvement* as the modernistic man loves to speak of. Also this holiness, this sanctification, Christ became unto us from God. We are under grace and not under law. Hence, under grace, we also walk in holiness. This

"sanctification" is part of the "complete redemption" where-with Christ has redeemed us, His people. And this sanctification is always such that it follows upon and is most closely related to justification. Hence, the more we taste that we are freely justified in Christ's blood the more we shall also desire to walk in thankfulness which reveals itself in good works proceeding from a true faith, according to the law of God and unto His glory. The Christian cannot live an antinomian life when he walks in the strong consolation that his sins are no more, that he is free from sin. Nay, we thus have our fruit unto holiness.

In the third place, they who thus walk may be assured that they will surely inherit eternal life. For the end of such a life is eternal life. The term "end" here means the appointed end of a thing. Thus the "end" of the "seed-time" is the harvest. And so the harvest time, the God-appointed fruit, is everlasting life in the ages to come. Then in body and soul we shall forever be perfect and know God even as we are known. And this knowledge spells *everlasting life*.

This end is held before us in our battles as believers against sin and unbelief.

Now in so doing Paul does not hold this before us as something which is offered to all upon condition of faith. When Paul here speaks of this eternal life he has more in mind than a "gift of God which is eternal life" and is offered to whosoever is willing to take it.

You ask for our grounds for this latter observation? Then we refer you to what Paul says about the "free-gift of God" in the former Chapter, verses 15-19. It is very clear and evident from these verses that the "free-gift" of God is something far greater than a mere offer of salvation. The "free-gift" refers to the entire economy of salvation in Jesus Christ, even as God sent His Son into the world, to assume our flesh and blood, to suffer and die for us, to rise again on the third day, and to ascend on high to ever live and pray for us. That is the free gift.

It is called the free-gift exactly because it is grace, and the principle of the quickening Spirit over against all the principle of law, which proclaims that the man that doeth the law shall live thereby. Paul draws this contrast very beautifully in Romans 5:15-19. And he does this in a threefold manner. In the first place (verse 15) he contrasts the great transgression in Adam with the free-gift in Christ Jesus our Lord. If the offense in Adam abounded unto many, much more the free-gift in Christ shall abound unto many.

The second contrast is, that even as through the offense of one many were judged and condemned, much more would the free gift in Christ out of many offenses abound unto many to justification.

The third contrast is that whereas sin reigns through the one in the many thus also as many as receive the free-gift *shall reign* through faith unto life eternal.

The "free-gift" makes us alive and changes us. Sin's dominion is broken in us by means of this gift of God.

And, therefore, we must not and cannot remain in sin

that grace may abound. The nature of the free-gift in Christ will not permit it. Were it so that we were still under the "wages of sin" then we would still walk in sin. But now this is all changed. For the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord. God forbid, therefore, that we, who have died to sin exactly in this free-gift, should walk any longer therein. G.L.

EDITORIALS

(Continued from page 294)

Question Box

I received the following question:

Editor of the Standard Bearer. Dear Rev. Hoeksema:

The Ladies Aid Society of Grand Haven are studying from the 1st epistle of Timothy. Our pastor is our president. He had asked the ladies to close with prayer. When we came to the second chapter where women must keep silent and should not teach, a remark was made that some thought it is wrong for women to pray when a man was present.

Now we would like to have some light on this. Is it wrong for women to close in prayer because we have a man in our presence? Would you kindly answer this in the Standard Bearer?

Yours in Christ,

Ladies of Grand Haven Prot. Ref. Church
Mrs. Ralph De Jong, Secretary.

Answer: If one compares, with this passage in I Tim. 2, that of I Cor. 11:2ff. and especially I Cor. 14:34, 35, it should be evident that the apostle is referring, not to any gathering in the church such as, for instance, the Ladies' Aid, but of the public assemblies in the church. This, to my mind, is the meaning of the words in I Cor. 14:34: "Let the women keep silence in the churches." And this, undoubtedly, also applies here. The mother is surely called to teach her children in her own home. And the women may certainly discuss the truth of Scripture in their meetings in the Ladies' Aid.

Besides, it is not merely a question of prayer, but of keeping silence in general. What sort of a gathering of the Ladies' Aid could we have in the church if the minister or some man merely taught and all the members kept silent? Granted now that this were even possible in a gathering of ladies!

Finally, the passage has nothing to do with the presence of a man. If it should be wrong, on the basis of Scripture, for a woman to speak or to pray, it would be wrong in principle, and not because a man is present. The text in I Tim. 2 says nothing about forbidding a woman to pray or to teach when a man is present, but speaks entirely in general.

Once more, therefore, this passage does not refer to praying or speaking in any place or gathering at all, but merely to the gatherings of the church as a whole for public worship. The pastor of Grand Haven is perfectly right when he asks one of the ladies to close with prayer. H.H.

CONSISTORIAL SUPERVISION OF LEAGUE OR FEDERATION ACTIVITIES

The subject of the proper relation of consistories to the existing societies, leagues or federations is often a matter of doubt or misunderstanding. In some instances this may even be stating the matter rather mildly. On the one hand, at the simple suggestion of some jurisdiction or supervision by the consistories, one happens upon the outcry of hierarchy. On the other hand, in discussing the relation of consistories to the above named organizations, we find the opinion that consistories should exercise not only supervision, but also jurisdiction over all the activities. Then too, we hear of doubt in the matter.

It is not our purpose in stating these various observations to lay a charge at the door of any of those holding these various opinions. Fact is, that history, also that of our Protestant Reformed Churches, shows that consistories, as well as the activities of a league of societies, may be partly responsible for the existence of especially the first two opinions mentioned above. When a consistory endeavors to "seize" control of a society, it may expect, among its membership, a fear for any and all official action. And, when the activities of leagues or federations assume a questionable character, the result will produce the opinion that consistories should have more to say in these activities. Hence, we do not purpose to cast reflections in any specific direction, but rather mention these facts to point out the existence of different opinions and the dangers involved. For, as long as the relation of consistories to these various organizations is based on opinions, it remains a matter of majority rule rather than a matter of truth and verity, or worse still, is a matter to be decided according to the whims and wishes of each consistory. At one time, therefore, should there exist rights and privileges of an organization, these privileges would be trampled under foot and the consistories would commit the sin of hierarchy. At another time, there being no relation between the consistories and organizations, the consistories may find themselves unable to carry out their specific callings. And these dangers are always nigh at hand.

We would call to mind the fact that our subject concerns the relation of the consistories to the activities of these various organizations. It is not a question as to the relation of consistories to the individual members of these organizations. Nor, let us note, does our subject treat the matter of jurisdiction over league or federation activities. In fact, with a view of this latter, we believe that the committee, in assigning to us this specific topic, did so in the conviction that no such jurisdiction, or rule may be exercised by consistories over these various organizations. And with this we heartily agree. The right and authority of a consistory to rule and govern lies entirely within the sphere of the institute of the church, while the various organizations belong to the organism. The consistory, therefore, rules and governs, has jurisdiction only over the membership of the local congregation,

and that in connection with its calling to maintain the pure preaching of the Word, and the rightful administration of the sacraments. It has the authority of Christ Himself, to determine the membership of the institute in order that no one desecrates the sacraments, so that it may exclude all unbelievers and such as lead offensive lives. Here the authority of the consistory ceases. It may not rule and govern the individual lives of its membership. The consistory may not determine what its members may or may not do, nor how they must live. Therefore, we also conclude that no consistory has jurisdiction over the affairs of a free and voluntarily constituted society, even though its members are likewise members of the institute.

However, when we speak of supervision, of oversight, the picture changes, to some extent at least. For, when it comes to the matter of supervision the sphere of the consistory's authority broadens. It has the right and the authority to supervise, to oversee the lives of the members of the local institute. This is its calling as consistory. And it is necessary that the consistory have this authority to supervise. In order that it may be able to rightly rule and govern, exercise its rightful authority over the preaching of the Word and over the sacraments, it must see to it that each and every member of the congregation departs himself in harmony with his membership. And, it matters not whether a member belongs to a society or has part in the affairs of a league or federation, the consistory has a right to oversee and instruct that member in his conduct and deportment, and, if necessary, to admonish and exhort.

We must add, however, that such oversight and supervision is also limited. For, it finds its ground and basis in the right to govern and rule over the preaching of the Word and administration of the sacraments only as this takes place within the local institute. Never has the consistory, as an official body, the right and authority to supervise outside the boundaries of its own membership. Hence, also from this point of view we conclude that a consistory has not the right to oversee the affairs and the activities of a league or federation. Such affairs and activities lie outside the boundaries of the consistory's supervision. To enter upon the affairs or activities of any society or league or federation of societies, with the purpose of either jurisdiction or supervision, constitutes on the part of the consistory, a sin against the liberty and privileges of these organizations, and casts a reproach upon the church of Christ.

There would, however, be something wrong if in the organic life of the church the paths of our leagues and federations and that of the individual consistories would never meet. Fact is, that it is not only most natural, but also reality that almost all the activities and affairs of these organizations are conducted in the churches of the various societies. In order to carry out their various activities, these organizations, through their various member societies, naturally make use of the facilities which are at their disposal. In this way, as already mentioned, they have access to the various church

buildings, kitchens etc. With these facilities as starting points they carry on their activities in other ways. The membership meetings of the various leagues, the conventions of the federation of Young People's Societies, singspirations, inspirational meetings, and what have you, are all activities that make use of the facilities of the local congregation. And, to our mind, it is at this juncture, and here only, that our consistories have anything to do as official bodies with the various leagues or the federation.

The consistories are administrators of all congregational buildings and property. In behalf of the congregation they are duty bound to supervise the material affairs, the care and also use of all that is the property of the local organization. And we add, that this supervision must always harmonize with the calling and duties of their office. It stands to reason that anyone living in a glass house will not allow their children or friends to throw stones. How much less will those, called to rule over the preaching of the Word and administration of the sacraments, allow others to use that which belongs to their care to the detriment and destruction of the Word and the administration of the sacraments. In other words, consistories must be discreet and careful in their calling as overseers of local buildings and facilities. This is their calling as officebearers, and their obligation to the congregation, as well as to the churches in the federation to which they belong. It is unreasonable to think that any Protestant Reformed consistory would allow any activity to take place within its sphere of supervision that would conflict with the three forms of unity that form the basis for its affinity with other churches. It is still less reasonable to think that it would allow that which is contrary to the word of God.

It is at this point then, that we advocate consistorial supervision over league or federation activities. Fact is, that at this juncture consistories are duty bound to oversee the activities of any organization requesting the use of its facilities. And, we would add, that at no time, with a view to any of our leagues or federations, should the consistories become lax in their duties. History, even our own, produces sufficient grounds. Duty requires unfailing vigilance.

It might be well to emphasize once more that we are advocating supervision and not jurisdiction. The freedom and liberty of the organic church may not be ground under the heels of hierarchy. And on the other hand, let us beware that liberty and freedom do not develop into licentiousness. Or, better said, let us beware that licentiousness does not take the place of true liberty and freedom.

With this in mind it would be well that in conclusion we attempt to point out a few things that will help us retain the correct relation between the various organizations involved. In the first place, by supervision we refer to the careful study of the program of activities, considering it in the light of scripture and the confessions and not that of private opinions. Secondly, that in case something is found

that is not in harmony with the standards of judgement, the consistory seek by way of admonition and advise, to rectify these errors. And finally we would add, let our leagues and federations submit themselves willingly to such supervision, on the one hand jealously guarding their liberty, while on the other hand also recognizing those lawfully called to be officebearers in the house of God. And in this way all concerned will find themselves in harmony with the injunction of Scripture, "let all things be done decently and in order."

G. Lanting

UNTO THEE, O LORD JEHOVAH

Unto Thee, O Lord Jehovah,
Do I lift my waiting soul.
O my God, in Thee I trusted;
Let no shame now o'er me roll.
On my enemy be shame,
Oft without a cause transgressing;
But all those who trust Thy Name
Honor with abundant blessing.

Psalm 25:1.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

(Continued from page 299)

organs the prophets. It means that they destroyed the covenant conceptually, brake it in pieces, trampled it with their feet in their hatred of it, of its covenant God, of its life and peace and obligations (vs. 8). Their corrupting the covenant was their failure to keep the word of the Lord of hosts and their lifting up their faces at the law, that is, their contempt of the law, their regarding it with disdain. Sowing contempt, that is also what they shall reap. Jehovah will repay them in kind. He will make them contemptible and base before all the people. For Jehovah is not mocked (vs. 9).

It is plain that the message of vss. 2-5 "Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated" is radically related also to the instruction contained in these verses (6-9). Levi is Jacob, Christ, the church of the elect, the Gentiles of whom it is here stated that Jehovah's name shall be great among them and that they shall offer incense and a pure offering unto Jehovah. And that they shall because His covenant of peace and life is with them. Esau, the apostates of all ages, the despisers of Jehovah's covenant, priests and people alike, will be destroyed. For Jacob He loved, Esau He hated. This is the supreme reason. Esau is the type of the carnal, the profane, the reprobated seed in the church of all ages. (See Heb. 12:15-17).

G.M.O.

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

VIEWS DURING THE SECOND PERIOD (300-750 A.D.)

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

We concluded our preceding article with the remark that we would call attention in this article to the historical background for the conflict between Augustine and the Donatists. We must do this as a prelude to the role which Augustine later played in this important drama. And, as we observed in our preceding article, we are again indebted, also for this material, to Philip Schaff's *History of the Christian Church*.

Although defeated in their attempt to reverse the action which gave Caecilian universal recognition as the bishop of Carthage, except in Carthage itself, and notwithstanding the fact that Emperor Constantine declared against them in Milan in the year, 316, and threatened to banish their bishops and confiscate their churches, the Donatists, in the year, 321, were granted full liberty of faith and worship by the emperor. And at a council in the year, 330, they numbered two hundred and seventy bishops.

Constans, the successor of Constantine, resorted again to violent measures; however, neither threats nor promises made any impression on the party. It came to blood. The Circumcellions, a sort of Donatist mendicant monks, who wandered about the country among the cottages of the peasantry, carried on plunder, arson, and murder, in conjunction with mutinous peasants and slaves and in crazy zeal, for the martyr's crown, as genuine soldiers of Christ, rushed into fire and water, and threw themselves from rocks. Yet there were Donatists who disapproved this revolutionary frenzy. The insurrection was suppressed by military force, several leaders of the Donatists were executed, others were banished, and their churches were closed or confiscated. Donatus the Great died in exile. He was succeeded by one Parmenianus.

Under Julian the Apostate the Donatists again obtained, with all other heretics and schismatics, freedom of religion, and returned to the possession of their churches, which they painted anew, to redeem them from their profanation by the Catholics. But under the subsequent emperors their condition grew worse, both from persecutions without and dissensions within. The quarrel among the two parties extended into all the affairs of daily life; the Donatist bishop, Faustinus of Hippo, for example, allowing none of the members of his church to bake bread for the Catholic inhabitants.

At the end of the fourth century, and in the beginning of the fifth, the great Augustine, of Hippo, where there was also a strong congregation of the schismatics, made a powerful effort, by instruction and persuasion, to reconcile the Donatists with the Catholic Church. He wrote several works on

the subject, and set the whole African church in motion against them. They feared his superior dialectics, and avoided him wherever they could. The matter, however, was brought, by the order of the emperor in 411, to a three days' arbitration at Carthage, attended by two hundred and eighty six Catholic bishops and seventy nine Donatist bishops.

Augustine, who, in two beautiful sermons before the beginning of the disputation, exhorted to love, forbearance, and meekness was the chief speaker on the part of the Catholics; Petilian was the chief speaker on the part of the schismatics. Marcellinus, the imperial tribune and notary, and a friend of Augustine, presided, and was to pass the decisive judgment. This arrangement was obviously partial, and secured the triumph of the Catholics. The discussions related to two points: (1) Whether the Catholic bishops, Caecilian and Felix of Aptunga, were traditors (men who had delivered up the sacred writings to the heathen persecutors); (2) Whether the church loses her nature and attributed by fellowship with heinous sinners. The balance of skill and argument was on the side of Augustine though the Donatists brought much that was forcible against compulsion in religion, and against the confusion of the temporal and the spiritual powers. The imperial commissioner, as might be expected, decided in favor of the Catholics. The separatists nevertheless persisted in their view, but their appeal to the emperor continued unsuccessful.

More stringent civil laws were now enacted against them. These civil laws consisted in this, that the Donatist clergy were banished from their country (the same thing also happened to the arminian clergy at the time of 1618-1619), fines were imposed upon the laity, and the churches of this schismatic party were confiscated. In 415 they were even forbidden to hold religious assemblies upon pain of death.

Augustine himself, who had previously contented only to spiritual measures against heretics and had attempted to use the means of instruction and persuasion to lead them back into the church, now advocated force to bring them into the fellowship of the church, out of which there was no salvation. He appealed to the command in the parable of the supper, Luke 14:23, to "compel them to come in;" however, the word "compel" in this text does not necessarily refer to physical force and violence.

New eruptions of fanaticism ensued. A bishop, Gaudentius, threatened that, if the attempt were made to deprive him of his church by force, he would burn himself with his congregation in it, and vindicated this intended suicide by the example of Rhazis, in the second book of the Maccabees.

The conquest of Africa by the Arian Vandals in the year 428, devastated the African church, and put an end to the controversy, as the French Revolution accomplished centuries later in France. Yet a remnant of the Donatists, as we learn from the letters of Gregory I, perpetuated itself into the seventh century, still proving in their ruins the power of a mistaken puritanic zeal and the responsibility and guilt of state-church persecution. In the seventh century the en-

tire African church sank under the Saracenic (Mohammedan) conquest, which Mohammedan onslaught carried out of Asia Minor, swept through Northern Africa and through Spain into France, and finally halted and stopped at Tours, France, in the year 732.

What was really the Donatist controversy? The Donatists were not a heretical but a schismatic group. They are not known for the heresies they proclaimed but for their break with the Catholic church (again we remark: not the Roman Catholic church of today). They maintained that the church visible must be pure and advocated a strict discipline. The Church must exist only as the true spiritual people of God. Augustine admitted the necessity of Church discipline, but maintained that absolute purity could not be attained for the church of the Lord in the midst of the world. The true distinguishing marks of the Church according to the eminent Church Father are: Catholicity (the true Church is spread through all lands) and apostolic connections (connections with the churches founded by the apostles). The Donatists, we remarked, were not heretics but schismatics. During the severe persecution by Dioclesian many Christians had lapsed; that is to say, they had denied the faith. The Donatists thought that the lapsed should not be permitted to re-enter the Church. Some bishops had surrendered their copies of the Bible to the government officials to be burned by them. They believed that such bishops were not worthy to administer the sacraments or ordain others as bishops. And so they withdrew and organized churches of their own. There were many Donatist churches in North Africa.

That Augustine advocated Christian discipline is evident from the following quotation of the eminent Church Father, taken from Volume IV of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: "Nor would I therefore be understood to urge that ecclesiastical discipline should be set at naught and that every one should be allowed to do exactly as he pleased, without any check, without a kind of healing chastisement, a lenity which should inspire fear, the severity of love. For then what will become of the precept of the apostle, 'Warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men; see that none render evil for evil unto any man?'" At any rate, when he added these last words, "See that none render evil for evil unto any man," he showed with sufficient clearness that there is no rendering of evil for evil when one chastises those that are unruly, even though for the fault of unruliness be administered the punishment of chastising. The punishment of chastising therefore is not an evil, though the fault be an evil. For indeed it is the steel, not of an enemy inflicting a wound, but of a surgeon performing an operation. Things like this are done within the Church, and that spirit of gentleness within its pale burns with zeal towards God, lest the chaste virgin which is espoused to one husband, even Christ, should in any of her members be corrupted from the simplicity which is in Christ, as Eve was beguiled by the subtilty of the serpent."

Augustine therefore surely believed in church discipline.

That is evident from the above quotation. However, in his denunciation of the Donatists in their zeal to realize a perfect church in the midst of the world, he writes as follows: "Notwithstanding, far be it from the servants of the father of the family that they should be unmindful of the precept of their Lord, and be so inflamed with the fire of holy indignation against the multitude of the tares, that while they seek to gather them in bundles before the time, the wheat should be rooted up together with them. And of this sin these men would be held to be guilty, even though they showed that those were true charges which they brought against the *traditors* (we again remark that these "traditors" were those who were accused to delivering the sacred writings up to government officials—H.V.) whom they accused; because they separate themselves in a spirit of impious presumption, not only from the wicked, whose society they professed to be avoiding, but also from the good and faithful in all nations of the world, to whom they could not prove the truth of what they said they knew; and with themselves they drew away into the same destruction many others over whom they had some slight authority, and who were not wise enough to understand that the unity of the Church dispersed throughout the world was on no account to be forsaken for other men's sins."—thus far this quotation of the learned Church Father. Hence, Augustine laments the fact that the Donatists separated themselves not only from those against whom true charges had been brought but also from the good and faithful in all nations of the world whom they could not prove to be guilty. It is evident from this quotation that all the charges which the Donatists had brought against these "traditors" were not all equally substantiated; nevertheless they had separated themselves also from those who were not proven guilty of the things wherewith they had been charged. Augustine although believing in church discipline, set himself sharply over against these Donatists.

H.V.

YE GATES, LIFT YOUR HEADS, THE GLAD SUMMONS OBEY

Ye gates, lift your heads, the glad summons obey,
Ye doors everlasting wide open the way.
The King of all glory high honors await,
The King of all glory shall enter in state.

What King of all glory is this that ye sing?
The Lord, strong and mighty, the conquering King.
Ye gates, lift your heads, and His summons obey,
Ye doors everlasting, wide open the way.

The King of all glory high honors await,
The King of all glory shall enter in state.
What King of all glory is this that ye sing?
Jehovah of Hosts, He of glory is King.

Psalm 24

The Voice of Our Fathers

The Canons of Dordrecht

PART TWO

EXPOSITION OF THE CANONS FIRST HEAD OF DOCTRINE OF DIVINE PREDESTINATION

Article 16 (cont.)

It is of prime importance when we are dealing with these matters concerning the assurance of election and the conviction of reprobation that we remember that these are essentially *spiritual* matters, and that the efficacious work of God is the ultimate cause thereof. We very easily fall into the error either of a false objectivism, according to which we seek to establish by a rational and logical process that we are or are not children of God, basing our conclusion on various objective facts, such as that we are members of some church in this world, or that we are baptized, or that we have believing parents, etc.; or we fall into the error of a false subjectivism, according to which we look for certain marks and evidences of faith in ourselves, and thus try to conclude that we are elect. On the other hand, there is also the attitude of false mysticism, which waits for some special revelation or whispering of the Spirit to assure us that we are children of God, that is, apart from the objective testimony of the Word of God as contained in Scripture. Now it is to be noted that the fathers carefully avoid condoning any of these errors. And there are abundant evidences of this in this Article. They are the following: 1) They very plainly indicate that the matters under discussion are matters of grace or a lack of grace. For they speak of the fact that assurance, peace, and filial obedience are "efficaciously wrought." And they speak of waiting for a "season of richer grace." There can be no doubt, therefore, that the *Canons* recognize the fact that assurance is at bottom a matter of *grace*. God must through the Spirit of His Son witness with my spirit that I am a child of God, or I will never have that assurance. From this point of view we must emphasize too that the assurance of which we here speak is an assurance of *faith*, that it is *spontaneous*, and that it cannot be reached in the way of any kind of process of deduction, but is obtained spontaneously by our walking in the way of that assurance. 2) Over against all false mysticism, the fathers insist upon the persistent use of the *means* of grace as the only way to experience a lively faith in Christ. This can only be due to the fact that the fathers understood clearly that God, while He indeed works assurance by the witness of the Holy Spirit with our Spirit, nevertheless does this through means, and that these God-ordained and God-employed means are the preaching of the Word and the sacraments. God "hath appointed" certain means "for working these graces in us;"

and we ought "diligently to persevere in the use of the means." 3) And over against all dead intellectualism, the fathers insist upon the way of conversion and sanctification, as is abundantly plain from the entire article. A healthy distinction must therefore be maintained between the *power* of faith and the *activity* of faith, between the *being* of faith and the *well-being* of faith. The former may be present without the latter for a time. And the latter may also be lost for a time, though the former can never be destroyed. This explains the possibility of the various reactions to the mention of reprobation, reactions which are not necessarily at all times the same in the same Christian. And this explains the need of a healthy self-examination on the part of the children of God, that is, a self-examination that asks the question, not whether we *have* the faith, but whether we are *in* the faith.

The article mentions, first of all, those who may be called, for want of a better term, seeking souls. This article characterizes them in a two-fold way. In the first place, they are those who persist in the use of the means of grace. You will find them present when the Word is preached. They will diligently attend catechism. They are present when societies gather to study the Word of God. Probably, — at least, if they never have had much assurance, — you will not find them at the communion table, because you would hardly expect that such persons will have made confession of faith. Or, if such an individual is an older person and has at one time made confession of faith, but is troubled by doubt, you may find him absent from the Lord's table, or at least fearsome about partaking of the Lord's Supper. For, in the second place, they are those who do not yet experience a lively faith in Christ, and therefore lack an assured confidence of soul, peace of conscience, an earnest endeavor after filial obedience and a glorying in God through Christ. This description itself is clear enough that it needs no further explanation. Any child of God who is of this type will readily recognize his own picture in these words. And it is also readily understandable that such a person would be alarmed at the mention of reprobation and be inclined to classify himself with the reprobate. However wrong he may be in his attitude, however morbid and sickly his attitude may become, nevertheless I say, it is readily understandable that he becomes alarmed. After all, if one lacks assurance, what else can be the result than such alarm?

Nor do I believe that such an experience is as much of an exception as it is sometimes imagined to be. I can conceive of it that a young man or young woman who is brought up in the sphere of the covenant, who has been instructed in the truth of the Word of God and has been trained in the way of God's covenant from infancy on, and who therefore for that very reason never experiences a sudden conversion-change. He may have received the Holy Ghost and been regenerated by the Spirit in infancy. But the power of faith in him has not yet fully blossomed out into faith's certain knowledge and hearty confidence. Of a special translation out of darkness into God's marvellous light he knows

nothing. Now and then he may feel more or less of a love toward God in Christ. And there is a rather latent love for the communion of saints. But the clear consciousness of faith and the free and confident appropriation of the grace of God in Christ is missing. Being instructed also in the truths concerning election and reprobation, and undoubtedly hearing of reprobation in the preaching of the Word, he begins to ponder the subject with regard to himself,—as what earnestminded covenant child will not do? A measure of alarm arises in his soul, which, if it is not put down, increases and more and more takes a hold on his mind and heart. And, as he falls probably into a false subjectivism and looks for striking evidences of his being a child of God in vain, he is almost ready at times to class himself with the reprobate. He can have great anxiety of soul at such times. He teeters on the brink of indifference, and may be ready to give up in despair and to cease using the means of grace. And, if the grace of God does not keep him, that is exactly what he will do.

What about such a situation? What must such a person be told? What must his parents tell an adolescent covenant child when he comes to them with such troubles of soul? What must a pastor say about these things in the catechism room? Or what must he tell a lamb of the flock when he gets personally close enough to such a person that he confides his soul's anxieties to his pastor?

The *Canons* have some sound counsel on this subject. First of all, they teach that such a person *ought* not to be alarmed at the mention of reprobation, and *ought not* to rank himself with the reprobate. Why not? The reason is not difficult to find. A genuine reprobate will never assume the attitude described above. This is the attitude and the anxiety of a seeking soul. Basically, this is a soul that is troubled about sin, even though before his own consciousness such a soul may say: "Yes, but the trouble is that I am not troubled enough about my sin." This is a soul in which the love of God has already been shed abroad, even though he may say: "Yes but that love is not fervent enough." Actually it is already a saved soul. And in due time the lively faith in Christ, assured confidence of soul, peace of conscience, an earnest endeavor after childlike obedience, and a glorying in God through Christ, will also blossom forth and he will effectively experience these graces. Secondly, the fathers exhort that such a person should diligently persevere in the use of the means of grace. How sensible the fathers were! After all, God has appointed those means of grace for the very purpose of working a living faith in His children. And He always operates through those means. How foolish, then, it would be to cease using those means which God has appointed. That would be spiritual suicide. Where can I obtain an assured confidence of soul, except there, where the Word of His love is heard? Where can I attain peace of conscience, except there, where God speaks peace unto His people? Where can I learn filial obedience, except there, where God makes known His will and the way of His

covenant by His Spirit and Word? Where can I ever learn to boast in God through Christ, except there, where God makes known the riches of His sovereign grace? Let His children then diligently persevere in the use of the God-ordained means of grace. And thirdly, the *Canons* here speak of humbly and devoutly waiting for a season of richer grace. Notice by the way, that the fathers do presuppose grace: for they speak of a season of *richer* grace. But what is to be done until that season of richer grace arrives? The *Canons* here remind one of the teaching of the *Heidelberg Catechism* concerning the necessity of prayer for Christians. There, in Lord's Day 45, we are taught that prayer is necessary "because God will give his grace and Holy Spirit to those only, who with sincere desires continually ask them of him, and are thankful for them." This, in my opinion, expresses the chief idea of this "humbly and devoutly" waiting for a "season of richer grace." We ought, first of all, not to be dissatisfied, but to be thankful that God has already given us His Holy Spirit and a measure of His grace. And, in the second place, there is but one other thing to do when we desire a lively faith in Christ, an assured confidence of soul, peace of conscience, an earnest endeavor after filial obedience, and glorying in God through Christ. That one thing is: take it to the Lord in prayer! After all, the God of our salvation is the source of all these blessings. To whom, then, should one look for them but to Him? And when we do look to Him, we may be "fully persuaded that he, notwithstanding that we are unworthy of it, will, for the sake of Christ our Lord, certainly hear our prayer, as he has promised us in his word." Then that season of richer grace will in due time arrive. And the doubtful and hesitating seeking soul will develop into the firm believer who will not be alarmed any more at the mention of reprobation but who will have attained the blessed assurance of his eternal and unchangeable election and who will see in reprobation a peculiar illustration and recommendation of the eternal and unmerited grace of election.

H.C.H.

MONEY WILL BUY:

A bed, but not sleep.
Books, but no brains.
Food, but not appetite.
Finery, but not beauty.
A house, but not a home.
Medicine, but not health.
Luxuries, but not culture.
Amusements, but not happiness.
A crucifix, but not a Savior.
A church pew, but not Heaven.

— Pilgrim Holiness Advocate

DECENCY and ORDER

Student-Preaching

"Students, who have received permission according to the rule of this matter, and persons who have according to Article 8 been judged competent to be prepared for the ministry of the Word, shall, for their own training, and for the sake of becoming known to the congregations, be allowed to speak a word of edification in the meeting for public worship." (Art. 20, D.K.O.)

The above provision of our church order allows two classes of persons to speak a word of edification in the churches during the meetings of public worship. The majority group consists of those students who are preparing themselves for the ministry in the seminary and are licensed by the faculty to speak in the churches. The minority group consists of those specially gifted persons who seek admission to the ministry under the provisions of Article 8 of the church order without pursuing the usual course of study in the seminary.

That the validity of this practice, which is sometimes called 'student-preaching', is subject to questioning may be a bit surprising to some of us. This has been an established practice in our churches from the very beginning. Its correctness has never been publicly challenged. Furthermore, it has the sanction of the church order and it is practiced in other Reformed Churches as well as in ours. We have never doubted that it was proper to have a student preach for us when our minister, for some legitimate reason, could not be present in the pulpit. Why then do we suggest that its validity be questioned?

We do not do this because we wish to criticize or condemn this practice nor do we have any desire to see it abolished. We think it should be continued and our reasons for this we shall present later. However, we do wish to question some phases of this matter which, for various reasons, we feel will bear an investigation. By probing into some of these things, we may discover unknown defects in our own practices and uncover avenues through which these defects may possibly be corrected.

In the first place, then, the history of the matter of student-preaching in Reformed Churches will clearly reveal that there has not always been agreement in the actions taken by the various Synods. In its very nature this question is debatable. It will have to be admitted that there is a pro and a con to it. History bears this out and it will be interesting to find out what the underlying reasons for disagreement are.

In the second place, it should be known that the present article of our church order is not a product of the Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-19, but is handed down to us from the Christian Reformed Church. It is a product of the church order revision of 1914 and took the place of another ruling made by the great Synod of Dordrecht on a related matter.

It is also an open question as to whether or not this revision represents an improvement.

In the third place, the entire matter of student-preaching ought to be clarified. To do this, Article 20, in its present form, is hardly adequate. It speaks of "speaking a word of edification" but fails to give a clear meaning of the term itself. It says nothing of the status of those who are licensed to speak in the churches under this provision. These matters deserve our attention because they determine the validity of this entire practice. This does not imply that we frown upon this practice. Not at all! Rather than plead for the abolition of the rule itself, we must try to find a solution to some of the intricate problems which are involved in the established practice of the churches wherein she permits those who are not ordained in office into her pulpits. Or, are we perhaps sacrificing principle for expediency?

Fourthly, while speaking of these things, we would at least raise the question as to whether or not Article 20 is complete? Shouldn't it express more? It states that students are allowed to speak a word of edification in the meeting of public worship "for their own training." If then the training of the candidate is the consideration that entitles him to this right to speak, should not the same consideration be a valid reason to allow him to, at least in a measure, engage in all of the labors that constitute the ministry? Should not practical, as well as theoretical, training be given him in visiting the sick, teaching catechism, administering the sacraments, participating in consistorial work, etc.? Isn't this the consistently logical conclusion that will be reached when the rule of Article 20 is fully applied? Or is it principally correct to limit the practical training of candidates for the ministry to "speaking a word of edification?"

In light of the foregoing then, we will consider this matter and express our own opinion with respect to some of the problems involved.

THE HISTORY

Already in 1568 the Wezelian Convention decided that churches which had ministers with exceptional ability should institute "propositiën," i.e., classes for men with gifts and desires for the ministry, in which men should be trained in preaching, not publicly but privately. In 1586 the Synod of 's-Gravenhage ruled that students for the ministry might teach in the public assemblies of the churches only after they had passed an examination and been ruled competent. Then in 1618-19, the Synod of Dordrecht returned again to the Wezelian position and ruled: „In de kerken waar meer bekwame predikanten zijn, zal men het gebruik der propositiën instellen, om door zulke oefeningen eenigen tot den dienst des Woords voor te bereiden, volgende in deze de orde, daaraan door deze Synode bijzonder gesteld."

This originally constituted the twentieth article of our church order. Freely translated it reads: "In churches where there are more competent ministers, the use of propositiën shall be instituted, that by such practices some may

be prepared for the ministry of the Word according to the rule of this matter established by this particular Synod."

Obviously the reason that the churches originally took this position was that there were at first no theological schools where persons aspiring to the ministry in Reformed Churches could be trained. The need of ministers necessitated this private training by the most qualified pastors. Later on when the students were trained in the schools, they were given permission to speak in the churches after they had successfully passed an examination which was given either at the school or before the Classis. However, at the time of the Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-19, the Synod obviously for good reasons, no longer trusted the faculties of the schools to give these examinations and rather than stirring up additional trouble by ruling that these examinations were to be given only by the Classes, they discouraged student-preaching altogether. It must be remembered that this was during the time of the great struggle with Arminianism, which had made deep inroads into the schools as well as the churches.

In 1834, the time of the „Afscheiding," the churches of the Secession again permitted student-preaching with the stipulation that an examination must be taken and the consent of the professors obtained. At that time there was a great dearth of ministers and provisions had to be made to supply the pulpits of the churches. It seems as though the pressing need forced a reversal in the position of the church but then in 1886 the churches of the Doleantie again did not favor the practice of student-preaching. It appears that failure to strike at the root of the problem and to come up with an answer to the question as to whether or not it is principally correct to have students preach is the reason for this repeated change. This continued also in later Synods. In 1892, the Synod of Amsterdam; in 1896, the Synod of Middelburg; and in 1899, the Synod of Groningen, all spoke out as favoring this practice but overagainst this and taking the reverse stand we have the Synods of Amsterdam in 1908, of Zwolle in 1911, and 's-Gravenhage in 1914.

The Hervormde Kerken took the position that students are not to be permitted to preach until they have been made candidates for the ministry. In some of the Netherlands Reformed Churches, and also among the English, German and Hungarian Reformed Churches, still another practice has been instituted. Students and candidates of the seminary are made assistant-ministers; given the right to preach the Word and administer the sacraments, although they are not as yet actually ordained in any particular church. They simply serve as assistants to the minister of certain churches and, in some instances, also draw a salary from the church they serve. The Reformed Churches in America use many of their ministerial candidates in this manner during the summer months of the year.

At any rate, it is obvious that there has been no unanimity of opinion on this matter. The historical precedents are of little value in determining the right or wrong position. In our churches virtually the same position is adopted as is

found in the Christian Reformed Church. Our students are given permission to speak in the churches as soon as the faculty considers them competent to do so. The only difference in the Christian Reformed Church is that this matter is regulated by the Board of Trustees instead of by the faculty and they have many more rules and decisions governing this matter than we do. Some of these we will, D.V., consider the next time.

G.V.d.B.

UNTO THEE, O LORD JEHOVAH

All the pathways of Jehovah
Speak of truth and mercies pure
Unto such as keep His covenant
And His testimony sure.
For the glory of Thy Name
Pardon, Lord, my evil-doing;
Grievous though my sin and shame,
Hear my cry, Thy love renewing.

Who is he that fears Jehovah,
Walking with Him day by day?
God will lead him safely onward,
Guide him in the chosen way.
Then at ease his soul shall rest,
In Jehovah still confiding;
E'en his children shall be blest
Safely in the land abiding.

Yea, the secret of Jehovah
Is with those who fear His Name;
With His friends in tender mercy
He His covenant will maintain,
With a confidence complete
Toward the Lord my eyes are turning,
From the net He'll pluck my feet;
He will not despise my yearning.

Turn Thou unto me in mercy;
Have compassion on my soul.
I am sore distressed and lonely;
Waves of trouble o'er me roll.
Myriad woes beset my heart,
Myriad doubts and bitternesses;
Thou who my Deliverer art,
Bring me out of my distresses.

Keep my soul, O gracious Savior;
Come, I pray, deliver me,
Lest my head with shame be covered,
For my refuge is in Thee.
Trusting in Thy power supreme,
Lord, I wait for Thy salvation;
Come, Jehovah, and redeem
Israel from tribulation.

Psalm 25:5, 6, 7, 8, 10

ALL AROUND US

Excerpts from the Church Herald.

Recently I paged through a small bundle of Church Heralds, a weekly publication of the Reformed Church in America. As I scanned through some of the more recent issues, my eyes fell on a series of small articles written by a Rev. Wm. R. Buitendorp of Tarrytown, N.Y. I called it a series. Really that is incorrect, for his articles have no connection. Rather they are intended to convey to the reader some little practical thought which is easy to read and easy to remember. In appearance these articles are quite similar to the "Word a Week" column which appears regularly in the Banner, the Christian Reformed publication.

If the theology expressed in these articles is the accepted belief of the Reformed Church of America and worthy of a rubric in their weekly periodical, then I am inclined to say: Alas, how has the gold become dimmed!

I herewith give the readers of the Standard Bearer three samples and offer a few words of comment.

In the January 7, 1955, issue we read the following from the pen of Rev. Buitendorp, entitled: "Answering Their Prayers."

"This is as marvelous as it is true, that you may touch another's life through prayer, or that your life may be affected by the prayers of someone else. Isn't it wonderful that no matter where you are you are never beyond the reach of someone who loves you?

"Someone was telling how he used to sail on a fishing schooner with his father. One night they were near the Arctic Circle when it suddenly became very dark, the fog closed in, and the sea began to churn, as the waves ran high. He said he was at the wheel doing his best to keep the ship on its course. His father was standing beside him. They both knew they were in for a bad night. 'Well,' said his father, 'about this time the little woman at home is offering up her prayer for us to the God Who holds the waves in His hand.' Then, after a pause, he shouted his command to the crew, 'All hands on deck, put a close reef in the mainsail, and let run the jib, we have got to get that prayer answered.'"

I ask, did you ever read an article in a religious periodical that in so little space contained so much non-sense as this one? I presume the man who wrote it is supposed to be a man of learning and of considerable theological training. Surely the above article speaks well neither for his learning nor for his theology. The questions could not be suppressed, What happened to God in this story? and, Who answers prayers?

But the second article to which I refer appeared in the February 4th issue. It is entitled: "God Dropped a Spark." This is much worse.

"The wonderful thing about the Christian faith is that no one is ever beyond the love of God. We may wander far,

but never beyond His reach. We may have made a mess of life, but He is still able and eager to redeem us.

"The Salvation Army has a saying that 'A man may be down, but he is never out.' This is a simple and sure statement of the Christian philosophy. We believe that there is always hope for any individual. No matter how dark or cold the soul there is still a spark of the divine love and the divine life that waits only to be flamed into a new flame. All that is needed is for you and me to give God a chance to show what He can and will do if we will but turn to Him.

"Our Lord gives us this assurance: 'Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.' All the rest is up to you."

In the February 25th issue of the Church Herald appears a letter to the editor relative to the above article which gave me some relief and with which I mostly agree. The letter reads as follows.

"Dear Mr. Editor:

Since the Church Herald is open for the discussion of Reformed doctrines, I deem it my privilege to make use of it. The article by the Rev. William R. Buitendorp in the Church Herald of February 4 does not reflect the Reformed view but rather Arminianism or Pelagianism. He writes, 'There is still a spark of divine love no matter how dark and cold the soul. What, not 'dead in trespasses and sins,' as Paul says in Eph. 2:1? 'All that is needed is to give God a chance,' he says. Did Adam give God a chance when he did? Did Saul of Tarsus? . . .

'Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out,' Jesus truly said, but He also said, 'Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life' (John 5:40). Let us reject Arminian teachings. Sincerely yours, . . ."

I certainly agree with this critic when he calls this Arminianism or Pelagianism. It is amazing that the Church Herald will allow such stuff to appear, and then too as a feature article, in their so-called Reformed publication. Is this the stuff they are teaching in their Seminaries? One wonders.

In the February 11th issue of the same paper we find another article from the pen of Rev. Buitendorp, entitled: "Others Call It God." Writes he:

"The tides are as interesting as they are mysterious. At Cape God we watched the tides come inland up a little stream and turning a vast marshland into a lake. The waters of the sea rose and filled the bay and then filled the river, and then the little stream, and then every little space between rush and reed. Even at a great distance the tide is felt. Albany is over a hundred miles up the Hudson River, yet the tide in the Atlantic Ocean may be measured in the river at Albany.

"It seems that wherever the tide can flow it comes in with its lifting power to raise both the distant and the near to new heights. And isn't the love of God like that? Given a chance to come into our hearts God's love searches out every little place to lift even the least significant of us to a new meaning and purpose. All that any of us need do to

experience this wonderful love of God is to let it come in, and God's love will do all the rest. Neither does it matter how far away you are. If you open the way to the sea the tide of His great love will come in no matter where you are.

'Life's tides on the crescent sea beach
When the moon is new and then,
Into our hearts high yearnings
Come welling and surging in —
Come from the mystic ocean
Whose rim no foot has trod —
Some of us call it longing
And others call it God.'

I say, not only a "mysterious tide," but also a mysterious god. A god who really wants to love us and cause his love to be shed abroad in our hearts, but he can do nothing until you remove all the obstacles out of his way. Such a god is no better or greater than the god of the Hindu about which I read in a recent article of Life magazine. Verily Christianity according to Buitendorp has not risen very far above paganism. How thankful I am that God has put me in a Protestant Reformed Church where I may learn to know Him as He really is, the God of my salvation who really saves, and not an idol, the figment of my imagination.

A Word to Enthusiasts.

Much more acceptable to our theological taste than the articles found in the Church Herald was a meditation we read in the February 15th issue of the Presbyterian Guardian under the title above named.

The author, Rev. Henry P. Tavares, begins his short meditation with this interesting paragraph:

"Some folks in this world drive a normal person close to desperation by the tenacity with which they hold to traditions. The new to them almost always looks suspicious. And it usually meets with a standard reaction: 'We never did it that way,' or 'That is not the way I was brought up.' This is their way of saying they don't like it, they don't want it."

The author disagrees with this stark traditionalism when he declares further:

"But to freeze in tradition is to overlook the fact that even the past had its sinners and its mistakes. And history is not a kind of assembly line, pouring out identical articles. Each day brings new developments, new demands, new insights. And since no age can claim that it has arrived, there should be progress, development, growth, improvement. Even the Church should mature and advance. The Reformed church should be always reforming, as the sages say. A thing is not perfect just because it is old. Truth and not bare antiquity must be our light. To worship the past is but a form of idolatry."

However, the author envisions an opposite extreme which is just as evil and perhaps much more dangerous. It is that over-balanced zealousness for something new. Writes he:

"But if some are over-stayed, there is no lack of those who are over-stirred. These are not stuck in a rut. But they

have no anchorage. They thrive on the thrill of new experiences. They are the exitable type, fickle, giddy, visionary. Highly volatile, every spark ignites them. It takes so little to stir their fancy and fire their enthusiasm.

"These are the people that rave over every new fashion, and run themselves breathless trying to keep up, that roll before the winds of opinion like dry autumn leaves, that fall for all the fads. They provide an easy living for the quacks and a sure target for the cults and sects."

The text of Scripture which the author placed over this Meditation is found in Matthew 8:19-20, "And there came a scribe, and said unto him, Teacher, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Concerning this passage the author writes:

"The man in this text need not have been a fickle enthusiast. But it is certain our Lord would have him be true, for he leaves him under no illusions about the meaning of discipleship. And though this procedure would not likely receive approval from many church leaders today more anxious for impressive statistics than for the conversion of the lost and the glory of God, it is really a kindness to the fickle as well as to the strong.

"Why this man made his choice, we are not told. Was it the teaching of our Lord? . . . Perhaps the mighty works brought out this decision . . . But even if prompted by good reasons, the commitment could be honest and lasting only if it could stand the cost. And because our Lord wants followers of fixed purpose, he tells this man at once what the journey is like that he proposes to take.

"There will be privations. This could be very important to a man whom Matthew calls a scribe. Can he leave his comfortable home? He is but a shallow enthusiast, if the life of the wanderer is too much for him. And if he is, there is hope for him only if he will face the truth. True discipleship involves conversion from the roots up. Christ is not just another teacher of religion in time to be outshined by a better. It is to insult him, to place him with philosophers of the good and the beautiful. He is not just a light. He is *the* Light of the world. There can be neither partial nor temporary allegiance to him.

"But just because he is not of this world, the world can never absorb him, but always finds him indigestible. It refuses him, and even labors to destroy him. And all who identify themselves with him share in some form his reproaches. There can be no room, therefore, for mere enthusiasts in the following of our Lord. Discipleship is for those firmly rooted in a heaven-born conviction, and fully committed to the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Indeed no man will come to Christ unless he is drawn of the Father to Him, and no man will follow after Him unless it is given him from above. And how true it is that they who follow Christ bear His reproach.

M.S.

CONTRIBUTIONS

The facts regarding the Edgerton Law Suit

In the Concordia of March 10, 1955, appears an article by Rev. P. De Boer in regard to the Edgerton Law Suit. We need not quote the entire article. In this article the Rev. P. De Boer writes, and I quote: "During the last few months we have made serious efforts on our part to seek an out of court settlement. It is in regard to this out of court settlement that we are writing. Our proposal, submitted the latter part of January of this year, assumed the form of a counter proposal. The reason for this was that the Veldman group had come to us with a proposal We were told that in case we did not submit now the damages would be much higher. . . . This was their proposal and the *only* proposal the Veldman group made. It is true that in the early part of the year before ('54) a meeting was held, at their request, in our lawyer's office, but neither we nor the Veldman group made any proposal regarding the properties We state that because there have been rumors that the Veldman group offered a proposal for settlement of the property question before their injunction was served. The above are the facts in the case. It was in answer to their one proposal, that our counter proposal was drawn up and submitted to them Here follows the counter-proposal, which speaks for itself. We only add that we received no answer to it, not even an acknowledgment of the receipt." — end of quote. These are Rev. De Boer's facts in the case.

First, the "Veldman group" which the Reverend P. De Boer mentions repeatedly in his article, did make a proposal at the meeting which was held in the office of their lawyer, L. Himmelman, which was held in the early part of the year, 1954. We made a proposal at that time regarding the property. We made the proposal to them that both sides would agree to submit to the court decision of Judge Taylor in Grand Rapids. They rejected this proposal. Hence, it is certainly true that we submitted a proposal to them for an out of court settlement before we served an injunction on them in April of 1954. The question of Synod did not come up until our proposal had been presented and rejected.

Secondly, the Rev. P. De Boer presents the proposal correctly which we subsubmitted to them during the early part of January of this year. However, he writes, and we quote: "We were told that in case we did not submit now the damages would be much higher." The reader must remember that, in our bill of complaint, we were seeking damages to the extent of \$250 a month. Assuming that we obtain possession of the properties in March of this year, this would total some \$4,500. We felt that \$2,000 was considerably cheaper than \$4,500. And it is certainly true that the longer we are restrained from taking possession of our own pro-

perty the more they would be expected to pay. Anyone is able, I am sure, to understand this.

The group of Rev. P. De Boer submitted to us a counter proposal during the latter part of January of this year. Now we should bear in mind that this proposal is the only effort put forth by them to seek a settlement out of court. Rev. P. De Boer speaks in his article of "serious efforts" put forth by them. Well, apart from the question how "serious" this effort was, the fact is that they put forth *one* effort and not efforts. We wonder whether Rev. P. De Boer is using the tactic of the Rev. De Wolf who, at a congregational meeting of his followers after Judge Taylor's decision, told his following that they had made three or four offers to us for an out of court settlement. We must also bear in mind that our court trial in Pipestone, Minnesota, had been set for January 31. It was later changed to February 28, upon the request of their lawyer. We received their counter proposal, their only proposal (mind you, both meetings with them in their lawyer's office proceeded from us) the evening of Jan. 27, 1955. They had drawn up this counter proposal the evening of Jan. 21, but it came to us through their attorney, and we received it at a meeting held on Jan. 27. This means that their only proposal came to us very shortly before the trial in Pipestone (we do not know whether they knew the evening of Jan. 21, when they composed their counter proposal, whether the trial would be postponed). We rejected this counter proposal at our meeting of Jan. 27 because the Articles of Incorporation contradicted this counter proposal and also because of the Church Order which forbade us to enter into such negotiations with them. Our lawyer was told by the undersigned to acquaint the group of Rev. P. De Boer with our decision. However, he did not give their group any word of this decision. He did not think it wise to do so. Now the Rev. De Boer writes that they received no answer from us, not even an acknowledgment of its receipt. Well, Rev. De Boer, and to all those who follow you, may I tell you that, at a pre-trial hearing which was held Jan. 28 between the two lawyers and the judge, our lawyer told their lawyer that their counter proposal was not acceptable to us. Hence, we surely did notify their attorney. I do not know whether Mr. Himmelman notified his clients of our decision. Besides, it was not necessary to notify them of our refusal to accept their counter proposal. The fact is that we made them our *final* proposition during the early part of January.

H.V.

OFFICE BEARERS CONFERENCE

All past and present office bearers are invited to attend this meeting to be held at 8 o'clock in our Hope Protestant Reformed Church on April 5, 1955.

Discussion on the subject of excommunication will be continued. Let us reserve this date and all be present.

J. King, Clerk.