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MEDITATION

Heaven on Earth

"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth . . ." II Thess. 1:3

It is not so easy to write on this most beautiful text.

Absent yourself; sit alone for a few moments; read the text carefully, slowly, and let it sink in; see the wondrous condition of this church, and weep.

What a church!

Some time before this epistle was written, Paul had already thanked God for their work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope. I, 1:3. Subsequently, he had admonished them to continue in that estate and to abound more and more.

This admonition was heeded, for he writes in this text that their faith groweth exceedingly and that their charity aboundeth.

I am jealous of the Thessalonians, jealous for myself, my congregation, our denomination, for the church universal in the world.

A wise man wrote once when deploring the miserable condition of the church of Christ: Twenty centuries of the development of dogma piled up a mountainous debt of responsibility!

Let us listen to Paul for a little while. Perchance our jealousy will engender yearning, and yearning prayer, and prayer supplication, and supplication the Holy Ghost.

And if you have the Holy Ghost in your inmost heart and mind and soul, you will have an abounding love, and an exceedingly growing faith.

And that is heaven on earth.

* * *

Heaven on earth!

Is it possible?

Oh yes, Thessalonica is your proof.

And the best proof of all are you and your heart, my brother.

There is the beginning of this most beautiful picture at Thessalonica. If that were not so, I would stop writing. If the beginning were not there, I would despair of ever getting results such as I envisioned in the above paragraph. If the Holy Ghost is not already present in you and in me and the brethren, there is no use in admonition.

Do you remember the chain I saw? First, yearning, then prayer, supplication, the Holy Ghost.

Well, no one will yearn after heaven on earth, except the Holy Ghost is present in his or her heart. That's fundamental.

Oh yes, it is possible. God be praised!

And if a little harvest be reaped we will do as Paul did: we will be bound to thank God, and we will feel it meet to break forth in singing.

"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren"

The word which the Holy Ghost uses for the giving of thanks is a word that means *grace*, strengthened by a prefix, which means *well, pleasing, beautiful*.

You might translate it *to worship*.

It is when you have seen visions of splendour, fantastic beauty, heart caressing sights of loveliness.

It means that you look upon the Face of God and tell Him: Oh God, I have seen Thee, reflected in Thy people! And I have seen that Thou art gracious. I have been warmed by the sight of the works of faith, the expression of love and lovingkindness. And I realize that their origin is found in Thee. I tasted that Thou art good, everlastingly good. I saw a glimpse of heaven, reflected in the behaviour of Thy saints, and it caused my heart to sing. It made me still looser from this earth, and it made me yearn for more of that life of the heavenly Paradise. How long, O Lord!

That is the giving of thanks!

That is the experience of a little bit of heaven here on earth.

* * *

Heaven on earth.

Experienced first by the church of Thessalonica. And then by Paul. Are we next?

Note the urgency of Paul's worship. He feels himself *bound* to sing unto the Face of God. Later in the sentence he calls such worship *meet*. It was *meet* that Paul gave thanks.

It shows that you do not need revival meetings in heaven. This urgency of Paul shall grow and grow, and come to perfect fruition in heaven when time is ended and when we all shall be safely with God.

Oh, for this *must* and this *meet* of worship. Then you need no bell to chime and call you sweetly to worship in the morning to the house of God. Then you need no committee of two sad and downcast elders that call on you and say: Brother, why so far, so very far away from the house of God? We can hardly reach you anymore. And your voice sounds faint to our spiritual sense organs.

That *must*, that being *bound*, and that *meet* is the urgency, is the flood of the work of the Holy Ghost in your soul.

That *being bound* and that feeling, that conviction that your worship is *meet* is the same thing as to its character, flavor and taste as the sound of the rushing mighty wind of Pentecost.

When you see and experience the wonderful works of God Triune, you grow fervent, you are in a hurry, even as God was in a hurry on Pentecost. God had waited so very long. And when the hour of His counsel arrived He was in a hurry to go to His bride and give her the Holy Ghost.

That is the bound and the meet of my text.

Watch Paul! He is kneeling at the Footstool of the Almighty.

He smiles as he prays, nay, worships.

He has seen heaven opened in the hearts and the works of the church of Thessalonica.

No, let us not disturb him. Such moments are golden.

But what do I say? He is in heaven at this time of my writing. And he is still thanking, praising, singing. He still looks on that Face and beholds all manner of reflections in Abraham, David, and the prophets.

Yes, and also the angels. Paul has a good view of Michael. What a name! Michael. That means: Who is like unto Jehovah God? And the name is the essence. It means that Michael flies around in heaven, and his inmost heart keeps on asking unto all eternity: Who in the wide, wide world is so lovely, so wonderfully lovely as my Jehovah, and my God?

And Paul has an unobstructed view of all such loveliness.

And he is still *bound*, and it is his conviction still that to worship is *meet*.

* * *

But we are on the earth, and so very far from heaven.

And we would like to taste somewhat of the table of the Lord.

Well, let us watch the saints of Thessalonica.

It may help.

All the bounties they exhibited unto Paul's thanksgiving were after all given by God. They had nothing of themselves. They and we start alike: empty of goodness and loveliness, but full of sin.

Except for that little principle. Oh, yes, that little principle. God be thanked for it. It shall remain to the end of time.

These blessed saints of Thessalonica had faith and charity. Faith, what is it?

Faith is the living bond of fellowship between you and Jesus Christ, your Lord.

Faith is the knowledge of God and His ways.

Faith is reliance, trust in God. It is the capacity to rest in Him, to build on Him as the everlasting Rock of your salvation.

Faith or unbelief spells the difference between a dear child of God and a child of the devil.

Faith gives you the capacity to see God through the Spirit of the glorified Christ which is given to you.

Faith, the spiritual, material entity is akin to the new heaven and the new earth, to the revelation of God in the new commonwealth; it is part and parcel of the full life of God's Covenant such as we shall exhibit in the age to come. It is the life of the renewed creature in Jesus Christ. When you finally shall arrive in heaven, and when after the parousia you all of a sudden shall be overwhelmed by the influx of this Paradise life with God, His Christ, the perfected church and the hosts of heaven and earth, then, then you shall say: I have had a taste of all this all along on earth, and we called it *faith*! It is much, oh so much, more than we ever had on earth, but the taste is the same, the flavor is the same as we had in our little church on earth.

* * *

Faith is the life of God and His Christ.

To have and to live the life of faith is essentially heaven on earth.

And it is fed by the Bible. And it is alive through the Holy Ghost.

And in the church of the Thessalonians this faith did grow exceedingly.

That *exceedingly*, that is what makes me jealous of them.

You see, these men and women acted very much as though they were in heaven already. They knew God and His Christ, and they talked to Him, to Them.

They knew their brethren and sisters in Christ, and behaved as such to them. They knew God and His ways, and they walked on those ways of God. There is the difference between a little faith and an exceedingly growing faith.

Little faith stumbles and grumbles along.

An exceedingly growing faith walks with God. They are the Noahs and the Enochs.

And to make the cup full to overflowing, listen to this testimony: "and the charity of every one of you all towards each other aboundeth!"

Remember that *charity* is the love of God in our hearts. Just forget for a moment the charity bazaars, etc.

It is the love wherewith God loves Himself.

And that love abounded in the Thessalonians. They looked at God and the church, at the world and its host through the eyesight of God. And they lived that love.

Just imagine such a life for a minute. You know how God looks at you, don't you?

You lie on your knees and bewail your sins. And He says to you in tones of lovingkindness: Be of good courage, My son, thy sins are forgiven thee. And you arise and smile through your tears. And you walk in the smiles of God.

And thus they looked at one another. They all looked that way towards every member of that church.

What a church-life!

Describing such life I can use another word of Paul. Here it is: being kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us. I have changed the text a little in order to have it apply in this case.

It is a little bit of heaven.

Heaven on earth!

Oh God, give it!

G. Vos

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On Wednesday, August 17, our dear parents

REV. AND MRS. G. LUBBERS

hope to celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary.

We join them in this celebration in giving thanks to our covenant God Who in His mercy has led us together in the path of His truth.

May God richly bless them in the time in which He has ordained that we should remain together.

"We will lift up our eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh our help." Psalm 121:1.

Agatha
Garretta
Cornelius G.
Lammert J.

IN MEMORIAM

In His infinite wisdom it pleased the Lord on May 19, 1955, to take out of our midst our brother and fellow-consistory member:

NICHOLAS J. YONKER

who, during many of his 76 years, was highly privileged in faithfully serving the congregation and the cause of our Lord Jesus Christ in the midst of the world in the capacity of elder.

May the Lord comfort the widow and family through His Word and Spirit.

The Consistory Prot. Ref. Church
of Grand Haven, Mich.

Rev. G. Lanting, Pres.

A. Peterson, Vice Pres.-Clerk

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EDITORIALS

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, 1955

(Continued)

The remainder of the business of our 1955 Synod we report under the following headings:

Protest

Fortunately there were no protests on the table of Synod that made the work unpleasant, as in the recent past. The protest to which we refer,—the only one, by the way, that appeared on Synod's agenda,—was by the Rev. G. Vanden Berg against his appointment to the Theological School Committee. We mention it at this time because it points up one of the issues involved,—perhaps the main issue,—in the matter of spreading the membership of the Theological School Committee and the Mission Committee over our entire denomination, (the last item mentioned in our previous editorial). The Rev. Vanden Berg, pastor of Oak Lawn, Illinois, protested his appointment chiefly on the ground of Article 2 of the Constitution of the Theological School Committee, which states in part: "Brethren shall be chosen from the midst of those that live within a reasonably short distance from the school." And the Synod sustained his protest. This means, therefore, that by synodical precedent the rules of the two above-mentioned committees are so interpreted as to limit the membership of these committees strictly to our Michigan churches. And in the light of the fact that these are two very important standing committees, which deal with matters pertaining to the churches in general, we urge once more that this situation be thoroughly re-examined, and, if at all possible, corrected.

Theological School

From all reports, namely, that of the School Committee, that of the School Rector for the past year, and the report of the students' standings, it appears that our small and frequently forgotten Seminary is flourishing. The school now holds its sessions in a spare room of the Adams Street Protestant Reformed Christian School, which location is a vast improvement over the quarters it previously occupied. Harmony, love, and progress characterized the work of the past year. With the graduation of Student Hanko, we have, I believe, three regular students left, two of whom should graduate next June, D.V., and one of whom has two more years of instruction ahead of him. A little reckoning will show, therefore, that our churches will not have a sufficient number of ministers for some years to come. And although vacant congregations may not fully agree, we believe that this situation is nevertheless not without salutary aspects for both our school and our churches.

One item of special interest in regard to our school is

the decision of Synod to abandon its plan to purchase property for a school building for the time being. Our notes show, however, that with a view to the future the committee of pre-advice advised, and synod decided, to continue collections for a Theol. School Building Fund. But unless I am entirely mistaken, the Synod made no provision for this when it passed on the matter of synodical assessments. It is possible, of course, that the Synod had in mind only free will offerings by the churches; and in that case I presume our Stated Clerk will so notify the churches.

Another rather important item in connection with the school was the matter of two aspirants seeking entrance to our school from one of our churches. The School Committee referred this matter to our Synod, and the Synod decided, in the main, to abide by the rules concerning academic requirements for entrance. We have a bit of criticism in this regard on the procedure followed by the School Committee. We believe that it was neither necessary nor correct for the School Committee to refer this matter to Synod,—not even on the ground that it was an exceptional case. The rules were there; and all the School Committee had to do was apply the rules. And in the opinion of the undersigned, the action of referral to Synod should have come not from the Committee, but by way of appeal on the part of the men involved.

A third important item in this connection was the matter of proposed support for married students. As you know, our churches have always had a strict rule against such support. A suggestion to change the rule appeared in the report of the School Committee. This suggestion was that exception be allowed in special cases, according to the judgment of the Theological School Committee and ultimately Synod. The feeling of Synod was apparently that such an amendment would actually have the effect of destroying the rule itself. There was also an overture from the Consistory of First Church, supported by Classis East, asking Synod "to review its position on student help from the E.B.P. fund to help married men attending our Theological School." It was rather strange that Synod did not pay much attention to this overture as such, probably because the question came up rather naturally in the report of the School Committee. Incidentally, we may remark that from a procedural viewpoint the overture of First Church was not above criticism, since it was simply a request to review, *without any grounds being offered*. For this reason the Synod might well have flatly rejected the overture of First Church. It is well to remember that it is not the duty of Synod to produce grounds for overtures, but the duty of those who bring the overtures. As to the outcome of this matter, Synod finally appointed a study committee to report at the next synod. This committee is to study the grounds of the existing rule and also the usage in other churches. The matter is postponed, therefore, undoubtedly to the disappointment of the married students. In conclusion, we offer the following comment: 1) This delay might have been avoided if either the

Consistory of First Church, which brought an overture on the subject, or the School Committee, which knew the question would come up, had made a preliminary investigation and had allowed the Synod to benefit from such a study. 2) The decision of Synod does not limit the study to the committee. Let our churches also give attention to the question. 3) We refer the reader to some recent comment on this subject in the Rev. G. Vanden Berg's articles on our Church Order.

Mission Matters

The Synod made no weighty decisions concerning our mission work, although a good deal of attention was paid to our mission work. Apart from approving the annual report of the Mission Committee, the Synod made only one positive decision in this connection, namely, to grant approval for supplementing the work of our missionary with radio broadcasting when this is practicable. We were favored at Synod by a personal report by our new missionary, the Rev. G. Lubbers, concerning his labors. And the readers of the *Standard Bearer* may look for an occasional written report from the Rev. Lubbers also. From the report of the Mission Committee we may glean the following: 1) Our mission work, after being interrupted by the schism, and after having long suffered because of the false tactics of those who were formerly our missionaries, is now going forward once again. 2) The Rev. Lubbers, after laboring briefly in the Pella area, after a cry for help from some who could not go along with the schismatics, is now laboring among some German Reformed brethren in Loveland, Colorado. The Rev. Herman Mensch, a faithful servant of the Lord whom many of you know, was instrumental in making the contact in the Colorado field. We urge our people to remember the labors of our missionary both privately and in congregational prayer.

We cannot refrain from the observation that our churches do not judge their mission mandate or their mission labors by the unprincipled and utilitarian standards suggested by the articles of the Rev. J. D. de Jong in a recent *Reformed Guardian* and cited with approval by the Rev. W. Haverkamp in a recent number of *De Wachter*. Our home missionary will continue, as in the past, to go wherever there is a cry for help and wherever the Lord opens a field. And our home mission efforts will not be judged by their cost or their tangible results. The cause of the church and of the truth transcends both.

Foreign Correspondence

The standing committee for foreign correspondence had nothing to report this year.

There was, however, an interesting report from the committee for revision of the Church Order. To enlighten the reader we can probably do no better than to quote the brief report of these deputies:

"Esteemed Brethren:

"At our Synod of 1950 a request by the Synod of the

Reformed Churches of the Netherlands to appoint deputies for Revision of the Church Order was entertained, and the undersigned were appointed as deputies to study revision and to maintain contact with the deputies of the Netherlands. See: Acts 1950, Articles 81, 82 and 84. The committee met several times, and studied and deliberated on work done by the committee members separately. The Committee also maintained contact with the deputies in the Netherlands. However, recently we received a complete concept of a revised Church Order which was presented to the last Synod in the Netherlands, or will be presented to that body in the future, without our committee's advice or criticism. We as committee, and you as Synod no doubt realize that this procedure is not correct, both as to the principle that the Church Order belongs to all the Reformed Churches in the world, and therefore ought to be revised only after thorough consultation with each other; and as a matter of consistency: they requested us to appoint deputies, but without consulting our deputation, they proceed to offer a completely revised concept of the Church Order to their Synod"

The undersigned had opportunity to read the concept revision mentioned above. And, to say the least, they are indeed proposing sweeping changes in the Netherlands, both as to the form and the principle of our Church Order. This revision has also occasioned much comment in the Dutch papers. It is to be hoped that final action is postponed. And our deputies, the Revs. H. Hoeksema, G. M. Ophoff, and G. Vos, are writing the Netherlands deputies to that end.

Financial Matters

Concerning this subject we report briefly: 1) That the Synod, in view of our limited financial power as churches, gave careful attention to financial matters. 2) That the treasurer reported that in general our churches gave wonderful cooperation in bringing up last year's assessments. 3) That our new treasurer, Mr. A. Haan, was commended by Synod for his excellent and carefully worked out financial report. 4) That our assessments will continue for the coming year at approximately \$80 per family. We urge that our people view this not as a heavy burden, but as a God-given privilege.

Varia

A few items remain to be mentioned: 1) The Synod appointed a committee of five to work on the production of new catechism books for our children. 2) The committee for emeritus study and the committee for re-editing our Church Order had not finished their work, and were re-appointed by Synod. 3) South Holland was appointed the calling church for the Synod of 1956, D.V.

This marks the end of our report. The Lord has given us as churches abundant reason for joy and for hope with respect to the future. And we hope and pray for the continued blessing of our God upon our Protestant Reformed Churches.

H.C.H.

AS TO BOOKS

The Epistles of Paul to the Philippians and to Philemon, by Jac. J. Muller. Published by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. Price \$3.50.

This is one of the volumes of the New International Commentary on the New Testament which is being published by the Eerdmans Publishing Co. Except for the notes on the bottom of each page, it is easily accessible to the general public and as such we gladly recommend to our readers. Those who wish to prepare themselves for a Sunday school lesson or for a discussion in a society can very well make use of this volume. It is written in a very clear style and the author emphasizes the truth that the work of salvation is throughout to be attributed to the sovereign grace of God.

A few minor comments we wish to make.

First of all, we wish to remark that we cannot agree with the author's interpretation of the phrase "all the saints in Christ Jesus," in vs. 1 of ch. I. He explains that they are saints, not subjectively, but only objectively. Cf. p. 34-35. In this he is probably influenced by Barth, to whom he also refers. But the saints, though objectively they are holy in Christ, are, nevertheless, also subjectively holy in virtue of the principle of the new life that is in them.

A second observation concerns the important passage of Ch. II:5-8. We refer particularly to the phrase in vs. 6: "being in the form of God," which is the key to the entire passage. The author explains the participle "being" (*huparchoon*) as being "an imperfect participle." This is an error. There is no imperfect participle and "*huparchoon*" is present. And it is very essential that the present tense should be maintained in the interpretation for it refers to an eternal present. Christ eternally IS in the form of God even while He emptied Himself in the human nature.

But we gladly recommend this commentary to our readers.

H.H.

General Revelation by Dr. G. C. Berkhouwer. Published by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. Price \$4.00.

This book is a translation from the Dutch. I read the book in the Holland language and reviewed in the *Standard Bearer* several years ago. Cf. Vol. 28 of the S.B. This time I read it again, partly to check up on the translation. The latter is very good.

As to the contents of the book, in eleven chapters the author, Dr. Berkhouwer, who by this time is rather well-known among us, discusses the theme of general revelation from various viewpoints. First he considers the different views of various theologians, especially of Barth who, as is well-known is a determined opponent of a "natural theology"

and who also must have nothing of a so-called general revelation. His own conception the author offers especially in chapters seven to nine under the headings: Revelation and Knowledge, Revelation and Fulfillment of the Law, Revelation and Illumination.

Although, as is well-known, I do not agree with Dr. Berkhouwer, especially with regard to his view on common grace, I heartily recommend this book to all that are interested in the question concerning general revelation. The author is a man of study and wide reading. Any theologian ought to find a good deal in this particular product of the author's pen that is worthy of his attention. Even the views of others which Dr. Berkhouwer discusses in this book are of great interest to any student of dogmatical subjects.

Hence, I recommend this book to all that are interested in subjects of this kind. I recommend it for intelligent and serious study. The last word has not been said about this subject anymore than about that of "common grace" to which that of "general revelation" stands closely related. Dr. Berkhouwer, in connection with his discussion of Rom. 2:14, 15, writes on p. 184 that "Hoeksema also lost the right path on account of his *a priori* opposition to common grace." I could not help but smile a moment when I read this. But surely, I cannot possibly agree with the author's interpretation of the above mentioned passage from Romans. When he paraphrases or translates *ta tou nomou*, the things of the law, or to *ergon tou nomou*, the work of the law, simply by "the doing of the works of the law," I do not agree with him, for the simple reason that it is very evident from the preceding and following context as well as from Rom. 1:18-32 that this cannot be the meaning of the apostle. Besides, of the work of the law, to *ergon tou nomou*, the apostle writes that it is written in their hearts. Unless you interpret the genitive *nomou* as a *genitivus subjectivus* (the work which the law does in the hearts of the heathen) you make the apostle say that the heathen have the law written in their hearts.

But I better not criticize any further in this book review. I heartily recommend the book to the intelligent and critical student.

H.H.

Expository Outlines on the Whole Bible, by Charles Simeon. Published by Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. Price per vol. \$3.95.

The Zondervans sent me a few more volumes of the Expository Outlines. It is impossible for me to review them all in detail. But I perused them rather carefully and the more I examine them the more I come to the conclusion that this is, indeed, a very excellent work. In proof of this let me furnish the reader with one or two illustrations. In the commentary on the Romans, the author explains vs. 6 of chapter 9 as follows:

"In the chapter we are about to consider, the Apostle begins with expressing his deep and continual sorrow on

account of the judgments impending over the Jews for their obstinate rejection of their Messiah. He then anticipates an objection which would be brought against him; namely that if, as he had supposed, the Jews were to be cast off, the Word of God, which had promised all manner of blessing to Abraham and his seed, would be made void. But to this he replies, that the promises were made to Abraham and his *spiritual* seed: and that all others, however they might be descended from him *after the flesh*, would assuredly be cast off, since they were not "all Israel, who were of Israel; neither, because they were natural seed of Abraham, were they necessarily to be numbered amongst the children to whom the promises were made."

This is sound exegesis. Again he writes:

"It is here supposed that the whole nation of Israel possessed the same advantages, and, in appearance, enjoyed the same blessings. Yet the Apostle distinguishes between some of them and others; and affirms, that some had claims and privileges, to which the others were not entitled. This was true respecting them. And it is true at this time, also, in relation to ourselves. For as then, so now also all not objects of electing love."

Throughout the author emphasizes God's absolute sovereignty in the matter of salvation and his electing love.

Not only because of his correct emphasis on the truth of predestination, but also because of the rest of the exegesis and application in this commentary, I would heartily recommend it to the reader.

H.H.

De Psalmen (The Psalms), by Dr. J. Ridderbos. Published by J. H. Kok, N.V., Kampen, the Netherlands. Price f 18.50.

This is the first volume of a series of three by the same author. The present volume contains a commentary on psalms 1-41. At the end of this volume we find an appendix in which are discussed the questions of the superscription of le-David in many of the psalms; that of recent opinions about the Psalms; that of the enemies mentioned in many of the psalms; and that of the cursing prayers in the psalms.

In this commentary the author characterizes himself, as we would expect of him, as a sound exegete, as believer in Holy Writ, as one that throughout accepts the Scriptures as the inspired Canon, and as a thorough scholar.

Without further comment this ought to be sufficient as a ground for my recommendation of this commentary to those that are interested in the study of the Word of God and who, moreover, are still master of the Dutch language.

H.H.

Beslagen Vensters (Dimmed Windows), by Rev. H. Veldkamp. Published by J. H. Kok, N.V., Kampen, the Netherlands. Price f 3.90.

In this little book of 110 pages, the author discusses in a popular way the important subject of prayer, the purpose,

the contents, the motives, the limitations of prayer, etc.

I read this little book with a mixed impression. On the one hand, I found many beautiful thoughts in the book, beautifully expressed in the characteristic style of the author. On the other hand, I feel that I cannot subscribe to all that the author writes concerning prayer. He leaves the impression with the readers that the believer may and can pray for anything he desires, when he "prays in faith," and may expect the positive answer to his prayer. This is true, not only in regard to his spiritual, but also with respect to his earthly and bodily needs. When he prays for prosperity in his business, if his motive is only the glory of God, his prayer will be heard. When he is sick or his wife is sick, and he prays for healing and for the lengthening of his life or the life of his wife, if only the purpose in his heart is that he may glorify God a little longer on the earth, he must expect that his prayer will be answered. He criticizes Landwehr when he says that in many cases the believer must add to his prayer: "Not my will, but Thy will be done."

With this rather emphatic tendency of the book we cannot agree. Do not forget that, in the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer, the Lord teaches us a very simple and extremely limited prayer for our earthly and physical needs. When we are sick, it is of the Lord, and we must learn to be willing to walk in the way of the Lord. If it appears that the Lord leads us in the way to the end of our earthly life, we must be willing to die and become prepared for our entering into the house of many mansions and not ask for the prolongation of our life.

This means, not that I advise our readers that can read Dutch not to read the book, but to read it and judge for themselves.

H.H.

Notice for Classis West

Classis West will convene, the Lord willing, Sept. 14, 1955, at the Doon Protestant Reformed Church. The consistories are reminded that matters for the classis must be in the hands of the stated clerk not later than thirty days before the convening of the classis. Inasmuch as Candidate R. Harbach will be examined at this classis, the Deputies Ad Examina of Classis East are expected to be present at the meeting of Classis West.

Rev. H. Veldman, Stated Clerk.

"General revelation can at best only give us to have some knowledge of certain truths but it can bring about no facts, nor history, and brings about no change in the world of being. It can create fear in us but no confidence and love."

H. Bavinck quoting Shedd.

OUR DOCTRINE

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

AN EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

PART III — OF THANKFULNESS

LORD'S DAY 47

Chapter II

The Implications of the First Petition

And remember that we must glorify Him as God! We must not merely say some good things about Him, as if He were some man of renown. But we must confess and proclaim His infinite goodness, all His glorious and adorable virtues, His infinite power and wisdom, His glorious majesty and sovereignty, His righteousness and holiness, His justice and truth. We must praise Him as He revealed Himself to us as the God that calleth the things that are not as if they were, and that quickeneth the dead. We must adore His glorious virtues as they shine forth to us in the face of Jesus Christ our Lord, His unfathomable love, His abundant mercy, His sovereign grace. And mark you well, that to hallow His name, His holy name that stands apart from all other names, we must give Him all the glory and praise Him in all His works. We must beware, lest we divide the glory that is due unto His name between Him and ourselves. For He is God! We never do anything for Him; He always does all things for us. His is all the glory of creation, of the government of all things, of salvation. Of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things, nothing excluded. Nor must we glorify Him and praise Him for some things which He does, while in other things we fail to see and acknowledge His infinite goodness. For His work is always perfect. And in our whole life, with all its vicissitudes, as well as in the whole course of the world's history and of the history of the church, we must see His work and adore His name. He sends prosperity, but also adversity. He makes peace, but war is also His work. He gives health, but He also lays us on our sick-bed. He maketh alive, but He also kills. And many of the details of His work we cannot now understand: for we are children of the moment, and from the viewpoint of our passing existence we cannot see the perfection of the whole of God's work. But believing His Word, we know that He doeth all things well, and that He is always worthy of all praise and honor and glory forever. And to hallow His name means that we express His praise, rejoicing in the God of our salvation; that we declare His glory to Him in prayer and adoration, in speech and song; and that we profess and proclaim His adorable virtues before one another and before the whole world.

But finally, it also implies that we glorify God in our

whole life and walk. To glorify God in our speech and to hallow His name with our mouth, and not to sanctify the Lord God in our walk, is worse than not to glorify Him at all. To praise God with our mouth, and to walk in darkness, is of the devil. For then we are like those of whom the apostle Peter writes that by reason of them the way of truth is evil spoken of, or blasphemed. II Peter 2:2. And according to the apostle John, "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." I John 1:6. The more piously we talk about God with our mouth, while we commit iniquity and walk in darkness, the more abominable we become in the sight of God. The reason for this is not difficult to discern. Do we not confess that we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus? And does not the workmanship reflect the character of its author? Do we not confess that God is our Father? And do not the children reflect the image of their father? If then we call Him our Father, while reflecting the image of the devil, do we not blaspheme His holy name, and become occasion for the world to blaspheme it? The prayer, "Hallowed be thy name," therefore, does not only ask for grace that we may always glorify Him in our speech, but also for His sanctifying Spirit, that He may lead us in the way of His good commandments, so that our walk may be a reflection and manifestation of His glorious grace: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Matt. 5:16.

The Lord enjoins us in Matt. 6:9: "After this manner therefore pray ye." And then follows the Lord's Prayer.

Let us examine ourselves, and ask the question: "Are we ready to pray in this manner?"

After we have somewhat discussed the meaning and the implications of this first petition, it should have become abundantly evident that this perfect model of prayer is certainly not adapted for general use in public assemblies and mixed gatherings, as it is often supposed to be. It is only the redeemed and sanctified children of God that can even begin to stammer it.

But even so, the question still is: are we always ready to say, "Hallowed be thy name?" Are we really earnestly desirous that He hear us and grant us our petition when we ask this of Him? Suppose He hears us: are we ready to receive this grace from Him? Are we prepared to say: "Our Father Who art in heaven, glorify Thou Thy name in and through me, even though this should require that my name in this world should be completely eclipsed?" Do we really desire that He so instructs us by His Word and Spirit in the knowledge of His name that the zeal for its glory may consume us, and that His glory becomes our highest and only purpose in life? Do we really venture to ask Him for grace that we may always and everywhere confess and praise Him with our lips, that we may always and constantly maintain this confession in our walk and life, and walk as children of light? Do we deeply and clearly realize that if God should hear this prayer, we may have to suffer reproach for His

name's sake in the world, that it may cost us our job, our position, our very life? If we are really children of God, we will answer: "Yes, I am ready to pray this petition, but with fear and trembling. Lord, I believe. Help Thou mine unbelief." For remember that we have but a small beginning of the new obedience by virtue of which we can pray this petition. And as we presented this first petition before the face of our Father in heaven, and somewhat realized its depth of meaning and tremendous significance, we probably feel that for the time being we have prayed quite enough, and that we may now properly close with the prayer: "Our Father Who art in heaven, give us grace to pray, 'Hallowed be thy name.'"

LORD'S DAY 48

Q. 123. Which is the second petition?

A. "Thy kingdom come"; that is, rule us so by thy word and Spirit, that we may submit ourselves more and more to thee; preserve and increase thy church; destroy the works of the devil, and all violence which would exalt itself against thee; and also, all wicked counsels devised against thy holy word; till the full perfection of thy kingdom take place, wherein thou shalt be all in all.

Chapter I

The Idea of the Kingdom of God

You may notice that in the Heidelberg Catechism in the 48th Lord's Day the second petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Thy kingdom come," is so interpreted that it implies especially three elements.

The first element is that God may more and more so rule over us by His Word and Spirit that we may submit ourselves more and more to Him. This we might call the personal, individual element in this petition, according to the Heidelberg Catechism. And it is very necessary, especially in our day that this personal element have all the emphasis.

Over against many voices that clamor for the kingdom of God as if it were a kingdom of this world, it is urgent that the church loudly and emphatically proclaim the testimony of the Word of God: the kingdom of God is not of this world. Nothing is more common in our day than to speak of the establishment of the kingdom of God in every domain of human life. The kingdom of God must come in the state, in the domain of politics, in society, in national and international spheres. Its fundamental idea is that of righteousness among men, — political righteousness, social righteousness, industrial righteousness, national and international righteousness. The possibility of its realization is given with the fundamental soundness of human nature and the universal brotherhood of man. This social kingdom gospel is a philosophy that has borrowed almost all its terms from Scripture and from the faith of the church, without adopting their essential meaning. It speaks of sin, but not as corruption of the whole human nature, nor as guilt that makes us damn-

able before God. It speaks of Christ, but not of the Christ of the Scriptures, Who was delivered for our transgressions and raised for our justification. It speaks of righteousness, but not of the righteousness which is of God by faith in Jesus Christ. It speaks of regeneration, but not of a radical change of the heart, wrought by the Spirit of Christ. Over against this beautiful and appealing, yet very deceiving and vain philosophy, it is well to state definitely the truth of Scripture and the faith of the church concerning the kingdom of God. It is well to remind ourselves that the kingdom of God is emphatically a kingdom of *God*, not of man. It is well to emphasize that the kingdom of God is based on the righteousness of God which is in Christ Jesus, not on the righteousness of man. It is absolutely necessary that we realize that the kingdom of God is principally established not by a man made change in human relationships, but by a divinely wrought redemption and regeneration of the individual sinner. And therefore, the Heidelberg Catechism is principally correct when it presents the idea of the kingdom of God first of all as personal matter: "Rule us so by thy word and Spirit, that we may submit ourselves more and more to thee." The petition, "Thy kingdom come," means primarily and principally: let Thy kingdom come in our hearts.

Secondly, and it is also necessary to emphasize this element, you may notice that when the Catechism broadens out, it does not include the whole world, it does not speak of a universal brotherhood of man, but it explains this petition as a prayer for the church. And therefore it limits it to the communion of saints in Christ Jesus. You can never make the scope and the sphere of the kingdom of God, as far as its subjects are concerned, any broader than this. It is always limited to the church.

And finally, the Catechism explains the kingdom of God as principally eschatological. Its perfect realization and final manifestation must never be expected in this world, nor by way of gradual development, but by the final wonder of the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ from heaven in the day of His coming. To this the Heidelberg Catechism refers in the last clause: "till the full perfection of thy kingdom take place, wherein thou shalt be all in all."

The kingdom of God as to its main idea is the commonwealth in which God is king, in which He is known and acknowledged, loved and freely obeyed, by willing subjects as the only Sovereign of all, Whose Word is law, written in the hearts of all the citizens of the kingdom. It is such a rule of God as finds free and willing response in the hearts of the subjects of this kingdom. Hence, as the Catechism explains, the second petition means that we pray that God may so rule us by His Word and Spirit, that we may submit ourselves more and more to Him. Upon this element the emphasis must be placed. God is, of course, always King. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom ruleth over all. He rules over all the wide creation, and over every creature in heaven, on earth, and in hell.

H.H.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Covenant of Sinai*

The Covenant of Sinai, as this expression indicates, is the covenant that the Lord instituted with His people at Sinai. There is no agreement as to what this covenant was as to its character, whether a covenant of works, a contract between God and Israel with conditional promises, or a covenant of grace. The question is then, what was this covenant as to its character. Then there is also the question, who did this covenant include, only the Israel according to the election or both the reprobated and the elect Israel? Finally there is also the question, why in the epistle to the Hebrews is this covenant called the *first* covenant, and why does the inspired writer say of this covenant that it waxed old and vanished away. And why did it wax old and vanish away? And what does it mean that it waxed old and vanished away?

These are the questions for which I ask your attention and with which I wish to be occupied with you for a while. I have arranged my material under the following four points: The covenant of Sinai: 1) Its character; 2) Its promises; 3) Its members; 4) Its being called the first covenant and why.

I. *The covenant of Sinai as to its character.* The fact that Israel could not merit with God, was creature, moving, living and having his being in God, and therefore less than nothing in comparison with God must, to my mind, exclude the idea that the covenant of Sinai was a covenant of works, a sort of contract between God and Israel. There is no room for argument here. The point is undebatable, it seems to me. For a covenant in the sense of a contract is only possible between man and man, but never between Man and God. For over against God, man has nothing to say. His sole obligation and duty with respect to God is to hear and obey. And his obedience is God's gift in him. And when he disobeys, it is because God sovereignly hardens him. How can there then be such a thing as a covenant in the sense of a contract between God and His creature. This cannot be. For if the covenant is a contract, the two parties to the contract do have the right to speak up to each other. They deliberate together. They bargain together, and if successfully, they reach an agreement as to what the articles of the covenant are to be. And this agreement is the covenant. But certainly God was not bargaining with Israel there at Sinai. He did not ask Israel, if he would agree to be His people, but He let it be known that Israel was His people and that settled the matter for Israel. And He did not submit His law to Israel for approbation, but He came to him with His "thou shalt" and that again settled the matter for Israel. And, as

we shall see, He did not pivot the fulfilment of His promises to Israel on Israel's willingness to obey Him, but despite Israel's apostasy, He entered with him into the rest of Canaan in fulfilment of His promise.

This shuts us up to the view that the covenant of Sinai was a covenant of grace. That the covenant of Sinai was a covenant of grace is clear from the transactions there at Sinai reported in the book of Exodus (Chapter 20-23). The people of Israel were encamped at the base of Mount Sinai. Moses was with the Lord in the Mount. Here the Lord was communicating to him the ten commandments and some additional legislation. This was followed by the promise of the Lord that He would send His angel to lead His people on their journey to Canaan and that He would surely drive out the Canaanites before them. Thereupon Moses left the presence of the Lord and returned to the people. He wrote down all the words of the Lord and called the writing "the book of the covenant." The following morning he rose up early, and builded an altar and erected twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel. As Aaron and his sons had not yet been appointed to the priesthood, Moses sent young men, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the Lord. Then he took half of the blood and sprinkled it upon the altar. Taking the "book of the covenant" he read it in the audience of the people. And they said, "All that the Lord has said we will do and be obedient." Then Moses took the blood and sprinkled it upon the people, and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words."

The thing to observe here is that the covenant of Sinai was confirmed in blood, in the final instance the blood of Christ. The law of this covenant called for the sacrifices by blood by which the sins of the people were covered before the face of God—covered, that is cancelled, obliterated (symbolically). This shows that the covenant of Sinai was, must have been, a covenant of grace, the very covenant first revealed in paradise immediately after the fall and later instituted with Noah and Abraham. But one will say, The law entered in there at Sinai, the law, "Thou shalt keep all my statutes and my ordinances, which if man doeth he shall live by or in them," that is, live by the deeds of the law, and further, "Cursed is every one that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them." Thus speaks the law. And the law was added to the promise. This, one will say, shuts us up to the view that the covenant of Sinai was a covenant of works with conditional threats and promises. "If thou keepest me, thou shalt live by me. If thou transgresseth me, cursed art thou." Thus threatens and promises the law. Let me tender my reply. In the first place, the "if" clause, "which, if a man doeth," is not a condition, but the idea is that keeping the law and life go hand in hand, and likewise transgression of the law and death. We see it in Adam our common parent who had left God's hand a sinless man, and who therefore, how long we know not, was living by the law, com-

*Commencement address.

mandment. As long as he continued obedient to the law, he lived. Disobeying the command, he died. Second, we must consider God's purpose in bringing in the law. His purpose was not to place His chosen people under the necessity of keeping the law in order that He might destroy them for transgressing the law, which they did, seeing that they were dead in sin. Only if that had been true, could it be said that the covenant He established with them there at Sinai was a covenant of works. His purpose was to put them under the necessity of keeping the law indeed but only that they might be brought under the conviction of sin and that, as so convicted, they might be driven into the arms of Christ by the curses of the law. No more, than we, did the saints of the Old covenant imagine that they were living by the deeds of the law. They were hiding themselves in Christ, and they knew that it was by His mercies alone that they lived. The law entered in four hundred years after, but, in the words of Paul, it did not disannul the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the covenant of grace. It means that, despite the entering in of the law, the covenant of grace abided. It abided there at Sinai. (see Gal. iii, 17).

We were delivered from the law by Christ who fulfilled all its requirements, doing so, according to the Hebrews, as the Mediator of the covenant. The only question is whether the covenant of Sinai was that covenant that abided. It was, must have been, seeing that it, too, was confirmed in blood.

II. That this is so, is also clear from what was the promise of this covenant (my second point). The promise as it first came to God's afflicted people in Egypt is contained in Ex. iii, 7, 8, "And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry, by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Hevites, and the Jebusites." And again in the same vein in Ex. VI, 6-8, "Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: and I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you into the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for a heritage: I am the Lord."

This was the promise of the covenant of Sinai. It was the very promise that the Lord had given to the Fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And it was unconditional. Had it been conditional, had it hinged for its fulfillment on Israel's willingness to keep the covenant, it would never have been realized. For Israel was a stiffnecked people. But God continued faithful to His promise. When, shortly after, the

people there at Sinai made them gods of gold, the Lord forgave them, and despite their great sin vowed that "Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do wonders, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of the Lord: for it is a terrible thing that I will do with thee. Observe that which I command thee this day: behold, I drive out before thee the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hevite, and the Jebusite."

III. And this brings us to the question: Whom did the Covenant of Sinai include? To whom was the promise of the earthly Canaan given? Also to the Israel according to reprobation, or to the Israel according to the election only? According to one view the promise of the covenant of Sinai was also unto the reprobated Israel, and this Israel, too, was included in this covenant. And then it is concluded that, seeing that the earthly Canaan was a prophetic type of the heavenly, the promise of the heavenly kingdom — the promise of Christ and all His benefits — is likewise given to all the baptized, soul for soul. However, the view that the promise of the earthly Canaan was given also to the Israel according to the reprobation and that thus also this Israel was included in the covenant of Sinai can be proved wrong. True it is that the earthly Canaan was a type of the heavenly. In the covenant of Sinai all was type: the deliverance from the bondage of Egypt, the ten plagues, the passage through the Red Sea, and later through the Jordan, Israel's warfare with the Canaanites, and the conquest of Canaan, the sacrifices by blood and the priesthood, etc. All was type of the realities of Christ's heavenly kingdom. What this means is, that in promising His people there at Sinai the earthly, the Lord was at once promising them the heavenly. Thus in saying to Israel, "I will bring you unto the land concerning which I swear to give it unto Abraham, and I will give it to you for a heritage," He was at once promising them that "I will bring you, my people unto the heavenly land, concerning which I swear to give it unto Abraham, that is, unto Christ, and I will give it to you for a heritage." Seeing that the earthly was a type of the heavenly, God could not be promising His people the earthly without at once promising the heavenly. So in saying to His people there at Sinai, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage," and by implication, "I will bring you into the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham." What the Lord on that occasion was, in the final instance, saying to His people is this: "I am the Lord thy God, the God of thy salvation, which have brought thee out of the house of thy *spiritual* bondage, the bondage of sin and of the devil, and I will give thee rest, the rest of the heavenly.

Let us consider that Abraham was expecting a heavenly country. And his expectation was well grounded. It was grounded on the promise of God to him that he would give him the heavenly. Yet, if we examine the promises of God as they came to Abraham, we discover that not once did the Lord say to him in just these words, "I will give you the

heavenly," but always, "I will give to you and to your seed this land where thou art a stranger—the earthly Canaan." This is the only promise that Abraham ever received as to the form of words. That Abraham was nevertheless expecting the heavenly can only be because the earthly was a type of the heavenly, so that in promising him the earthly the Lord was at once promising him the heavenly. And Abraham had understanding of this as taught by the Spirit of Christ. And so, too, God's people in general.

This, it seems to me, proves conclusively that the covenant of Sinai was indeed a covenant of grace, the very covenant that God gave to Abraham. For the promises also of this covenant were in the final instance promises of the heavenly and not of the earthly.

And therefore the promises of the covenant of Sinai were given, could have been given, only to the Israel according to the election of grace, and the covenant of Sinai included, could have included, only the elect Israel. For the promise of this covenant, the unconditional promise of the heavenly in the final instance, was for the elect only.

That the promise of Canaan was given only to the elect, is strictly according to the teachings of Paul in his epistle to the Galatians, where the statement occurs, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to thy seeds as of many, but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."

It is true, of course, that also reprobated Israelites entered Canaan, and that they multiplied in Canaan until their number far exceeded the number of true worshipper of God, the remnant according to the election, Christ's little flock. But it can be shown that it is just as true that the reprobated Israel had no right to Canaan and were out of place in the Holy Land. First to be considered is the generation of Jews whose carcasses fell in the wilderness. They are described (see Hebrews 3:9-19) as men that hardened their hearts, tempted God, proved Him and saw His works forty years. Wherefore "I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest." They could not enter. The supreme reason was the oath of God. The secondary reason was their unbelief (see verses 18, 19). The conclusion is warranted that they were reprobated. Canaan was not for them.

Next to be considered is that all gross sinners in Israel, such as murderers, adulterers, blasphemers, worshippers of strange gods, had to be put to death. The law demanded that this class of persons be extirpated. They were corrupting the land. God's country was not meant for them. But, as could be expected, despite this demand of the law, the carnal seed in Israel was permitted to live and the result was that eventually the land would be filled with their abominations. As often as this happened the Lord would take away from Israel the land either by withholding the seasonal rains and then there would be no harvest, or by selling land and people into the hand of their enemies to be spoiled and

plundered of them. And finally, when the measure of iniquity was filled up, the Israel of the ten tribes was uprooted from the land and scattered among the nations never to return, and Judah was exiled to Babylon. And after the seventy years only a remnant returned. It all goes to show that Canaan was not for the wicked, that it had not been given by promise to the reprobated Israel. Canaan was God's country, the land of the living, type of the new earth. The reprobated had no more right to it than they have to heaven. They were as out of place in the earthly Canaan as they would be in Heaven. The covenant did not include them. We must break off here to complete this exposition in a following article.

G.M.O.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On August 17th our beloved parents

PETER SCHIPPER and GRACE SCHIPPER—nee De Bruyn hope to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary.

We are deeply grateful to our Covenant God for all the blessings He has bestowed upon them and us; and we trust and pray that according to His will they may be spared for each other and for us unto fulness of years, and that they may continue to experience Jehovah's loving kindness all the days of their pilgrimage.

Their children:

Rev. and Mrs. Marinus Schipper
Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Westenbroek
Mr. and Mrs. Donald Schipper
Mr. and Mrs. Edward Borst
Mr. and Mrs. William Dykstra
Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Kronemeyer
Mr. and Mrs. Herman Schipper
Mr. and Mrs. Harold Schipper
19 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren.

Holland, Michigan.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On July 22, 1955, our beloved parents and grandparents

LAMMERT LANTING and MINKE LANTING (nee Boersma) commemorated the 35th anniversary of their marriage.

We thank our Heavenly Father with them for having kept and sustained them together through the years, and pray that the Lord may grant them His peace in their remaining years.

Their grateful children:

Mr. and Mrs. Peter Koole
Rev. and Mrs. George Lanting
Mr. and Mrs. Peter Knott
Gertie
Jeanette
Twelve grandchildren.

South Holland, Illinois.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Hebrews 11:22-26

Continued

Of this one who is great in the annals of the history of Israel we must say just a word more. It is demanded by the text in question, for it says of this Moses that he so very clearly saw the underlying issue in his decision to refuse to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. It was the "pleasures of sin for a season" or it was "suffer the reproach of Christ."

Now such an example is very much to the point in the letter to the Hebrews. These were exactly in danger to fall back for the sake of the reproach of the word of the Cross. And their courage of faith must be bolstered by citing the example of Moses in his day and hour. They must hear this testimony concerning Moses from the pages of Scripture. It is a voice from one of the cloud of witnesses; a voice of one of the elders who obtained a good report.

It is, therefore, of importance to take a little better notice of this determination of Moses to suffer the lot of all God's people and of all of God's prophets.

The Bible often speaks of the reproach of Christ.

We think in this connection of such a passage as Matthew 5:11, 12 where we read: "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you." We should notice in this passage that here is spoken of a reproach which the meek, the poor in spirit endure, for the sake of Christ, His kingdom, His Word in the midst of the world of evil men, who are the haters of God! And because they hate God and all His perfections, particularly His love and grace revealed to the elect people of God, as they are constituted of God an elect nation, a holy people, a royal priesthood, they also hate this people. The seed of the serpent hates the Seed of the woman. But when this hatred reveals itself in "reviling," and "speaking of all manner of evil falsely" for the sake of the Son of God, then we must be inwardly full of deep and abiding satisfaction and blessedness. For then the reward is great in heaven.

Or we think of the reproach which Christ had to endure on the Cross even by those who were crucified with Him. When others about the Cross jeer at Christ and say: "Let Christ the King of Israel now descend from the Cross, that we may see and believe" then the two malefactors too joined in as we read, "And they that were crucified with him reviled him." Mark 15:32. Such was the reproach wherewith Christ was reproached. Thus we read in Romans 15:3 where Psalm 69:9 is quoted: "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; the reproaches of them that reproach thee are fallen upon me."

When this reproach of which Christ complains falls upon the children of God then Jesus says: "Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake." Luke 6:22.

Such as the evil that had come upon Israel in the desert. Their lot and plight in Egypt was one simply of suffering for righteousness' sake. They are the children of God by His free choice. According to the prophetic Word, which is more sure and shines as a light in a dark place, Israel had come down into Egypt. It was the Word spoken to Abram by the Lord as recorded in Genesis 15:12-14, "And when the sun was going down a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him, and He said unto Abram, know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years. And also that nation whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterwards they shall come out with great substance."

Thus is the nature of Israel's suffering!

It was clearly a suffering because they were accounted a righteous and holy people unto the Lord. That was the sole reason. Thus it was clearly intended to be, according to the prophetic word, spoken to Abram. And thus it was also realized at the time of the Pharaoh, who forgot about the greatness of Joseph. For this king's evil policy was not against a rebellious people who were increasingly becoming a dangerous menace to the land of Egypt, intending to overthrow the throne of the King of Egypt, but it was clearly a policy and program intending the massacre of a people who had one desire in life, namely, to serve the Lord their God in the land of their fathers. There they should be a peculiar people unto God in all the earth. Read, therefore, the very evil strategy on the part of the king of Egypt. "Now there arose up a new king over Egypt which knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out a war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land." Exodus 1:8-10.

From the foregoing it is quite evident that the subjugation of Israel was inspired by the forces of hell against God and His anointed Son as He revealed Himself in His people. The prophetic Word spoken to Abram must be made of none effect. The Satanic element in Pharaoh's decision must not be overlooked. We must not be ignorant of the Devil's wiles in this strategy and policy of the king of Egypt.

Oh, Moses saw this plan of Satan. And he had but one thing burning in his soul. The zeal of God's house consumed him. It was to deliver the people of Israel that they might return unto the land of their fathers as pilgrims on the earth, seeking the city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God!

And he sallies forth to perform this great work in faith. While he ponders this question he looks not merely at the things that are in the present, the great power and riches and treasures of Egypt, but he looks away from all this to greater riches, to abiding and lasting treasures and reward. And in the Spirit of God and in the power of faith he refuses to be called a son of Pharaoh's daughter.

And so the reproach of Christ is his choice.

His choice was such that he immediately would be reproached for the sake of Christ's cause in this world.

In the first place he is greatly reproached by the Israelite, who reproachingly said to him: "Who made thee a prince and judge over us? intendest thou to kill me as thou killedst the Egyptian?" Oh, what a stinging reproach this was to the "man of God" who loved the people of God! He thought that Israel would understand. He lived in naive and youthful enthusiasm. But he immediately suffers a great disillusionment which must have been a bitter disappointment to him for forty years. He tasted the reproach of all those who are eaten up with the zeal of God's house. The fleshly element in Israel did not understand. Always they resisted the Holy Ghost as He spoke to Israel through the prophetic Word, shining in the darkness of Egypt's bondage. Small wonder that the great objection of Moses to the Lord at the burning bush is: but what shall I say to the people. The people will not understand! Oh, what a bitterness for Moses' soul. Hated really without a cause. Hated by the fleshly Israel. Moses has only said to them what was the law and the prophets: "Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow?"

God surely used this incident to cast Moses once and for all time out of the house of Pharaoh. Moses' bridges were burned. He in faith learned that he could not possibly ever go back. He could only press forward. Having put his hand to the plow he could not look back. Through forty years of loneliness he endures as seeing the unseen God in the heat of the desert day and the cold of the mountain by night.

But he has one great and all-embracing consolation.

It is that this is not simply a suffering and being reproached for a rash deed in killing an Egyptian, but that it was, indeed, a suffering for the cause of the Son of God, for the cause of Christ, the Redeemer of Israel from the house of bondage into the glorious liberty of Canaan, the land of promise.

What an identity, therefore, between the suffering of the Hebrew believers and that of Moses. They suffer in the same cause and from the same motive, be it then in a different historical setting. And also what an identity even today. How the righteous today are always cast out without a cause. How in our day those who would maintain the faith are cast out by those who hate doctrinal clarity and distinctiveness that Christ, our Lord, may receive all the glory. Well may we claim these promises in faith and "in this evil day" do as Jesus instructs us to "leap for joy," for behold our reward is great in heaven. We are in good com-

pany, for "in like manner did their fathers unto the prophets." Luke 6:23.

It is only "the reward" which God holds before our believing eyes that makes us strong and courageous in the fight. Only in view of this reward will we stand unmoveable, never back-sliding, falling back into perdition, but believing unto the salvation of the soul.

Thus did Moses.

He did some "accounting" in faith!

He began to compare the "treasures" of Egypt, the accumulation of all the wealth and power, the glory and honor of Egypt with what God promises to His servants. No, he did not compare the "treasures" of Egypt with the "reward" but with the "affliction of Christ." As far as the natural eye could see such were the alternatives. For all who will to live godly in this world must suffer affliction. But such affliction works patience in the believer, and patience works approvedness and approvedness hope, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts. He looked in faith for the promised reward while in the midst of the affliction for Christ.

And he did not falter.

Faith has a better and abiding treasure in heaven.

When the road is hardest and the night seems darkest, faith burns the more warmly in our hearts and glows with spiritual warmth and profound convictions.

Such must be the faith of the Hebrew Christians.

They must indeed *not* look to Moses. That would be fatefully wrong. That is the error of all "hero of faith" worship. Nay, we must look where Moses looked. In faith we must look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross and despised the same and is set down on the right hand of the Father.

Faithful is the saying: For if we be dead with him we shall also live with him. If we suffer we shall also reign with him. If we deny him, he also will deny us. If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

G.L.

"Pelagianism avows, indeed, that its main interest is in defending the holiness of God and that their position maintains this better than Paul and Augustine or Thomas and Calvin; because God in the thought-structure of the latter is made the author of sin. However, this is nothing more than a fiction; on the basis of Pelagianism sin remains as unexplained as on the standpoint of Augustine; yea, in the case of the latter the holiness of God is better accounted for. For it is more in harmony with Scripture and the entire Christian faith to confess that God in a certain sense willed sin for wise reasons, be it then not known to us, than to teach that He in no wise willed sin and yet tolerates sin and permits it. This latter element exactly is doing injustice to God's holiness and almight." — H. Bavinck, Geref. Dogmatiek

IN HIS FEAR

A Snare for Our Children

When a new vaccine which will protect our children against the dreadful Polio germ is discovered and made available, we rush our children off to the doctor to give them the benefit of this preventative measure.

But many of us persist in *leaving* a snare for our children.

When firemen, auxiliary policemen or even trustworthy senior students are placed on street corners to insure the safe passage of our children from one side of the busy thoroughfare to the other, we hail it as a wonderful safety measure.

Yet, we often *place* a snare for our children.

We provide the best and most nourishing foods for them. We buy the warmest clothing we can afford. We make sure that their shoes fit properly so as not to injure their feet. We see to it that their teeth are promptly filled when cavities appear. We see that their eyes receive the best of care at the hands of those who have been trained in the best of schools.

However, we sometimes *fight to keep* a snare that others have placed before our children.

Every physical danger to our children frightens us. We strive to do our utmost to see to it that their earthly life is not injured or abruptly ended. Every trap, every snare—whether it be an abandoned refrigerator door or uncovered cistern—every threat to their physical wellbeing—whether it be an exposed electrical wire with its fatal “shock” or an unshielded electric fan with its maiming power—we recognize as a threat to their physical life and wellbeing.

But spiritual snares we tolerate, even help to build and often fight to retain.

There is nothing new about this.

The Church—that is, that which was called the Church—in the Old Testament dispensation manifested such behaviour long before the New Testament Church appeared upon the pages of Holy Writ.

Our theme is actually borrowed from the Word of God which in several passages speaks of a snare unto Israel. And the whole Book of Judges is written and included in the canon of the Word of God because Israel allowed, kept and defended a snare for the children of the church of that day.

Deuteronomy 7 speaks repeatedly of that snare. Israel is told that when the promised land is reached Israel must kill all the heathen that dwell there and break down all their idols. Israel must “utterly destroy them” and “shall burn with fire” their idols. Thus in verse 16 you read these unequivocal words of God: “And thou shalt consume all the people which the Lord thy God shall deliver thee; thine eye shall have no pity upon them: neither shalt thou serve their gods; for that will be a snare unto thee.”

Somewhat later in verse 25 we read: “The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire: thou shalt not desire the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snared therein: for it is an abomination unto the Lord thy God.”

Turning to the Book of Judges we see the truth of these words and Israel ensnared in the idolatry of the heathen whom they left in the land. We read in Judges 2:1-3: “And an angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you. And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this? Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you.”

And these things were written, not to fill the pages of Holy Writ, but for the warning and instruction of the New Testament Church; for you and for me and for our children.

Very correctly we sing in our Psalter versification of Psalm 78:

“My people, give ear, attend to my word,
In parables new deep truths shall be heard;
The wonderful story our fathers made known
To children succeeding by us must be shown.

Instructing our sons we gladly record
The praises, the works, the might of the Lord,
For He hath commanded that what He hath done
Be passed in tradition from father to son.

Let children thus learn from history's light
To hope in our God and walk in His sight,
The God of their fathers to fear and obey,
And ne'er like their fathers to turn from His way.

The story be told, to warn and restrain,
Of hearts that were hard, rebellious and vain,
Of soldiers who faltered when battle was near,
Who kept not God's covenant nor walked in His fear.”

That truth the New Testament Church also can and ought to sing today. The New Testament Church too must beware of leaving or placing snares for her children and ought the rather to teach her children the lessons that are taught in the history of the Old Testament Church.

Things have changed. We do not live in the land of Canaan. Our land is not and was never meant by God to be a type of the Heavenly Canaan that comes in the day of Christ at the end of time. We have, therefore, no calling to consume and destroy all the unbelievers out of the land. We are not called to wage physical warfare with all who serve another god besides Jehovah. The citizens of the kingdom of heaven inherit the earth as the meek, as the pure in heart, as the poor in spirit, as the peacemakers. And the same

Israel after the Babylonian Captivity, when Israel entered a period that illustrated a new phase of the truth, had not the calling to destroy and consume the oppressors but instead to wait patiently for the Messiah. It is her calling to come out from among the heathen and be a separate people, II Cor. 6:17.

The calling of Israel did remain and still remains for the New Testament Church to remove out of its own midst the idols of the heathen. She has the calling, therefore, to discipline *her own* members whose walk is not in His fear. For all sin is idolatry in that it is rooted in unbelief rather than in faith in God and is serving that which is not God.

The Church today that fails to discipline always leaves a snare for her children. It does this as surely as it was a snare for Israel to leave the idols in the land for their children to see and to worship. For, leaving the idols in Canaan and leaving sinful practices today is to put the stamp of approval upon them. It encourages sin. It leaves it to tempt our children. It provides the opportunity for their flesh to copy it and enjoy it. And these churches find in generations (and more rapidly with each generation) that their children do not learn from history's light (the history of their congregation's and denomination's light) to trust in our God and walk in His sight, but rather to turn from Him and to walk so that they are indistinguishable from the world.

Denominations and congregations must be careful not to place snares in front of their children and not to defend these snares when their members have introduced them. Their calling before God is always—even as with Israel—to destroy *out of and in their own circle* the idols that from time to time are raised up.

The Church that sets its stamp of approval upon divorce, membership in secret societies and in worldly unions is reaching out into the heathen world to bring into its own circle the idols that appeal to its flesh. And in this way they deliberately set a snare for their children. Those who sit down and draw up carefully worked out documents to introduce or defend these things that have already crept in manifest in that deed no love to God. O, it may be love to brother or sister so-and-so who has succumbed to these evils. It may be the result of a tender spot in the heart for these, perhaps because of former friendships, perhaps because of blood ties, perhaps because he was formerly your pastor; but it is not love to God. It is a carnal, sinful, fleshly love which may be found also in idolaters. But the word of God still stands! In this respect Deut. 7:16 is still true: "Thine eye shall have no pity upon them." To be sure, we must deal with such in love; but it must be in the love of God. And the love of God will never allow us to defend their sin. When it becomes a matter of choosing between defending them in their "idolatry" and obeying the Living God Who forbids having other gods besides Himself, then in that respect our eye may not have pity upon them so that we let the snare remain for future generations because brother so-and-so practices this or that sin.

That is also why the Church that walks in His fear still demands public confession of public sins. Also in this respect a snare for future generations may not be placed by the Church. Only by demanding confession and by public announcement that confession has been made of those sins which by their public practice or by their very nature become known to the congregation does the Church continue to break down before the eyes of its youth this form of idolatry, these heathenish practices in our land. And, we may say in parenthesis, we have great difficulty in understanding the inconsistency of making public the confession of those who have sinned against the seventh commandment and then do not even demand a confession of those who break the third commandment. Lest we be misunderstood, in the lines above we exactly maintain that there shall be public announcement of the confession of those whose sin against the seventh commandment becomes public because of the very nature and outcome of the sin. But why are those who curse and swear and are caught lying publicly or even are found guilty by the courts of having disobeyed the authorities in one way or another measured with another rod? Are we not laying a snare for our children also in that respect? Are we maybe busy breaking down the one idol everytime it appears once again in our midst and then busy laughing at other idols of a different sort and shape but which deny Jehovah the Living God as well as the idol we set out to crush in pieces?

It might be well for us to look around a little bit and see if we can recognize the idols that we cherish and even defend. There are some that we will even fight to preserve.

Is it that we are so steeped in idolatry ourselves that we do not recognize them as idols? Does it have to be as big as the image of Nebuchadnezzar in the plain of Dura before we will see it? Do we think that an idol that stands only two inches high—purposely to deceive—is less of a snare to us and to our children than Baal and Ashteroth?

The Lord willing we hope to continue our discussion of this matter next time.

J. A. H.

"The real will in God is the will of well-doing (*voluntas beneplacitis*) and this (will) is one with God's being, is unchangeable and is always fulfilled. Pelagianism has erroneously left this line of thought, and has posited a powerless desire and an unfulfilled wish in God as being the will of God. This is doing injustice to God's essence and all His virtues."

—H. Bavinck, quoting Lombardus

"Pelagius admitted that man in his moral efforts stands in need of Divine aid, and, therefore, spoke of the grace of God as assisting the imperfections of man by a variety of means. He supposed, however, that this grace is something external, and added to the efforts put forth by the free will of man; it must therefore be deserved by virtuous inclinations."

—K. R. Hagenbach, *History of Dogma*.

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

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

THE EPISCOPACY.

We concluded our preceding article with the observation that it is truly a remarkable phenomenon that the episcopal form of church government should characterize the Church of God for about fifteen hundred years, from the time of the apostles to the Reformation. It is a truly remarkable phenomenon because it is undoubtedly true that the Word of God supports the Presbyterian form of church government. And one can hardly deny that this phenomenon is worthy of a little investigation.

This phenomenon is easily understandable. In the early Church, we understand, the presbyters or elders were all of the same rank. There is certainly nothing in Holy Writ to deny the truth of this observation. It was natural, however, that in each congregation one of the elders should assume leadership. He would preside at the meetings of the elders and lead the congregation in worship. We have the same situation in many vacant churches today. These churches, without the services of a regular pastor, are very easily led to look up with esteem to an elder that has received talents from the Lord above many in the congregation. Now these presbyters or elders are also called overseers in the Word of God, inasmuch as they were called of God to have the oversight over the church. And the word "overseer" in the Greek is the same word as our word "episcopal," from which we also get our word, bishop. The transition, therefore, from the presbyterian form of church government to the episcopal form of church government is easily understandable in the infancy of the New Testament Church.

With the death of the apostles the rapid development of this episcopal form of church government is also easily understandable. Churches, of course, were first established in the cities. From the cities Christianity spread out into the surrounding country or rural districts. Other congregations were organized. The city with its surrounding territory was known as a diocese, and its bishop was called a diocesan bishop. Formerly there were merely monarchical bishops, bishops of city churches. Now we have, besides these monarchical bishops, also diocesan bishops, bishops that were in charge of large districts. And it is surely not difficult to understand that a bishop of a large city should be regarded with greater esteem and respect than the bishop of a small rural church. The growth of episcopal authority is therefore understandable. This, however, is not all. There were bishops during those early days of the New Testament infancy of the Church who had enjoyed instruction from the apostles them-

selves. Is it surprising, then, that the churches should regard these men (such as Polycarp) with a tremendous amount of respect and veneration? Indeed, this episcopal development was very natural. This, then, is the historical background for this episcopal development in church government.

The belief that the episcopacy was the principal bond of the Church, presenting its unity, did not decrease, but it increased. Salvation was inseparably connected with the Church and the bishop. Ignatius, we may possibly recall, had once written: "Do ye all follow your bishop as Jesus Christ followed the Father. Do nothing without the bishop." Cyprian is known for his emphasis upon the unity of the Church as revolving about the authority of the bishop. This Church Father wrote once: "There is one God, and Christ is one; and there is one Church and one Chair (by *one chair* he meant "one center of authority")." He continued: "He who is not in the Church of Christ is not a Christian. He can no longer have God for his Father who has not the Church for his mother. There is no salvation out of the Church. The Church is based on the unity of the bishops. The bishop is in the Church, and the Church is in the bishop. If anyone is not with the bishop, he is not in the Church." In fact, of Cyprian and his emphasis upon the episcopacy Philip Schaff writes as follows: "He represents the claims of the episcopacy in close connection with the idea of a special priesthood and sacrifice. He is the typical high-churchman of the ante-Nicene age. He vigorously put into practice what he honestly believed. He had a good opportunity to assert his authority in several controversies in which he was involved. Cyprian considers the bishops as the bearers of the Holy Spirit, who passed from Christ to the apostles, from them by ordination to the bishops, propagates himself in an unbroken line of succession, and gives efficacy to all religious exercises. Hence, they are also the pillars of the unity of the church; nay, in a certain sense they are the church itself. Cyprian is thoroughly imbued with the idea of the solidary unity of the episcopate,—of many bishops exercising only one office, each within his diocese, and each at the same time representing in himself the whole office. But with all this, the bishop still appears in Cyprian in the closest connection with the presbyters. He undertook no important matter without the presbyters. The fourth general council, at Carthage, A.D. 398, even declared the sentence of a bishop, without the concurrence of the lower clergy, void, and decreed that in the ordination of a presbyter, all the presbyters with the bishop, should lay their hands on the candidate. The ordination of a bishop was performed by the neighboring bishops, requiring at least three in number. In Egypt, however, so long as there was but one bishop there, presbyters must have performed the consecration, which Eutychius and Hilary the Deacon expressly assert was the case."—end of quote. It is interesting, in this quotation from Cyprian, what that Church Father has to say of the close connection between the bishop and the presbyters. Cyprian himself undertook no important decisions without the presbyters. In fact, the

fourth general council at Carthage, 398, even declared the sentence of a bishop, without the concurrence of the lower clergy, to be void. This is surely a far cry from the position of the Roman Catholic Church today as far as its conception is concerned with respect to the infallibility of the pope. However, we will have more to say about this in due time,

Seeberg describes the episcopacy in this period, 300-750 A.D., as follows (this quotation has been quoted before in our discussion of the great Donatist controversy): "Augustine holds that the great church is the *one Catholic church* by virtue of the distribution of the latter throughout the whole world and by virtue of its connections with the church of the apostles, whose *successors the bishops are* (italics mine — H.V.)." However, Seeberg continues and maintains that the idea of the Roman Primacy receives no special elucidation at the hands of Augustine. We find a general acknowledgment of the "primacy of the apostolic chair," but Augustine knows nothing of any special authority vested in Peter or his successors. Peter is a "figure of the church," or of the "good pastors," and represents the unity of the church. In this consists the significance of his position and that of his successors (thus also Cyprian). As all bishops (in contradistinction from the Scriptures) may err, so also the Roman bishop. This view is plainly manifest from the bearing of Augustine and his colleagues in the Pelagian controversy. The infallible authority of the pope in the church at large was a dogma in which only the popes believed. Dogmatically, there had been no advance from the position of Cyprian — thus far Seeberg. To say that all bishops may err, including the Roman bishop, is also a far cry from the position of the Roman Catholic Church of today as it maintains the infallibility of the pope at Rome. Seeberg declares that Augustine knows nothing of any special authority vested in Peter or in his successors.

Concerning the bishops and their power during this period, 300-750 A.D., the following quotation from Philip Schaff is surely interesting: "The bishops now stood with sovereign power at the head of the clergy and of their dioceses. They had come to be universally regarded as the vehicles and propagators of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and the teachers and the lawgivers of the church in all matters of faith and discipline. The specific distinction between them and the presbyters was carried into everything; while yet it is worthy of remark, that Jerome, Chrysostom, and Theodoret, just the most eminent exegetes of the ancient church, expressly acknowledge the original identity of the two offices in the New Testament, and consequently derive the proper episcopate, not from divine institution, but only from church usage. The traditional participation of the people in the election, which attested the popular origin of the episcopal office, still continued, but gradually sank to a mere formality, and at last became entirely extinct. The bishops filled their own vacancies, and elected and ordained the clergy. Besides ordination, as the medium for communicating the official gifts, they also claimed from the presbyters in the West, after

the fifth century, the exclusive prerogatives of confirming the baptized and consecrating the chrism or holy ointment in baptism. In the East, on the contrary, confirmation (the chrism) is performed also by the presbyters, and, according to the ancient custom, immediately follows baptism As the bishop united in himself all the rights and privileges of the clerical office, so he was expected to show himself a model in the discharge of its duties and a follower of the great Archbishop and Archshepherd of the sheep. He was expected to exhibit in a high degree the ascetic virtues, especially that of virginity, which, according to Catholic ethics, belongs to the idea of moral perfection. Many a bishop, like Athanasius, Basil, Ambrose, Augustine, Chrysostom, Martin of Tours, lived in rigid abstinence and poverty, and devoted his income to religious and charitable objects." Hereupon Philip Schaff describes how the bishops departed from this rule of ethical conduct, and that their very power and the temporal advantage of the episcopate (the bishops were granted temporal advantages) became also a lure for avarice and ambition, and a temptation to the lordly and secular spirit. From all this, however, we may be able to gain an idea of the rise of the episcopate and the development of the episcopacy in the early centuries of the New Testament Church. The unity of the Church and salvation within the Church were inseparably connected with the bishop. He was the principal bond of the Church, preserving its unity. He was indispensable as far as the salvation of the child of the Lord was concerned. He was the successor of the apostles and the gifts of the Holy Spirit were inseparably connected with him. And we may also remark that the bishop of Rome at this time held the leading position in the whole Church. This, as we shall presently see when we trace the amazing rise of the papacy, is not difficult to understand. Various circumstances united to bring this to pass, not the least of which was Rome's position in the midst of the world at that time and the role which Rome's bishop played in its defense over against the heathen invasions. To this, however, and the rise of the Papacy we wish to call attention in subsequent articles.

H.V.

"Augustine on the other hand looked upon it (grace) as the created principle of life, which produces out of itself the liberty of the will, which is entirely lost by the natural man. In the power of the natural man to choose between the good and the evil, to which great importance was attached by Pelagius, as well as by the earlier church, he saw only a liberty to do evil, since the regenerate man alone can will the good."

— K. R. Hagenbach, History of Dogma.

The Voice of Our Fathers

The Canons of Dordrecht

PART TWO

EXPOSITION OF THE CANONS FIRST HEAD OF DOCTRINE OF DIVINE PREDESTINATION

REJECTION OF ERRORS

A Word of Introduction

A few prefatory remarks may not be amiss as we begin our discussion of the *Rejection of Errors* which is appended to this First Head of Doctrine. For a more detailed discussion of this peculiar aspect of the *Canons* we refer the reader to Chapter 3, Part I, "The Confessional Status of the Canons." Let it suffice at present to remind ourselves that historically this phenomenon had its origin in the fact that the Synod of Dordrecht was called to pass judgment over the Arminians and their teachings, that as to both the idea and the method of this rejection of errors the *Canons* are thoroughly Scriptural, and that as to their significance these negative articles are indispensable to the maintenance and defense of the truth and binding upon every truly Reformed man to the extent that he must be disposed to refute and contradict especially these errors and must exert himself to keep the church from such errors.

In each chapter of the *Canons* this negative section, usually denoted for reference "B," is introduced by the words: "The true doctrine having been explained, the Synod rejects the errors of those . . ." In the first chapter of the *Canons* this introductory formula, which must be understood as prefacing each of the negative articles, contains the words "concerning Election and Rejection." We shall not repeat this formula each time we quote an article of the *Rejection of Errors*, but ask the reader to bear in mind that this formula belongs with all the negative articles. Incidentally, the historical reason for this negative section of the *Canons* is indicated by the original Latin version of the introductory formula in Chapter I, which reads: "A Rejection of the Errors by Which the Belgic Churches have been for some time greatly disturbed. The Orthodox Doctrine concerning Election and Reprobation having been expounded, the Synod rejects the Errors of those . . ."

* * * *

Article I. Who teach: That the will of God to save those who would believe and would persevere in faith and in the obedience of faith, is the whole and entire decree of election unto salvation, and that nothing else concerning this decree has been revealed in God's Word.

For these deceive the simple and plainly contradict the Scriptures, which declare that God will not only

save those who will believe, but that he has also from eternity chosen certain particular persons to whom above others he in time will grant both faith in Christ and perseverance; as it is written: "I manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me out of the world." John 17:6. "And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed," Acts 13:48. And: "Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love." Eph. 1:4.

The meaning of this article is so plain that it scarcely needs any explanation. The emphasis in the statement of the error rejected falls, of course, on the words: ". . . is the whole and entire decree of election unto salvation, and that nothing else concerning this decree has been revealed in God's Word." That it is the will of God to save those who believe and who persevere in faith and in the obedience of faith is, of course, a thoroughly Scriptural idea. Without faith and without perseverance there is no salvation. Furthermore, it belongs also to the decree of election that God decreed to save those who would believe and who would persevere in faith and faith's obedience. There is no dispute about that. This is also the plain teaching of the *Canons* in the positive section of this first chapter. Cf. Articles 7 and 8. But the insidious error of the Arminians was that they taught that this was the *sole* content of the decree of election unto salvation. And this error made room for the next erroneous step, namely, that divine election was conditioned by human faith or unbelief.

Notice how crafty the Arminians were. In the first place, observe that this error left them apparently free from blame in that they could still employ Scriptural language concerning election and salvation. In the second place, the Arminian could apparently place a strong emphasis on one of the cardinal truths of Holy Writ, the truth of salvation by faith only. And thus, in the third place, he could with a semblance of truth cast the accusation in the teeth of Reformed men that they falsely accused the Arminians, and that it was instead the Reformed men who were in error because they did not want the doctrine of salvation by faith and did not want to stress the necessity of perseverance.

I say "apparently," because, as the *Canons* also point out, the Arminian was really in error. By this teaching he denied the real nature of faith and perseverance, as does anyone who fails to place faith and perseverance themselves in the decree of election. And it is indeed possible to fall into the same error of the Arminians which is mentioned in this article without literally stating that nothing else concerning this decree of election has been revealed in God's Word. This is frequently done, in fact, by those who deliberately keep silence about the decree of election or who fail to relate the gift of faith to the decree of election as effect and cause. In other words, their error is often not in what they say, but in what they leave unsaid. And by leaving unsaid what they ought to say, namely that faith and perseverance in faith are blessings of salvation which flow

to the elect from the fountain of divine election, they give aid and comfort to the Arminian enemy of the truth.

By this means, the fathers say, these heretics deceive the simple. By "the simple" is undoubtedly meant not so much those who are intellectually simple, who do not have any power of discernment, who lack the necessary mental power to understand and to oppose this error. Rather are "the simple" those who are ethically upright and guileless, and who are for the very reason of their own guilelessness easily deceived into believing that the Arminians are "not so bad," are "sincere," after all do preach of election and do proclaim the gospel of salvation by faith only. This deception can be readily understood. These "simple" believers have a certain respect for ministers of the gospel. They look to them for instruction. And they expect their ministers and professors to be honest, straightforward, and guileless. They have a right to expect this. Besides, the speech of these heretics is deceptive: they apparently speak the truth, while actually they proclaim the lie. And thus they deceive guileless people of God; they gain sympathy, and they gain sympathetic adherents; and they in a measure succeed in casting their truly Reformed opponents in the role of theological hairsplitters and false accusers and heresy hunters. In the meantime, this deception is very wicked and unethical; and the fathers do not hesitate to call it by its right name: "deception." For they lead these simple people of God away from the truth, not toward it. And they deprive them of the real ground of their comfort and their assurance.

Nor do the fathers leave this accusation without objective grounds. The real nature of this deception of the Arminians consists, according to this article, in a plain contradiction of the Scriptures. The Arminian, in other words, comes with the Scriptures in hand, but actually contradicts them. He comes with "a word" out of the Scriptures, rather than with "the Word" of the Scriptures. For the Scriptures do not merely declare that God will save those who will believe. The latter is true, but it is only one element of *the truth*. And if stands alone, then it is basically a contradiction of the truth. For then the question remains: whence is faith and perseverance? And to the gospel belongs also this, that God has from eternity chosen certain definite persons to whom, in distinction from others, He grants both faith and perseverance.

The three quotations from Scripture speak for themselves. The text in John 17:6 plainly teaches: 1) That God has given certain men (not: men who will believe, or: men who will persevere, but: men) to Christ. 2) That it is to these men that Christ has manifested His Father's name. Hence, the manifestation of the Father's name has both its origin and its limitation in the fact that the Father gave to Christ certain men. The text in Acts 13:48 would have to be just changed about if it were to harmonize with the Arminian teaching. The Arminian must read this passage as follows: "And as many as believed were ordained to eternal life." But the Scriptures very plainly place the ordination unto eternal life prior to the act of faith, and therefore teach that

the decree of election is at once the divine limitation and the divine origin of faith. Hence, when Paul and Barnabas preached to the Gentiles in Antioch in Pisidia, only those, but then surely those, who were divinely predestinated unto eternal life responded in faith, were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord. And the text in Ephesians 1:4, quoted and explained already in Article 9 of the positive section of this first chapter, obviously teaches that the obedience of faith (the being holy and without blemish before him in love) is one of the very purposes of eternal election. Also here, therefore, the Scriptures plainly teach that eternal election is the fountain and cause and at once the limitation of that blessing of salvation which is denoted "the obedience of faith."

In the light of all this, it must be granted that the fathers are not at all too severe in their judgment that the Arminians are guilty of deceiving the simple and contradicting the Scriptures. And if in our day Reformed men would be a little less disposed to tolerate error and a little more disposed to refute and contradict the errors rejected by our fathers, Reformed churches in general would be doctrinally more vigorous and spiritually more healthy.

* * * *

Article II. Who teach: That there are various kinds of election of God unto eternal life: the one general and indefinite, the other particular and definite; and that the latter in turn is either incomplete, revocable, non-decisive and conditional, or complete, irrevocable, decisive and absolute. Likewise: that there is one election unto faith, and another unto salvation, so that election can be unto justifying faith, without being a decisive election unto salvation. For this is a fancy of men's minds, invented regardless of the Scriptures, whereby the doctrine of election is corrupted, and this golden chain of our salvation is broken: "And whom he foreordained, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

Rom. 8:30

Here again we find an example of the fact that the fathers do not hesitate to call the Arminian heresy by its right name. They note here concerning this particular error: 1) That it is not Scriptural, but a fancy of men's minds, invented regardless of the Scriptures. 2) That it is not the doctrine of election, but a corruption thereof. 3) That it doctrinally breaks the golden chain of our salvation, described in Rom. 8:30. At the same time we may note that in this article is an example of the fact that the Arminians themselves were often guilty of the very thing with which they charged the Reformed. The accusation is often made that the Reformed system of doctrine is so intricate and involved that only a theologian can understand its many ramifications. If any doctrine is worthy of this accusation, however, it is this Arminian doctrine of various decrees of election which is fully qualified in every respect to befuddle and confuse men's minds.

H.C.H.

(to be continued)

ALL AROUND US

Liberated Protestant Reformed Churches.

Two clippings from two issues of the Canadian Reformed Magazine (Liberated) were sent to me recently by a friend and brother who suggested that we might like to make a few comments in our department of the *Standard Bearer*. This we gladly do because both of the clippings will be of interest to our P. R. people since they not only reflect on our churches, but also on the schismatic group that recently left us.

Under the above title we treat the material contained in the first clipping which was taken from the May 3rd issue of the Canadian Reformed Magazine and which was an editorial in that issue, written by the Rev. G. Van Dooren, minister in the Canadian Reformed Church (Liberated).

We shall not translate verbatim his entire article but merely give the reader the gist of the editorial and then translate only that part which we deem pertinent to our purpose.

It appears that the Rev. G. Van Dooren had written in an earlier issue of his magazine (April 6, '55) concerning the request of a group of Liberated people living in Grand Rapids, Michigan, who had requested the Canadian Liberated to organize them into a Liberated church. In his previous article the Reverend had spoken of this request as a sign of happy growth. In fact he had titled his article „Verblijvende Groei!" which title was concluded with an exclamation point (!). However, evidently some of his readers, it appears, criticized that (!) and asked whether it would not have been more proper to have used a question mark (?) instead. The critics were wondering whether it was necessary or even possible for this group of Liberated people in Grand Rapids to be organized into a Liberated church. It should not be necessary, so the critics concluded, because there is a Liberated Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, and it should not be permissible since not to recognize the Liberated P. R. C. is not to gather with Christ, but would be a scattering of the sheep.

In the May 3rd issue of the C. R. M. the editor comes to the defense of his exclamation point. In our opinion he offers a rather weak defense. He seems to agree with his critics, while at the same time he attempts to defend his former article.

The Rev. Van Dooren writes that he is in sympathy with the "Vrijgemaakte P. R. C." i.e., Liberated Protestant Reformed Church. By the latter he refers no doubt to the schismatic group in Grand Rapids that left First Church under the leadership of H. De Wolf. That he calls them "Vrijgemaakten" is quite significant. Whether the De Wolf group will be pleased with this appellation, we do not know, but it is significant that the Liberated in Canada recognize their kind in the United States. Birds of a feather will

flock together, you know. It is quite impossible for us to believe that the Canadian Liberated would call the United States Liberated "Liberated" if they did not recognize any similarity.

Now Rev. Van Dooren does not want his critics, on the one hand, to criticize his article in which he spoke of the possible organization of this group into a Liberated Church as "happy growth." On the other hand, he does not want his critics to conclude from his article that it would be sin for this group to join with the Liberated P. R. C. Lest they come to the latter conclusion, the Reverend would remind his critics of two things. And now I translate freely.

"In the first place, that group, (of Liberated in Grand Rapids who left the P. R. C. before the split — M.S.) as was said, is to be seen as a projection of what earlier was undertaken in Grand Rapids, and already since May 1953 had convened regularly their own meetings. That means to say: what happened in Grand Rapids dates back to before the split in the P.R.C., it dates from the time when, first semi-officially and then officially the P.R.C. accepted the Declaration of Principles, by which they bound where God did not bind, and cast out those who would live holily according to God's Word. Thereby the P.R.C. scattered the sheep of Christ and gave evidence therein of the ear marks of the false church. It was at once impossible for brothers and sisters who would remain Reformed and who hungered after the lively preaching of God's Word there to keep company.

"And in the second place: really since that time there has been some change. In the P.R.C. a separation has taken place. And our sympathy is with those who have set themselves against the pressure of Rev. Hoeksema and his associates. And our Synod (Liberated of Canada — M.S.) decided to give deputies a mandate to investigate the possibility of correspondence, i.e., an acknowledgment on our part of the Liberated P.R.C. as the true churches of Christ. And we gladly agree, it can have the appearance that the one does not jibe with the other. But more than appearance, according to our way of thinking, it is not. Because no one can at present run ahead of the matter of correspondence. That will take a few years before the matter is settled, however it may be. That the Synod (Liberated of Canada — M.S.) expressed it thus, namely, to investigate the *possibility of correspondence* (italics mine — M.S.) (and thus not: to effect correspondence) says plainly that the churches are not yet finished with this matter. Some of the brothers perhaps have already done this (i.e., in their own mind — M.S.). Now that is their personal conviction which I understand and respect. But an official ecclesiastical decision it is not. And so long as there is no such decision, no one can build on a decision which does not exist.

"Well then, we cannot require of the brothers and sisters in Grand Rapids that they wait for that decision. They are brothers and sisters of us, who with us in every respect would exercise communion. 'Of one Spirit' are they in the good sense of the word. But — apart from that — they are

sheep which must be bound together to the sheep-fold. They cannot, seeing that it may take years, wait still a couple of years for the official service, the administration of the Word and Sacraments.

"I have well-founded hope that those in the circle of the P.R.C. understand all this, and I would deduce from this that they will not qualify this as contradictory: namely, while we investigate the possibility of correspondence and at the same time say to our brothers and sisters there: Go forth in the work of the Lord.

"Therefore I would maintain the exclamation point, and not exchange it for a question mark."

In answer to the question, whether the establishment of a Liberated church composed of immigrants will make the matter of correspondence with the Liberated P.R.C. difficult to carry out, the editor writes as follows:

"I believe this: if a true unity of faith comes to revelation between the Liberated P.R.C. and our churches, then that unity of faith also in Grand Rapids will lead to a joyous amalgamation of two churches which have learned to know each other as true churches of the Lord." So far Rev. Van Dooren.

I call attention to two or three things. In the first place, it nauseates me to see how those Liberated like to prate about themselves being the true church, while they are so ready to condemn our churches as false.

In the second place, I believe it should be understood clearly by this time how potently that Declaration of Principles has done its intended work. It not only delivered us from those who never were Protestant Reformed, but it also spared us from the misery we surely would have experienced if those Liberated immigrants had come into our churches and taken over, as they do everywhere.

In the third place, I believe that the Rev. Van Dooren has inventoried the schismatic group that left us correctly. That's exactly what they are: "Liberated", i.e., liberated from the Protestant Reformed truth. In that respect, they are to be pitied.

"The Reformed Guardian."

The other clipping from the Canadian Reformed Magazine, above referred to, appears in the June 1st issue of this magazine under the above title. In this brief article the Rev. Van Dooren reflects on "The Reformed Guardian" the first issue of which he had just received. I translate his article as follows:

"The paper 'Concordia' (of the Liberated P.R.C.) has made room for another paper the first issue of which we received today. 'The Reformed Guardian', published by 'the Reformed Guardian Publishing Ass'n, pres. Rev. H. De Wolf.

"We quote: 'This magazine is dedicated to disseminate, guard and apply the Reformed Principles of Faith as set forth in the Scriptures, summarized in the Reformed Standards,

and maintained by the Protestant Reformed Churches of America! It appears every two weeks, costs 3 dollars per year, and is to be ordered at box M-931, Grand Rapids, Michigan, U.S.A.'

"Without entering into the contents itself, we could leave it with this announcement. Only we note that the contents is embracive: editorials, Scripture interpretation, political observations, a youth corner, a small child's corner, an article respecting the question 'Is Preaching effective?' and a serial on dogmatic subjects.

"Whoever follows closely what moves and develops in the circle of these PRC'S can for a small sum do himself this service (namely, to subscribe — M.S.). According to our way of thinking it is a duty, to have and to show this interest.

"The more so because in this periodical a departure has been taken from the well known (and now famous!) speech about 'our beloved Protestant Reformed truth', and in place of this again and again 'Reformed' without more is spoken of. This comes out plainly in this part of the editorial in this first issue.

'The Reformed Guardian stands committed to complete loyalty to the inspired Word of God as authoritative and normative for our faith and practice. We also stand committed to the Three Forms of Unity: the Heidelberg Catechism, the Confession of Faith, and the Canons of Dordt. We shall seek to take cognizance of all that the Reformed fathers from Calvin on have written and thought. Personally I hope we do more justice than in the past to the writings of the heyday of the Reformation, particularly to Calvin's. Of course, we shall also carefully note what Reformed thinkers have thought and written during the past half century and more, as well as to what those true to the Reformed heritage in our own day are saying and writing. But we shall acknowledge the opinion of no theologian, living or dead, as binding. Binding shall only be what the Scriptures teach and our Confessions express either directly or by implication.'

Whoever starts out thus, starts out well!

"Format and execution is easy and exquisite." So far the quote.

The reader will note:

1. The editor of the R.C.M. is happy that the group that left the Protestant Reformed Churches has repudiated "our beloved Protestant Reformed truth." Evidently he as well as the schismatics has felt nauseated by this expression whereby we have always designated our peculiar distinctiveness. In other words, he is glad that the schismatics have demoted themselves to just plain "Reformed."

2. It is to be noted, however, that the editor's rejoicing in the schismatics' demotion was occasioned by what the editor of the Reformed Guardian himself had declared concerning their relation to the Protestant Reformed truth. The

editor of the R.C.M. is therefore not to be so severely criticized for his evil joy as the Rev. P. De Boer who gave him occasion to so sneer at the Protestant Reformed truth.

3. Moreover, it is to be noted also that both the Rev. Van Dooren (Liberated) and the Rev. P. De Boer (Liberated P.R.C.) and their papers, both want generalities. They must have nothing of peculiarities. Well, I guess that is peculiar, i.e., peculiar to those who leave the sound basis of the truth to embrace the error of Arminianism. Arminius said he was Reformed too, just plain Reformed(?).

M.S.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Missionary Notes

There is a general sentiment amongst the readers of the *Standard Bearer*, that they would like to hear something from the Home Missionary concerning his labors during the past four months in the field. At least if I have correctly interpreted a cross-section of such opinion expressed to me during the past few days here in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Gladly do I relate a few of my experiences as a novice in the field of Missionary endeavors.

It was on January 24 that the undersigned first drove by car to the Oskaloosa-Pella community to begin the labors of visiting with some of the families of that community, especially in Pella, and also of paying a visit to the "Consistory" of the Pella Church. With the fond memories cherished in his heart of seven years of labors of love in that congregation he went forth. With all the love of his heart he went first of all to visit the individuals of the Consistory—only to find that their attitude had radically changed toward the undersigned. They had closed the bowels of their affection for him—and they have not opened their hearts toward him up till this day!

It will be a long remembered experience for me what I particularly experienced on the meeting with the "Consistory" on the evening of February, the first Wednesday of that month. When entering the place of meeting, instead of being treated as a brother, I was placed under a veritable inquisition. The Rev. Gritters had evidently prepared "questions," had written these out in duplicate forms for all the members of the "Consistory," and refused to give the undersigned a copy of these questions. Five men sat with their pencils ready to jot down the answers of the undersigned to the questions. What they actually wrote down I have never learned, even though at a later meeting I was promised a copy of these questions and with their "record" of my answers.

What struck me as being unbrotherly was not at all that they asked questions of me, but that they asked these ques-

tions from out of the heights in the tone of voice of a lawyer attempting to trap a man in cross-examination. It appeared very soon that the "invitation" I had received to meet with them was not at all to discuss matters, but was meant as a "summons." Of course, I could not allow myself to be summoned. What I desired was simply a brotherly and factual discussion of the issues. I desired a heart-to-heart talk about the very grave injustice which Pella's "Consistory" had perpetrated in the church of God. However, the same ruthless injustice that had driven them to declare Rev. C. Hanko, H. Hoeksema and others outside of the Denomination was driving them in this meeting also to the bitter end.

And, let me add, this was the attitude manifested also at a later meeting when Rev. Hanko was "summoned" to appear before the schismatic Consistory. The Rev. C. Hanko could not believe, in utter amazement, the attitude revealed on that gathering—where the undersigned too was present.

The Scriptures do not vainly say: he, that hateth his brother, walks in darkness and knoweth not whither he is going. That there is a difference as wide as the poles between "steadfastness" and "stubbornness" became evident on those meetings with the "Consistory." May the Lord reward them according to their evil doing! For He judges with a righteous judgement.

But there is also a more pleasant side to be remembered of our labors in Pella.

First of all there was the pleasant fellowship with the brethren and sisters, who could not follow the "Consistory" in their mutiny and denominational schism, nor the underwriting of the "Statements" of Rev. De Wolf. That fellowship with the brethren will not be forgotten. How could I forget the fellowship in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Cecil Vander Molen. It was like being in the home of Aquila and Priscilla.

How shall I forget the great power of God whereby I was strengthened in Pella to preach the Word even for as few as two people in the audience. How marvelously the Lord strengthened me in that task. With what joy I preached the Word even for so few I shall never forget. The Lord caused us to taste richly that where two or three are gathered in Christ's Name—there He is in their midst!

Before the undersigned left Pella, Ia., arrangements were made with Radio Station KBOE, Oskaloosa, Iowa, to have our Reformed Witness Hour Program on the air there on Sunday morning from 7 till 7:30 o'clock. May this ministry be instrumental that many hear the clear and distinctive witness of the Reformed faith.

It was during these days of labor at Pella, Ia., that a voice came to the undersigned from out of Loveland, Colorado: "Come over, and help us."

Of this we will have something to report in the next issue of the *Standard Bearer*, D.V.

G. Lubbers

Recent History of the Hull Protestant Reformed Church

Dear Editor:

May we at this time ask you for a little space in the *Standard Bearer* please?

It is now nearly one year and eight months since we met in our church building. It was on September 20, 1953 that we as the continuation of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hull, Iowa had to find a meeting place for our services.

For some weeks we met in Western Christian High School. It was at that time that we asked the Rev. M. Schipper who was then pastor of our church at South Holland, Illinois to labor with us and for us.

Our separation from the other members of what was at that time the Protestant Reformed Church of Hull, Iowa was due to the fact that the delegates of Classis West decided to recognize Rev. De Wolf and not to recognize Rev. Hoeksema and Rev. Hanko. When they decided to go along with Rev. De Wolf, they made themselves guilty of schism.

Some of our members went to what was our consistory at that time and asked for a hearing about these matters. The Consistory said that it would not give them a hearing. They would not set a date for the hearing. Instead they put an announcement on the bulletin that at an indefinite time they would decide about these things for the congregation.

One of the consistory members could see that the consistory was doing wrong. All we could do was to separate from that part of the consistory and recognize only that consistory member who wanted to stay with the Protestant Reformed Churches.

A committee of three was appointed together with this one consistory member who remained faithful. They met from time to time and decided that a congregational meeting should be held so that we could elect more office-bearers and have a complete consistory again. This was announced from our pulpit two successive Sundays. The meeting was held at our Doon, Iowa church. And a complete consistory was elected.

The consistory then decided to ask the Rev. H. C. Hoeksema of our Doon church to serve us with advice. The Rev. Hoeksema was the only minister in Classis West who remained with the Protestant Reformed Churches and who did not leave to side with Rev. De Wolf — who himself left the Protestant Reformed Churches by his act of schism and of refusing to abide by the decisions of Classis East and of the First Protestant Reformed Church at Grand Rapids, Michigan. By refusing to take the matter on which he could not agree with his consistory and Classis to the next Synod and by setting himself up as a separate consistory, he left that Protestant Reformed Churches.

For six weeks we held services in the Western Christian High School building. We then rented the basement of the Community Building in Hull. Here we still are conducting

our services at this time. We cannot use this building for our catechism classes, so we asked for the use of the Township Hall. It is a very old and small building, but the instruction and the Word of God taught our children is not harmed by this.

In November of 1953 we made a trio and called the Rev. M. Schipper, who after prayerful consideration had to decline our call. After this we extended four more calls which were also declined. In December of 1954 we extended our sixth call, this time to the Rev. John A. Heys, who the Lord at His appointed time gave us as a shepherd of our own, who also faithfully serves us with the truth which we missed for so long a time.

We are thankful to our God that He made all things well with us, although at times it did look dark to us.

May He give us grace to continue to put our trust and our hope in Him and continue to give us the truth of the Protestant Reformed doctrine in the preaching on the Sabbath and in the instruction our children receive in the catechism room.

Our congregation at present numbers 33 families and 151 souls.

We wish to thank the Rev. H. C. Hoeksema for all his labors in our behalf.

We likewise wish to thank all the ministers and students who preached for us during our vacancy and also the various churches who gave us the services of their ministers when we needed the assistance of their pastors.

May the Lord bless us richly as a congregation and Minister that we may fight the good fight of faith and be faithful unto Him Who has called us with an Holy calling.

In the name of the Consistory of the
Hull Protestant Reformed Church

Peter Jansma, Clerk

O GOD, BE MERCIFUL

O God be merciful,
Be merciful to me,
For man, with constant hate,
Would fain my ruin see.
My many enemies
Against me proudly fight;
To overwhelm my soul
They watch from morn to night.
What time I am afraid
I put my trust in Thee;
In God I rest, and praise
His word, so rich and free.
In God I put my trust,
I neither doubt nor fear,
For man can never harm,
With God my Helper near.

Psalm 56:1-2

REPORT OF CLASSIS EAST

In session July 6, 1955

In the Hudsonville Prot. Ref. Church.

Rev. R. Veldman, chairman of the April Classis, led in devotions. We sang Psalter No. 203. He read Psalm 121 and offered prayer.

All the churches were represented with proper credentials. However, two of the eleven churches had only one delegate.

After Classis was declared constituted, the Rev. G. Vos, following the order of alphabetical rotation, took the chair, while the Rev. R. Veldman served as secretary.

Delegates who came to Classis for the first time were given opportunity to sign the Formula of Subscription after which the minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved.

The chair appointed the brethren Rev. G. Lanting and elder W. Klaassen to serve as Finance Committee for this session of Classis which committee later reported.

Three churches requested Classical appointments. The chair appointed the Revs. C. Hanko and G. Vanden Berg and elder J. Boelema to arrange the schedule. Their report which was later adopted was as follows:

Creston — July 24, C. Hanko; July 31, G. Vanden Berg; Aug. 14, G. Vos; Aug. 28, R. Veldman; Sept. 4, J. McCollam; Sept. 25, G. Lanting; Oct. 2, M. Schipper.

Hope — July 24, R. Veldman; Aug. 7, E. Emanuel; Aug. 14, J. McCollam; Aug. 21, G. Lanting; Sept. 11, M. Schipper; Sept. 18, G. Vos; Sept. 25, C. Hanko.

Kalamazoo — July 31, G. Vos; Aug. 14, M. Schipper; Sept. 4, G. Lanting; Sept. 18, R. Veldman; Sept. 25, J. McCollam; Oct. 2, G. Vos; Oct. 9, C. Hanko.

The Stated Clerk read his report re correspondence which was received for information. He called attention also to two matters: 1. The request from Classis West for written sermons. 2. The tabled overture of Grand Haven re the structure and meeting of Classis.

Re the first matter, the chair exhorted our ministers to send in to Classis West the promised written sermons.

Re the tabled overture of Grand Haven, Classis decided: 1. Re the item of a combined Classis to refer Grand Haven to the decision of Synod 1955 in re the redistribution of the Classes. 2. Re the number of Classical meetings, that Grand Haven be referred to Art. 41 of the Church Order, the second sentence.

The Church Visitors rendered a written report of their completed work which was received for information.

A Consistory asks Classis for advice re the erasure of a baptized member. Classis advises to proceed with erasure.

Classis decides to meet next time, October 5, in Fourth Church.

The Classical Committee read its report which Classis also receives for information.

Questions of Article 41 of the Church Order were asked of each Consistory and answered satisfactorily.

There being no more business Classis adjourned at noon. After the Rev. G. M. Ophoff led us in the closing prayer, the members of Classis retired to the basement of the church to enjoy a delicious meal prepared by the Martha's of our Hudsonville church.

M. Schipper, Stated Clerk,
1900 Belden Ave., S.W.,
Grand Rapids 9, Mich.

