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MEDITATION

Power to Become Children of God

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." John 1:12.

But . . .

No matter that when He Who was the true Light came unto His own, that is, His own things,—His own inheritance, His own temple, His own altars, His own service, His own sacrifices, His own feasts, His own covenant, yea, His own world,—no matter that His own people, Israel, received Him not. No matter that they rejected Him, from the beginning were minded to kill Him, and finally nailed Him to the accursed tree! His own received Him not. But . . .

There were those who received Him! There was a remnant from among Israel. And there was a remnant from among all nations of men. They received Him,—Him, the Light, the Life, the eternal Word! And in them the wonder of grace was revealed. For to them He gave power to become children of God!

Wonderful power! Unspeakably blessed privilege! Glorious position!

Sons of God!

Nay, His rejection by His own did not mean, could not mean, that the cause of Christ went down to defeat. He is the Word. He is the way, the truth, and the life! God's Word cannot be made ineffective! Nor is the fact that He is rejected by some and received by a few to be explained as though He is dependent upon men, as though He is a poor beggar, who humbly and kindly seeks a listening ear, and awaits the inclination of men to receive Him. For if it were left to mere men, natural men, to receive Him, He would never be received by any. The darkness cannot comprehend the Light!

But as there is sovereign election and sovereign reprobation, so there is a humbling and a hardening process, and thus

there are those who receive Him and those who reject Him, and so there is eternal weal and eternal woe!

* * *

Children of God . . .

Sometimes the Scriptures employ a term which lays the stress on the legal aspect of our sonship and our adoption. But frequently they also use a term, as here, which emphasizes the spiritual, ethical side of our sonship, which points to the fact of our being begotten, or born, of God. In general, the idea of this child-father relationship is that of likeness: the son is like his father, bears the image of his father. And this is also the idea of Scripture here and in many other places. To be God's children is to be like Him! Thus we read in John's First Epistle: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God . . . Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when it shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

Children of God!

What bliss beyond compare!

No, the expression does not refer to an *essential* likeness. There is but one God; and there is none beside Him. To be like Him does not mean that we shall ever be sovereign and independent and eternal and unchangeable as He is. It does not even mean that we shall possess the ethical attributes of righteousness and holiness as He possesses them, in Himself and independently and infinitely. In that sense we shall never be or become like God. It was in that sense that the Tempter deceived our first parents in the garden. But in the sense of essential likeness there is but one Son, the only begotten, Who is God Himself, in Whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And for us to be called sons of God can only mean that we are called after the name of that only begotten Son, and that we become conformed to the image of His Son, the Word that was made flesh, and in Whom is revealed the glory of the Father. But then the essential difference will ever remain. He is the Creator; and we shall be forever the creatures of His hand. He is God; we are men. He is the Fountain; and from that Fountain we can only drink the blessings of salvation. He is the Life; and from

Him we ever receive and enjoy life. He is the Light; and it is only in His light that we see light. He is the Giver; we the receivers. He abides eternally the only adorable God, before Whom we can only bow in worshipful reverence!

But all this does not detract in the least from the wonder that God has children, children who are like Him. Ever do the Scriptures teach us that ours is a most excellent position, a glorious calling! It implies that in a creaturely measure we reflect His image, partake of the divine nature, live His life, show forth the virtues of the Most High. It means that we reflect His holiness, His righteousness, His goodness, His purity, that we know Him, that we walk with Him and talk with Him, that we dwell in His house, that we are the objects of His Fatherly love, that we taste all His blessings, that we enjoy His most intimate communion! Children we are, who belong in Father's house, and who shall dwell forever in His tabernacle!

Yes, and it means too that we are children, not after the similitude of Adam, but conformed to the image of His Son! Children, not on the level of the earthy, but on the level of the heavenly! Children, not who can be corrupted and fall, but children incorruptible! Children, not who can lose their life, but children immortal! Children, not who can fall from their excellent position, but children who shall abide in Father's heavenly house and know the blessedness of His fellowship and love forevermore!

O, to be and to become such children of God more and more

What incomparable blessedness!

* * *

Power

Power to become children of God!

In eternity we become the sons of God by sovereign and unchangeable election. For He "predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." And, "whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." And surely, this is the fountain and cause of every saving good, of all the blessings of being children of God! That eternal adoption the Lord God also realizes in time, legally, through the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is on the basis of the perfect righteousness of Christ, established in the cross, and sealed in the resurrection, that God legally adopts us for His children and heirs. Our adoption papers, as it were, are made out in the blood of Christ. There, in Golgotha's cross, we are purchased out of the power of sin and death to be God's children. And there we obtain all the rights of sons. And the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, and therefore heirs, — heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.

But our Father in heaven not only legally adopts us. He does what no earthly and human father can ever do when he adopts a child. He makes us like unto Himself. He be-

gets us, causes us to be born again, born from above, born with new and heavenly and everlasting life! And thus His divine purpose, that we should be conformed to the image of his Son, we, who are by nature and according to our birth children of the devil, is realized! Children of God!

Yet the text speaks of *becoming* sons of God, and of the *power*, or right, to become sons of God. Not only so, but it speaks of those becoming the sons of God who are already His children: they were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God! And to be sure, only those who are the children of God can ever receive Christ and believe on His Name! Nevertheless, there was a sense in which they still were in need of power to become sons of God and in which they could, even though they were already sons, still receive power to become sons. And the same is true of us today.

Historically speaking, these words refer to those who lived at the time of the sojourn of Christ upon earth, first of all. It was the time when, sojourning among men, in the years 1 to 33 A.D., He came unto His own things, and when His own people rejected Him, while the remnant received Him. Those who received Him were surely already the children of God. But they were children of God in the old dispensation. And there was a difference. Christ had not come, and had not as yet fulfilled the law. The Spirit was not yet poured out, — the Spirit of Sonship. Their right to be sons was not yet established. They had everything by promise. Yes, they were sons, but as minor children. And they were treated as servants: they were under the law. But as soon as Christ came, and they received *Him*, the Son of God in the flesh, they became sons in the full sense of the word principally. They were no more under tutors and governors, no more treated as servants. But as free sons, who have reached the age of majority, they received actually all the rights and privileges of children of God. Through the blood of the cross their right to become God's children was established once and for all. And that right they received. For the Spirit of His Son was poured out in their hearts. And that Spirit witnessed with their Spirit that they were the children of God, and caused them to know and to express their sonship in the cry, Abba, Father!

Also of us, however, it is true that while we are sons, we still can become sons of God!

That is true, first of all, in the sense that that small beginning of sonship becomes ever more consciously ours: we grow, and must grow, in sonship and in the consciousness of sonship. We become more the children of God, and less the children of the devil, according as the small beginning of the life of Christ, our elder Brother, more and more dominates our entire life. And secondly, there still awaits us the perfect realization of our sonship through the wonder of the resurrection from the dead, when finally, as the apostle John writes, we shall be like Him, shall see Him as He is, face to face. We are the children of God but it doth not yet appear what we shall be. Still we are bound to the earth, to

the dust. Still we are like Him only in principle, while there is much imperfection. We see Him, but only in a glass, darkly. We know Him, but only from a letter, the Holy Scriptures. And we long to be fully His children, to be completely like Him, to be delivered from all that still causes us not to be like Him, and from all that still separates us from His Father-heart!

But for that blessing we need the power, the *right*.

We need it not only once, but constantly!

For God our Father is righteous!

He loves and blesses the righteous, and He hates and curses the wicked!

And therefore, not everyone is, or can be, a child of God! There is no peace, saith my God, for the wicked!

And we who are elect, but wicked by nature, and still wicked according to our old man of sin, need the right to become His children. That right is possible only on the basis of perfect righteousness, according to the standard of His own holy law, and according to the judgment of His own mouth. He Himself must declare us worthy of becoming His children! And we must hear His own Word before we can ever be assured of our sonship!

That right is established in the cross of His Son. And subjectively, to be sure, it becomes ours principally once and for all when by His Spirit and Word He calls us out of darkness into His light, and witnesses with our Spirit that we are His Sons. Then we receive the title, the deed, to the eternal inheritance.

But as we hope to become sons perfectly in His day, and as we seek grace daily to become conformed to the image of His Son, we need constantly to receive that right! We sin, and we need the forgiveness of sins. We need to hear from God Himself, constantly, day in and day out: "My son, my daughter, thy sins are forgiven thee!"

The blessed right to become the children of God!

* * *

That gift of the right to become sons of God,—and a free gift it is, and always remains,—is only in Christ, God's Son in the flesh!

It is in Him, because He is the Son by eternal divine right! It is in Him because, having assumed the flesh and blood of the children, He atoned and fully satisfied for all our sins! It is in Him too, because He alone can and does bestow that right, according to the standard of election, upon all those for whom He died, by His Spirit and Word! He, the Christ of God, *is* our righteousness!

To receive Christ, therefore, *is* to receive the right to sonship!

And to receive Him means that you believe *into* His Name, that by faith,—the faith which is God's own gift to you, efficaciously wrought,—you strike your roots ever more deeply into Him, and live out of Him, and constantly find in Him the sure right to become perfect sons!

Then we have hope,—the hope of our heavenly home with Father!

H.C.H.

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CONTENTS

MEDITATION —

- Power to become Children of God.....409
Rev. H. C. Hoeksema

EDITORIALS —

- Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, 1955.....412
Rev. H. C. Hoeksema

AS TO BOOKS —

- The Psalter414
Love the Lord Thy God.....414
Rev. G. Vos

OUR DOCTRINE —

- The Triple Knowledge (Part III — Of Thankfulness).....415
Rev. H. Hoeksema

FEATURE ARTICLE —

- Participation in the Lord's Supper.....417
Rev. C. Hanko

FROM HOLY WRIT —

- Exposition of Hebrews 11:24-26.....419
Rev. G. Lubbers

IN HIS FEAR —

- "A Form of Godliness, but . . .".....421
Rev. J. A. Heys

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH —

- The Church and the Sacraments.....423
Rev. H. Veldman

THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS —

- Te Canons of Dordrecht (Art. 18).....425
Rev. H. C. Hoeksema

DECENCY AND ORDER —

- The Consistories' Part.....427
Rev. G. Vanden Berg

ALL AROUND US —

- Principles of Education.....429
Rev. M. Schipper

CONTRIBUTIONS —

- "New" Reformed Guardian.....431
Rev. E. Emanuel
Report of the Eastern Ladies Aid.....431
Mrs. Dewey Engelsma
Spelen met Vuur.....432
J. R. Vanderwal

EDITORIALS

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, 1955

Purposely I use the full name in the caption of this report, not only because we claim to be the true continuation of the Protestant Reformed Churches, nor only because we shall maintain before the law that we are such, nor because we venture confidently to prophesy, history shall prove that we are such, but especially because it was clearly evident in every way at the recently held sessions of our synod in the edifice of the Fourth Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan that we still represent the Protestant Reformed cause, and that the sixteen delegates gathered at Fourth Church indeed constituted the *Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, 1955*. The Synod functioned in traditional Protestant Reformed fashion, in the proper ecclesiastical manner. Protestant Reformed language was spoken, unambiguously. The love toward and zeal for the Protestant Reformed truth and our Protestant Reformed churches was manifest. The deep-seated spiritual unity, — so sorely missed in the recent past because it was broken by those who have now left us, — that unity, and its accompanying warm zeal, which we knew in the earlier years of our history, was again clearly operative as the undercurrent of all Synod's deliberations and decisions. From this point of view, although one probably would not say that its decisions were of a momentous importance, nevertheless it may safely be said that Synod of 1955 will not soon be forgotten in the annals of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

The full and detailed report of the activities of this synod will presently be published in our combined *Acts and Yearbook*, which, we hope, will this time not be too slow in making its appearance. Our people should surely avail themselves of the opportunity to get a copy of this booklet also. But the undersigned, substituting during our Editor-in-chief's vacation, will furnish an abbreviated report of Synod's doings, plus a few comments.

On Tuesday evening, May 31, the pre-synodical service was held in the auditorium of the host congregation, Fourth Church. All the sessions of this year's synod were held either in the auditorium or the basement of Fourth Church. And the ladies of Fourth Church very graciously supplied the delegates with their noon dinner, as well as with the customary morning coffee and afternoon tea. At this pre-synodical service the Rev. C. Hanko, vice-president of the previous synod, officiated in the place of Rev. G. Vos, due undoubtedly to the latter's recent bout of heart trouble. The Reverend Hanko used as his text the 10th verse of Ephesians 2. Our esteemed brother Vos, let me add, was present and active at all the sessions of synod, though, according to doctor's orders, he must learn to live with his ailment.

On Wednesday morning the Synod met for the first time officially and was constituted. At the roll-call the usual four ministers and four elders responded from Classis East. But, due to the shortage of ministers, Classis West delegated only three ministers, but added a fifth elder. Classis West did this on the ground that the principle of equal representation of the classes at synod is weightier than the principle that there should be an equal number of ministers and elders in each classical delegation. This reasoning was accepted virtually without debate and by unanimous vote. The Rev. C. Hanko was chosen president of this synod, and the Rev. H. Veldman, vice president. The Rev. M. Schipper and the Rev. J. A. Heys were elected clerks. Our home missionary, the Rev. G. Lubbers, was present in his capacity of Stated Clerk. And both theological professors, Revs. H. Hoeksema and G. M. Ophoff, were present to give their advice on the various matters before the synod. At this Wednesday session the usual Committee on Committees was appointed, and thus the work of synod was distributed to three committees of pre-advice, who spent the rest of the day (and part of the night) in study sessions and in the preparation of advice for the guidance of the synod in its deliberations and decisions. The importance of the work of these committees for pre-advice is sometimes overlooked, I think. But their work is indeed important for the systematic and smooth functioning of any synod. As a rule, however, this does not become evident except by contrast, that is, when a committee of pre-advice fails to do its work carefully and thoroughly. Fortunately, Synod's committees this year in most instances did good work, even though their advice could not always be accepted.

The Thursday and Friday sessions were spent mostly in the examination of Student Herman Hanko, who had finished his course at our Theological School. This examination was conducted by the professors in the presence of Synod, and its outcome was indeed favorable, as is plain from the Synod's unanimous decision to declare brother Hanko a candidate for the ministry. As was also noted at the end of the examination, this was a joyous occasion. We were reminded that the Lord had kept for us our Seminary, and that He had preserved our two faithful leaders and professors. And especially was it an occasion charged with feeling for the president of Synod, who is the father of the new candidate. Candidate Hanko is not the first representative of the second generation in our churches' ministry; but he is the first graduate of our school whose father also had his training in the same school and by the same professors. On Monday evening, June 6, appropriate graduation exercises were held, attended by a goodly number of interested Protestant Reformed people. The Rev. Ophoff delivered the rectoral address, a discourse on the Covenant of Sinai. And Candidate Hanko spoke on "The Idea of the Preaching of the Word." Rev. Vos, president of the Theological School Committee, was chairman for the evening, and also presented the well-earned diploma. And so our churches may presently

look forward to the "minister-shortage" being relieved at least one-fourth.

As to the rest of Synod's work, we may mention, first of all, the matter of the Committee on Litigation appointed by the Synod of 1954. They explained in their report why no legal proceedings on a synodical level were begun in the past year, and also furnished advice as to any future litigation. The Synod of 1955 set in motion the proper machinery to recover eventually our synodical archives and funds and other properties, including the Acts of 1953, which were paid for with our money and were never lawfully published. Apart from this, there was very little on the table of Synod to remind us of the trouble caused by the schismatics. Indirectly related to this trouble was a decision of Synod to table indefinitely the revision of our *Psalter*, a work which was begun several years ago, but which is now impracticable because of our reduced size. And beside this, there was a request for advice from some of our faithful people in the Pella, Iowa, area, where, it appears, the schismatics, under the lead of Rev. M. Gritters, were not quite as successful in their evil work as first appeared.

The reader will bear in mind that I am not furnishing a chronological report of Synod's action. I merely want to cover at least the main matters treated, even though not in the same order as Synod did.

There were especially two matters which could not be classed as "routine." Both came originally from Classis West, and both were originally on the table of Synod already in 1954. One of these items was a proposal to change the classical boundaries in such a way that the congregations of Randolph, Wisconsin and South Holland and Oak Lawn, Illinois would be transferred from Classis East to Classis West, which had only five congregations left after the schism. This proposal had been referred by the Synod of 1954 to Classis East, and would have gone into effect last year already if Classis East had acted favorably. It was not until its January, 1955 session that Classis East finally came to a decision to "maintain the status quo . . . since we are in a period of flux." Hence, the matter was back on Synod's table, since the two classes did not agree on the matter. Synod, however, could not see the cogency of Classis East's reasoning; and, after a thorough discussion of the matter, it rejected the advice of the committee of pre-advice "that the matter be tabled until the synod of 1956," and decided unanimously in favor of the proposed change in classical boundaries. This decision goes into effect on August 1. As far as immediate results are concerned, this was one of the most far-reaching decisions of the Synod. The change may cause a little inconvenience for the three congregations mentioned, since they will have to travel farther for classical meetings. And it is probably also true that they are loathe to leave Classis East after residing in it for so many years. But on the other hand, there can be no doubt that Classis West was greatly crippled by its small size, and that this change will result not only in smoother classical

operation for the West, but also in greater balance between East and West. Classis East will now have nine congregations, and Classis West will have eight. For the undersigned personally it will be a sort of "homecoming" after a rather brief sojourn in Classis East.

The second proposal that came to Synod of 1954 originally from Classis West was an overture to realign the two major standing committees, the Mission Committee and the Theological School Committee, in such a way that the membership of these committees would be drawn from our entire denomination, rather than only from the eastern segment. In 1954 Synod by implication went on record as favoring the idea when it appointed a study committee of the Revs. C. Hanko, H. Veldman, and the undersigned, to try to present the Synod of '55 with a workable plan for carrying out this proposal. This committee drew up such a plan, and their report was distributed to the consistories along with the Synodical agenda in May. The committee of pre-advice counselled the Synod this year to declare the proposed plan not workable. After one of the most lengthy debates of the whole session, this advice was rejected, and the matter was sent back to the committee for positive advice. However, when the committee returned with its positive advice, the Synod, in my opinion mistakenly, became entangled once more in a general discussion of the practicability of the plan. And the outcome was that a motion prevailed to table the matter until 1956, in view of the sweeping changes involved. This means that the plan, even if approved in 1956, could never go into effect until 1957. The undersigned was disappointed by this decision for two reasons. 1) In the first place, the Synod tabled the matter without ever actually treating the report of the study committee thoroughly and in detail. 2) And in the second place, I am very much afraid of tabling and postponing a matter simply to avoid making a decision on a weighty matter. This does not mean that postponement is never in order. But we must beware of falling into the bad habit of tossing around a "loose ball" from one synod to the next, as has become the vogue in some circles. An example of this, I think, you have in the "divorce problem" on the Christian Reformed Synods. Hence, since the matter is tabled, let our consistories not "file it and forget it;" but let us study the report carefully and critically and without prejudice.

We will conclude this report in the next issue, D.V.

H.C.H.

CLASSIS EAST MEETS AT HUDSONVILLE

Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet Wednesday morning, July 6th, at 9 o'clock in the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church. Consistories residing in this Classis will please take note. There will be no Office Bearers' Conference.

Rev. M. Schipper, Stated Clerk

AS TO BOOKS

The Psalter, by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Third printing, \$2.50 (To churches \$1.75).

Our readers will remember that this psalter was published in a revised edition in 1947. But the supply ran out and the Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company issued a second printing at this time, so our churches and our people can again buy *The Psalter*, with our doctrinal standards, our liturgy and the Protestant Reformed Church Order of Dordrecht.

From two points of view this psalter is better than its predecessor. First, the paper is different, of a much better quality. The publisher tells me that the poorer quality of the first printing of our psalter was due to prevailing conditions after the world war. This is now corrected. Second, the binding is much better, more reinforced. Linen strips in the joints of the binding protect the book against rough handling. Hence, the life of these psalters should be and, no doubt will be, longer.

And so, if our churches are low on psalters, you can get your needs filled by ordering them now.

And our people also can get them at the same address. It is a good thing to have a psalter in our home for playing and singing the psalms of David. Acquaint your children with these fruits of God's loving providence towards His people. It is a sad fact that some homes have one or more hymn books from which the error is sung into the consciousness of our children from their early youth, while they are comparative strangers to the sweet singer of Israel.

And not to forget our Protestant Reformed schools: get your supply while the books are available. Nothing else should be sung in our schools. Here is the fact of history. First we sing the psalms of David; then we combine the *Psalter* with a number of hymns; and we end up having nothing but hymns. And truth is gone begging.

Buy and sing the *Psalter*!

G. Vos

Love the Lord Thy God, volume eight of an Exposition of the *Heidelberg Catechism*, by the Rev. Herman Hoeksema. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan. \$3.00.

Before I say something about this latest volume, allow me to enumerate the titles and prices of all eight volumes:

Volume 1 *In The Midst Of Death*, Lord's Days 1-4, \$2.50.

Volume 2 *God's Way Out*, Lord's Days 5-10, \$2.00.

Volume 3 *The Death of the Son of God*, Lord's Days 11-16, \$2.50.

Volume 4 *The Lord of Glory*, Lord's Days 17-20, \$2.50.

Volume 5 *Abundant Mercy*, Lord's Days 21-24, \$2.50.

Volume 6 *Baptized Into Christ*, Lord's Days 25-27, \$2.50.

Volume 7 *Eating and Drinking Christ*, Lord's Days 28-31, \$2.50.

Volume 8 *Love the Lord Thy God*, Lord's Days 32-38, \$3.00.

And so, the total price for these eight volumes is \$20.00.

This volume proudly takes its place along side the other seven. Its jacket is the most attractive of all, and its paper and binding are splendid. The size of the volume, even as the others, is very handy. And the printing is clear, very readable.

And as to its contents? Yes, what shall I say? In the short confines of this little article you cannot expect me to cover the rich truths that are developed by our Rev. Hoeksema.

This 8th volume begins the discussion of the Third part of the *Heidelberg Catechism*: our gratitude to God for so great salvation. The book treats the first four commandments, up to and including the commandment of the Sabbath.

Every family of our membership ought to have this and the other seven volumes in their library, so that we all, as well as our growing children, may become better acquainted with this wonderful Standard of our churches which has stood the test of time, and which has instructed and comforted untold multitudes of Reformed believers on two continents.

You buy and read newspapers and magazines, and I find no fault with it. But do not forget to buy this set for instruction, consolation and also in order to become more founded in the truths of God's Word.

Finally, I am able to inform you that volume 9 is set up in print at this time, and shortly will come off the presses, price \$2.50. And volume 10, which will conclude this set, is ready in manuscript, so that before long you will be able to have the whole set in your possession. Vol. 10 will be \$3.00.

I am thinking of a remark addressed to me not long ago: The Rev. Hoeksema writes for the ages!

Leave this set of books as a heritage for your children.

If you can afford it, give it as a graduation present.

G. Vos

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 16, 1955, our beloved parents

MR. and MRS. GEORGE SPRUYT

celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary.

We are thankful to God for having spared them for each other and us. Our earnest prayer is that God may further bless them in the way that lies ahead.

Their grateful children:

Mr. and Mrs. M. Campbell

Mr. and Mrs. J. Jansma

9 grandchildren.

Mr. and Mrs. D. Groeneweg

OUR DOCTRINE

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

AN EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

PART III — OF THANKFULNESS

LORD'S DAY 47

Chapter I

God's Holy Name

And when we are taught to pray, "Hallowed be thy name," the Lord Jesus would have us say at the very beginning of our prayers: "Our Father Who art in heaven, so reveal Thyself and so let Thy Self-revelation be recognized and acknowledged by us, that Thy name alone may stand out in all the world as a name of infinite wisdom and knowledge and power, of absolute Lordship and sovereignty, of unchangeable righteousness and truth, of matchless beauty, purest love, boundless grace, abundant mercy, as the only name that is worthy of all glory and adoration and praise forever."

Chapter II

The Implications of the First Petition

In the first chapter we have briefly explained the meaning, the objective aspect, of the first petition of the Lord's Prayer.

The question now arises: but what are the implications of these words, viewed as a prayer? For what do we really ask when we take this petition on our lips? For we may never overlook the fact that we are dealing here not with a mere question of cold doctrine, but with prayer. Nor is this the mere expression of a pious wish, "O, that Thy name were hallowed." On the contrary, we are definitely asking for something. As we utter this petition, we are giving expression to a heartfelt need. We would like to receive some blessing from our Father in heaven. We earnestly beseech Him to do something in our behalf. And therefore the question must be answered: what is our request? What is it that we need and that we express as a heartfelt need in this petition?

Let us not overlook the fact that the verb in this petition stands in the passive. In it we do not pray that we may hallow or glorify the name of our Father which is in heaven; but it is left entirely general, "Hallowed be thy name." It seems to us that the Heidelberg Catechism somewhat ignores this element, although we may say, perhaps, that it is nevertheless implied in its answer. It explains as follows: "'Hallowed be thy name'; that is, grant us, first, rightly to know thee, and to sanctify, glorify, and praise thee, in all thy works, in which thy power, wisdom, goodness, justice, mercy, and

truth, are clearly displayed." It cannot be denied that, although the Catechism suggests that God's name is indeed hallowed or glorified in all His works, it nevertheless ignores the passive form of the prayer, "Hallowed be thy name." Yet, we must not overlook this form, but try to answer the question: what does it mean?

Evidently it means, first of all, that we are taught to beseech our Father in heaven that He will so govern all things, the affairs of the whole world,—social, economical, political, national, and international,—the affairs of the church in the world, and all things that concern us personally, and our whole life in the world, in such a way that, first of all and above all, His name may receive all the glory and praise. For the passive form of the petition, "Hallowed be thy name," implies undoubtedly that the Most High, that our Father in heaven will glorify His own name through us and through all things.

And this is very significant.

It means that we approach God with the prayer on our lips, "Father, glorify Thy name regardless of what becomes of us, even though this should require that we be led in the ways of suffering and death. Glorify Thy name, O Father, no matter what becomes of our name." It was thus that our Lord Himself prayed when the dark shadows of the terrible cross were already stealing over His soul, and He said: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name." John 12:27, 28. The glorification of the Father's name was to Him His chief concern. He was willing that the Father's name should be hallowed even though it would lead Him into the depth of death and hell. Principally, in the first petition we are taught to pray for the same thing. That is why this petition stands at the head of the whole series of requests. The glory of God is first. The petition means that it is also first in our hearts and minds. We seek it above all. In this petition we profess that we are not chiefly and first of all concerned about the question of what becomes of us and our earthly existence and life. If our Father sends war, and thus reveals His name in the world, our first concern is not with ourselves and our earthly well-being, but that in and through the war God's name may be hallowed. It means that in those circumstances we do not immediately and rashly cry for peace, regardless of what may become of the revelation of God's righteousness and power and holiness. But we say: "Our Father, even if it must be through war, glorify Thy name." If we are led in ways of depression, hunger, want, suffering, sorrow, oppression, persecution for Christ's sake, we do not rebel against the ways of the Most High, but we humbly ask Him for grace to say, "Our Father, if I must be led through these deep and difficult ways in order that Thy glorious power and grace may be revealed, hallowed be Thy name."

This, then, is the first implication of this first petition of the Lord's Prayer.

It means that we earnestly implore our Father in heaven

so to reveal Himself in all things in the world, particularly too in all things that concern us and our present life in the world, that His name may be hallowed, whether it be in health or in sickness, in life or in death, in joy or in sorrow, in prosperity or in adversity, in peace or in war.

Secondly, this first petition of the Lord's Prayer also implies a request for grace that we may always hallow and glorify the name of our Father in heaven in our confession and in our entire life and walk in the world. Also this is very significant. Nor is it easy for us to learn thus to pray in spirit and in truth. For, mark you well, this too implies that we earnestly desire grace from God always and everywhere to seek the glory of His name first, regardless of our position in the world.

The Catechism explains in this connection that the first petition implies that we ask, first of all, that our Father in heaven give us grace rightly to know Him. And this stands to reason. How shall we sanctify and glorify Him if we do not know Him with that true spiritual knowledge that is the knowledge of love and fellowship, and that is wrought in our hearts by His Spirit and Word? And to be sure, this true spiritual knowledge of God presupposes that we have the right, the correct and full knowledge about Him. For how shall we know Him spiritually if we have no knowledge about Him, about His name, His being, His virtues, His works, His salvation in Christ Jesus our Lord? This prayer therefore implies that we ask our Father in heaven that He may give us the true, unadulterated knowledge, the right doctrine of Him. This true knowledge of God is contained only in the Holy Scriptures. And we receive it and increase in this knowledge through the reading and searching of those Scriptures, as well as through the preaching of the Word and the instruction of ourselves and our children in that Word, in the home, in the school, and in the church. The first petition of the Lord's Prayer, therefore, implies that we invoke God's indispensable blessing upon all these means for the preservation and dissemination of the true knowledge of God. In it we pray that the church may be preserved and extended, and that she may receive grace to be zealous for the maintenance of the truth and to guard it against all heresy. In this prayer we pray for its ministry, that it may be wholly devoted to the proclamation of the true gospel, both within the church and without, and even to the uttermost ends of the earth. We pray that wherever our children receive their instruction, in the home or in the school or in the church, they may be nurtured in the fear and admonition of the Lord, so that they may become thoroughly furnished unto all good works. And then we pray that God may so sanctify this knowledge about Him unto our hearts by His Spirit and grace that it may become true knowledge of Him in Christ Jesus our Lord. A thorough knowledge of God, about Him, as revealed in the Scriptures, is necessary; but a mere head full of doctrinal knowledge is not sufficient. This petition, therefore, also implies that we ask for God's Spirit and grace to give us that spiritual knowledge, that knowl-

edge of the heart, which is eternal life; that we may love the Lord our God with all our heart and mind and soul and strength. "Hallowed be thy name." That means: "Our Father Who art in heaven, give us to know Thee more and more, and preserve us ever in the truth of Thy holy Word."

It is not difficult to understand what this implies as to the spiritual disposition of our hearts that is required to send this petition to the throne of grace.

It certainly presupposes that we are filled with an earnest desire and longing for the true knowledge of God, and that therefore we employ every means which God gives us to obtain that true knowledge. It means that we certainly are not doctrinally indifferent, but that we are zealous for the truth as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. For if this is not our attitude, we are hypocrites when we pray, "Hallowed be thy name." And hypocrites are an abomination to the Lord. What would you think of a son who, being far from home, writes to his father that he longs to see him, but who does not even take the trouble of reading his father's letters? And what, then, do you judge must be God's attitude to us if, while we pray with our lips that His name may be hallowed, and that therefore we long to know Him, in the meantime we plainly evince in our life that we are not interested in His Word? What must we think of the preacher who from the pulpit sends this petition to the living God in heaven, but who during the week does not make a serious attempt to prepare for his sermons by studying the Holy Scriptures, or who proclaims to his flock his own philosophy instead of expounding to them the true Word of God and preaching the full counsel of God? What is to be thought of the individual Christian who repeats this prayer, but who cares not for sound doctrine, if only his soul is saved; whose seat is usually vacant when God's people are congregated for worship on the sabbath day, and who shows no interest in the preaching of the Word of God? What is to be thought of the family that would pray for the hallowing of God's name, but in whose midst the Bible remains a closed book? And what is to be thought of parents who teach their children the Lord's Prayer, but who neglect to give them a Christian education, not only in the church but also in the home, as well as in the school established by the parents? If such is our spiritual disposition and our actual attitude when we take this first petition upon our lips, will not God answer us: "O you hypocrites and workers of iniquity, depart from me; for you honor me with your lips, but your heart is far from me?" Indeed, this prayer requires that we live in close contact with the Word of God, and have a profound delight in the knowledge of His glorious name.

But even so we have not exhausted the meaning of this first petition of the Lord's Prayer. For in it we also ask for His grace to sanctify our hearts and minds, that we may always glorify the name of our Father in heaven. And to glorify Him implies, first of all, that we extol Him by the word of our mouth, and that we confess His glorious name.

H.H.

PARTICIPATION IN THE LORD'S SUPPER

In answer to the question, "Should small children be allowed to participate in the Lord's Supper?", the Reformed position has always been that this is impossible. But then we understand by small children those who have not yet reached the years of discretion. The reason is evident. The sacrament of baptism was instituted for infants as well as for adults, but the Lord's Supper was instituted for conscious believers. In baptism we are passive. We *are* baptized. We receive the sign and seal of our entrance into God's covenant in sovereign mercy, even though we have not yet come to a conscious faith. But the Lord's Supper is a sign and seal of our life within the covenant and our conscious participation in the benefits of the covenant. True celebration of the Lord's Supper includes a sincere self-examination, an eating and drinking in remembrance of Christ, and thus appropriating Him and all His benefits in gratitude. Since this is possible only by a conscious faith, the Lord's Supper is appointed only for conscious believers. Thus we can readily conclude that children should be excluded until they reach the years of discretion and are ready publicly to profess their faith in the midst of God's Church.

But that still leaves the question: Should children who have reached the years of discretion, but have not yet finished the prescribed course of catechetical instruction, be allowed to participate in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and even encouraged to do so? We have in mind particularly children from the age range of twelve or fourteen to eighteen years. And we mention eighteen years, because this is the age when ordinarily the required course of catechetical instruction is completed and young people most generally make confession of faith.

This raises another interesting question, namely, where did the idea of confession of faith at, for example, the age of eighteen years originate?

In some of the very old Dutch Psalmbooks you will find an introductory paragraph preceding the Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper. This introduction was a part of an early edition of our Communion Form, and reads as follows:

"Concerning the Holy Supper of the Lord.

"All those who first commit themselves to the church of God and desire to be admitted to the use of the Lord's Supper must first be instructed in the fundamentals of Christian doctrine from the Word of God, according to the form or manner of instruction which is deemed edifying in the church. And when they are thoroughly acquainted with these fundamentals of doctrine, and have made confession, they shall be asked whether they have any doubt whatever concerning the doctrine, that they may be dealt with in all justice. And if they say that they do, every attempt shall be made to satisfy them.

"But if they are satisfied, they shall be asked whether they will remain in the aforesaid doctrine, forsake the world, and live a new Christian life.

"Finally, they shall be asked if they are willing to submit to Christian discipline. And when they have promised this, they shall be admonished to live in peace and love and harmony with all men, and to make peace in case they live in disharmony with anyone."

In this preface the fathers speak of being "thoroughly acquainted with the fundamentals of doctrine," which immediately leaves the impression that they have in mind mature believers who have been fully indoctrinated. Yet they also speak of "all those who first commit themselves to the church of God," so that they are not speaking of those who are born and reared within the church, but of those who come in from without, and become members of the church through confession of faith and adult baptism. In that case, we have no problem.

But the problem centers about those who are born of believing parents, are baptized in infancy, and have their catechetical instruction within the church since the early years of their childhood. Should also they wait until they have been thoroughly indoctrinated before they make confession of faith and are granted permission to partake of the Lord's Supper?

Going back still farther in the history of the church, we find that the Roman Catholics introduced the sacrament of Confirmation between the sacrament of Baptism and of the Lord's Supper. This dates back to the third century of our Christian era.

Confirmation is defined (see "The Sacraments," by Pohle-Preuss) as "A sacrament in which those already baptized, through the imposition of hands, anointment, and the prayer of the bishop, receive the power of the Holy Ghost, by which they are enabled to believe firmly and to profess the faith boldly."

This "sacrament" is said to have been instituted by Christ, particularly in Luke 24:49, and to have been conferred upon the church on Pentecost with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Confirmation is not considered to be a repetition of baptism, namely of conferring the gift of the Holy Spirit, but a confirming of baptism, so that the *power* of the Holy Spirit is received, the grace of baptism is increased, whereby the recipient is enabled to believe more firmly and to confess this faith more courageously. Therefore reference is made especially to II Cor. 1:21, 22. This was always preceded by instruction in the doctrines of the church, but always took place at an early age.

Both Luther and Calvin rejected confirmation as a sacrament on the ground that it has no Scriptural basis, but is an innovation of the pope. Calvin referred to it as "the abortive larva of a sacrament," and "a false promise of the devil." Nevertheless, the Lutherans and also others still speak of confirmation, even though not as a sacrament. They also maintain that it must be preceded by a catechetical instruction in the doctrines of the Scriptures, but allow this confirmation to take place when that instruction is completed, usually already at an early age.

It is undoubtedly from this Confirmation that our Public Confession of Faith stems. I have not been able to trace the history of it in all its details, but have discovered that Calvin followed the practice in Geneva of having youthful catechumens recite the Catechism publicly before the church on the Sunday before communion, as a public expression of their own faith. One of the fruits of the Reformation has certainly been that emphasis is laid upon personal conviction and sincere confession of the faith wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit. For this we can only be extremely grateful. That is, no doubt, the reason why we follow the custom in our circles that those who desire publicly to profess their faith in the midst of God's church must first appear before the consistory to be examined in regard to doctrine and walk, and only upon being received by the consistory, are allowed to make confession before the whole congregation in the public worship, most generally on the Sunday before the Lord's Supper is celebrated. But it is also, no doubt, for this reason that the church has never made a hard and fast rule when public confession should be made. It has become customary for our young people to wait until they have completed the required course in catechetical instruction, which is about the age of eighteen. It should be understood though, that there are exceptions to this rule, some making confession earlier, and some later, but always leaving it to the conviction of the person making confession.

We have no argument here, but are heartily in agreement with the position that young people must make confession of faith, not out of mere custom, nor because of any kind of coercion, but solely out of personal, prayerful conviction.

But the problem remains, how about the children between the age limits of twelve or fourteen and eighteen, that is children who have come to years of discretion, but have not finished their prescribed catechetical instruction? Does not the command of Christ apply to them, "Do this in remembrance of Me?" Can there be any good reason why a child of, let us say, fourteen or fifteen, who has a sincere desire to partake of the Lord's Supper would be deprived of this privilege? Is it justified, if he shows evidence of sincere conviction and true godliness, to withhold from him this means of grace which God has instituted for His church? Or should he be encouraged to confess his faith and thus be permitted to partake of Communion with us?

Some of the arguments in favor of postponing making confession of faith and partaking of the Lord's Supper until the age of eighteen are evidently these:

First, this gives the young people an opportunity to become thoroughly acquainted with the doctrines of the church and the truth of Scripture. A child of fourteen has not yet finished his catechetical instruction. He still has much to learn, and will therefore be able to give a better account of what he has learned at eighteen than at an earlier age.

Second, a young person of eighteen has had an opportunity to grasp the truth of Scripture, absorb it, and make it part and parcel of his own soul. He is not so likely to

recite mere abstract truths, as would a child not yet matured, and therefore Confession of Faith is less likely to become mechanical, or matter of routine. He is not nearly so liable to become the victim of the coercion of a doting parent.

Third, a youth of eighteen has had at least some experience of life with its trials and temptations. He is likely to take this matter far more seriously, since he has begun to learn what it means to "forsake the world, crucify his old nature, and walk in a new and holy life." On the other hand, a younger person, because of the vanity of youth, may err from the way, fall into sin, and even make himself an object of church discipline as a confessing member.

Fourth, he has learned to feel a personal need for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and can do so with sincere faith and conviction.

All these arguments do bear weight, and should not be coldly ignored.

But there are also other considerations that enter in.

First, children are also members of God's church and partakers of His covenant. They do not become members by confession of faith, but are already members through their baptism. I mention this, because this fundamental truth is often lost sight of, even by those who still profess to maintain the Reformed persuasion. Confession of faith is often regarded as a public declaration of having accepted Christ as a personal Savior. Therefore it is referred to as "joining church," "joining the ranks of Christ," "becoming a volunteer for Jesus," etc. The Arminian error of the free will has made inroads into the church also in this respect.

Second, the command of Christ applies to all conscious believers: "Do this in remembrance of Me." Very often a child of fourteen, or even younger gives evidence of conscious faith. It is possible that he may have a sincere desire to confess his faith and partake of the Lord's Supper. When he has given this prayerful consideration, and remains firm in his conviction, is there anything that should hinder him from participating?

Third, the foolishness and vanity of youth is never an excuse for disregarding the command of Christ. It is true that it is wrong for a confessing member of the church to live in sin, but this applies just as well to a baptized member. Sin is always sin in the sight of God, and is always condemned by Scripture, no matter who commits it.

Fourth, confession of faith need not necessarily mark the end of the prescribed course of catechetical instruction. The group that makes confession of faith is no graduation class. In fact, young people of eighteen years are also urged to continue their catechism attendance, and to do so as long as possible, even after making confession, because there is still much to learn. Why should this not apply to children of an earlier age group?

In conclusion, it should be understood that I am not pleading for the old practice of confirmation, in preference to our public confession of faith. Nor am I pleading for a

(Continued on page 428)

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Hebrews 11:24-26

In this essay we will not write on those texts quoted by "Classis West" in their defense of the Statements of Rev. H. De Wolf. It seems to the undersigned that in our treatment of the passages which we have treated sufficient attention has been paid to this matter; those who are not convinced by what we have written will refuse to be convinced anyway should we write more, and those who read our articles with approval need no more proof.

So we will simply let this matter rest for the time being.

It is our purpose in this essay to call attention to what the writer to the Hebrews has to say concerning "faith" as this faith came to manifestation in Moses while he was living in Pharaoh's court during the first forty years of his life. Says Hebrews 11:24-26, *"By faith Moses when he became of age refused to be called a son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be evilly treated with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, accounting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward."*

The general thrust of this entire passage from the book of Hebrews is to warn the Jewish Christians against the sin of back-sliding from the faith in Christ unto the return to the O. Testament types and shadows and to act as if Christ had not come as the better and greater High Priest, establishing the New Covenant of grace upon better promises. And the writer raises a warning finger. He comes with the warnings, threatenings of the Gospel in order that the grace of God's preservation in the faith may be the portion of the church.

Such a Word of God we have in our text.

Our text is profitable for instruction, for reproof, for correction, for the entire pedagogy in righteousness of faith, that the man of God may be thoroughly prepared unto every good work. The example of Moses' faith is cited in order that the church, which is not of them that fall back unto the perdition of the soul, may indeed believe unto the receiving of the salvation.

To achieve this end in the hearers, the writer to the Hebrews calls attention to a certain aspect of saving and living faith in Hebrews. He speaks of faith here as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" Heb. 11:1. And he will demonstrate before the believing eyes of the Hebrew Christians that this faith clearly and uncontradictably was such in all the "elders, who obtained a good report" in the annals of the mighty in the Church of God in the Old Testament Dispensation. Always faith was "substance," that is, the sure subjective confidence in the soul. It was a hearty "fiducia," that is, solid, immovable

confidence that the things God had caused them to hope upon, according to His sure promise, would certainly be realized. In this confidence they hoped upon God as they, who are standing upon solid ground. Inwardly the "elders" had a certain subjective proof, God witnessing in them, that they would never be put to shame in their hope and trust upon the sure promise of God. In this confidence they were indeed patient, believing unto the salvation of their souls and unto the final glory of God in the Christ and in all the saints.

Such is the aspect of faith as here portrayed in the lives of the "cloud of faithful witnesses."

Let us try to see how this became very evident in the life of Moses while he lived in the court of Pharaoh in Egypt.

We notice the following in the text:

1. That the text teaches us that "faith" in Moses was such at the time here spoken of that he "refused to be called a son of Pharaoh's daughter." To understand the element of the "solid confidence of things hoped for" in this faith as thus revealed we should notice what was implied in being called a "son of Pharaoh's daughter." This evidently meant:

a. That Moses had all the rights and the privileges of being an Egyptian Prince. He was thus not reckoned amongst those who were the common rank and file in Egypt, who were virtually slaves too of the Egyptian monarch at this time. For we ought to observe the notice in Gen. 47:21, "And as for the people, he removed them from their cities from one end of the borders of Egypt to the other thereof. Only the land of the priests bought he not, for the priests had a portion assigned to them of Pharaoh, and did eat their portion which Pharaoh gave them; wherefore they sold not their lands." Thus the entire private ownership was taken from the people of Egypt and all lands were government owned—the people working for the king. Being a son of Pharaoh's daughter, Moses was not a mean subject of the king of Egypt, but could enjoy all the privileges of a Prince-royal. The entire Kingdom of Egypt lay at his feet.

b. It was for this reason that Moses was also instructed in all the knowledge and wisdom of the Egyptians. He was "a goody child," which evidently means that he was a child of extraordinary beauty and natural grace as well as a gifted man far above the average. This had "in faith" already been observed by his mother, who felt that her son would be someone special in Israel unto its deliverance. The result is that there comes a time in Moses' life that he "became great." Only as a son of Pharaoh's daughter could he become thus. Does not Stephen say in Acts 7:22, "And Moses was placed under the pedagogy of all the wisdom of Egypt; now he was mighty in words and works." A. T. Robertson makes the observation here, "The priestly caste in Egypt was noted for their knowledge of science, astronomy, medicine, and mathematics. This reputation was proverbial (I Kings 4:30). Modern discoveries have thrown much light on the ancient civilization of Egypt. Moses, like Paul, was a man of the schools . . . Moses did not have the

rhetoical skill and eloquence of Aaron (Ex. 4:10), but his words like his deeds carried weight and power." This all was a part of the privileges which Moses enjoyed under the protective status of being a "son of Pharaoh's daughter."

c. And we cannot doubt but what Moses must have attracted the notice of his instructors and also of Pharaoh's court as being an exceptionally gifted man. He rapidly rose to prominence. Head and shoulders above the rest he was. He stood out — being mighty in word and in deed. He must have stood out as did Daniel and his three friends later in the court of the Babylonian King. Yet, Moses *refused* thus to be a son of Pharaoh's daughter and to accept as his own all that was implied in being an heir to the Throne of Egypt. The term for "refuse" in Greek means: to refuse *something offered*. He refused the dictatorial monarchy of Egypt and thus come to stand where the Pharaoh would stand who would be destroyed by the Lord in the ten great plagues and afterwards in the Red Sea.

It came to a *crisis* in the life of Moses!

Either he would be the son of Pharaoh's daughter or he would be the son of Levi's daughter. He would either be the great one in Israel, the lawgiver of God's people or he would be the tyrant to maintain the evil policies of the King of Egypt against the Lord and against His anointed Son. It was an either-or proposition. He would either have to be for God's people or he would have to be against them. A neutral position was not possible. If he did not gather he would scatter. And he that wills to be a friend of the world would be accounted an enemy of God!

Indeed, it was a critical issue!

It was either to be the "goodly child" in Israel, or to use all of his gifts in the service of a king, who is rightly a type of Satan's tyrannical power and usurpation.

And the alternatives, too, were far-reaching in their consequences. Either he would enjoy the "pleasures of sin for a season," or he would have to suffer the lot of all God's people, that is, to be persecuted for righteousness' sake. For all who will to live godly in this world must needs suffer for the sake of the cause of the Son of God in this world. This Moses clearly perceived. He must have brooded upon this question of his place and calling in the midst of the world, and of the special providence of God that he was born at such a time as this, and that he of all the male children had been very wondrously brought into the very home of him, who had ordered his death together with all the male children in Egypt. I say: Moses must have brooded upon this question! The very providence of God that led him into Pharaoh's house also caused Moses to come to a point in the road of his life where he had to make a momentous decision.

He must either be willing to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter or he must outright refuse thus to be called. Either he must work for the *liberation* of Israel out of the house of bondage, or he must seek to perpetuate this state of bondage of Israel and seek to prevent God from calling

His Son out of Egypt. Hos. 11:1; Matt. 2:15. For let it not be forgotten that the glory of Israel is that in the twelve tribes there is one from whom the Christ, the Seed, shall come. In Isaac the Seed would be called. And the fury of Pharaoh, the evil and cunning dealing of Egypt with Israel was the manifestation of the Prince of this world as he worketh in the sons of disobedience. It was the Dragon standing before the Woman, being great with child, ready to kill her child as soon as it is born. Principally it is the same as when wicked Herod would kill all the male children in Bethlehem from two years old and under. Compare Rev. 12:1-3.

They are, therefore, great alternatives which Moses here faces!

Hence, the text says: that Moses chose the "reproach of Christ." For when Israel suffers in Egyptland, it is nothing less than that the Anointed Son of God is reproached. Moses saw the question, the rock-bottomness of the issue at stake. He saw this with the eye of faith. He saw this issue because he believed the word of God concerning Israel's glorious future as this has been foretold by the Lord Himself to Abraham. Gen. 15:13. Yes, Moses believed the dying prophecy of Jacob concerning each of his sons, as well as the implications of the commandment of Joseph concerning his bones; he knew that Israel would be delivered out of the land of the Slave-holder!

Faith was here, indeed, the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Moses has a right and proper evaluation of matters in this faith.

He weighs the alternatives very carefully. He sees both of these in their true worth and value. On the one hand there was the "pleasures of sin for a season," and on the other hand there was simply "suffering the reproach of Christ, suffering together with the people of God."

And his evaluation was such that he did not falter and back-slide into perdition, but believed unto the saving of the soul. He rejoiced in the greater treasures in heaven. He belongs to the "just who live by faith."

One of the cloud of witnesses he is, and he is great in the annals of the people of God!

(to be continued)

G.L.

School Teacher

The Free Christian School Society of Edgerton, Minn., is still in need of a principal.

Ray Brunsting, Secretary
R.R. 5, Box 35
Pipestone, Minn.

IN HIS FEAR

"A Form of Godliness, but . . ."

We live in a time when there is so much that passes for the fear of the Lord and yet, because it denies the power thereof, is actually in the service of the antichrist.

Today it is fashionable to be a "christian."

Few in numbers are those who in our land would not be offended if you would tell them that they are not christians. Few there are who would not consider that an insult!

Yet let us never forget that the reprobate, which far outnumber the children of God, are not christians in anything more than in name. They have only the form of godliness. Nothing more.

A christian according to the very correct answer of the Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day XII is one who is a member of Christ and who therefore partakes of His anointing. He is the object of God's grace.

Christians have more than the form of godliness. They live by its power.

There is also much that passes for Christianity and calls itself Christianity but actually is antichristian and antichristianity.

As Paul writes to Timothy, warning him in II Timothy 3:5: "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."

The word godliness means reverence, piety, worship and therefore the fear of the Lord.

A form of being "In His Fear" but denying the power thereof is irreverence, impiety and therefore sin.

And the very attempt to defend such powerless forms of godliness, reverence and fear is itself only a *form* of godliness but denying the power thereof. Let us be on our guard in this day when men would like to make us believe that Christianity is sweeping the world and modern "evangelists" seem to put Christ and the Apostles to shame by their seeming "successes." The more Christ preached *the truth*, the smaller His audiences became. From thousands who first came to hear him, instead of mass "decisions for Christ" there were only one hundred twenty who still followed Him after His death and burial. It is not all "In His Fear" that is presented to us as such. It is not all godliness and reverence that comes to the natural eye in that *form*.

It happens not infrequently that one envies the zeal of others. Not seldom is it that you have people sigh and say: O, if I could only be as spiritual, as full of holy zeal for God's kingdom as brother so and so or as sister so and so! And then almost overnight that form is torn off and the reverence and piety that was so highly coveted is no more to be seen! Without its power, it withered away.

What zeal also is often displayed in Modernism!

Energetic people! People full of ambition, ready to lend

a helping hand and to spend a hard earned dollar to improve the living conditions of another or to help some financially destitute family make ends meet.

Ah, we sigh and say: There truly is a christian! There is a man filled with the fear of the Lord!

And yet it is only a form of godliness. Only a form. Only the outside shell that looks good to the naked eye. But you must not dig deeper unless you want to be disappointed by reality.

What is worse: it is not simply a fraud that for a time deceives man. It is an abomination in the sight of the Lord! "The sacrifice (also his gifts and the time he sacrifices, his charity and civic endeavours, etc.) of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: but the prayer of the upright is His delight" Proverbs 15:8.

We repeat: to deny that, to try to defend the wicked in their form of godliness is itself only a *form* of godliness and is not true reverence, piety and fear before God!

Still more.

"Many shall say in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity." Matthew 7:22, 23.

What an indictment!

I *never* knew you! And we envied them! We, perhaps, began to review our Reformed faith and ask what is wrong with it that there is so much "In His Fear" in these modernistic circles and so little in ours. We fell in love with the form. And we, by so doing, denied the power thereof!

O, they cast out devils in Jesus' name.

The modern devils that drive you as a slave in the sweat shops of yesterday. They improved our working conditions in the name of Christ, in the name of Christianity. They did many "wonderful works" for his sake(?).

But they were not so wonderful after all. The form looked nice. It looked like the real thing. But it denied the power and without the power it is worse than worthless. It is an abomination in God's sight. For it is antichristian. Whatever does not serve the cause of Christ's kingdom militates against it. Whatever is not christian is antichristian. He that is not for me is against me, Jesus said. Whether it has the form of being for Him or not makes no difference. If the power that is for Him is not behind that form, it is the power of the antichristian movement.

Why is it that with the Five Points of Calvinism, we cannot fill a very large auditorium with listeners? Why is it that in our circles there are no mass "decisions for Christ?" Others with a gospel that promises and offers salvation to all who hear; who present a Jesus Who loves everybody; who apparently are overflowing with the mercy and compassion of God to save your dear soul from the brink of hell; who in Christ's name have "done many wonderful works"; these have to turn away the multitudes that come to hear.

Shall we review our doctrinal stand?

Shall we consider a change of tactics that we may be more successful in "winning precious souls for Christ"?

A word of warning from God through the Apostle Paul: Do not deny the power of godliness!

And that power is not in the rich harmonies and captivating tune of the hymn that extols the love of God for all men head for head.

The power is not in a fiery message that extols the cross of Christ and then asks and pleads with *you* to turn on the power and accept this Jesus Who, though He has done so much, still stands outside the door and is helpless to apply this salvation to you till you give him the right.

The power is not in a doctrine of election that preaches an election that is decided in time by your "decision for Christ."

The power of godliness is in God!

The power in Christianity is in Christ!

The power in godliness that is more than a form is the power of the Spirit of the almighty God.

The power is therefore in the Word of God as God's Word.

The power of godliness is in the truth.

The lie, false doctrine, any mixture of man's philosophies can produce the form of godliness. It can deceive men and please men. It can do things that men will call "In Thy name many *wonderful* works." In man's judgment they are wonderful works; for man is benefited by them and man is glorified at the expense of God's glory.

But God says: Depart from me ye that work iniquity!

He sees through the form of godliness. He sees the anti-christian power behind these works of iniquity.

That is also why it is so sickening when children of Zion sing the songs that have a form of godliness but deny its power. Many, many of the hymns of today evince that *form* of godliness. Are they not called hymns? Are they not set forth as gospel songs? Are they not rendered on the pulpits of the churches as church music and as inspirational and edifying numbers to render before God's people.

"Roll, Jordan Roll!" "I want to go to heaven when I die to see old Jordan roll!" What a wealth of spiritual zeal in such a song!? Godliness it is not. It only has the form. God, Christ, the Cross, Salvation are not in it. Powerless, nonsensical, superficial, ANTICHRISTIAN! It puts Christ outside of heaven! Jordan is the important thing there!

It has a form of godliness because it speaks the language of Scripture. It speaks of Jordan as the Scriptures do. It speaks of heaven and of going there when we die.

The form of godliness is there; but the power is sadly lacking.

And so it goes with countless number of songs that even find their way on our programs. They contain a few phrases that may be found in Holy Writ, and therefore are labeled: "sacred music," "Gospel Songs" etc.

We might as well be honest about the matter. We sing them and use them on programs because the music captivates

us. The reason we sing and use them is the earthly pleasure we derive from them and not the power of godliness.

And so we simply underscore the words of the apostle in the verse that precedes this warning against that which has only a form of godliness. Paul says: "... lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness (which looks like love of God, then) but denying the power thereof."

"From such turn away."

All these things are antichristian.

That is not putting it too strongly. Does God through Paul warn us to turn away from such things for any other reason than that they are rooted in hatred towards Him? Deeds that are perpetrated because men are lovers of pleasure rather than of God? And there is no neutrality. In the measure that we love pleasure more than God, in that measure we hate God and oppose Him and His Christ.

And there surely is something wrong when the ungodly, the unregenerated are attracted to our godliness. You can realize such things by denying the power of godliness. You can make Christianity look good to him and "sell it to him" by taking the power of Christ out of it. Give him some room — and the more room you give him, the more attractive that form of godliness will be to him — give him plenty of room and push the Living, Almighty God to the background or else emphasize His love and grace for *all* down-and-outers, *all* underdogs and abused men while denying His righteousness, His justice and sovereignty. You will make that form attractive to man. They will see something good in Christianity. They will advocate it for the ills and troubles of our social and economic confusion and injustice.

But: "from such turn away."

By all means do not advertise their form of godliness to your children.

This same Apostle Paul, guided by the same Spirit of Truth had written to the Thessalonians: "Let no man deceive you . . . that man of sin be revealed (the antichrist) . . . Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped (essentially the same word as godliness in II Tim. 3:5); so that he as God sitteth in the temple, shewing himself that he is God."

The antichrist has a *form* of godliness.

But he opposes all that is of God.

From such turn away!

J.A.H.

Few preachers have equalled John the Baptist in self-depreciation and Christ-exaltation. He sought to turn the attention of his hearers from himself to Jesus, and if he made disciples, it was only that they might be persuaded to leave him and follow Christ, the One who was preferred before him (John 1:15), because pre-existent. John was happy and content to be esteemed the Bridegroom's friend, and rejoiced as he entered into His joy (John 3:29).

—H. A. Ironside

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

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

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

We were busy in our preceding article with the question relative the importance of membership in the true church, as advocated in the second period of the Church, 300-750 A.D. We noted that it was generally held that membership in this Catholic Church (not to be confused with the Roman Catholic Church) was strictly necessary unto salvation. And, in connection with this question, we were busy with presenting a few quotations of Augustine which he wrote in his struggle with the Donatists. We will now continue with a few more of his quotations.

“And let any one, who is led by the past custom of the Church, and by the subsequent authority of a plenary Council, and by so many powerful proofs from holy Scripture, and by much evidence from Cyprian himself, and by the clear reasoning of the truth, to understand that the baptism of Christ, consecrated in the words of the gospel, cannot be perverted by the error of any man on earth,—let such an one understand, that they who then thought otherwise, but yet preserved their charity, can be saved by the same bond of unity. And herein he should also understand of those who, in the society of the Church dispersed throughout the world, could not have been defiled by any tares, by any chaff, so long as they themselves desired to be fruitful corn, and who therefore severed themselves from the same bond of unity without any cause for the divorce, that at any rate, whichever of the two opinions may be true,—that which Cyprian then held, or that which was maintained by the universal voice of the Catholic Church, which Cyprian did not abandon,—in either case they, having most openly placed themselves outside in the plain sacrilege of schism, cannot possibly be saved, and all that they possess of the holy sacraments, and of the free gifts of the one legitimate Bridegroom, is of avail, while they continue what they are, for their confusion rather than the salvation of their souls.”—end of quote. The reader will notice that the learned Church Father, in this quotation, literally declares that they who openly place themselves outside in the plain sacrilege of schism cannot possibly be saved, and that all that they possess of the holy sacraments and of the free gifts of the one legitimate Bridegroom is only of avail for their confusion rather than for the salvation of their souls. Hence, Augustine teaches here that there is no salvation outside of the communion of the Catholic Church which, we understand, must not be confused with the Roman Catholic Church as it bears that name today.

“Further, if we inquire more carefully what is meant by

‘outside,’ especially as he himself makes mention of the rock on which the Church is built, are not they in the Church who are on the rock, and they who are not on the rock, not in the Church either? Now therefore, let us see whether they build their house upon a rock who hear the words of Christ and do them not. The Lord Himself declares the contrary, saying, ‘Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken Him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock,’ and a little later, ‘Everyone that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand.’ If, therefore, the Church is on a rock, those who are on the sand, because they are outside the rock, are necessarily outside the Church. Let us recollect, therefore, how many Cyprian mentions as placed within who build upon the sand, that is, who hear the words of Christ and do them not. And therefore because they are on the sand, they are proved to be outside the rock, that is, outside the Church; yet even while they are so situated, and are either not yet or never changed for the better, not only do they baptize and are baptized, but the baptism which they have remains valid in them though they are destined to damnation.”—end of this quote. Hence, all they who are on the rock are in the Church, and they who are not on the rock are not in the Church either. And from this Augustine would conclude that all those are on the rock must be in the Church, that all those who are not in the Church are not on the rock, and that therefore they who are outside the Church are also necessarily outside of salvation. Hence, there is no salvation outside the Church. We may also note, in this quotation, that the Church Father declares that the baptism as administered by these schismatics must be considered valid. This is plain from the conclusion of the quotation.

A final quotation from Augustine reads as follows: “But in this world no one is righteous by his own righteousness,—that is, as though it were wrought by himself and for himself; but as the apostle says, ‘According as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.’ But then he goes on to add the following: ‘For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ.’ And according to this doctrine, no one can be righteous so long as he is separated from the unity of this body. For in the same manner as if a limb be cut off from the body of a living man, it cannot any longer retain the spirit of life; so the man who is cut off from the body of Christ, who is righteous, can in no wise retain the spirit of righteousness, even if he retain the form of membership which he received when in the body. Let them therefore come into the framework of this body, and so possess their own labours, not through the lust of lordship, but through the godliness of using them aright. But we, as has been said before, cleanse our wills from the pollution of this concupiscence, even in the judgment of any enemy you please to name as judge, seeing that we use our utmost efforts in entreating the very men of whose labors we avail ourselves

to enjoy with us, within the society of the Catholic Church, the fruits both of their labors and of our own." — end of quote. That the renowned Church Father connects salvation with membership in the Catholic Church is also evident from this quotation. No one can be righteous as long as he is separated from the unity of the body. A limb that is cut off from the body of a living man cannot any longer retain the spirit of life. This is naturally true. It is also spiritually true. No man who is cut off from the body of Christ, Who is righteous, can in any wise retain the spirit of righteousness. And therefore they must come into the "framework of this body," and this body is the Church of God. Hence, salvation and church membership were inseparable.

THE EPISCOPACY.

Having called attention to the doctrine of the Church, during the Second Period, 300-750 A.D., particularly as pertaining to the visible or invisible character of the Church, we noted that this question was inseparably connected with the Donatist controversy, the greatest controversy during the early days of the Church of God in the New Dispensation. And we also noted that salvation was not considered possible outside of the Catholic Church, the Church of God as it existed universally during that time. The Donatists were condemned, not because they taught heretical doctrines, but because they had withdrawn themselves, schismatically, from the Church of God in the midst of the world.

Another aspect of the doctrine as taught during this second period is the development of the episcopacy. We have already called attention, in preceding articles, to the fact that the form of Church government from the time of the apostles until the Reformation was episcopal and not presbyterian. This does not mean that the form of church government during the time of the apostles was episcopal. We need not doubt that it was presbyterian during the early days of the apostles. The presbyterian form of church government is the control of the government of the church in the hands of the "presbyters," or elders. This, we understand, does not dispose of classical and synodical authority. For, in the first place, also our classical and synodical gatherings are constituted of representations from the consistories of the various churches. Hence, classical and synodical authority is never to be identified or confused with the episcopal form of church government. And, secondly, the presbyterian form of church government, also as maintained in our Protestant Reformed Churches, has never denied the fact that, in the life of a denomination, a classical or synodical decision does not have binding power. There are examples in the history of our churches which verify this. In June of 1950 the consistory of what was the Protestant Reformed Church of Hamilton, Canada, decided that such members should be accepted into the fellowship of the church there who promised to submit to further instruction in our Protestant Reformed truth and who also promised that they would not agitate. This decision the consistory never enforced. In

October, at the meeting of Classis East, this matter appeared before the classis. And the classis decided that the consistory of Hamilton must enforce that decision. Except for one dissenting vote by an elder of our Chatham church at that time this decision was unanimous. That means that the Revs. Blankespoor, Kok, Knott, and others voted in favour of that decision. Do these men wish to deny the binding character of that decision? They realize, do they not, that this decision was such that the Protestant Reformed Church of Hamilton, to remain within the fellowship of the Protestant Reformed Churches, was compelled to pursue one of two courses: either protest against this decision to the synod, or enforce it. And if, upon protesting to the synod, they would fail to carry their point at the synod, then they would be compelled, if they wished to remain within the fellowship of our churches, to abide by the decision which was taken at the sessions of Classis East in October of 1950. It seems to me that even the mention of this is superfluous. And then there is that other case in the history of our churches in which the Reverend B. Kok was involved, and which case, I understand, was mentioned at the court trial in Grand Rapids which granted our church in Grand Rapids the right to our name and the property. Hence, we have never denied the binding power of classical and synodical decisions. And we need not doubt that the type of church government at the time of the apostles was undoubtedly presbyterian in form. The apostles, we read in Acts 14:23, ordained elders in every church, and there is nothing in Scripture to warrant the conclusion that the ruling power over the churches was in the hands of a bishop. It is, therefore, a remarkable phenomenon that, whereas the form of church government was presbyterian in form at the time of the apostles, and the Church, beginning at the Reformation, recognizes the presbyterian form of church government to be in harmony with the Word of God, the episcopal form of church government should characterize the life of the Church of God in the New Dispensation from the time of the apostles to the period of the Reformation. It is truly remarkable that this episcopal form of church government should characterize the Church of God for about fifteen hundred years. This phenomenon is surely worthy of a little investigation.

H.V.

These two sins, hatred and pride, deck and trim themselves out, as the devil clothed himself, in the Godhead. Hatred will be godlike; pride will be truth. These two are right deadly sins: hatred is killing; pride is lying.

— Martin Luther

We did not become believers by struggling, but by trusting in what Christ had done for us; so we shall become fruitful by trusting the same Saviour to work in and through us.

— Hudson Taylor

The Voice of Our Fathers

The Canons of Dordrecht

PART TWO

EXPOSITION OF THE CANONS

FIRST HEAD OF DOCTRINE

OF DIVINE PREDESTINATION

Article 18

To those who murmur at the free grace of election, and just severity of reprobation, we answer with the apostle: "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" Rom. 9:20, and quote the language of our Savior: "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" Matt. 20:15. And therefore with holy adoration of these mysteries, we exclaim in the words of the apostle: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

This translation is in need of correction in its opening clause, where the adjectives "free" and "just" are misplaced. The translation should be, as also the Dutch has it: "To those who murmur at the grace of free election, and the severity of just reprobation . . ."

In this concluding article of the First Head of Doctrine the fathers deal with two subjects. The first is that of our answer to those that murmur against this doctrine of sovereign predestination. And the second is that of our own attitude toward this doctrine, and that too, in contrast with those who murmur against it. At the same time this first and most important chapter of the *Canons* is closed with a most fitting and Scriptural doxology, a hymn of praise to the predestinating God of our salvation. At the conclusion of the Fifth Head of Doctrine we find a doxology once more, but already now it is as though the fathers could restrain themselves no longer, but in contemplation of the very doctrine which they have been busy formulating and defending must needs break forth into the well-known words of the closing verses of Romans 11. And indeed, it is to be observed that it is exactly such a doctrine as they have expounded that can and does occasion the adoring worship that is expressed in these words.

The article speaks of those who "murmur" against this doctrine. And by the very mention of them it presupposes, of course, that there are those who so murmur. And we know too that this presupposition is very realistic. There have always been, and still are, those who murmur against the grace of gratuitous election and the severity of a just reprobation. In fact, so common is such murmuring that it

is indeed true that one may well judge the orthodoxy of his doctrine of predestination by the criterion of this murmuring. You may be certain that if you preach and teach and maintain the pure, Scriptural doctrine of sovereign predestination, men will murmur against you and your doctrine. The apostle Paul knew such murmuring in his day; Augustine knew of it; Gottschalk had to suffer it; Calvin had to hear it and answer it; the fathers of Dordt had to do battle against these murmurers. And those who will be Reformed today, and adhere strictly to this same doctrine, will have to face these same murmurers. And that such murmuring can be a criterion of orthodoxy is due to the fact that to be the object of such murmuring is the exclusive prerogative of the true doctrine of predestination. Change it a bit, compromise on the subject of its sovereignty, soften it by adopting a "double track theology," — and you will no longer hear the murmurings.

The fathers also indicate the nature of these murmurings. The objections are against the *grace* of free election and the *severity* of just reprobation. Carefully and wisely do they choose their words. They are words that point out clearly the gross wickedness of those who object against the doctrine. It is exactly against grace, the grace of God, that they murmur. And it is especially against the grace of free election that they object. If only you insist that all the other blessings of salvation are gifts of God's grace, that they are all free, they may probably let your doctrine pass. But the moment you insist that election is free, gratuitous, that it is unmerited, and that therefore it is grace, not works, they will murmur against your doctrine. For, you see, election is the end, the anchor end, of the chain of salvation. Or, to use the figure which the *Canons* employ, election is the fountain and cause of all saving good. And if, then, that election is free, unmerited, a matter of grace, then there is absolutely no room left for man and his "free will." Hence, they murmur against the *grace* of election. This murmuring may assume more than one form. Usually men object, as we well know, that "this doctrine makes men careless and profane." Or the kindred objection is raised that this doctrine makes *passive* Christians. Much more frequently, however, men murmur against the *severity* of just reprobation. A doctrine of election they claim to be able to endure; but they cannot stand the severity of reprobation. It is, so they say, a horrible doctrine. Some of these matters we have already discussed in our treatment of previous articles. But it is well that we see clearly the nature of these murmurings. Actually, of course, when they object against the severity of reprobation, they also oppose, and mean to oppose, the grace of free election also, and even primarily. Make no mistake about that! But remember too what the *Canons* mean by a "just reprobation." That is not a reprobation on the basis of foreseen sin and unbelief. It is not a reprobation on account of sin. If such is your doctrine of reprobation, you will never hear

these murmurers. That is exactly the doctrine that they want, and concerning which they claim that it does justice to the doctrine of human responsibility. But the "just reprobation" of which the *Canons* here speak is that described in Article 15. It is not a reprobation on account of sin, but a reprobation unto condemnation in the way of man's own sin. And while it is unblameably just, its severity nevertheless remains. For that severity is not in the condemnation, but in the fact that this decree of reprobation has its source in God's "sovereign, most just, irreprehensible and unchangeable good pleasure." In other words, you may make it ever so clear that reprobation is just, and that the decree of reprobation does not violate man's nature as a responsible, moral, rational creature, and that therefore this decree of reprobation is realized in history in the way of perfect justice. As long as you insist on that which makes this decree of reprobation so inexorably severe, namely, its absolute sovereignty, wicked men will murmur against your doctrine. If you ask, therefore, what it is that occasions these murmurings, the answer is: the goodness and severity of God. But it is the goodness and severity of God, Who is really GOD, that is assailed by these murmurers. And that is the same as saying that the stumbling block for these murmurers is God's *sovereignty*!

To murmur is different than acknowledging that we cannot comprehend God's works and ways. In fact, contemplating God's work of sovereign predestination, the believer will exactly confess: "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" To murmur is to contradict and to rebel. It is the work of pride. He who murmurs presumes to know better than God, against Whose work he murmurs. Murmuring is unbelief!

And now notice how the fathers, with the Scriptures in hand, teach the believers to answer these murmurers. They refer in both passages which they quote to instances of murmuring. In the first instance, from Romans 9, the apostle is answering an objector against the doctrine that God has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth: "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?" And the article quotes only the first part of the apostle's answer: "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" Notice the following elements: 1) That by quoting this answer and instructing the believers to answer the murmurers in this language the *Canons* point to the real nature of the murmurers' objections. The trouble is not that they misunderstand. The trouble is not intellectual at all. It is ethical; it is a matter of the will and of the heart. Their murmurings partake of the sin of answering against God! 2) That the *Canons*, with the Scriptures, tacitly assume that the major premise of these objectors is correct, namely, that free election is indeed grace, sovereign grace, and that just reprobation is indeed severity, sovereign severity. 3) That the fathers, with the apostle Paul, insist that man, infinitesimally small speck of dust that he is, *a priori* has no right to contradict and to rebel

against the infinite and sovereign God. When God speaks, there is only one attitude for man to assume: let him lay his hand upon his mouth, maintain utter silence, and simply listen! Aught else is nothing short of blasphemous rebellion!

The article might well have quoted the rest of the apostle's reply in Romans 9. But they turn instead to the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, and quote from it, Matthew 20:15. In the context the Savior tells of the laborer who objects when all those who are hired by the lord of the vineyard receive the penny's wages, whether they have labored only one hour or whether they have borne the burden and the heat of the day. Without going into a detailed explanation of the parable, we may notice: 1) That apparently, but only apparently, there is an element of justice in the objection here. And this fact emphasizes the Lord's point all the more strongly. 2) That the lord of the vineyard answers in the parable: "Friend I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny?" And he then insists on granting unto the last servants even as unto the first. 3) That the reason which in this case overrules all objection, the reason that cannot be answered, is: "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" Although therefore, you find in this instance not an objection against predestination, the principle of the reply is certainly applicable. If the lord of the vineyard may do as he pleases with his own money, then it is certainly true that the Lord of heaven and earth is not beholden to account for His actions to mere men, but is sovereignly free to do as He pleases with His own,—His own creatures, His own salvation, His own damnation, His own heaven, and His own hell. Hence, let never the church flinch in the face of those murmurers. But let them reply in harmony with the Scriptures.

And then let their own attitude be that of adorable worship, expressed in the words of Romans 11:33-36. This is neither the time nor the place to give an exposition of these words. Suffice it to say: 1) That in the light of the context, both in the epistle to the Romans and in the *Canons*, no more fitting words could have been chosen. For certainly, although this doxology speaks of "all things," the narrower context is that of the truth of eternal predestination with a view to Israel and the Gentiles. 2) That in these words is truly expressed the attitude of holy adoration of these mysteries. For notice that this doxology is pre-eminently theological: "Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." 3) That this doxology is at the same time a humble confession that when we contemplate the truths of election and reprobation, as they are mysteries revealed to us by God Himself, we come face to face with the incomprehensible, unsearchable, and unfathomable God of our salvation.

Ever, therefore, let the church confess the truth in such a way that it may end with the language of this doxology, in holy adoration!

H.C.H.

DECENCY and ORDER

The Consistories' Part

In former installments we wrote that it is not the task of the consistory to establish, maintain and supervise the christian school. Even though she may and, also, should be greatly interested in and deeply concerned about the school, she has no right to exercise any ruling authority in an institution such as the school which stands outside of the domain of her rule. The establishment of the christian school is the sole responsibility of the parents. Theirs is the mandate to maintain it with or through proper supervision. Even though it would happen that the same individuals were chosen to serve on the school-board who are elders and deacons of the church, these men would not serve in these two respects in the same capacity. In the one instance they serve as office-bearers of Christ who are called to maintain the ministry of the Word and to promote the cause of the Son of God in the world, while in the other instance they function as parents in their calling to bring up their children in the fear of the Lord. However intimately these may be related, we must also distinguish carefully between them lest there be a real conflict of authority.

We have also noted that the most important factor in maintaining good christian schools is *the teacher*. However desirable other things may be, they are not indispensable. But the teacher is! One can have a school yet (and a good school too) without buildings, benches, books, paper, etc. but one cannot have a school without a teacher. Without teachers there can be no schools. Likewise, without good teachers the schools cannot be good. The first requisite then, toward the establishment of good christian schools is that a staff of good, qualified, capable, efficient, sound instructors be obtained and if such schools are to be perpetuated, there must be a continuous replenishment of the teacher supply. Here lies the root of the real problem of true christian instruction.

To help solve this problem, at least in part, is the task of the consistory. Do not draw the erroneous conclusion from what has been written above that the church and school are separate from each other in such a way that the former has nothing to do with the latter. Do not think that the consistory is called to assume an attitude of total indifference toward the affairs of the school. This would be all wrong. We only stated that the consistory must never over-step its authority. That is something quite different from the assertion that consistories have nothing to do with the schools. The former have a definite duty to perform in regards to the latter.

This is implied, if not expressed, more than once in our church order. Article 21 states, "The consistory shall see to it that . . ." which defines a duty. Each time a consistory sends a delegation to Classis, the delegation is asked under Article 41 whether the christian schools are cared for? This

question does not state by whom these schools are cared for but the fact that the question is directed to the consistories certainly implies that they have some obligation in this respect. When the Classis sends the Church Visitors to the various congregations under Article 44, the question is put before each consistory, "Does the consistory see to it that the parents send their children to the christian schools?" The import of this question we wish to discuss in another connection but we cite it here to make plain that no consistory may, under the church order, assume an indifferent attitude toward christian instruction but must be very much concerned therewith for if the phrase of it expressed in this question did not belong to their labors, the whole question would indeed be out of order and this it is not.

It is rather difficult to draw an exact line as to the scope or limitations of the labors of a consistory in this respect but we can offer a few suggestions circumscribing the labors expected.

(1) First of all, consistories shall see to it that there are *good christian schools*. For every Protestant Reformed Consistory this can mean nothing less than the most serious labor in the direction of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools. Laxity in the past does not justify present or future indolence. Consistories should encourage and admonish parents to fulfill their covenant obligations, giving them good counsel in the face of the many problems that are to be confronted in the undertaking of this big task. They must patiently instruct the parents who do not as yet understand the principle necessity of positive action toward the realization of schools where our children can be and will be instructed according to the demands of the covenant and, consequently, also in harmony with the baptismal vow made by the parents before God and the church. They must be ready to assist wherever possible in this undertaking. For these reasons it is impossible for one, who himself is adverse to christian instruction, to serve as an office bearer in the church and do justice to his calling. God calls the office bearers of the church to promote christian education.

(2) To maintain good christian schools, we wrote, good teachers are indispensable. In this respect consistories can perform a very important labor. They ought to encourage those young people of the congregation who give evidence of possessing the necessary qualifications to seek preparation and labor in this field. Parents of such young people should be approached, too, and their attention directed to the potential ability as educators in their child and, likewise, the parents should encourage the development of this as much as possible. Especially is it important that qualified young men seek their life work in this important field. That field is in dire need of many competent plowmen to harrow and cultivate it so that the real fruits of christian culture may be brought forth. Too often young people get through grammar or high school and seek a place to labor where they can make the most money. Money is the factor that speaks the loudest. And parents are frequently moved by the same carnal greed

and encourage their children in this. Today wages are high and opportunities plentiful and the result is that many abilities of young people are lost to the service of God's Kingdom and sacrificed upon the altar of greed and covetousness in the short-cut to material happiness. We are living in an age of materialism and the danger is more than imaginary that we and our children are easily swept away by the spirit of this age. Against this we must constantly fight. Let not covetousness reign in our hearts. Let us as parents and consistories be diligent to instruct our generations in true values and then the spiritual always comes first. Teach them to seek the Kingdom of God and its righteousness first! First, that is, foremost and above all! We must learn to be willing at all times to count all things but loss for Christ's sake and this ought to be learned in our youth so that we do not seek a life-work motivated by carnal covetousness but rather seek to employ our God-given talents in the highest possible way in the service of His cause. Consistories do well to expend some positive labor in this direction for the need is ever increasing!

(3) Thirdly, consistories must labor with those who are negligent in sending their children to the good christian schools that are provided and thus impede the furtherance of this cause. They are knowingly or unknowingly obstructionists. In communities where Protestant Reformed instruction is available, none of the children of our churches in those communities should be deprived of it. And, in communities where this is not yet available, the best possible means ought to be used although we may never be satisfied with any kind of a substitute but must labor untiringly toward obtaining the goal—instruction for our children that is in harmony with our confession! Consistories must admonish those that are negligent for such negligence is not simply refusal to perform an optional task but is omission of a God-given duty. In other words, it is *s-i-n*! It is no small thing to live in daily conflict with the sincere vows made before God in baptism. Such sin will surely find us out!

The question is sometimes asked whether a consistory may or should apply the steps of christian discipline unto parents who refuse to send their children to the christian school. To my knowledge the church in the past has never taken the position that such parents are to be barred from the table of the Lord and ultimately excommunicated from the church. I know of no such cases. Strong admonition is regarded as the extreme measure.

Personally, I doubt the correctness of this position. It is sometimes difficult to depart from precedent but if precedent is to be maintained it must be based upon sound principle and otherwise we fall into traditionalism. I know of no such principle sustaining the above-mentioned position. I am of the opinion that, although each case of neglect must be separately and individually considered so that all factors involved may be taken into account, there is no misuse of key-power on the part of a consistory that censures those who promise to instruct their children in the fear of the Lord to

the utmost of their power and then wantonly and willfully refuse to give them daily instruction in the christian school. Such sin is very serious. It may not go unpunished and the power to punish sin in the church is the power to censure in christian love. Now, it is so that all sin is not censurable sin but sin against one commandment is fully as serious as sin committed against another. Censure is readily applied against those who publicly transgress against the seventh or eighth commandment. The sin against other commandments is equally severe and I would categorize parental neglect on this score in a threefold way: (a) As breaking the oath and thus violating the third commandment for which God will surely punish us. (Heid. Cat. q. 102) (b) As defiance of the authority of our Heavenly Father Who commands that His children be trained in a covenant manner and thus violating the fifth commandment. (c) As spiritual homicide and so violating the sixth commandment!

The matter is a serious one. Consider Him with Whom we have to do and before Whose eyes all things are naked and open (Heb. 4:13). Do you not tremble? And let consistories in His fear labor and instruct and admonish that we may be faithful to God and to our children.

G.v.d.B.

PARTICIPATION IN THE LORD'S SUPPER

(Continued from page 418)

change in the amount of catechetical instruction our children should receive. Nor am I pleading for a change in practice, so that our children make confession of faith at a much earlier age, regardless of whether they themselves feel inclined in their own hearts to do so.

But I am pleading for two things:

First, that our young people should not be encouraged to set a definite age limit, as if it is improper for them to confess their faith earlier or later than at that specified age. That leads to dead formalism, mere custom, making confession because it is expected of us, or because others do.

Second, that those who have a sincere desire to confess their faith in the midst of God's church be encouraged to do so, regardless of age, custom, practice, or whatever. I stress, of course, a sincere desire which is the result of prayerful consideration, and is incited by the urge to comply with the command of Christ, "Do this in remembrance of Me."

C. Hanko

Adam received the promise of the woman's seed ere he had done any work or sacrifice, to the end God's truth might stand fast—namely, that we are justified before God altogether without works, and obtain forgiveness of sins merely by grace. Whoso is able to believe this well and steadfastly, is a doctor above all the doctors in the world.

—Martin Luther

ALL AROUND US

Principles of Education.

In the editorial column of the Banner of June 10th we came upon an item which is appearing on the agenda of the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church which at the time of this writing is still in session. The item referred to is: Principles of Education.

We have only one reason for calling attention to this article. From time to time we meet parents in our own Protestant Reformed Churches who still send their children to the Public School. The objection expressed by these parents to sending their children to the existing Christian School is that conditions in the local Christian School (mainly High School) are so bad that they felt it was safer to send their children to the Public School. They boldly say they have no obligation, either moral or financial, to support the existing Christian School where these evil conditions prevail. They also declare that if they had a Protestant Reformed Christian School to which they could send their children their objection would be removed. But since there is no such school nor the possibility for the present of obtaining such a school, they would rather send their children to the Public School than to the existing Christian School with all of its corruptions.

We have agreed with these parents that the ideal is, of course, our own Protestant Reformed Schools, and this not only in the primary grades but also and especially in the higher grades, both High School and ultimately College. It has been our privilege in the last school year to send our children to our own Protestant Reformed School. We can attest to it that there is nothing like it. And so long as our children are of school age, we will always feel reluctant to move into a community where Protestant Reformed instruction is impossible.

But what are those parents, who have no Prot. Ref. School and are complaining about conditions in the Christian School, doing about it? Are they attempting to arouse the interest of our Protestant Reformed people to organize a Prot. Ref. School Society and eventually procure a Prot. Ref. School of their own? Are they seeking the advice and help of those Prot. Ref. communities where such school societies and such schools are already in existence? No! I fear they say they would like a Prot. Ref. School only to salve their conscience and to pacify their objectors who remonstrate with them for sending their children to the Public School. This may be too severe an indictment but it will stand until we see a different action than they are now taking. Some of these parents are not too interested in education in any form. They are compelled by State law to send their children to school until certain age limits are reached. If the law did not demand it, they could easily take their children out of school entirely. Others openly state that they have no

intention of paying Christian School tuition so long as the corrupt conditions in these schools persist. All of which seems to imply that they are not too interested morally or financially in Christian education.

That there are conditions in the existing Christian Schools which are bad and to which no Reformed Christian ought to subscribe there is plenty of evidence. This is especially true in the High Schools, but it is not without evidence also in primary grades. This I have found by personal experience.

We have severely criticized the philosophy of Christian Education as it has been adopted quite universally in the Christian Reformed communities and used predominantly in the Christian Schools. We did this for two years while serving on the Board of a local Christian High School and we did this on more than one occasion in the presence of Christian School teachers in a local Christian grade school. Our criticism is not only that their philosophy is based on another philosophy of common grace with which we whole-heartedly disagree, but we have found that the principles of Christian Education they have adopted also tend to modernism. In many instances they are both pelagian and arminian. Besides, there are many other principles and practises which we have thoroughly condemned.

Even the Principles of Education as set forth in the Banner article above referred to are not above criticism as I will make plain in a moment.

Nevertheless we have exhorted these Protestant Reformed parents to use the existing Christian Schools with all their corruptions in preference to sending their children to the Public School. Not to do so is to deny our covenantal vow we made when we presented our children in Baptism. Not to do so is to deny our whole covenant conception which insists that not the State but the parent is the proper instructor of the child. Not to do so is to deny that there are still children of God in the existing Christian Schools with whom we may and should cooperate in the matter of christian education where it is impossible to have a school of our own. Not to do so is to lose our right and privilege to protest the corrupt conditions in the existing Christian School. On the other hand, to send our children to the Public School, which is never neutral in the matter of religion, is to send them to the world which hates God, His truth, and His Church. It is to send them to a school whose instruction is darkness and permeated with the lie. And please do not write me to inform me that there are christians also in the Public School, both teachers and pupils. This is not the question. We are talking about principles. We claim that no Reformed christian and much less a Prot. Ref. christian has the right to send his children to the Public School. He is not Reformed and much less Prot. Reformed when he does so. And no Prot. Ref. Consistory may allow the constituency of the church and much less of the consistory itself to send their children to the Public School. Those who nevertheless persist in doing so should be disciplined after they

refuse to submit to thorough Reformed instruction in this matter.

But to return to the article in the Banner. Here is set forth seven principles not much different than those adopted thirty years ago by the National Union of Christian Schools, and not much different from those expressed in the book *Philosophy of Christian Education* published a few years ago by the Union. I believe the book is called: *The Course of Study*. Nevertheless they are to be preferred to the principles of education in the Public School system.

A committee was appointed by the Synod of 1953 "to analyze and appraise the principles of education formulated by the Ecumenical Synod of Amsterdam (1949)." This committee now comes to the Synod of 1955 with its report. They propose certain principles of education which are prefaced by a Preamble. We have not the space to quote the entire Preamble. But here are a few excerpts that will suffice. "While modern education seeks to give light, it has no light within itself to give. Its face is turned from the light, which is the Word of God. Teachers who believe in the current educational theory and practise cannot help children to lay hold on a biblical interpretation of life." "Christian education only has the true goal, the true standard, and the true motivation. The true goal is the forming of personality as the image of God. The true standard is the truth of God's Word. The true motivation is the 'new obedience' which is the obedience of faith."

Under the Principles set forth by the Committee, we quote the following:

"1. Christian education has its foundation in the Creator-creature relationship. Man was created in the image of God and must use creation for God's praise. He can know the truth and explore the world properly because God has spoken to him.

2. Man has lost the true knowledge of God, righteousness and holiness. He holds down the true knowledge of God in unrighteousness. However, by receiving the gospel through faith he receives light. Christian education is education in Christ.

3. God gathers from the human race, groping in darkness, a chosen people. As his children they do his will, according to the truth of his Word. Christian education is education of the man in Christ.

4. Since man is a religious being, his deepest needs are spiritual. Education divorced from the truth results in commitment to man-made, idolatrous substitutes for the truth. Christian education is education of the religious being in the truth and for the truth.

5. True education has its conception in the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom. This leaves no room for the dualism between religious education and secular education. All true education is religious.

6. Education is the nurture or bringing up of the whole man and comprises all of life: man's body and soul and all the functions of the soul—his thinking, feeling, and willing. The human intellect cannot be parcelled out for instruction independently of the emotional life or the life of the body. Human volitions cannot be educated apart from the intellect and the emotions. To bring all activities under the discipline of God's will, education should be of one piece in which a person's earthly relations and functions, as well as his relations to heaven, are centered in and directed by the norm or standard of God's Word.

7. Children born of Christian parents are members of the church of Christ. They are children of promise. God calls them His own. Their education must be in keeping with their covenant relationship. Christian education is education in Christ for those who in God's providence are placed in relationship to Christ."

As was said, these principles are surely not above criticism. Briefly, they scrupulously avoid the supra-lapsarian conception of God's decrees. They are thoroughly infra. Also the committee has not clearly intimated what it understands by the "church." Besides the committee plainly goes out from the viewpoint of "presupposed regeneration." And nowhere does it reckon with the truth of reprobation.

Perhaps many more criticisms could be raised against these principles of education, and many more criticisms could be raised against the practises in the Christian Schools. Where we have had opportunity we have raised our voice to both criticize their principles and practise. And generally speaking our criticism landed on deaf ears and was received very ungraciously. But, what of it? Does that mean that we should therefore send our children to the Public School? God forbid! Though these Christian Schools are controlled mostly by Christian Reformed parents and leaders, and though I am convinced that the Christian Reformed Churches walk in error, there are children of God among them. There is a remnant in that church whom I will seek, praying that they will see the light and condemn the error both in doctrine and practise. And with them I will even cooperate in the matter of education so long as they will allow me to be a member of their association, and so long as it is physically impossible for me to send my children to a Protestant Reformed School.

Never could I, nor should any other Protestant Reformed parent for that matter, send our children to the world that does not and cannot reckon with God's Word, which does not seek to train its pupils to become citizens of the kingdom of heaven, which is so fast developing in sin and corruption that many who before had no scruples about sending their children to these schools are now organizing Christian Schools to separate their children from their atheistic and demoniacal influence. It is not true that we must choose between two evils, the Public School and the Christian School with its corruptions. The Public School is out!

M.S.

CONTRIBUTIONS

No doubt many, if not all, of our Protestant Reformed people have, by this time, received a copy of the "new" Reformed Guardian, distributed by the schismatic leaders and their adherents.

Already, comments and opinions have been voiced regarding the appearance of this "new" periodical. Yes, even favourable opinions. Hence, I feel the necessity of calling the attention of our people to several facts. Remember, there is nothing "new" about the Reformed Guardian. Oh, it's true, it makes its appearance in a new format—a new shape and size. However, remember, there is nothing "new" as far as *contents* is concerned. We do not buy a magazine because of its cover; we buy it because of its contents. Therefore, we must not be deceived as to the contents of the "new" Reformed Guardian simply because it has an attractive cover. It is the same old flower and it emits the same old odor.

Regardless of the attempts, on the part of its staff, they cannot conceal its true and underlying purpose. All of their efforts will prove futile as they endeavour to propagate (consciously or unconsciously—intentionally or unintentionally—wittingly or unwittingly) their heretical doctrines and position. Subtle as heresy is, it *never fails* to reveal itself and show its true colours. And very often, its own leaders can be *thanked* for this service.

This has *already happened* in Volume 1, Number 1 of the Reformed Guardian, April 25, 1955, and thanks to the Rev. P. DeBoer for setting forth (though in a very subtle manner) the true purpose of the Reformed Guardian and also, of course, the true purpose of the schismatics, which is reflected in this periodical.

Without entering upon a lengthy criticism of the contents of this first issue, let me just call attention to this one excerpt from the editorial entitled "Mode of Writing."

"We shall, furthermore, strive to be up-to-date, writing on those subjects that are the need of the hour. Particularly we wish to seek to articulate the Reformed faith and heritage for our present generation, especially for those in the midst of the American world. There is need of this. So often we so little understand the thought-patterns of those with whom we rub elbows in the American world that we find it next to impossible to make our faith articulate for them."

Now, according to the New Century Dictionary, the word "articulate" means: "*to utter in distinct syllables or speech*"—"distinct or clear." Now, there is no question as to who Rev. De Boer means when he speaks of "our present generation." He certainly doesn't mean the spiritual covenant seed, as it finds itself throughout the American world. He, himself, tells us to whom he refers namely, "those with whom we rub elbows in the American world." These, *too*, are the people to whom we have done a *great injustice*. Why?

Because "so often we so little understand" their "thought-patterns." We *don't understand them* therefore, according to the Rev. De Boer, we've been unsuccessful in articulating the "Reformed faith and heritage for our present generation."

But is this the truth? Can the Rev. De Boer *truly* say he doesn't understand, for instance, the "thought-patterns" of the *Christian Reformed Church*? Does he not understand the "thought-patterns" of the *Arminian*? Does he not understand the "thought-patterns" of the Modernist? These are the people with whom he rubs elbows. Therefore, is it the truth that Rev. De Boer speaks when he says: "So often we so little understand the thought-patterns of those with whom we rub elbows?"

The only possible way the Rev. De Boer and the schismatics can make *their* "Reformed faith and heritage" articulate "for our present generation, especially for those in the midst of the American world," is to speak the *same theological language* of this "present generation." Then it will be articulate, according to the meaning of the word as the Rev. De Boer understands it.

Was he not articulate when he was a minister in the Protestant Reformed Churches? Was he not clear and distinct? Did he not set forth the doctrine of the Protestant Reformed Churches, as they understood the clear teaching of the Word of God? *What kind of heretical camouflage is this?* Why doesn't the Rev. De Boer come forth and declare the truth of his purpose? How undeniably clear it is that, *already*, the schismatics are "*courting*" anyone and everyone who will lend a listening ear. And because *this* is their purpose you, Protestant Reformed reader, *must* beware so that you read cautiously—with a fine-toothed comb—sifting every word, phrase and sentence—reading it forward, backwards and upside down, lest you, too, be ensnared by such heretical tactics.

E. Emanuel

Report of the Eastern Ladies League

The spring meeting of the Ladies League of the Protestant Reformed Churches was held on the evening of May 11, 1955. The meeting was opened by singing Psalter number 194 and Psalm 98, verse 1 and 8, after which our president, Mrs. F. Harbin read I Corinthians 12 and led us in prayer. A word of welcome was extended to all the ladies gathered at our Fourth Protestant Reformed Church. The first number on the program consisted of a quartet from our First Church. The president then introduced the speaker, Seminarian Herman Hanko, who spoke on *The Multifirmity of the Church*:

I. The Idea of the Church—The Church is the body of Christ, a living organism with Christ the Head, the Church composing the other members of that body—receiving its life from its Head. Each member was chosen from before the foundations of the world by God eternally in His counsel according to His own Sovereign good pleasure—chosen and prepared to occupy his own particular place in that

harmonious unity of the body of Christ. Various denominations do not make up the true Church. No, she is spiritual and her members who are gathered in time from all the nations of the world, of every tribe and tongue, of every race and people, are united to Christ by the spiritual bond of faith.

II. Multiformity of the Church: There is a many formedness to its members, a many sidedness of the saints that compose the membership of the body of Christ. There are differences in physical and psychological characteristics; also, there is a diversity as to natural gifts, spiritual gifts, and even the measure of these gifts. No individual has any significance in himself; each member is incomplete, so they have need of one another — they supplement one another and thus constitute a real communion of saints. Each member has its own peculiar virtue, place, and function, and the total membership forms one beautiful harmonious organism living in Jesus Christ to show forth eternally the praises of the Divine Author, the Triune God.

III. Manifestation in Time: The true Church in the world is known by three distinguishing marks — 1. The pure preaching of the gospel; 2. The pure administration of the sacraments; 3. The exercise of Christian discipline. Although she is not pure as to walk, she is pure in doctrine insofar as the Spirit has guided the Church into the truth as it has been developed up to that time. So the same multiformity that will exist in heaven comes to manifestation in time. Yet, because of sin and the physical nature of its members, it is revealed only in part. In how far must we seek the unity of the Church of Christ? We must seek unity, not in compromise but only upon the basis of the pure preaching of the Word. For Christ speaks where His Word is proclaimed according to the Scripture, and where Christ speaks, there we find the Church.

It is the calling of every child of God to exercise and develop the talents God has given him so that in the home, school, or social life he may use them to the advantage and welfare of his fellow members.

(Mr. Hanko's interpretation of the relationship of the true Church and the various denominations must be quoted in its entirety to do it justice, and as space does not permit this, we have omitted it altogether.)

After this instructive and edifying speech, we sang Psalter number 124 and a collection was taken for the Standard Bearer. Minutes of previous meetings were read. Next we were favored with a well worked out panel discussion on the subject of Prayer, after which we enjoyed another number from the quartet. The treasurer gave her report and Mrs. D. Jonker closed with prayer.

Surely after an evening in Christian fellowship, we feel that God has blessed us beyond our expectations. So we pray that He will keep us faithful in the Church Militant until He takes us to be the Church Triumphant where we will enjoy the perfect communion of Saints.

Mrs. Dewey Engelsma, Reporter

Spelen met Vuur

Dat schoolknapen nog al eens een vuurtje stoken, leest men af en toe wel in de bladen, soms is de schade gering, doch in vele gevallen belooft het soms in de duizenden. Zoo hoorde ik ook eens van zoo'n vuurtje stokerij welke een zeker soort knapen in een klein hoekje van een tamelijk gebouw hadden aangericht, heel onvoorzichtig zou men zeggen, doch zoo zijn nu eenmaal jongens, doch de plaats leende er zich prachtig toe meenden ze. Eerst begon men met een heel klein vlammetje, o wat ging dat mooi wat had men een schik, doch het moest nog wat hooger oplaaian dat leek zoo prachtig. Doch opeens rezen de vlammen hoog op, en in een ogenblik stond het geheele gebouw in lichte laaie, aan blussen viel niet meer te denken, doordat het aan bekwame leiding ontbrak, en het mooie gebouw door vaders en moeders met vereende krachten tot stand gebracht, werd een prooi der vlammen . . . gelukkig werd voor een gedeelte de kostbare inboedel nog gered alles ging niet verloren, doch met verbijsterde gezichten stond men elkander aan te staren, en zooals het meestal gaat men gaf de verkeerden de schuld van het groote onheil en men stond verlegen met de handen in het haar. Doch wat nu? Uit den aard der zaak zou men denken dat men met vereende krachten zou besluiten tot de wederopbouw van het verbrande perceel, doch niets daarvan, de hoofdpersoon van het vuurtje spelen is hoogstwaarschijnlijk wegens de doorgestaande hitte van het tooneel verdwenen, en zoekt verademing op hooger gelegen gronden, zijn medeplichtigen achterlatende bij de rookende puinhopen. Commentaar overbodig.

J. R. Vanderwal

Note by editor.

It is probably not superfluous to add a little note to the above parable by Mr. Vanderwal. The reader must understand that Mr. Vanderwal is one of the faithful members of the Protestant Reformed Church in Redlands, California. The above parable refers to the recent history of that church. The fire of which he writes is the attempt to destroy that congregation, an attempt for which Vermeer and his friends are to blame. The end of the parable refers to the fact that Vermeer, after he saw the results of his evil work, fled and left his helpers in the lurch.

O GOD, BE MERCIFUL

Thou knowest all my woes,
O treasure Thou my tears;
Are they not in Thy book,
Where all my life appears?
My foes shall backward turn
For this I surely know,
When I appeal to Thee,
That God is still for me.

Psalm 56:4