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MEDITATION

The Shepherds

"And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them."

Luke 2:15-18, 20

A few shepherds. . . .

We do not know their names. . . .

But: "it came to pass"!

Yes, the hour of God's everlasting counsel struck, and the Christ Child was born.

How strange are the ways of God.

We have meditated on the strange happenings of Christmas; we have heard the strange things enumerated; we have read over and over again the resumé of the strange happenings by eminent authors. . . .

And still . . . every succeeding Christmas we are struck again and again by the wonderful ways of God.

Some one must be told about the glorious event of the Incarnation. But who?

Shall it be to the princes of Judah? Shall we tell it to the Sanhedrin, that august assembly of all that is studious and pious in Israel?

Shall we prepare pomp and circumstance?

What momentous preparations shall we make for the event of all events?

The event is great enough.

God shall be manifested in the flesh! God shall come very nigh unto man. He is going to dwell in man in unity of the Person of the Eternal Son.

It shall be an event which will make the halls of everlasting delight reverberate with music and dancing unto all eternity.

Whom shall we first tell of this wondrous story? That is, apart from the mother, foster-father, and an obscure aunt in the hill country of Juda.

The angelic host stands ready: they are very willing to be the heralds of such wondrous joy which shall be to all the people of God.

And from everlasting, God has His answer ready.

After My Son is born, you host of angels shall go to the fields of Ephrata. And it will be in the death of night. And you will find a group of obscure and lowly shepherds keeping the watch over their flocks. And it is decreed by Us that you shall tell them in word and song of My eternal love for the elect: people of the good-will of God.

And it came to pass. . . .

There are the shepherds, having the watch over their flocks.

It is night.

We do not know what they said, what they thought at this hour of all hours. It will not do to speculate too much. We do not know.

But suddenly there shone a light round about them which caused them to become sore afraid. And not only because they were sinners such as you and I. Oh, no. But it was so strange, so unearthly, so blinding, so wondrously beautiful. Oh yes, even the beautiful can strike fear in your heart. Attend that this beauty was the beauty of God.

And then they saw the comely face of the angel; and they heard the soft, sweet voice of the angel, talking to them: "Fear not, for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord."

Then the angel is lifted up among his fellows that hovered over the strange scene. And they heard the singing of a song that was inspired by God Himself: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward man!"

Oh yes, the angel had also said, and it is important: ". . . and this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

And then the angels went away from them, back to heaven where they belonged.

* * * *

These simple shepherds belonged to the few who were waiting for the redemption of Israel. They are of a kind with Simeon and Anna, Mary and Joseph, Zacharias and Elizabeth.

That is plain from their behaviour, after the angels returned to heaven.

Oh yes, they were believers. You will see them and recognize them when you go to heaven. They will stand out as the exalted company of men unto whom the Lord first preached the Christmas Evangel.

That they were believers is so plain that it almost seems like an insult to your intelligence when I try to prove it. Every word and every action of these men proclaim to the whole world that they believed God.

Let *us* now go! And let *us* go and see the thing which the Lord hath made known unto *us*. And they go now: in the dead of night. They hasten to go.

Yes, they identify themselves with the Gospel which the Lord had preached through his host of angels. And once more listen to the angel: *Unto you* is born! And this shall be a sign *unto you*.

Brother, if such language was spoken unto me, I would sing of it to my dying day. Wouldn't you?

But what am I saying? It *was* said unto me. And to you.

And we are gloriously glad on Christmas day.

And what is the content of their faith?

Not much in words, but an eternity of truth and gladness.

This it is: A Saviour is born; a Christ is given; the Lord has come!

It is enough. For this Saviour is their Jesus: He will die for them. And this Christ is their Substitute: He will do the work for them, ordained and authorized by the Father. And He is their Lord: He will buy them, has already bought them in the Counsel, and being His property, He will lead them to their everlasting Home.

It all shows that they know the plight they and Israel were in. They know that this Gospel meant that salvation had come for those whose home was death.

Isaiah prophesied of these humble shepherds: The people that sat in darkness shall see a great Light. Literally it has been fulfilled.

Christ's day will end in a three hour darkness, but the shepherd's night was illumined as the day, but then as the Day of God's good pleasure.

And so, great joy was first of all to these humble shepherds.

How I envy them!

The believing shepherds of Bethlehem.

Can you not see them running through the streets?

They are in a hurry. Faith works that way. When you are really hungry and thirsty for righteousness you hurry to the well of living Water.

Faith leads these simple men.

And what did they find?

To tell the truth: it is very disappointing: a stable, with its attending scene of poverty, bad smell, and company of beasts.

What else? A quiet mother; a common little infant; and squalid circumstances. There was no "layette" for the new arrival. Not even a clothes basket, covered with nicely colored cloth. HE lay in a manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes. Amazing circumstances.

Was that now the great and glorious event which had taken place? For that, angels must come from heaven with Divine and glorious Light?

All they see is in one word: POVERTY!

Is that the Saviour of the world? Is that Jesus: Jehovah-Salvation? A little baby? What is more helpless than a little babe?

Is that the mighty Christ, the Office Bearer? Who is going to go to work, and what a work! We broke the Law of God. A Christ is He who will fulfil the law for us, for millions.

Is that God Almighty? A Babe in swaddling clothes? God in a foul smelling manger?

See it, brother; ponder it, sister. And marvel for the rest of your life and for eternity.

Such are the mysteries of the Kingdom.

The world never saw it.

* * * *

But, evidently, the shepherds do not share our confusion. And why not? They came to see a SIGN!

There is the answer.

What they see is exactly adapted to faith. Faith can see and interpret the sign of the marvellous grace of God.

Let us see.

There was no room for Him in the inn of the world. No, there is no room for Jesus in the camp of the arch enemy, the devil. Later, much later, they will even take that manger-bed away from Him, and nail Him on the accursed tree.

Swaddling clothes, a manger, a stable. Yes, that is the poverty of Him who became poor to make us rich. It fits.

They see the Hero of God unto whom no place must be given, but who would fight and wrestle with evil and the curse and the world and the devil, until He would emerge the Victor over all, and would prepare a place, a wondrous place for the redeemed earth and people.

And what a place! That place will be a new heaven and a new earth.

How much of all this they saw I do not know. But that they saw it in principle, I am sure.

For they return gloriously glad because of what they saw and had heard.

They first heard, and then they saw.

And what they saw filled them with a joy which they could not keep.

They left the stable singing.

Blessed shepherds.

* * * *

Blessed shepherds.

They made known abroad.

A simple lesson is gleaned from that statement: faith will not keep still. Neither will it keep the glories for itself. Faith is very unselfish. It loves to give.

And give they do.

Although it is night, they go from house to house, carefully choosing their audience. They know them who were waiting with them for the redemption of Israel.

Evidently they did not knock on unwelcome doors. They found their audience. What am I saying? God also prepared them an audience!

If there is one thing in this whole wondrous history it is this: everything is prepared beforehand: the truth of the Incarnation, the angelic host, their word and song, the shepherds, the stable, the manger, the swaddling clothes, Mary and Joseph, and the audience of preaching shepherds, as well as their final song of praise.

For that is the testimony: "praising God!"

Beloved reader, do praise Him!

He is so worthy of it. Amen.

G. Vos

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On December 18, 1955, our dear parents,

MR. and MRS. WILLIAM LEMS

will celebrate their 25th Wedding Anniversary.

We give thanks to God that he has spared them for one another and us. Our prayer is that God may continue to bless and keep them in all things.

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Boer
Jane
Karren

Doon, Iowa.

IN MEMORIAM

The Sunday School of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church herewith expresses its sincere sympathy to Mr. Gerrit Moelker and family in the passing of a dear Father and Grandfather.

May the God of all grace sustain and comfort the family in this time of sorrow.

Mr. Jacob Kuiper, Superintendent
Miss Sybil Engelsma, Secretary

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EDITORIALS

The Apostates of 1953 and the Three Points

By the apostates of 1953 I refer, of course, to those that departed from us and from the Protestant Reformed truth.

And by the Three Points I mean the three doctrinal tenets adopted by the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in 1924 relative to the matter of so-called common grace.

Most of you will remember that it was because we refused to subscribe to those three doctrinal tenets that both Classis East and Classis West of Grand Rapids, Mich., cast us out of their fellowship and we were compelled to organize a new church denomination, first under the name of Protestant Christian Reformed Churches and later, since 1926, under the name of Protestant Reformed Churches.

It was not the synod of 1924 that cast us out but both the classes aboved mentioned.

Remember that at the synod of 1924 there were several protests demanding that our stand in regard to the denial of "common grace" be condemned and, at the same time asking for disciplinary action in case we would not retract our doctrinal conclusions.

Synod did neither the one nor the other.

As far as the demand for disciplinary action was concerned, synod took no action at all. True, the committee for pre-advice that was appointed for the case by synod, indeed, advised synod to decide on some disciplinary measures. They came to synod with the following advice.

"1. Seriously to admonish the brethren with a view to their deviations and to ask of them the promise that in the future they will adhere to what synod expressed in the three points mentioned above;

"2. To urge the brethren, H. Danhof and H. Hoeksema in all seriousness to refrain from all attempts to propagate their deviating views regarding the three points in the church;

"3. To point out the brethren that in case, either now or in the future, it should become evident that they will not adhere to the decisions of synod, this body shall be obliged, though very loath to do so, to make the case with their respective consistories.

"4. Should the brethren refuse to live up to these proposed conditions synod would then have to appoint a committee. Your committee would, in that case, offer the suggestion that this committee consist of the officers of synod." (from the Typewritten report of the committee *ad hoc*).

This advice was rejected when synod adopted a substitute motion in which the entire advice was omitted. In spite of the fact that in a long speech I explained my stand to synod, and strongly emphasized that I would never submit to the decisions of synod if they should ever adopt the three points; in spite, too, of the fact the Rev. Danhof with my knowledge,

delivered a protest to synod, in which he, too, stated plainly that he would openly refute the three points, synod never took any further action.

Besides, synod expressed, indeed, that several expressions in the writings of Danhof and Hoeksema cannot very well be harmonized with the three points, but that, nevertheless, they were Reformed as far the truth of the Confessions is concerned. They, according to synod, were fundamentally Reformed!

But in spite of the fact that the case was closed, the classes East and West reopened the case, demanded of Danhof and Hoeksema, and also of the Rev. Ophoff, that they either subscribe to the three points or, at least, promise to make no propaganda against them. And when they refused they and their consistories were deposed from office.

I write these facts, not simply to rehearse the old history, but to emphasize that the reason for the existence of the Protestant Reformed Churches must always be found, negatively, in the denial and refutation of the three points of 1924 and, positively, in the proper emphasis of these churches on the doctrine of sovereign grace and unconditional election. And, too, I want to show that those that have now departed from us deny this stand of the Protestant Reformed Churches and, principally, subscribe to the doctrine of the three points of 1924.

What I intend to write concerns chiefly the "First Point" adopted by the synod of 1924, although the second and third points are intimately connected with it.

Let me, first of all, quote this first of three points:

"Relative to the first point which concerns the favorable attitude of God towards humanity in general and not only towards the elect, synod declares it to be established according to Scripture and the Confession that, apart from the saving grace of God shown only to those that are elect unto eternal life, there is also a certain favor or grace of God which He shows to His creatures in general. This is evident from the Scriptural passages quoted and from the Canons of Dordrecht II, 5 and III, IV, 8 and 9, which deal with the general offer of the gospel, while it also appears from the citations made from Reformed writers of the most flourishing period of Reformed Theology that our Reformed writers from the past favored this view."

Now we must note at once that, although the synod meant to maintain what before this time was often vaguely called "common grace" and what was especially expounded in the three volumes on the subject by Dr. A. Kuyper in the Netherlands, yet it lapsed into the Arminian conception of common grace when they adopted the First Point.

In the first part of this point it attempted to express the idea of "common grace" in the Kuyperian sense when it declared that "apart from the saving grace of God shown only to those that are elect unto eternal life, there is also a certain favor or grace of God which He shows to His creatures in general." Now, we must remember that we also deny and always did deny this theory of common grace. It is certainly

true, of course, that men in this world, elect and reprobate have all things in common. There is a general providence of God by which He sends upon all men the same things, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, prosperity and adversity, sickness and health, peace and war. These things God sends upon all men, regardless whether they are godly or ungodly, elect or reprobate. But it is by no means true that God sends these upon all men promiscuously *by His grace*. The very contrary is true. Scripture plainly teaches that even when God sends prosperity to the wicked He sets them on slippery places by which He casts them headlong into eternal destruction. Things are, indeed common but grace never is.

But this is not the element in the First Point with which we are now concerned, especially as we wish to compare it with the views of those that have recently departed from the Protestant Reformed truth.

I said a moment ago that the synod lapsed into the Arminian conception of common grace. The reason for this is, no doubt, that it attempted to prove "common grace" from the confessions. Now, the confessions never even mention the kind of common grace to which we made reference above. They did not even know it. They always speak only of saving grace. And thus it happened that when the committee of pre-advice and synod following them attempted to prove common grace from the confessions, they made saving grace general and became Arminian.

It is in this respect that those that apostatized from the Protestant Reformed truth in 1953 subscribe to the teaching of the First Point.

How does the First Point teach the Arminian theory of common grace?

It does so by maintaining that it is evident from the general offer of the gospel that there is a certain favor or grace of God upon His creatures in general. In other words, it teaches that, in the preaching of the gospel, God is graciously inclined to all that hear the gospel. In the preaching He bestows grace upon all the hearers. You can also put it this way: in the preaching of the gospel God shows His grace to all, to everyone of the hearers, by promising, on His part, to every one of the hearers, eternal life . . . on condition that they believe.

Such is the teaching of the first point.

That this, indeed, is the meaning is evident from those parts of the confessions which the synod quoted, or to which it referred, as well as from the Scriptural passages to which reference is made in this connection.

The quotations from the confessions are the following:

Canons II, 5: "Moreover the promise of the gospel is that whosoever believeth in Christ crucified, shall not perish but have everlasting life. This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be declared and published to all nations promiscuously and without distinction to whom God out of His good pleasure sends the gospel."

It is evident that the synod of 1924 corrupted this passage from the Canons into meaning that God in His grace has the gospel preached to all men without distinction, and that He promises to every one of them eternal life if they believe or on condition of faith. The sovereign promise of God, which is unconditional and particular, that is, only for the elect, which is the teaching of the Canons throughout, is here corrupted into a general promise that is, however, conditional.

The other articles of the Canons referred to by synod are III, IV, 8, 9:

"As many as are called by the gospel are unfeignedly called. For God hath most earnestly and truly declared in His Word what will be acceptable to Him, namely, that they who are called should come unto Him. He, moreover, seriously promises eternal life and rest to as many as shall come to Him and believe on Him."

"It is not the fault of the gospel, nor of Christ offered therein, nor of God who calls men by the gospel, and confers upon them various gifts that those who are called by the ministry of the Word refuse to come. The fault lies in themselves some of whom, when they are called, regardless of their danger, reject the word of life; others, though they receive it, suffer it not to make a lasting impression on their heart; therefore, their joy, arising from a temporary faith, soon vanishes, and they fall away; while others choke the seed of the Word by perplexing cares, and the pleasures of the world, and produce no fruit. This our Saviour teaches in the parable of the sower. Matt. 13."

Also from these articles of the Canons, which simply teach that the outward calling comes to all that hear the Word, that in that outward calling God does not lie but confronts them with the truth and with the promise of eternal life to all that believe, the synod elicits the error that God is gracious to all that hear the Word and the promise is for all on condition of faith.

Those that recently departed from us certainly subscribe to this first point, as we hope to show.

H.H.

IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory of the Edgerton Protestant Reformed Church hereby expresses its heartfelt sympathy with our brother, consistory member, elder Gerrit Gunnink, in the death of his son,

ARTHUR GUNNINK

May our covenant God abundantly comfort him and his family, so that they may know, that all things work together for good to them that love God and to them that are called according to His purpose.

Rev. Herman Veldman, President
R. Brunsting, Clerk

OUR DOCTRINE

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

AN EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

PART III — OF THANKFULNESS

LORD'S DAY 50.

Chapter Three

The Implications of the Fourth Petition

Whether the wheels of industry shall be idle or busily spinning, whether there shall be labor for our hands or whether we will be without employment, whether we shall be able to work and provide for ourselves and those that are dependent on us, — all these things depend not ultimately or really on us or on the wisdom and ingenuity of man, but on the Word of our God in Christ Jesus our Savior. And therefore, according to Scripture, it is literally true that our heavenly Father feeds us and clothes us and gives us shelter. This is the beauty of passages of Scripture like Matthew 6:25-30: "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" In the fourth petition, therefore, the believer is taught to acknowledge the absolute sovereignty of God over all things, and his own dependence on no one but his Father in heaven. It is in that faith that he prays: "Give us this day our daily bread."

This prayer also implies that with respect to the things of this present time, with respect to our daily bread, we live in sanctification of life before the Lord our God in Christ Jesus our Savior. For the prayer implies that we do not strive anxiously or greedily to secure our bread in a way that is contrary to the will of God. If, on the one hand, one would idle his time away, neglect his calling, be lazy, and refuse to labor for his daily bread, and then send this petition to the throne of our Father in heaven, he would neglect his calling, tempt God; and his prayer would certainly not be heard. But also, on the other hand, if one accumulates riches in a way that is contrary to the will of our Father in heaven, by false dealing or usury if he is a business man, by cutting

the wages of those that are in his employ if he is an employer, by forcing his employer to raise his wages by strikes and boycotts and violence, by speculation and gambling, or other illegal methods, he does not walk in sanctification of life in respect to his daily bread. And although he may probably succeed in obtaining his share of earthly goods, he certainly does not receive it in the favor of God, and he cannot pray: "Give us this day our daily bread." Or again, if one has abundance, and knows that his brother is poor, and fails to provide for him, or if he piles up his savings for a possible rainy day while he refuses to provide from his portion for the needs of the kingdom of God in the world, he is a hypocrite when he kneels down to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." For this petition certainly implies that the believer would receive his daily bread only from the hand of his Father which is in heaven, and therefore in the way which is pleasing to Him, and in His favor.

In the third place, this petition certainly presupposes that spiritual disposition that is expressed by the Scriptural term *contentment*. The apostle Paul writes to the *church* at Philippi: "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Phil. 4:11. Contentment is that spiritual virtue which is the very opposite of covetousness. Thus the apostle writes in I Tim. 6:6-10: "But godliness with contentment is a great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us therewith be content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." In the spirit of contentment, which is opposed to covetousness, we can be strong and bold in the Lord. For thus the epistle to the Hebrews has it, in chapter 13:5, 6: "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." Contentment is that spiritual virtue according to which our inner state of heart and mind is always in harmony with the will of God concerning me as realized in my earthly way. In that state we are satisfied with our lot, knowing that it is from God and that He will cause all things to work together for our good. There is an expression of contentment in the fourth petition. In it we do not ask for great things. By it we express before our Father in heaven that we shall be satisfied with the barest necessities, content to live on the level of the most simple earthly life. We declare here: "Our Father which art in heaven, if it please Thee to give me no more than is strictly necessary for me to continue my journey this day, I will be satisfied and receive from Thy hand whatever it pleaseth Thee to give me with thanksgiving." This also implies child-like confidence. I live by the day. I am not anxious for the

morrow. If I have nothing left tonight, and I know not how I shall obtain breakfast tomorrow, I shall not worry, but lay me down to sleep confident that my heavenly Father lives tomorrow as well as today, and that He will care for me. Give us this day our daily bread, and we shall not be anxious about the morrow.

If therefore we have understood the real implications of this fourth petition, we will be ready too to acknowledge that this prayer, though it places us on the level of a very simple earthly life, and exactly because of this would have us live on a very high spiritual level, it is not necessary any more to make special mention of the fact that the natural man, the unbeliever, the world, cannot possibly take this petition on their lips. The world is quite directly opposed to all that this prayer teaches us with respect to the attitude we are supposed to assume toward earthly things. The unbeliever does not want just bread. He is not satisfied with his portion of bread. Above all, he wants more than bread for this day. He wants the world. He wants the whole world. He wants nothing but the world. He wants abundance. This is true not only of the rich, but also of the poor. All the strife and unrest in the world testifies to the fact that the spirit of the world is opposed to the spirit of the fourth petition. The world strives after what in our day is rather profanely styled "the more abundant life." And how could it be different? The natural man understands not the things of the kingdom of God. He does not acknowledge himself to be in the service of God with all things, to be a mere steward with respect to earthly things. He serves the world. He seeks the world. His slogan is: "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." He has no hope beyond this world, and he does not know the transcendent joy expressed in the confession, "Thy lovingkindness is better than life." Small wonder, then, that he serves Mammon! And in that service one surely cannot pray: "Give us this day our daily bread." And let us not overlook the fact that the wicked too eats his bread, and that he usually eats in abundance. God often gives him more of it than He gives His own children. But He gives it to him in His wrath. By the abundance of worldly goods He sets the wicked on slippery places, on which He casts them down into destruction. Asaph beheld how the ungodly prosper in the world, and how they increase in riches. But when he went into the sanctuary of God, and understood their end, he realized that all this abundance and wealth and prosperity were but slippery places, on which God set them in His wrath and cast them down into destruction. They "are brought into desolation as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image." Ps. 73:12, 18-20. The same note is heard throughout Psalm 37. There we read: "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. For evildoers

shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth." vss. 7-9. And in vs. 16: "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked." And again: "For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off." vs. 22. And once more, in vss. 35, ff.: "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off. But the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord: he is their strength in the time of trouble. And the Lord shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him." The same note is struck throughout in the book of Proverbs. The wicked may prosper, and have abundance in this world, so that his house is a palace and full of riches; but the Lord never bestows these goods on him in His grace. For: "The froward is abomination to the Lord; but his secret is with the righteous. The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just. Surely he scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto the lowly." Prov. 2:32-34. And thus it is throughout Scripture. And therefore the church may indeed sing:

*"Although the wicked prospered seem,
At last they vanish like a dream
And perish in a day;
Jehovah's foes shall soon appear
Like fields once fair, now brown and sear;
Like smoke they fade away."*

Or, as the versification of Psalm 92 has it:

*"When as the grass the wicked grow,
When sinners flourish here below,
Then is there endless ruin nigh,
But Thou, O Lord, art throned on high;
Thy foes shall fall before Thy might,
The wicked shall be put to flight."*

But with the child of God, who has been called out of darkness into light, and lives by faith in the Lord Jesus, his crucified, risen, and exalted Redeemer, all this is principally different. For, in the first place, he has been called back into the service of the living God; and so the things of this world are for him not an end in themselves, but a means to an end, the capital entrusted to him, that with it he may serve his God. He does not live to eat and to drink and to be merry, but he eats and drinks to live, and that too, to live in the service of God.

H.H.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Prophet Zechariah

A call to repentance, Chapter 1:1-6

1. *In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of Jehovah unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying,*

2. *Angry (was) Jehovah at your fathers with anger.*

3. *Therefore say thou unto them, thus saith Jehovah of Hosts, Return ye unto me, saith Jehovah of Hosts, And I will return unto you, saith Jehovah of Hosts.*

4. *Be not as your fathers, to whom the former prophets cried, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, Turn, I beseech you, from your evil ways and from your evil doings; But not did they hear, nor did they pay any attention to me, saith Jehovah.*

5. *Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, could they live forever?*

6. *Surely, my words and my statutes, Which I commanded my servants the prophets, — Did they not overtake your fathers, so that they turned and said, Like as Jehovah of Hosts purposed to do unto us, According to our ways and according to our doings, So hath He dealt with us.*

Zechariah was preeminently a prophet of comfort. This is so, seeing that the promises of God occupy so large a place in his prophecies. But as the promises are only unto the true believers, our prophet copiously intersperses his instruction with a call to repentance. So in this first section in which the necessity of repentance is stressed and which is plainly an introduction to the entire collection of discourses.

1. *Eighth month* — It answered to the latter part of October and to the first part of November. *Second year of Darius* — See on Haggai 1:1. Zechariah began his prophetic activity about two months after Haggai delivered his first reported address. The day of the month is not indicated, doubtless because of the character of this particular address. It is generally introductory. There is, therefore, no need of conjecturing that the note of the day of the month was there originally, but that it dropped out in transcription. *Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo* — See introduction. *The prophet* — Denotes Zechariah, and not Iddo.

Call to Repentance, 2-6

2. *Angry was Jehovah with your fathers with anger* — This reminder of God's wrath is the ground of the exhortation of the succeeding verse. The wrath of Jehovah had been revealed in the capture and spoilation of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple, and the exile in Babylon.

3. Therefore — Because of God's anger with the fathers. *Unto them* — the contemporaries of the prophet. *Return unto me* — a call to repentance addressed to all, soul for soul. The severity of Jehovah regarding the fathers should serve as a warning to the children. They should forsake their abominations and seek after God in true contrition of heart, lest they be overtaken by worse calamities. *And I will return unto you* — Conversion is the fruit of the regenerating and sanctifying grace of God. The latter is always first. When by His mercy God's backsliding people return unto Him, He returns unto them in again causing them to enjoy His favor and fellowship, *saith the Lord of hosts* — Thrice repeated within the compass of this verse and thereby heavily emphasizing the fact and truth that the exhorter here is not a mere man but Jehovah, Himself, speaking through the prophet as His organ.

4. *Be not as your fathers* — As it is natural for the children to imitate their parents, the prophet repeats his injunction in a negative form, warning the people against following the example of their forebears, who were utterly indifferent to the remonstrances of the prophets of God that labored among them. *The former prophets* — the predecessors of Zechariah. Perhaps he does not have in mind Daniel, who wrought at the court of the Persians and not in the midst of God's people, and whose prophecies deal not so much with their obligations toward God as with the endurance of the church in the face of the onslaughts of the gates of hell, with the coming of Christ's kingdom amid and through the rise and fall of the mighty kingdoms of the world. *Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, Turn, I beseech you* — So had He pleaded with the former generations. All the day He had spread out His hands toward them (Isa. 42:2). *Turn, I beseech you, from your evil ways and doings* — To be supplied is the thought, "And I will turn unto you," and also, "But if you harden your hearts and persist in scorning my calls to repentance, nameless miseries shall be your portion." So had the Lord, through His prophets as His organs, exhorted, mandated, threatened and warned the former generations. *But they did not hear* — They had paid not the least bit of attention to the Lord but had persisted in hardening their hearts.

5. *Your fathers, where are they? And your prophets, could they live forever?* — What these questions mean and how they are to be answered is clear from the succeeding verse.

6. *Surely my words* — All the words of the Lord that He had spoken to the former generations through His prophets as His organs. It is clear from the succeeding clauses that the reference is particularly to the prophecies of the judgments of God that overtook the fathers on account of their impenitence, through all the ages of the past, — pestilence, drought, famine, war, servitude and finally dispersion and exile. All in substance has already been foretold by Moses, Deut. 28, 32. See also Deut. 28:63-68; 30:1-10. Isaiah and others had predicted the dispersion of Israel of the ten tribes,

the overthrown of Jerusalem, and the Babylonian exile. *And my statutes* — The fixed decrees of God whereby he blesses the penitent for Christ's sake, and brings the wicked to nought. *Which I commanded* — The prophets were expressly commanded of God to speak His words to the people. Their discourses are replete with such expressions as, "Speak unto the children of Israel," and, "Say unto my people." They spake as raised up and sustained by these mandates of the Lord as bound upon their hearts by His Spirit. *My servants the prophets* — the former prophets. They were God's organs prepared and raised up by Him to speak His word to men as standing before His face. *Did they* — these words and statutes — *not overtake your fathers?* — True, the prophets could not live forever. They went the way of all flesh. But certainly, their words, predictions, did not die with them, but they abided in the mind and counsel of Jehovah whose words they were. And as His living words that He continued to speak they had pursued the fathers all the days of their existence on this earth, filling their lives with nameless woes and scattering them, finally, among the nations and driving them into exile. *And they returned* — The deceased fathers, the Israel according to the election of grace. As pursued by the dreadful words of God, they repented of their sins and returned to the Lord in true contrition of heart. *And said, Like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways and according to our doings so hath He dealt with us* — So spake the penitent. There is this in their utterance: 1) His words came to pass. 2) We deserved His strokes. 3) His judgments are righteous and just, being, as they are, according to all our works.

This is what these fathers had said. And their testimony was preserved. And therefore, though long dead, they still spake, bearing witness to the fact that through the ages of the past all God's words had come to pass. Let the contemporaries of Zechariah, therefore, not walk in the footsteps of their apostate forbears. Doing so, they shall surely come to grief. But if they repent and turn unto the Lord, it shall go well with them. And also this according to His Word of promise. For had He not, according to His promise, spoken by the former prophets, turned their activity?

But the people had already repented about a month before. As stirred up by the words of Haggai, they had resumed operations. And there is no historical ground for the view that the work had again been abandoned. It may be assumed that they were still zealous as builders of God's house. Yet there was need that they nevertheless be admonished to forsake their evil ways and turn to the Lord.

First, Zechariah's two questions — "where are the fathers" etc. — leave the impression that there were sceptics among them, unbelieving Jews, carnal men, who were reasoning as follows, "The former prophets have gone the way of all flesh and their prophecies died with them. For the fathers died without ever having been overtaken by their predicted calamities. Zechariah will not live forever either. And also his threats and warnings will die with him. At

least when they come to pass, if they ever do, we will long have been in our grave. Through death we will escape his words as did our fathers through death escape the words of the former short-lived prophets. So, why should we allow ourselves to be frightened into taking our repentance seriously? Let us eat, drink, and be merry. For tomorrow we die.

It is not improbable that the questions originated with these sceptics, and that the prophet took them out of the sceptics' mouths as purposing to expose the carnal reasoning implicit in them as questions of the sceptics. They were carnal men. According to the sound of Zechariah's exhortation some of them might have been walking either secretly or openly in gross sin. They had to be told that if they did not turn from their evil ways, they would surely perish when the Lord came in judgment. They had to be told to repent especially so since it is not unlikely that they, too, were taking part in the work of building the temple and imagining that, on that account, they were pleasing in God's sight. Certainly, it must have been true also of this post-exilic community, of the church of that day there in Palestine, that "all is not Israel that is of Israel."

But the true believers in the community would also have continuous need of a call to repentance, seeing that like all God's people, they were but sinful men with only a small beginning of the true obedience. All had to know that outward conformity to God's will is not enough, that building His temple is a good work only if it proceed from a living faith; that what God demands is truth in the inward parts.

Observation on the expression, "Turn, I beseech you . . ." So, as was stated, the Lord had pleaded with the former generation, with the fathers of whom it is said that they would not listen. All the day He spread out His hands toward them (Isa. 42:2). Indicated in the first instance is the eagerness of God's moral will. Being holy God, He delights in well-doing, and hates iniquity. And to repent is to do well. And that He besought His people — the former generations — rendered, before His tribunal and in the judgment, utterly inexcusable all such among them that, according to His sovereign good pleasure, had persistently scorned His calls to repentance and had died in their unbelief. Certainly, God's spread-out hands cannot be taken to mean, in the light of Scripture, that He was determined and eager in His love to save also this reprobated Israel, had it only been willing, and that, therefore, He was helpless in the face of the unbelief of this people. He desires and wills to save only the penitent Israel, the people foreknown of Him in Christ. To this people only He spreads out His hands in love. This people He gathers and takes to His bosom as cleansed from all their iniquities in Christ's blood.

Observation on the exhortation, "Turn ye unto me, and I will turn unto you. Harden your hearts, and nameless miseries shall be thy portion." There are no real conditions concealed in this exhortation. It is a mandate to repent, addressed to all, soul for soul. Implicit in it is the promise

to the penitent that they shall be saved and a declaration to the impenitent that, unless they repent, they shall be destroyed. This is what Zechariah wants his hearers to know. This is what he tells them right at the beginning of his series of discourses. For, as was stated, he comes to them with glorious promises, and he does not want the wicked, who do not repent, to imagine that these promises are also theirs. His purpose is to comfort and encourage by his Gospel the penitent, God's elect. The impenitent have no need of comfort. They despise God's Gospel. It is therefore vain to tell such men that the promise is also theirs and thereby to tell them that Christ died also for them.

The First Vision — The Reporting Horsemen, 7-17

7. *Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Sebat, in the second year of Darius came the word of the Lord unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, saying,*

8. *I saw that night, and behold! a man riding upon a red horse, and he was standing among the myrtle trees, that were in a deep place: and behind him horses, red, reddish, brown and white.*

9. *And I said, What (are) these, my Lord? And he said to me, the angel who was speaking with me, I will shew you what these (be).*

10. *And answered the man who was standing among the myrtle trees, and said, These are they whom Jehovah has sent to walk to and fro through the earth.*

11. *And they answered the angel of Jehovah who was standing among the myrtle trees and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, the whole earth is sitting still and is undisturbed.*

12. *Then answered the angel of Jehovah and said, O Jehovah of hosts! how long wilt thou not have compassion upon Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, against whom thou hast been angry these seventy years?*

13. *And answered the angel who was speaking with me, words (that were) good, and words (that were) comforting.*

14. *And said to me the angel who was speaking with me, Cry, saying:*

*Thus saith Jehovah of hosts,
I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a jealousy (that is) great,*

15. *And I burn with a great anger against the nations at ease.*

For I was angry for a little, but they helped forward the affliction.

16. *Therefore thus saith Jehovah,
I have returned to Jerusalem in mercies.
My house shall be built in her, saith Jehovah of hosts.
And a measuring line shall be stretched over Jerusalem.*

17. *Cry yet saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts:
My cities shall yet overflow with good,
And Jehovah shall yet comfort Zion,
And shall yet choose Jerusalem.*

7. This verse gives the date of the vision. It was from three to four months after Zechariah's first revelation and two months after Haggai's last, namely on the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, Sebat, answering to our February, in the second year of Darius, 519. *The word of Jehovah* — So the visions could be called, seeing that they were explained and amplified by an accompanying oral revelation. The remainder of the verse is the same as verse 1 (See there).

8. *I saw that night* — Not in a dream but in a vision (4:1). The prophet was not asleep but in a state of wakefulness that was characterized by profound abstraction of mind and spirit in which there were reflected in his soul images of heavenly things by which his attention was wholly engaged. The vision was one of the means by which the Lord communicated His word to His prophets. *That night* — As the Jewish day began at sunset, this was probably the night that preceded the twenty-fourth day. The vision came to the prophet by night, when he was most susceptible to divine revelations. For the night is still, worldly cares are suspended, and outward impressions are few. The prophet received the rest of his visions in this same night.

G. M. O.

IN MEMORIAM

The Mary Martha Society of the Fourth Protestant Reformed Church wishes to extend its sincere sympathy to one of our members, Mrs. Arthur Gunnink and family, in the recent bereavement, the loss of husband and father,

MR. ARTHUR GUNNINK

Psalm 27:14 — "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: Wait, I say, on the Lord."

Mrs. Gerrit Pipe, President
Mrs. F. Ondersma, Secretary

IN MEMORIAM

The consistory of the Fourth Protestant Reformed Church hereby wishes to express its sympathy to Mrs. Arthur Gunnink and family in loss of their husband and father.

MR. ARTHUR GUNNINK

Psalm 68:20: "He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belongeth the issues from death."

Rev. H. Veldman, President
John Veltman, Secretary

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of I Corinthians 1-4

How strongly Paul feels about this schism and party-strife in the congregation of Corinth, and with what righteous and holy concern it fills his apostolic heart may be gathered from what he writes in the verses 13b through verse 17 of this first Chapter of this Epistle.

We refer, of course, to the following from the pen of Paul as recorded in the verses 13b-17, *"Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius, lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the house of Stephanus: besides I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the Cross of Christ should be made of none effect."*

Paul asks two very peculiar and arresting questions in this portion of Scripture under consideration.

These two questions are really questions which touch the rock-bed of the truth of the Gospel and of the reality of the Mystery of godliness that is great. It touches the question of the reality of God in the flesh. In it Paul confronts the congregation of Corinth in their conduct with the quintessence of the reality in Christ Jesus in his death, and the accruing benefits for the church of this suffering, as this is portrayed in baptism!

Paul asks first of all: Paul was not crucified for you, was he? The rendering in the King James Version hardly does justice to the Greek. The construction is such that the question really presupposes a negative answer. When the Corinthians read this letter and come to this question they should spontaneously say with all their hearts: God forbid!

That is what Paul desires them to say!

For Paul is only interested that the truth of the Gospel, that the Word of the Cross be maintained in the lives of these Corinthians and in that of the entire Church of the living God in the midst of the world.

What a preposterous and sacrilegious proposition. Paul having been crucified in behalf of the church of God! Paul a mere man presented even for a moment as having accomplished on the Cross what only the Son of God, Immanuel, could possibly do and has done! Perish the thought. No wonder that Paul asks this question in such a way that the answer which is expected is a strong and emphatic "no"!

Paul does not mean to state that such for a moment was the teaching of these Corinthians. Fact is, that the question presupposes very strongly that these Corinthians believed in no one else except Jesus Christ and Him, the crucified one. However, their conduct was such in their doting contention about Paul and their forgetting about the essential facts and content of the gospel, that one would think that Paul had been crucified in behalf of the church! These partisans need

strong language and must be pointed to the ultimate and the rock-bottomness of their faith, so that they may see the abject folly of their contentious doings.

Is this not consummate skill and sagacity on the part of Paul in handling the Word, the Sword of the Spirit?

Then, too, Paul asks the equally preposterous question: Were ye baptized in the name of Paul?

Baptism as a *rite* is a picture of the *transition once and for all* out of the dominion, both legally and spiritually, of the bondage of sin and death into the liberality, joy and peace in Christ Jesus, our Lord. It portrays the fact that we have been crucified with Christ and that now we have been raised with him unto newness of life, having been called into the fellowship of God's Son. Thus a fundamental separation is indicated in baptism of the separation also between the church and the world, the children of God and the children of the Devil. That is the only "schism" having the sanction of Christ, for it is rooted in and is a manifestation of the enmity which God has "established" between the Seed of the woman and the seed of the Serpent.

In the light of the foregoing paragraph it ought to be quite evident that Paul's preposterous question, "were ye baptized into the name of Paul," is a very jolting one!

It is a two-edged question.

On the one hand it shows the evil of man's puny party-strife, of the refined deviltry of making schisms where God does not make one; a schism which is not caused because of the separation due to the offense of the Cross, and the Gospel of salvation. Such was this schism in Corinth. A mere uproar over non-essentials; a travesty on the real separation of the Cross!

However, on the other hand it reminds these Corinthians that "baptism" makes separation; it is a sign and seal of the righteousness by faith, and is the portion of those believing. They must not be afraid of the real separation because of Christ and the truth as it is in Jesus. Then it is a question not of defending a person, a preacher, the "earthen vessel," but it is a question of "the excellency of the power which is of God" (II Cor. 4:7-9) Yea, then the Scriptures say "In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the Devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." (I John 3:10)

Has this difference been brought about in Paul's name?

God forbid!

There is a strange depravity and an overwhelming propensity (mental disposition) in the flesh of the church toward the honoring of men. It must be that since man likes to have an undue honor bestowed upon himself he also is inclined to go head-long into the evil of heaping undue praise upon leaders in the church of Christ.

Paul had a keen understanding of this propensity. Did he not need to have a "thorn in his flesh" himself "lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of revelations." Did Paul not daily live by the truth of the *pedagogical* word of God to him given him upon his three-

fold petition, that the thorne be removed: "My grace is sufficient to thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." (II Corinthians 12:9) O, Paul is aware of this evil of giving praise to man, which is not his due. He *knew* himself (Rom. 7) and, therefore, understood the evil also in the church. Paul does not write a mere abstract philosophical "opinion" in I Corinthians 13:1-3 "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as *sounding brass*, or a *tinkling cymbal*. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, *I am nothing*. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it *profiteth me nothing*" (I italicize)

This is a burning question of the new obedience in Paul as he forgets that which lies behind and reaches out unto that which is before him to the prize of the upward calling in Christ Jesus.

It is with this in mind, namely, this profound sense of the evil propensity of the flesh in which there dwells no good at all, that Paul abstained almost entirely from baptizing in the congregation at Corinth. The great and central and all-controlling task of Paul is to "evangelize," to preach the glad-tidings of Good things, and he is to do this in such a way that "if any one do any boasting in the church, he shall boast in the Lord." (I Cor. 1:31, Jer. 17:19).

O, it is true Paul did baptize a *few* in Corinth. He mentions them by name. He baptized Crispus, ruler of the synagogue in Corinth before his conversion (Acts 18:8), Gaius and the household of Stephanus, the first-fruits in Achaia. (I Cor. 16:15) For the rest Paul does not even remember any whom he baptized. It really doesn't matter.

But, strange as it may seem, the flesh in the church often talks more about the minister, who baptized them, than about the Lord, Jehovah who saved them, and incorporated them into His Son. Who has not heard people speak in great detail about the minister under whom they made confession of faith, by whom their children were baptized? But who has not often too observed that as soon as the question is asked about the sharing in this great gift of Christ as this is signified and sealed in baptism, that there is silence in every language!

And with this in mind Paul evidently left the act of administering baptism to Timothy and other co-workers. He would simply step aside for the moment. He did not desire to stand in the lime-light. Paul was no actor who must stand forth at an advantage. He recedes to the shadows in order that the Sacrament as an institution may stand forth, and that all the light of the glorious gospel may fall upon the Cross of Christ as the *central fact* of the gospel.

In so doing he emulated the example of his and our Lord, Jesus Christ. Do we not read in the Gospel of John the following: "When therefore the Lord knew how the

Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (though *Jesus himself baptized not*, but his disciples) . . .?"

This is the example followed by Paul.

How would not the flesh in the early christians have capitalized (?) on the fact that they had personally been baptized by Jesus. But such none could say. Yes, they were baptized by him with the gift of the Holy Spirit; they received the sign of the greater baptism in the water by baptism at the hands of the apostles and disciples.

Now all are baptized by Christ who believe.

This baptism of the people of God by Christ is signified and sealed in the water baptism.

It makes no difference whether Paul performs this rite or his collaborators under God.

The Cross and the Word of Cross manifest its effectiveness and glorious content. And that is all that counts. Then the Lord will be glorified.

With this in mind Paul also preaches.

Paul knows the great distinction between *wisdom of words* and *words of wisdom*. The former is the portion of those who would boast in man, in the talents of a preacher, while the latter is the "wisdom of the God, in the Cross." And this "Wisdom" can be related as facts, the accomplished fact of Salvation in the Cross. It is the Wisdom and the power of God.

Such was Paul's example. Well may we follow in his footsteps in the ministry of the Word and the Sacraments.

And well may we heed what Paul has to teach us in the verses 18-25 of this Chapter, which we hope to begin to study in the next issue, D. V.

G. L.

Announcement

Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet on January 4, 1956 at 9 a.m. in the Hope Prot. Ref. Church.

M. Schipper, Stated Clerk

IN MEMORIAM

The Men's Society of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express its sincere sympathy to one of its fellow members, Mr. Gerrit Moelker, and his family in the recent death of their father and grandfather,

MR. JOHN MOELKER

May the bereaved find comfort in the knowledge that God is our refuge and our strength a very present help in trouble. Ps. 46:1

Rev. H. Hanko, President
J. Dykstra, Secretary.

IN HIS FEAR

Christmas in His Fear

It will be challenged, but we will say it anyway: There is so very little celebration of Christmas left in the world today.

Indeed, there is more Christmas celebration than there ever was before. That is, there is more celebration at Christmas time than there ever was before. The newspapers are full of it. Magazines point to it in their advertisements. Store windows, street decorations, rows upon rows of "Christmas" trees in what formerly were vacant lots are only a few of the many, many things that already indicate that in a few days there will be much Christmas celebration: celebration at Christmas time.

But celebration of Christmas itself will be difficult to find.

And we put the word Christmas in quotation marks above when we wrote of "Christmas" trees, because so men speak. Yet Scripture indicates no tree that has any symbolism for Christmas and does not single out a pine, a fir, a spruce tree for the proper observance of the birth of the Saviour. It does not specify tin foil, candles, brightly colored ornaments and the like for the proper observance of so wonderful a thing as the coming of the Son of God in our flesh.

If any tree has symbolism for Christmas; if there is any tree that belongs to the idea of the birth of the Saviour; it is the tree of the cross with nails and blood and a crown of thorns for which He came into our flesh and for which He was born as one of us.

Christmas as celebrated today by the overwhelming majority of men, women and children is positively antichristian. It has no place for the Christ but centers around the antichrist.

Is the child's mind focused upon the fact that "unto you is born this day in the city of David a *saviour*" (we italicize) when we take them to Santa Claus and perhaps keep him out of catechism on Saturday morning or afternoon, to see the Santa Claus parade or to see him in the store in some distant city? Is the child taught that for Christ's sake God "is the rewarder of those that diligently seek Him"? (Hebrews 11:6). Or do we teach him that Santa Clause will reward him if he obeys his father and mother, eats his oatmeal, goes to bed when told, washes the dishes without grumbling and a host of other things?

Do we let Santa Claus take the place of a sovereign and righteous God? Do we take Christ out of Christmas? The Scriptures teach us that Christ will come quickly and that His reward is with Him; and He will render to every man according to his works, Revelation 22:12. And shall we by this antichristian Santa-Claus-business teach them that Santa Claus is the rewarder of every boy and girl according to his and her works? It is so easy to fall into the anti-

christian philosophy in the pre-Christmas days and tell your children that if they do not behave, Santa Claus will not give them the presents they want. But by so doing we destroy the whole idea of Christmas for our children and teach them anti-christian philosophy.

The same is done with our lavish meals under which the table groans; and for mother or older sister Christmas celebration reaches no loftier spiritual(?) plane than tending a hot stove, polishing the silver for the company that is expected and behaving as though for the rest of the family what Paul says is true that their "God is their belly," Philippians 3:19. That "belly" must be served, and therefore there can be no appearing before His face in Divine services.

And instead of gathering with our covenant seed in a program wherein they in song and speech utter words that tell of the true significance of the birth of the Saviour we resort to that modern and most subtle of all tools of the devil, the TV set, to be entertained (corrupted would be a better word) by those who have no part in Christ, have no room for Him in the inn of their carnal and fleshly program. Nor would He ever consent to take part in any of their evil programs that glorify the flesh, that portray the evil philosophy: "Let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die."

Let us not be self-righteous Pharisees and dare to say that we are free from all this corruption!

If we are honest with ourselves, we will admit that for us also it simply would not seem like Christmas without all these unscriptural decorations and an especially sumptuous meal. In fact should it please God to give us who live in the northern climes an exceptionally mild day, the weather even would militate against our conception of what ought to be on Christmas. The world sings its silly songs: "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas." And in our flesh is that same unchristian and unchristmas, or shall we say Christless idea, concerning what is necessary and what belongs to celebration of Christmas. A Christmas without turkey or chicken does not seem quite right. But a Christmas without Christ means one with joy and merriment for the flesh!

"A Merry Christmas to you" often means, and always means when uttered by the world, a day with merriment because it is not "spoiled" by the things of Christ and His kingdom.

Of course the world speaks of Him as the Prince of Peace. Of course the world sings many carols about His birth. But do not forget that the same godless Jews who crucified Him and gave money to the soldiers who watched His tomb and were witnesses of the fact that He was risen from the dead also continued to sacrifice and pray in the Temple and to declare and claim to look for the fulfillment of all God's covenant promises. Today they still reject Him and call Him an imposter and yet they sing and speak of a Prince of Peace, of a Son of David who shall occupy his throne. For them there is no Christmas-except as a money making project. And they will exploit it to the utmost as a money-making adventure. They will even hire groups or

individuals to sing these carols — which, by the way, is not as pious and sweet as it looks either — though they believe none of the message in them.

We say that this practice of playing or hiring others to sing and play Christmas carols to attract business to your store is not so pious and sweet as it looks. How dare we make merchandize of the things spiritual? How dare we use spiritual things as an attraction for business adventures? That surely is not In His Fear! By doing so we take Christ out of Christmas! For He drove the money changers and sellers of cattle out of the Temple. And you may be sure that were He to come and visit us in what we call Christmas celebration He would strongly rebuke us for bringing the things of the Temple, the spiritual things of the salvation He has come to bring to His people, into our stores for the sake of making a few more dollars of filthy lucre. We may take Him into our store, into our place of business. Indeed! That we ought to do but not in order to use Him and the things of His salvation for a material, worldly advantage. Let us take Him along with us in our hearts to our place of business to teach us how to serve God therein and not to serve our flesh. We may take Him into our business as our Lord and Master Whom we will serve in every transaction. But we may not take Him into our business as some handy servant and slave whom we use together with His benefits for our material advancement. Similarly, we may tell the world that we conduct no business on the Sabbath. But when we advertise thus in order to win the approval and the business of fellow-Christians, we make merchandize of spiritual things and sin therein.

When we celebrate Christmas In His Fear then we go to Him and praise Him for the gift of all gifts that He has given us. We go to Him in prayer. We go to Him in His house of worship. We acknowledge this great and glorious gift and do not hide it from ourselves and from our children by a host of worldly, material gifts that we give and receive from men. When we celebrate Christmas In His Fear, Christ and the love of God in sending Him to be our Saviour occupies the central part of our celebration; and the greater part of our activity on that day revolves about Him. When we celebrate Christmas in His fear we gather in all humility and joy before His feet to be taught by Him anew and more richly the glorious truths of the birth of His Son.

And he who truly celebrates Christmas in His fear will not be able to hold back his songs of praise to God. With the holy angels he shall sing: Glory to God in the highest. He will sing of the true peace that God has wrought in this Son for those who are the men of His good pleasure and will glorify Him for it. And as the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God and telling all whom they met what they had seen and heard, the covenant parent will also want to have the day filled with such praise and glory to God by his children and will take them along to God's house of worship that they too may hear of all this wonder of God's grace.

Christmas celebration In His Fear is celebration before

His face. It is celebration in the consciousness that He accomplished all these things that the Church of Christ might live before His face in everlasting glory. And it is celebration that responds to that glorious truth.

Birthdays of men are celebrated. Flags are raised and put on display. Flowers may be heaped upon their graves. Business establishments may be closed for the day. The memory of these men is held in high esteem. And in their honor many things are said and done on that day. But the individual for whom all this celebration is set forth knows nothing of it and is not benefited in the least by it.

On Christmas we celebrate the birth of one infinitely greater and more worthy of our praise and adoration. And He lives and sees and knows what we do to celebrate the day of His coming into our flesh. Celebration In His Fear, therefore, is celebration as before His face and in love to Him.

You need not purchase a "Christmas" tree to honor and praise Him. He does not ask you to spend a tidy sum of money for tinsel and a string of light bulbs of various colors. He demanded of Israel that to celebrate the glorious deliverance from the house of the bondage of sin and death they eat the roast flesh of a lamb. But He does not demand you and me to procure a turkey or chicken to observe the day of His birth. In fact you *cannot* celebrate His birth by these things! They have absolutely nothing to do with His birth. In fact that abject poverty into which He came in the stable, in the lowly manger, outside the inn militates against all this gaudy and vulgar display of an event so sublime and heavenly.

He does call us to unfurl the banner of the truth; to meet with His people in His house of worship to hear what He has to say; to sing praises to Him.

He calls us to listen to Him and to make all our celebration subservient to it and not to gifts, toys and meals.

He calls us to believe what He says of Himself; to rejoice in it because of faith and with the angels to sing of the glory of God.

He calls us to bow in childlike reverence before Him in the adoration of love.

In His Fear keep Christ in Christmas.

Keep Him there all day.

J. A. H.

"In Jesus Christ a preparatory history both divine and human comes to its close. In him culminate all the previous revelations of God to Jews and Gentiles; and in him are fulfilled the deepest desires and efforts of both Gentiles and Jews for redemption. He is the author of a new creation, the second Adam, the father of the regenerate, the head of the church, "which is his body, the fulness of him, that filleth all in all."

(Schaff's History of the Christian Church)

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

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

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

THE PAPACY (by Philip Schaff).

(Continued)

At last the Roman bishop, on the ground of his divine institution, and as successor of Peter, the prince of the apostles, advanced his claim to be primate of the entire church, and visible representative of Christ, who is the invisible supreme head of the Christian world. This is the strict and exclusive sense of the title, Pope.

Properly speaking, this claim has never been fully realized, and remains to this day an apple of discord in the history of the church. Greek Christendom has never acknowledged it, and Latin, only under manifold protests, which at last conquered in the Reformation, and deprived the papacy forever of the best part of its domain. The fundamental fallacy of the Roman system is, that it identifies papacy and church, and therefore, to be consistent, must unchurch not only Protestantism, but also the entire Oriental church from its origin down. By the "una sancta catholica apostolica ecclesia" of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed is to be understood the whole body of Catholic Christians, of which the *ecclesia Romana*, like the churches of Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Constantinople, is only one of the most prominent branches. The idea of the papacy, and its claims to the universal dominion of the church, were distinctly put forward, it is true, so early as the period before us, but could not make themselves good beyond the limits of the West. Consequently the papacy, as a historical fact, or so far as it has been acknowledged, is properly nothing more than the Latin patriarchate run to absolute monarchy.

By its advocates the papacy is based not merely upon church usage, like the metropolitan and patriarchal power, but upon divine right; upon the peculiar position which Christ assigned to Peter in the well-known words: "Thou art Peter, and on this rock will I build my church." This passage was at all times taken as an immovable exegetical rock for the papacy. The popes themselves appealed to it, times without number, as the great proof of the divine institution of a visible and infallible central authority in the church. According to this view, the primacy is before the apostolate, the head before the body, instead of the reverse.

But, in the first place, this preeminence of Peter did not in the least affect the independence of the other apostles. Paul especially, according to the clear testimony of his epistles and the book of Acts, stood entirely upon his own authority, and even on one occasion, at Antioch, took strong

ground against Peter. Then again, the personal position of Peter by no means yields the primacy to the Roman bishop, without the two fold evidence, first that Peter was actually in Rome, and then that he transferred his prerogatives to the bishop of that city. The former fact rests upon a universal tradition of the early church, which at that time no one doubted, but is in part weakened and neutralized by the absence of any clear Scripture evidence, and by the much more certain fact, given in the New Testament itself, that Paul labored in Rome, and that in no position of inferiority or subordination to any higher authority than that of Christ himself. The second assumption, of the transfer of the primacy to the Roman bishop, is susceptible of neither historical nor exegetical demonstration, and is merely an inference from the principle that the successor in office inherits all the official prerogatives of his predecessor. But even granting both these intermediate links in the chain of the papal theory, the double question yet remains open: first, whether the Roman bishop be the only successor of Peter, or share this honor with the bishops of Jerusalem and Antioch, in which places also Peter confessedly resided; and secondly, whether the primacy involved at the same time a supremacy of jurisdiction over the whole church, or be only an honorary primacy among patriarchs of equal authority and rank. The former was the Roman view; the latter was the Greek.

An African bishop, Cyprian (died 258), was the first to give to that passage of the sixteenth of Matthew, innocently as it were, and with no suspicion of the future use and abuse of his view, a papistic interpretation, and to bring out clearly the idea of a perpetual *cathedra Petri*. The same Cyprian, however, whether consistently or not, was at the same time equally animated with the consciousness of episcopal equality and independence, afterward actually came out in bold opposition to Pope Stephen in a doctrinal controversy on the validity of heretical baptism and persisted in this protest to his death.

Opinions of the Fathers.

We now pursue the development of this idea in the church fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries. In general they agree in attaching to Peter a certain primacy over the other apostles, and in considering him the foundation of the church in virtue of his confession of the divinity of Christ; while they hold Christ to be, in the highest sense, the divine ground and rock of the church. And herein lies a solution of their apparent self-contradiction in referring the *petra* in Matthew 16:18, now to the person of Peter, now to his confession, now to Christ. Then, as the bishops in general were regarded as successors of the apostles, the fathers saw in the Roman bishops, on the ground of the ancient tradition of the martyrdom of Peter in Rome, the successor of Peter and the heir of the primacy. But respecting the nature and prerogatives of this primacy their views were very indefinite and various. It is remarkable that the references of the *rock* to Christ, which Augustine especially defended with great ear-

nestness, was acknowledged even by the greatest pope of the middle ages, Gregory VII, in the famous inscription he sent with a crown to the emperor Rudolph: "Petra (i. e., Christ) dedit Petro (i. e., to the apostle), Petrus (the pope) diadema Rudolpho."

It is worthy of notice, that the post-Nicene, as well as the ante-Nicene fathers, with all their reverence for the Roman see, regarded the heathenish title of Rome, *rubis aeterna* (the eternal city — H. V.), as blasphemous, with reference to the passage of the woman sitting upon a scarlet-colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, Rev. 17:3. The prevailing opinion seems to have been, that Rome and the Roman empire would fall before the advent of Antichrist and the second coming of the Lord.

1. The views of the Latin fathers.

The Cyprianic idea was developed primarily in North Africa, where it was first clearly pronounced.

OPTATUS, bishop of Milevi, the otherwise unknown author of an anti-Donatist work about A. D. 384, is, like Cyprian, thoroughly possessed with the idea of the visible unity of the church; declares it without qualification the highest good, and sees its plastic expression and its surest safeguard in the immovable *cathedra Petri*, the prince of the apostles, the keeper of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, who, in spite of his denial of Christ, continued in that relation to the other apostles, that the unity of the church might appear in outward fact as an unchangeable thing, invulnerable to human offence. All these prerogatives have passed to the bishops of Rome, as the successors of this apostle (this bishop expressed himself thus about the year, 384-H.V.).

Ambrose of Milan (Ambrose was one of the three great leaders of the western part of the Church in the latter part of the fourth and the first part of the fifth century. The other two were Jerome and Augustine. He became the bishop of Milan in the year, 374, was a strong supporter of the Nicene Creed, in opposition to the Arian heresy which denied the Godhead of the Christ, wrote many books, is classed among the Doctors or great teachers of the Church, and also did much to promote Christian hymnology. He died in the year, 397—H.V.) speaks indeed in very high terms of the Roman church, and concedes to its bishops a religious magistracy like the political power of the emperors of pagan Rome; yet he calls the primacy of Peter only a "primacy of confession, not of honor; of faith, not of rank," and places the apostle Paul on an equality with Peter. Of any dependence of Ambrose, or of the bishops of Milan in general during the first six centuries, on the jurisdiction of Rome, no trace is to be found.

Jerome was another of the three great leaders of the western part of the Church during this period. He was born in the year, 340 and died in the year, 420. The last years of his life were spent in Bethlehem, the birthplace of Christ. There he lived as a monk and in a cave next to the cave in which Christ was supposed to have been born. He was about the only western churchman who knew Hebrew, hav-

ing learned Hebrew from Jewish rabbis when he lived in Antioch and Bethlehem. He proceeded to make a new Latin translation of the Bible. He translated the Old Testament not from the Greek Septuagint but from the original Hebrew. This Latin translation of the Bible by Jerome is known as the Vulgate. It was Jerome's noblest achievement and to this very day it is the official Bible of the Roman Catholic Church—H.V.

Jerome the most learned commentator among the Latin fathers, vacillates in his explanation of the *petra*; now, like Augustine, referring it to Christ, now to Peter and his confession. In his commentary on Matthew 16, he combines the two interpretations thus: "As Christ gave light to the apostles, so that they were called, after him, the light of the world, and as they received other designations from the Lord; so Simon, because he believed on the rock, Christ, received the name Peter, and in accordance with the figure of the rock, it is justly said to him: "I will build my church upon thee (super te)." He recognizes in the Roman bishop the successor of Peter, but advocates elsewhere the equal rights of the bishops, and in fact derives even the episcopal office, not from direct divine institution, but from the usage of the church and from the presidency in the presbyterium. He can therefore be cited as a witness, at most, for the primacy of honor, not for a supremacy of jurisdiction. Beyond this even the strongest passage of his writings, in a letter to his friend, Pope Damasus (A.D. 376), does not go: "Away with the ambition of the Roman head; I speak with the successor of the fisherman and disciple of the cross. Following no other head than Christ, I am joined in the communion of faith with thy holiness, that is, with the chair of Peter. On that rock I know the church to be built." Subsequently this father, who himself had an eye on the papal chair, fell out with the Roman clergy, and retired to the ascetic and literary solitude of Bethlehem, where he served the church by his pen far better than he would have done as the successor of Damasus.

H.V.

Rome teaches that "no one ought to flatter himself up with faith alone, fancying that by faith alone he is made an heir, and will obtain the inheritance . . ."

Wherefore Rome, as do all Arminians, calls it "rash presumptuousness" for any man to be assured that he is in the number of the predestinate.

Quote, "No one, moreover, so long as he is in this mortal life, ought so far to presume as regards the secret Mystery of divine predestination, to determine for certain that he is assuredly in the number of the predestinate . . . for except by *special revelation*, it can not be known whom God hath chosen to himself."

Decree on Justification, Chapters XI, XII, Council of Trent.

The Voice of Our Fathers

The Canons of Dordrecht

PART TWO

EXPOSITION OF THE CANONS

SECOND HEAD OF DOCTRINE

OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST, AND THE REDEMPTION OF MEN THEREBY

Article 3. The death of the Son of God is the only and most perfect sacrifice and satisfaction for sin; and is of infinite worth and value, abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world.

The subject of this brief article is the value of the death of Christ. It is to be noted that already here mention is made of "the death of the Son of God," by which expression we are pointed to the reason for the value of Christ's atoning sacrifice, a subject which is further treated in Article 4. And in regard to the value of the death of Christ, the article points: 1) To the fact that it is "the only and most perfect sacrifice and satisfaction for sin." The superlative "most perfect" (which is a correct translation of the Latin *perfectissima*, — a point which the Dutch misses with its *volmaakte*) is not to be understood in such a way that among many sacrifices for sin the death of the Son of God is the most perfect, while others are less perfect. That idea is impossible in the light of the fact that it is the "only," unique, sacrifice for sin. Rather does it mean "perfect in the highest degree," so that there is no shortcoming, no flaw, in it, and so that it therefore could be the "only" sacrifice and satisfaction. 2) The infinite worth and value of that only and most perfect sacrifice. This is further defined by the words: "abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world."

In regard to both these points it is well to remind ourselves once again that the fathers were combating the Arminian error of general atonement, set forth in Article 2 of the Remonstrance. In this article the Remonstrants taught: 1) That Christ, agreeably to the purpose of God, died for "all men and every man." 2) That He obtained for them all redemption and the forgiveness of sins. 3) That no one actually enjoys this forgiveness of sins except the believer. And they quoted the well-known words of John 3:16 and I John 2:2 ostensibly in support of their teaching. Now it is quite evident already from the above three proposition themselves, but especially from the various and devious explanations of their position, that the Arminians wanted to maintain a general atonement, the efficacy or power of which depended not on the atoning death of Christ but on the humanly fulfilled condition of faith. For while it is true that no one actually enjoys the forgiveness of sins except the believer, it is not true that "no one actually enjoys *this* forgiveness

of sins (that is, a redemption and forgiveness of sins for all men and every man) except the believer," as Article 2 of the Remonstrance has it. And therefore the fathers rightly maintained that the Arminians denied the only and most perfect sacrifice of Christ, and over against the Arminians they taught that the death of the Son of God is indeed the only and most perfect sacrifice and satisfaction for sin. But then the Arminians came back with a sophistic accusation that with their doctrine of limited atonement the fathers proclaimed a limited and stingy God, and with a show of piety they accused the fathers of denying the infinite value and worth of Christ's sacrificial and atoning death. And it was in answer thereto that the fathers affirmed that the death of the Son of God "is of infinite worth and value, abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world." Such is the background of this third article of Chapter II.

That Christ's death is the only and most perfect sacrifice and satisfaction for sin implies that as an actual fact there is not and never was any other sacrifice for sin, that this most perfect sacrifice completely satisfies the justice of God with respect to sin, and that another sacrifice of any kind is therefore both unnecessary and impossible. This means, on the one hand, that Christ did not suffer any more than was necessary for the salvation of the elect, as though any part of that infinitely valuable sacrifice of the death of the Son of God could be "wasted." And it means that it was not possible that the profitableness and worth of what Christ merited might have existed and might remain in all its parts complete, perfect, and intact, even if the merited redemption had never in fact been applied to any person. Cf. II., B, 1. For perfection excludes waste, to be sure; and even the abundance of the worth of Christ's sacrifice does not imply that His sacrifice was in any wise superfluous. On the other hand, it implies that nothing ever need be added or can be added to the sacrifice of Christ: He suffered all that was necessary to suffer to make satisfaction for sin, and His death is the only expiatory sacrifice. In the old dispensation there were no sacrifices for sin except such as were typical, in which the blood of animals pointed forward to the blood of the Lamb of God. And when Christ came, He sacrificed Himself and thus fulfilled and put an end to all typical sacrifice. And in the new dispensation His sacrifice is perfect and therefore unique, because all the value and worth that is necessary for our redemption, and therefore for our deliverance, is in that sacrifice alone. Nothing at all can ever be added to that sacrifice, or need ever be added to it. He did not merely "acquire for the Father the mere right to establish with man such a covenant as he might please, whether of grace or of works," but He "confirmed the new covenant of grace with his blood"; and when He confirmed it, it was indeed confirmed. He did not simply merit for the Father "the authority or the perfect will to deal again with man, and to prescribe new conditions as he might desire"; but He merited salvation and the faith whereby this satisfaction unto salvation is effectually appropriated. Cf. II., B, 2, 3. In other

words, all the blessings of salvation are included, as far as their value, their worth, their purchase, is concerned, in that one and perfect sacrifice and satisfaction of the death of the Son of God.

In this connection it is interesting to note how our fathers very carefully analysed the second point of the Remonstrance and pointed out its fundamental defects. The various provincial delegations and the professors of theology and the different foreign delegations studied the Arminian position and arrived at their conclusion independently, and all their reports are preserved for us in the Acts of the National Synod of Dordrecht. A study of these reports, or opinions, some of which are very detailed and lengthy, reveals that the first fundamental flaw to which many of them called attention was the mechanical way in which the Arminians presented the work of Christ and made separation in that work. The fathers frequently emphasize the organic wholeness of that work, and point out that you cannot make separation between redemption and deliverance, between the redemptive value of Christ's sacrifice and its power and effectual application, between the blessings which He merited by His death and the application and appropriation of those blessings. The latter necessarily follows the former. And while *distinction* can be made between various aspects of the work of Christ, that work is nevertheless one whole, the parts of which are inseparable. On this basis, of course, if Christ's atonement is general, so that He actually has obtained for all men and for every man redemption and the forgiveness of sins, then all are redeemed and have their sins forgiven, whether they know it and believe it, or whether they have never heard of the work of Christ and never have the gospel preached unto them. This the Arminians could not and would not admit, since they would then be forced to maintain the actual salvation of all men. And the second fundamental element emphasized in these opinions is that of the *purpose and intent* both of God Triune and of Christ, Who came to do the Father's will, in that atoning death. It is here, of course, that the connection between the first and second chapters of the *Canons* comes to the foreground. This is developed further in Article 8. But even here we may note that it is only on the basis of the truth that it was the purpose and intent of God the Father and of our Lord Jesus Christ to atone and to obtain redemption and the forgiveness of sins for all the elect and for them alone, that this truth of the unique and most perfect sacrifice and satisfaction of the death of the Son of God can be maintained.

Now we come to the rather striking statement as to the infinite worth and value of Christ's death, namely, that it was "abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world." Taken at face value, of course, this statement is entirely correct and Scriptural. For Scripture teaches literally that Christ is the propitiation "for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." I John 2:2. And a proper exegesis of this passage indeed reveals that "the whole world" is not the same as "all men and every

man." In fact, many of the opinions of the delegates to the National Synod rather detailedly exegete such terms as "world" and "all," as they appear in various Scriptures, and they point out that never do the Scriptures teach an atonement for every individual. Viewed in this light, of course, the statement could stand without further comment. However, that would be only a very superficial explanation of this statement. The truth is that the fathers intended to say something *general* about the death of Christ without teaching the lie of general atonement. And the reason for this we have pointed out in our opening remarks on this article: the Arminians charged that the doctrine of limited atonement was a denial of the infinite value and worth of Christ's death, and over against this the Synod maintains that His sacrifice was indeed of infinite value.

That by this statement they do not intend to teach general atonement, and that it is not entirely accurate to say that Christ's death is "sufficient for the sins of all men, but efficient only for the believers," is plain from: 1) The fact that in this chapter they combat the Arminian error of general atonement. The fathers certainly do not cast out this error from the front door and bring it back in through the back door. 2) The fact that they very literally maintain the doctrine of limited atonement, especially in Article 8, and therefore could not possibly have meant to say that Christ actually expiated the sins of the entire human race, head for head. 3) The fact that in many of the official opinions of the delegates this very subject is discussed in detail, and that in the same opinions the truth of limited atonement is strictly maintained, both as to the intention of God in Christ and as to its actuality. The only exceptions to this are the opinions of the British theologians and of Martinus, one of the theologians from Bremen. These, to put it very mildly, might be called in question. Cff. "Acta der Nationale Synode van Dordrecht, 1618 en 1619," pp. 420, ff., and 694, ff.

A study of the above opinions of the delegates is also very revealing as to the meaning of the statement under discussion. It means that the sacrifice and satisfaction of Christ *when considered by itself*, that is, apart from God's elective decree and apart from the intent and purpose of Christ's death and apart from the fact that Christ represented in His death only the elect, *would have been* sufficient to expiate the sins of the entire human race, yea, of several more worlds. There is nothing defective in that death itself, nothing lacking in the value of the sacrifice, that limits its atoning efficiency to the elect alone; the latter limitation is not due to a limited value of Christ's death, — for His death was abundantly sufficient, yea, infinite in value; — but it is due to the sovereign limitation of God's elective will, with which will Christ was in perfect harmony when He gave Himself to the death of the cross. Such is the idea of this statement.

In evaluating the statement we may remark: 1) That it is actually a bit of speculation, and, in a way, a bit of philo-

(Continued on page 140)

DECENCY and ORDER

A Question on Approbation

Before we proceed to discuss the various elements of Article 23 of our church order as we wrote that we would do in our last article, we wish to comment on a question received from one of our readers, which concerns Article 22 and deals with the matter of the approbation of elders mentioned in that Article. The question as we received it is:

"When an elder, being approbated, becomes guilty of a sin before he is installed, and he is labored with, does his nomination/election become null and void, by an act of the Consistory, as long as he remains unconverted of his sin?"

"When an office bearer, elected, is on approbation, before installation, and falls into sin, and a brother brings charges against him to the Consistory, and the charges are true, and proven, is he taken off the nomination, or his election declared null and void, when the Consistory is convinced the charges are true?"

"An elected office-bearer, of whom a bad report is true, and proven to be true by witnesses; is he taken off nomination or is his election voided — apart from whether or not he is sorry for his breach?"

"John Jones is elected and is being approbated. A brother brings in a bad report to the Consistory. The report is proven to be true. Is John Jones' election voided *immediately* by the Consistory? Or do they labor with him to confess his sin in order that he may serve in that office?"

In the above question we have four different formulations of the same question. There are really two cases presented here which are essentially the same but differ only in one detail. The first is the case of a brother who is placed on nomination by the consistory and against which objections are lodged prior to the election. The other is the case of an elected office bearer against whom objections are raised between the time of his election and installation. In both cases the supposition is that the charges brought to the consistory against the brother are proven true. The questioner wants to know what the proper action on the part of the Consistory would be in such instances and, further, whether the penitence or impenitence of the accused brother make any difference as far as the procedure of the Consistory in treating the matter is concerned.

In our reply to these questions we make the following comments:

(1) We assume that the sin or sins referred to are of a public, gross nature. This makes an essential difference in the case where the accused is penitent. If the offense is of a minor or personal nature, a matter between two individuals, and the accused is shown to be wrong and confesses his sin, the matter is closed and in that case it would not effect the brother's serving in the office. If, however, the matter is

public and the sin is of a gross nature, the name of the guilty one should be removed from the nomination at once even though he repents. Before such a person could serve in the office, a sufficient period of time must elapse, as we wrote in the November 15th issue of the Standard Bearer, so that it may be shown beyond question that the confession of sin is sincere.

(2) In the case where the election has already taken place, we deal with what might in a way be called an exceptional case. It is rather unusual that a man who has been chosen to the office of elder perpetrate gross sins between the time of his election and installation. Abstractly, of course, this is quite possible. It is even possible that one has lived in a certain sin for a time but that it did not become known to anyone in the congregation until after the election. In either case, where the charges are definitely proven to be true, the election itself must be voided. Essentially the same action is taken by the consistory in the immediate deposition of elders guilty of gross sin who are serving in the office. In the hypothetical case we are considering, the elder has not yet been installed but he has been chosen by the congregation. It may be very advisable for a consistory that is confronted with such a case to seek the advice of a neighboring consistory as it does in the case of the deposition of an elder. It would be the safer and most fair procedure but, at any rate, if the charges are true, installation cannot take place as those guilty of gross sin may not be put into office in the church.

(3) In instances where gross sin has been committed, the fact of the brother's penitence or impenitence does not effect the disposition of the case by the Consistory at all. The only way in which that matter would affect the consistory's action is that in the case of impenitence, she would have to labor further with the brother as a common-member and apply the necessary steps of discipline. In either case the person guilty of public sin is immediately declared ineligible for the office. The office may not be desecrated. The welfare of the church and the glory of God's Name are more important than the pleasure of any individual.

(4) In this connection, we may also cite a possible situation which implies a warning for Consistories confronted with matters of this sort. It is possible that a certain member may not like the person who has been elected to office and, although he brought no charges against the person at the time the nomination was submitted for approbation, he afterwards, out of jealousy, spite or ill-will, digs up various accusations which he procures a witness to sustain. Outwardly it would appear as though his case against the brother is very strong. The Consistory must proceed carefully in investigating such matters. It is well to inquire why the charges were not brought in before and if there is no legitimate reason, and jealousies are evident, the whole matter can be dismissed and the Consistory can proceed with the installation of the elected brother.

(5) With the following comments of Monsma and Van

Dellen we fully agree: "Moreover, certain valid objections against one of the elected brethren may arise after the election. To use an extreme illustration: An elected brother might drink himself drunk after an election and thus make himself undesirable for the time being at least, although his conduct on this score was above reproach previously.

If objections are entered against any elected brother, but the Consistory finds that the objections are not valid and insufficient then the party concerned is installed as usual. But if the complaining member gives notice of appeal to Classis, then the installation should wait until after the Classis has considered the matter. However, if the Consistory is fully persuaded that the objector is merely motivated by jealousy or ill-will, then the Consistory has the right to proceed with the installation in spite of the appeal to Classis. But it stands to reason that a Consistory will await the verdict of its Classis unless the circumstances are very extraordinary. And when a Consistory is minded to install a brother in spite of an appeal to Classis, it should first consult a neighboring Consistory or its Church visitors as a matter of good order and Christian consideration toward the aggrieved party. If a consistory has awaited the verdict of its Classis, and if the Classis advises to install, then the Consistory should install without delay, even though the protesting brother should appeal to Synod. No one duly elected should be barred from office for months by a series of protests. That would be unjust toward the elected brother, and toward the Church."

* * * *

A few words may be said yet regarding approbation in general. This is a very important part of the lawful calling of ministers of the Word, according to Article 4, as well as of the calling of elders and deacons, according to Articles 22 and 24. It, together with the election proper under the method used in our churches, denotes the very essential part which the congregation takes in the calling. Too often are the instances and too many are the members who do not regard this seriously. Instead of voicing dissent with the nominations made in the proper way and at the proper place, they rather choose to openly criticize the Consistory's labors and go about gossiping and slandering the name of the brother who has been put on the nomination, lowering him in the esteem of others. Nominations are not made and announced to the congregation for that purpose. They are made and announced solely so that the congregation may have opportunity to seriously and faithfully perform their Godgiven duties in the selecting of office-bearers in the church. Approbation is not simply a privilege which may or may not be used. It is a duty; the duty of every member of the church.

Approbation means to approve. According to the first system of electing elders that is mentioned in the 22nd Article of our Church Order, there was but one approbation. The Consistory would then elect the number of elders needed and submit their names for approval to the congregation. When

this was obtained the installation could properly take place.

According to the system used by our churches, however, there is really a double approbation. Firstly, the nomination of names is submitted for approval to the congregation. At least for a two week period opportunity is given to every member to express disapproval with the nominations. Of course, such disapproval must be well founded. Secondly, the election itself implies approbation and then especially, if we consider with this that according to the Form of Installation of office-bearers, the names of those chosen by the congregation are again announced to the church for final approval. Without this approval the installation itself cannot take place. All of this indicates how thorough the election of office-bearers in Reformed Churches really is. It shows that one who is chosen is really called and selected by the church. Reformed people do not sanction the practice of individuals appointing others to office. However, if this practice is to remain what it ought to be, the church must be evermore conscious of her duties of approbation and may never neglect them.

When one has serious objections to the placing of a certain name or names on nomination, it is in the interest of all concerned that he voices them before the consistory at the earliest opportunity. If he is in error with respect to his objections, the consistory may be able to make him see it so that before his own mind the objections are removed. If his objections are valid, it is in the interest of the whole church that the consistory be informed so that they may act accordingly for the spiritual welfare of the flock. One who is really concerned with the true interests and spiritual welfare of the church will not hesitate or fear to perform this necessary duty. Only let it always be remembered that this work too is a spiritual work of love and must never be performed under the motive of a head-strong determination to get my way or else . . . but rather out of the desire to seek the well-being of the church and cause of Christ to which one's own wishes are always to be submissive.

Let all things be done decently and in good order!

G.V.D.B.

THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS

(Continued from page 138)

sophizing about the value of Christ's death. 2) That the thought is not a Scriptural presentation, even though it does not militate against the Scriptures, and may therefore stand. 3) That also in the light of the *Canons* themselves the infinite value and abundant expiatory worth of the death of Christ may be viewed more correctly from the point of view of: a) the fact that it was an atonement for sin against the *infinite majesty* of God (cf. Art. 1); b) the fact that it was the "only begotten Son of God, of the same eternal and infinite essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit," Who atoned; and, c) the fact that His death was attended with a sense of the infinite wrath and curse of God due to us for sin. (cf. Art. 4).

H.C.H.

ALL AROUND US

"God's Ways . . ."

On this subject Dr. Edwin H. Palmer, pastor of the Christian Reformed Church at Spring Lake, Michigan, writes in the November issue of torch and trumpet.

His brief article is obviously an autobiography though he heads his article with the words, "A chapter in the spiritual biography of a young pastor." He tells us about his early background, and how he was led to the Christian Reformed Churches. The purpose of his article was evidently two-fold. In the first place, he wanted his readers to reflect with him on how wonderfully the Lord led him through the way of conversion from a careless, worldly, individual into a profound love for spiritual values of a Calvinistic calibre as he believes they are most clearly set forth in the Chr. Ref. Churches. And, secondly, to remind his readers of the important link between Westminster Seminary of the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches and Calvin Seminary of the Christian Reformed.

I'm sure the article itself, though brief enough to be quoted in its entirety here, will be of little interest to our readers so I will not quote it. However, it affords me a nice opportunity to write a word or two about three other young pastors who perhaps could, but would not, write of almost a similar experience. I refer, of course, to the Revs. E. Emanuel, R. C. Harbach and J. A. McCollam, who are by this time quite well known to our people.

All have been informed of their background. Reared in backgrounds wholly foreign to our own, in churches of Arminianistic hue, the Lord led them through various off-colored schools as far as the Reformed doctrine was concerned even into the ministry of churches just as off-color. And then, by an act of sovereign mercy He led them providentially to us, where today they each serve in the ministry of our Prot. Ref. Churches where the Lord has called them.

When I read Dr. Palmer's article I could not help reflecting on these brethren whom it pleased God not only to bring into contact with our peculiar truth but also gave grace to them to abide in that truth, while others who were born and reared in it fell away.

Recalling how our people asked me often when first these brethren came to us: What are we going to do with them? I replied that I believed the Lord would provide a place for them, not knowing, of course, or even dreaming of the way this was finally to be accomplished.

Considering all this, I say with Dr. Palmer: God's ways are surely wonderful! Much more wonderful they are for the three brethren mentioned than even the experience of Dr. Palmer. For they surely are united to a church where "the sovereignty of God, predestination, the covenant, are purely taught. To Him be all the praise!

"The Church's Suburban Captivity"

Rev. Peter Y. De Jong, writing under the heading "Fathers and Brethren!" in the same issue of torch and trumpet mentioned above and reflecting on an article in the Christian Century with the above title, makes some interesting comments upon which we wish to centre your attention briefly. We usually enjoy his articles which are pithy and practical, and this one not the least. He writes as follows:

"In the SEPTEMBER 29, 1955 issue of *The Christian Century* a challenging article appeared under the title of 'The Church's Suburban Captivity.' In it the writer attempted to point up what he considered one of the greatest perils of American ecclesiastical life. Since World War II the trek from the larger cities with their overcrowded streets and outmoded houses to the suburbs with grassy plots and gardens has been growing apace. Millions have been spent in erecting church buildings in outlying areas.

"All this, the author notes, has left the churches in the city in the back-wash. The flight to the suburbs has almost taken on the appearance of panic. In these days of rising prosperity people don't want to be caught in the old neighborhoods. And the net result has often been that others less prosperous have moved in, whom the churches in their weakened condition and their fear of getting the 'wrong people' into the Lord's house have failed to reach. The whole temper of our spiritual life has been affected. Clergy and leadership are largely recruited from people with the suburb-mentality, which the writer considers a 'threat to the church's witness to Christ's lordship.' The concept of success has been introduced into the church with its emphasis on 'pushing competition,' 'distributive rewards,' and 'individualistic thinking.' In spite of its hyperactivity, the church with the suburb-mentality has been too successful in insulating itself from the masses.

* * * *

"This points up a problem which we also have with us, be it in a somewhat different form. As Reformed Christians we confess vigorously that the Lord Jesus Christ and not man (whether preacher or parishoner) gathers the church in the unity of the true faith. In principle we react strongly against any attempt to make the church 'class-conscious.' Traditionally we even insist that people should attend that church of our faith which is located nearest their homes.

"Much of this profession, I fear, has been with tongue in cheek. Practice has often given the lie to our principle. At times, indeed, it is advantageous and even necessary for people to retain membership in a church farther removed from them. The language used at worship, the mobility of people who live in rented apartments or rented farms, strong family ties in a church which stresses the covenant idea, and dwindling membership in certain congregations may justify some of this.

"But a problem has arisen which needs to be pointed up. During the past two decades there seems to be a growing awareness of 'class' within the Christian Reformed Churches.

And though the subject is a delicate one and lays all who mention it open to sneering or scathing denunciation, it demands discussion not only but strong resistance. It can hardly be denied that many of our people moving into a new area chose their church-home without thought to principle. Instead of asking where they are most needed, they select their church-homes on the basis of where they feel they 'will fit in best.' Thus in our larger centers we find certain congregations made up almost exclusively of day-laborers; other of farmers; others of business men; others of professional people. The parlance of the people betrays the rise of this trend unmistakably. We hear them talking about 'rich' churches, 'snooty' churches, 'common man's' churches, and 'rather liberal' churches. Although many of these remarks are unjustified and most of them are unkind, they sound an alarm which we do well to heed.

* * * *

"In the Christian Reformed Church we have always taken a measure of justifiable pride in the reality and vigor of our denominational unity. We are one in our common faith in Christ. We are one in the preaching heard in our pulpits from coast to coast. We are one in seeking to realize common goals in education, philanthropy and missions. But if this unity is not to be undermined or destroyed, every congregation ought as much as possible represent a cross-section of our Reformed believers. What more impressive sight can there be than a congregation assembled around the Word and sacraments comprising rich and poor, educated and uneducated, farmers, business men and day-laborers, teachers and doctors and lawyers, yes even black and white and red and yellow! The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is the great leveler of men. In the sight of God the souls of all his saints are precious. The church of the Saviour must do more in our days of social climbing and growing class-consciousness, stimulated by rising nationalisms throughout the world and increased luxury at home, than preach the principles of spiritual unity in Christ. We need desperately consistent personal practice.

"This requires a large measure of self-denial. All of us like a church where we can feel perfectly at ease with our little clique of friends and associates. But by seeking the gratification of these man-centered desires, we fail to grow spiritually ourselves and weaken our witness in a hopelessly divided and warring world.

"As ministers and elders we must warn incessantly against this growing evil. The sin lies at the door of every human heart. Here we must experience the relevance of the Word which teaches us, 'Owe no man anything but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.' In choosing a church-home that love will seek not itself but the welfare of others and the unity of Christ's body which is so essential in our sin-wracked world."

The problem which the writer in *The Christian Century* envisioned in the church in general and the Rev. P. Y. De

Jong in the Christian Reformed Church in particular is not, as I see it, a particular problem of the Protestant Reformed Churches. At least I am not aware of any class distinctions in our churches. I do not know of any "common man's churches," "rich churches," "snooty churches," "sound or liberal churches," etc. This is due, no doubt, to the fact that we are small, and now through the process of reformation have become even smaller.

However, if this can become a problem for a church as small as the Christian Reformed, and I have no reason to doubt that it can and is, there is no reason to hesitate to declare that in time it can become a problem also for us. And we can agree with most of what Dr. De Jong acclaims as the proper solution, namely, that "every congregation ought as much as possible represent a cross-section of our Reformed believers." Dr. De Jong does, however, in his solution pose another problem when he suggests that congregations should comprise among such as "rich and poor," "educated and uneducated," etc., also *black and white* and *red and yellow*." Surely this latter distinction brings with it several practical problems that are of no small significance. Space will not allow us to present them now, so we will pass them up for the time being.

There is, however, something in this article of Dr. De Jong that is applicable to us. I refer to the following: "Traditionally we even insist that people should attend that church of our faith which is located nearest their homes." I am not sure that we have this "tradition." But I wonder if it would not be good that we did, and that we would put it into practice. What I say here has particular significance for those who live in a city like Grand Rapids where we have four churches and another on the periphery. I know of several cases where people will by-pass a church within a few blocks from their home to go several miles across town to worship in another of our churches. There may be several reasons why people do this, as also Dr. De Jong suggests. And maybe these people can well defend their action. But the fact of the matter is that some of these smaller churches which could be helped with the addition of ten or twenty families are asking themselves and others the question: Should we not dissolve and ask our people to go to these churches which, because of their size, seem to draw these families that by-pass the smaller churches?

It seems to me that when a church has only seven or eight families and it could have twenty seven or eight if so many did not by-pass them, it is only playing church when the smaller church continues. And this expression "playing church" I apply both to the small church that continues and to those who by-pass it. It becomes a bit ridiculous when a church of only seven or eight families has to struggle for years to meet its Classical and Synodical assessments besides its regular running expense so that its members are taxed with budgets that are ridiculously abnormal while members who should be there to help this struggling congregation by-pass it to go to a larger church where the only incon-

venience is the element of travel and now and then the problem of sending their children to catechism, etc. It seems to me that nobody would be hurt and all concerned would be helped if a rule were imposed that all our families would go to the church nearest their homes. And they should be so advised by their consistories when family visitation is conducted.

M.S.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Missionary Notes

It is interesting and sometimes saddening to note that in those church circles where the teaching of the Heidelberg Catechism is clung to, although they are not of the Reformed churches as they descend from Netherlands, that controversies arise over the question of the relationship of salvation by grace alone and the good works of thankfulness. These controversies often arise because there is no sincere willingness to maintain both, but that each runs off the beaten path of the Heidelberg Catechism, aiming to maintain either works at the expense of grace, or grace, in the imaginary fear of works, which follow from grace.

One could allow a measure of justification for these battles were it not that the Heidelberg Catechism is so very explicit and clear on this point in both the questions 62, 64 and 86. In the latter question we read, "Since then we are delivered from our misery, merely of grace through Christ, without any merit of ours, *why must we still do good works?*"

The question of the necessity of good works in this *professionally defined sense* is a very actual one in the congregation of the Reformed Hoffnungs Gemeinde at Loveland, Colorado.

However, not all the brethren, whom I have met in my labors as Home Missionary, maintain the need of these "good works" in the sense that the Heidelberg Catechism speaks of it.

I have met brethren who are very afraid to say: Since we are redeemed by grace, without works of merit, we must now perform good works of gratitude!

How do they reason?

It is theologically linked up with their conception of "image of God," "the new man," "Faith," and other questions.

According to the popular expression of these laymen brethren, the *christian* is dead. All our life is *in* Christ. But that life in Christ doesn't seem to be imparted to the believer, so that although he was darkness he now, according to the *new man*, is alive in the Lord, a living member of His body!

Then quoting Question 5 of the Heidelberg Catechism and in reciting that beautiful answer they omit the "by nature" in the part that reads as follows: "For I am *by nature* prone to hate God and my neighbor." The consequence would be that they have to say: "I hate God and my neighbor,"

but then they get into difficulty with Question 1, in the answer of which we read "and *make me sincerely willing and ready*, henceforth, to live unto him." One rather doubts whether they would be willing to say: I hate God! But to this the omission "by nature" leads one.

By thus denying, virtually at least, the necessity and possibility of the good works of faith a good part of the marrow and bone of the Catechism is denied, and one of the "three things" which we must know to live and die in the enjoyment of the comfort of belonging to Jesus *is neglected!*

When asked: does not the Heidelberg Catechism speak of our putting off of the "old Man" and the "putting on of the "new Man," then the answer is: *Christ is the new man!* You answer: well and good! However, does this "new man" which is Christ not in anyway *make us "new man"*? The answer one gets then cannot seriously cause one to doubt that this is denied by them; and it is very clear that it is *harmfully neglected* by them.

I looked in a Catechism Book of a certain Rev. Hofer and found, that, according to Question 208, he cannot be held responsible for this neglect of maintaining that we *too* share in this "new man," which is really principally *Christ* as the life-giving Spirit. I read there in German "*Was meint die Schrift mit dem neuen Menschen? Antwort: Den Herrn Jesum Christum und was wir in ihm geworden sind.*" (I italicize) (What does Scripture understand with the New Man? The Lord Jesus Christ, *and what we have become in Him.*) This latter part seems to point in the proper direction.

The *motive* back of this rather strange reasoning, that Christ alone is the "new Man," without our also becoming "living members," who bear fruit in patience, is the fear of legalistic pietism, which looks for the ground of salvation within themselves, in their "pious" *experience*. And this fear is understandable. If the *performance* of good works were to be the "ground" of *salvation*, then *let* all works forever be cast out of the window! However, they are not the "ground" of salvation, but they are the "evidence" of faith and the "new man," of "what we have become in Christ!"

Not distinguishing properly (*richtig unterscheiden*) between the "ground" of salvation and the "evidence" of salvation in good works of thankfulness, they fall into the error of the Antinomist (*die Gegengesetzlichen*) which allow only for the activity in faith which says: my sins are forgiven, and do not allow for the sanctifying activity of a living faith, which reveals itself in the keeping of the law of love "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Only Question 21 then has a place in the life of faith; the Questions 63, 64 and also Questions 86, 87, 91 and 114 are to all practical extent not applicable to life. Thus the foundation laid so very carefully in Question 86 is not maintained, and a crippled life of sanctification is the result.

The "small beginning" (*Geringe Anfang*) is so distorted that it results in our life in nothing. (*Nichts*).

Faith *only* says: our sins are forgiven!

Now the congregation in Loveland understands that faith says, indeed, that our sins are forgiven, or rather: God says that to them *in their faith* in the Son of God. And in this same faith God makes them *sincerely willing*, henceforth, to live unto Him!

Faith to our people in Loveland is to be ingrafted into (einverleibt in Christo) and thus receive all of His benefits, also the benefit of a putting off of the old man and the putting on of the new man.

They understand that when speaking of the New Man and of "faith" it must not be forgotten "what we have become in Him" (See above, answer of Rev. Hofer)

The congregation fully agrees, in principle, with what Ursinus writes in his Exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism, Question 91. There Ursinus writes:

"II. *God works are to be done*: 1. That we may thereby testify of our faith, and be assured of its existence in us by the fruits, which we produce in our lives." Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the praise and the glory of God." "Faith without works is dead (Matt. 7:17; Phil. 1:11; James 2:17)."

G. L.

Joy in Pella

The Lord has done great things for us. In Him we rejoice. It was on October 27, 1955, in the evening, that our Classical Committee of Classis West was in our midst at our request to reconstitute our consistory as the Consistory of the Pella Protestant Reformed Church. At that meeting our Classical Committee not only was present but also our missionary, the Rev. Geo. C. Lubbers, a member of the mission committee, members of our South Holland, Illinois and Hull, Iowa churches and a brother and sister from Loveland, Colorado to rejoice with us that the Lord still kept some here in Pella that love our Protestant Reformed truth.

This meeting was held in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Cecil Vander Molen. The sermon was delivered by the Rev. H. Veldman, President of the Classical Committee, who preached on the text of Hebrews 6:17, 18. This sermon was very appropriate in light of our recent struggle to maintain that glorious truth of God's promise and covenant. God's promise is not conditional but an oath which He swore by Himself. That glorious truth which is the truth the Protestant Reformed Churches have always believed and maintained thrilled our souls again that night; and we understood with deeper meaning why a purification in our churches was necessary. We saw the reason why we must be a little flock again. We must maintain that truth even though it means a smaller congregation and denomination.

After the sermon the Rev. J. A. Heys, Secretary of the Classical Committee, took charge of the meeting and office bearers were chosen and installed. The congregation is a little flock: eight souls. We could not help but think of

Noah and how God has saved him and his family so that eight souls were saved from perishing in the Flood; and eight souls were saved from the evil world by the Flood. If we look at it from a human viewpoint, then it looks to be so foolish. But we are called by our God to go forward; and if God is for us, who can be against us? We had hoped and prayed that the Lord might open the eyes of those that left us as He showed us the error of our way. Undersigned was also guilty for a time as well as the rest of the consistory. But the Lord has given me grace to confess my error. His name be praised. I hope that He may use me as an example for others in confessing that I had erred in supporting those who became schismatic in order to defend the heresy of conditional theology.

I would like to call the brothers and sisters who still love the Protestant Reformed truth to get down on their knees and return with us. In this we would greatly rejoice, for therein God would be glorified.

Our meetings have been held so far in the homes of Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Van Weelden and of Mr. and Mrs. Cecil Vander Molen. The other side is still using the buildings. According to our incorporation papers the church belongs to those who remain true to the Protestant Reformed truth.

Now, brothers and sisters, pray for us. We need your prayers. We are by far the smallest congregation of our denomination. And our strength is not in numbers but in God. Pray for us that He may keep us faithful to the truth.

Cecil Vander Molen

Your reporter

Pella, Iowa

"A Word From Calvin"

"The reprobate wish to be thought excusable in sinning, because they cannot avoid a necessity of sinning; especially since this necessity is laid upon them by the ordination of God. But we deny this to be a just excuse; because the ordination of God, by which they complain that they are destined to destruction is guided by equity, unknown indeed to us, but indubitably certain. Whence we conclude that they sustain no misery that is not inflicted upon them by the most righteous judgment of God. In the next place, we maintain that they act preposterously, who in seeking for the origin of their condemnation, direct their views to the secret recesses of the Divine counsel, and overlook the corruption of nature, which is its real source. The testimony God gives to his creation prevents their imputing it to him. For though, by the eternal providence of God, man was created to that misery to which he is subject, yet the ground of it he has derived from himself, not from God; since he is thus ruined solely in consequence of his having degenerated from the pure creation of God to vicious and impure depravity.