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MEDITATION

A Contrast

"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores," etc.

Luke 16:19-31

Every commentator of Holy Scripture refers to the above Scripture as the *parable* of the Rich Man and Lazarus. And everyone whom I have ever heard speak of this same Scripture likewise refers to the *parable* of the Rich Man and Lazarus.

However, I doubt very much whether we have a parable here. If it is, then it is the only parable where a name is used: Lazarus and Abraham. Moreover, then it is the only parable where a heavenly saint speaks.

I think that we have here a piece of history.

But I will not insist on it; against such overwhelming testimony I do not dare to step into the lists of controversy on this point.

The story, whether history or parable, is striking, and informative.

There was a certain rich man. And there was a beggar named Lazarus. It is difficult to find a more striking contrast than this, especially when we listen to the various details describing their respective positions in life.

The rich man has no name, although the poor man is mentioned by name.

The rich man's name is of no consequence. The name he bears on earth will be wiped out. They are the nameless ones unto all eternity.

His earthly station was such that he is mentioned among the rich. That means that he has more than he needs. His clothing is the apparel of kings: purple and fine linen. His manner of life is wrapped up in mirth and plenty. He fared

sumptuously every day. That which ordinary mortals experience once in a while, and which is referred to in Scripture as the day of slaughter, was an every day occurrence with him. Music and banqueting, eating and drinking, wallowing in excess and riotous delight was the warp and woof of his life. He fared sumptuously every day.

Spiritually the rich man was dead. For when he died he went straight to hell.

What was his sin?

I think there are two sins of the rich man in this story that stand out. The first is that he fared sumptuously every day. No man may do that. He never grasped the calling of his life. That calling is to live soberly and work. The Dutch have a very expressive word for such sinning: *overdaad*. And at a very early age I was taught that all *overdaad* is sin. Literally it means "overdeed," and it means that our every thought, word and deed should conform to that which is sober, good, seemly and praise worthy. Your stomach has room for a good meal. You may not overcrowd it: that is *overdaad*. Apply that to all departments of your rich life, and you grasp the significance of this man's sinful life. Sumptuous living has in it the germ of hell.

His second sin was Lazarus.

His calling was to share his riches with Lazarus, and all such. He should have lifted him from his lowly place at the gate of his palace. He should have washed his sores and should have mollified them with oil. He should have shared his fine linen with him and made bandages for his numerous wounds. The dogs were more merciful than he: they licked his sores. And far from giving him the crumbs that fell from his table, he should have shared his food with him. And instead of the hovel to which he was carried every night, he should have shared his mansion with him. Lazarus was his constant sin.

And the two sins enumerated above emphasized another sin: he did not live a godly life. God was not in all his thoughts. He cared for just one thing: the carressing of his senses. He is a picture of the ungodly of Psalm 73: His eyes stood out in fatness; and he had more than heart could wish.

* * * *

Lazarus was poor, and a beggar.

But he has a name, and what a name: He whom God helps!

Yes, it seems a contradiction. It seems that he is the only one whom God forgot.

But he has a name. The godly have names, and their name shall be exalted in the day of Christ, for then they will receive a name which no one can read but the one that receives it. Moreover, their names are written in the book of life. And such name refers to the essence of their exalted place in heaven.

His earthly station was such that he is among the poor. And poor means that you lack that which you need according to the ordinances of creation. Poor means that you suffer hunger, lack proper clothing and shelter against cold and heat.

He was clothed in rags, and his rags were few, for the dogs seem to have no trouble to reach the sores that cover him.

He has few friends, and what friends! They cast him down every morning at the gate of the rich man's palace. There was no pleasant aroma round about his tortured frame.

But God helped him.

That is clear when we note the desires of his heart: he desired the crumbs which servants would cast to the dogs after every banquet.

The unions of the world fight for the full life.

But Lazarus desires just crumbs, the crumbs of the rich. He is satisfied with that.

There come the servants again with their burden of half eaten chops and steaks, bread and cakes. Lazarus hurries on hands and knees among the dogs to gather his portion for this morning. And in his heart he murmurs: Heere, zegen deze spijze om Jezus' wil! Amen. God helped him again this morning and he smacks his lips. His name is Lazarus.

Spiritually he was alive to God, the God of his salvation. He knew Him and communed with Him, all the dreary, painful days and nights. And he was satisfied with crumbs, saturated with the saliva of the rich man and his honored (?) guests.

Oh, beloved reader, Lazarus was truly a humble soul. I believe I called this story informative. Here is your information: Lazarus is the example in Scripture for sweet humility. And I would affirm that if you really know yourself and God, you *know* that crumbs are really too much for you. Then you know that there is but one thing that fits you and that one thing is hellfire for all eternity.

What was God's purpose with Lazarus?

The deeper the way, the higher the joys of heaven. Whom He loveth He chastizes. The way of the cross leads Home.

Lazarus is the true picture of the pilgrim and the stranger who travels the weary road to heaven. Lazarus is the example of those that are loose from the earth and that long for the Jerusalem which is above.

Now let us look at these two in their death.

In their life the rich man was first. But in their death Lazarus is first. And it came to pass that the beggar died.

We do not read that he had a burial, although it was mentioned of the rich man. A hole is soon dug, and the fetid corps thrown down, hastily.

But wait! Listen to the rustle of angels' wings. The angels were sent to carry his soul to heaven. And soon he hears the music of heaven, and, especially, Abraham's music harping on his harp. For Lazarus is placed next to Abraham, a place of honor.

Lazarus arrives in glory. He had to suffer a short period on earth, but even then, his suffering wrought him glory, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. He had given just a passing glance at his sores, the rags, the dogs, the crumbs, and the pain on earth, but he had on the other hand looked steadfastly at the things that were not seen, and now, after he died, he enjoyed those things of God's eternal covenant.

Now look at the poor-rich man, and shudder.

He also died, but he was buried.

We know those burials: they are an abomination to God and righteous men. What pomp and circumstance! What speeches and eulogies! What emptiness and fraud!

But he is dead! That was the end of his sumptuous living. He left his castle for good.

Angels came to carry Lazarus to his eternal home; did the devils come to get him when he died? Who were his companions to his eternal home? I know not.

* * * *

Now let us look at this duo in eternity.

What shall we call the rich man here?

I have it: a lost soul!

On earth he was on the way to gain the whole world. He certainly did his best to crowd as much into his covetous life as he possibly could.

Yes, he had gained quite a bit. He had been a rich man. But in the process he lost his own soul.

He arrived in hell. And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments . . .

How awful! What shall I write about that? I know so little about it. But the little that I know of hell makes me tremble. The text speaks of torments. And a little later it speaks of being tormented in this flame! And Jesus speaks of weeping and gnashing of teeth. Also, I hear of the smoke of their torments, which arise forever. And of the lake of fire, which is the second death. And the gnawing worm shall not die, and they shall be an abhorring to all flesh.

And do you know what is the most awful thing about the whole picture of hellish torment? It is that there is no end to it. Go away for, let us say, a billion times one billion years, and then return to this poor man in hell: he is still crying, weeping, gnashing his tongue in the pain of this flame. Oh, beloved reader, hell is so long! I hear them speak of despair.

And why?

That which a man soweth that he also will reap. We have to do with a good and righteous God. Hell fits.

But listen to him: he speaks. Father Abraham, have mercy on me! Wonder why he did not address the Almighty. Did he instinctively know that the time for mercy was gone?

Father Abraham, on earth I did not care to address Lazarus. I had no need nor use for his festering appearance. I loved the garish way. But now I have need of him. Father Abraham, make him my servant. Tell him to dip just one finger in heavenly cool water. One solitary drop of that water I crave. Bid him go to me, and spill that one drop on my heated tongue: I suffer so much in this flame! Father Abraham, have mercy on me!

And the answer is: NO!

Abraham will motivate his decision. You and he have your deserved portion: he deserves heaven for Jesus' sake; and you deserve hell for your wicked works' sake. Moreover, there is that gulf fixed! Oh that gulf!

But the answer is NO!

And then we listen to something passing strange: a missionary plea from hell!

Send Lazarus as a missionary to my father's house: I have five brethren.

Abraham answers: they have the Bible; there is no need to disturb the heavenly joy of Lazarus.

And the rich man replied: No, father Abraham! Notice that awful negative. He knows better than heaven. No, a missionary from the dead is more effective.

And the final answer? I think I spoke twice about the informativeness of this history, or parable. Here is more information if the wicked are deaf to the calling voice of God in the Bible, they will not be persuaded from their evil way, even though one rose from the dead.

The tale is over.

I continue to hear the sighing, the weeping of the damned. Believe me, dear reader, it is very true and very real.

And we all are charmed by the hallelujah's of Lazarus and of the multitude that no one can number. It charms my soul in eager expectation.

G.V.

Notice for Classis West

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet, the Lord willing, Wednesday, March 7, 1956, at Edgerton, Minnesota.

The consistories are reminded that all matters for the classical agenda must be in the hands of the stated clerk not later than thirty days before the date of Classis.

The Stated Clerk,
Rev. H. Veldman

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CONTENTS

MEDITATION —

- A Contrast169
Rev. G. Vos

EDITORIALS —

- The Apostates of 1953 and the Three Points.....172
Rev. H. Hoeksema

AS TO BOOKS —

- Lukas, vols. I, II, by Dr. C. Greijdanus.....173
Hebreen, Jakobus, by Dr. F. W. Grosheide.....174
Geschiedenis der Openbaring, by Dr. J. H. Bavinck.....174
By Grace Alone, by Herman Kuiper.....174
Rev. H. Hoeksema

OUR DOCTRINE —

- The Triple Knowledge (Part III — Of Thankfulness)....175
Rev. H. Hoeksema

THE DAY OF SHADOWS —

- The Prophecy of Zechariah.....177
Rev. G. M. Ophoff

FROM HOLY WRIT —

- Exposition of I Corinthians 1-4 (7).....180
Rev. G. Lubbers

IN HIS FEAR —

- The Sabbath in His Fear (2).....182
Rev. J. A. Heys

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH —

- The Church and the Sacraments.....184
Rev. H. Veldman

THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS —

- The Exposition of the Canons of Dordrecht.....186
Rev. H. C. Hoeksema

DECENCY AND ORDER —

- Family Visitation.....188
Rev. G. Vanden Berg

ALL AROUND US —

- "The Song of the Angels".....190
Rev. M. Schipper

CONTRIBUTIONS —

- Playing Church".....191
Rev. G. Lubbers
"Playing Church".....192
J. King

EDITORIALS

The Apostates of 1953 and the Three Points

The question now is whether they that departed from us still deny the doctrine of the Three Points of 1924 or agree with it.

On this hinges the question whether they are or are not still Protestant Reformed.

We are well aware that most of them claim that they still are and that they have never departed from the Protestant Reformed truth. But this does not mean anything whatsoever. History shows that heretics always make the same claim. They always like to remain in the church as long as possible in order to exert their corrupting influence from within. And in order to maintain their position in the church, they do not introduce their false doctrines openly and boldly and all at once so that every one may know what they really teach. On the contrary, they rather try to camouflage their heretical tendencies as long as possible, hide them under a semblance of truth, and gradually introduce them into the church.

This certainly is evident from the history of the Arminian controversy during the latter part of the sixteenth and the first part of the seventeenth century. Arminius himself, first as minister in the Reformed church in Amsterdam, and later as professor in Leyden, aroused suspicion occasionally, but up to his death in 1609 nevertheless remained a minister in good standing in the Reformed Churches. He was never deposed. When he was professor he did not openly introduce his false doctrine in the class room, but preferred to do so under cover in private talks with his students and lectures at his home. Even when in 1610 the well-known "Remonstrance" was composed in Gouda and first published in the Netherlands it was clothed in such language that most of the people and many ministers could not see anything wrong with it.

The first article of that document reads as follows:

"That God, by an eternal, unchangeable purpose in Jesus Christ, His Son, before the foundation of the world, hath determined, out of the fallen, sinful race of men, to save in Christ, for Christ's sake, and through Christ, those who, through the grace of the Holy Ghost, shall believe on his Son Jesus, and shall persevere in this faith and obedience of faith, through this grace, even to the end; and, on the other hand, to leave the incorrigible and unbelieving and under wrath, and to condemn them as alienate from Christ, according to the word of the gospel in John 3:36: 'He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him,' and according to other passages of Scripture also."

Now, what is wrong with this? the Reformed people of the Netherlands asked at the time when the Remonstrance was first published. Must we have so much trouble and con-

troversy in the church about this? To be sure, this is the infra view of election and men like Gomarus are supralapsarians, but does not infralapsarianism have a rightful place in the church? Do not the Arminians, after all, speak of an eternal and unchangeable decree of God unto salvation and unto damnation? It is true, thus some argued, that this first article makes the objects of this decree of God, not the elect and reprobate, but the believers and unbelievers, but does it not plainly and emphatically state that men can believe and persevere to the end only through the grace of God and through the Holy Spirit?

Thus the Reformed people in the Netherlands judged when first this Remonstrance appeared.

Nor can you blame them.

Remember that we read this first article in the light of later history and in the light of the Canons of Dordrecht, but the people at that time did not have this further light as yet.

And, even today, how many in the Reformed churches, do you think, would find nothing wrong with this first article, and even would prefer it to the definite doctrine of election and reprobation?

Yet, in this first article there is announced nothing else than the false doctrine of election and reprobation on the basis of foreseen faith and unbelief: God from eternity chose those that would believe and rejected those that would refuse to believe in His Son, Jesus Christ.

In other words, the Remonstrants plainly teach in this article the error of conditional election and reprobation.

Fundamentally, this is the same as the doctrine of the First Point of 1924 which teaches that God, in the preaching of the gospel is gracious to all that hear the gospel and which teaches that the gospel is a well-meant offer of salvation, on the part of God, to all men. For also such an offer is conditional, the condition being faith. And since the offer of the gospel is of God and is well meaning on his part, which implies that He is willing to save all, the condition must be fulfilled by man.

Again, fundamentally, this is the same as the doctrine of the apostates that departed from us, and who teach that the promise of God, in the preaching of the gospel, is for all that hear, if they believe.

To this we must refer presently.

The second point of the Remonstrance of 1610 ought to have warned the Reformed people in the Netherlands that the doctrine of the Arminians was by no means pure Reformed and Scriptural gold. It reads as follows:

"That, agreeably thereto, Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, died for all men and for every man, so that he has obtained for them all, by his death on the cross, redemption, and the forgiveness of sins; yet that no one actually enjoys this forgiveness of sins, except the believer, according to the word of the Gospel of John 3:16: 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever

believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life,' and in the First Epistle of John 2:2: 'And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.'"

Yes, indeed, this article teaches the doctrine of universal atonement: Christ died for all men and for every man.

It is rather difficult to understand how the Reformed people in the Netherlands could possibly accept this statement even at the time. Perhaps, some of them looked at it and shrugged their shoulders for a moment.

But, after all, do you not know that there are many preachers in the Reformed Churches today that would and do preach on texts like John 3:16 and I John 2:2 in the same way as the downright Arminians preach on them?

Besides, what is the difference between this and the teaching that the gospel is a well-meant offer of salvation, on the part of God, to all men? Or, again, what is the fundamental difference between this article of the Remonstrants and the teaching that God promises salvation to all if they only believe?

Can God offer what does not even exist? Can God promise salvation to all, unless that salvation is objectively accomplished?

Your answer is, of course: emphatically not!

Very well; but if this is true, then it is either or: God never offers or promises salvation to all, or Christ must have died for all men and for every one of them.

Then, too, the people in the Netherlands, at the time, continued reading and, as they did so, their doubts and fears that may have arisen in their hearts were put to rest and sleep again. For in the third article of the Remonstrance, the Arminians seem to stress the absolutely sovereign grace of God in the following words:

"That man has not saving grace of himself, nor of the energy of his freewill, inasmuch as he, in the state of apostasy and sin, can of and by himself neither think, will, nor do anything that is truly good (such as saving faith eminently is); but that it is needful that he be born again of God in Christ, through his Holy Spirit, and renewed in understanding, inclination, or will, and his powers, in order that he may rightly understand, think, will, and effect what is truly good, according to the word of Christ, John 15:5: 'Without me ye can do nothing.'"

Surely, no Reformed man can have any objection against this article.

Moreover, it would seem that by an article of this nature, the whole of the Reformed faith is really safeguarded. For, if anyone subscribes to the truth that faith is not the work or act of man at all, but it is the fruit of the sovereign grace of God alone, he can never, it would seem, go far astray from the Reformed truth.

Yet, this may still be Arminianism. The question is, after all: how absolutely sovereign do you conceive this a grace of God to be? Is it, perhaps, after all, something which God offers and which man can refuse to receive?

That this is the notion of the Arminians is plain from the next article of the Remonstrance:

"That this grace of God is the beginning, continuance, and accomplishment of all good, even to this extent that the regenerate man himself, without prevenient, assisting, awakening, following, and cooperative grace, can neither think, will, nor do good, nor withstand any temptations to evil; so that all good deeds or movements that can be conceived must be ascribed to the grace of God in Christ. But, as respects the mode of the operation of this grace, it is not irresistible, inasmuch as it is written concerning many that they have resisted the Holy Ghost, — Acts 7 and elsewhere in many places."

There you have it again.

It is all of grace.

But

Election is on the basis of foreseen faith.

Atonement is universal: Christ died for every man.

Faith is not the work or the act of the natural man. It is, on the contrary, only through the grace of the holy Spirit that man can possibly believe.

But

But this grace of God whereby man is regenerated and believes in Christ man may resist so that, after all, it is, ultimately left in the power of his own will whether or not he shall be regenerated and believe in Christ.

Fundamentally, this, too, is implied in the teaching of the First Point of 1924.

And it is also implied in the doctrine of the apostates of 1953 that the promise of God is general and conditional.

About this next time, D. V.

H. H.

AS TO BOOKS

Lucas, vols. I, II. (Luke, two vols.) by Dr. S. Greijdanus. Published by J. H. Kok, Kampen, the Netherlands. Price Vol. I f 7.95; vol. II f 7.50.

This is the second edition of this commentary of the former Dr. Greijdanus on the Gospel according to Luke. It belongs to the well-known series "Korte Verklaring" (Brief Commentary). This particular commentary on the gospel according to Luke appears in two volumes. The first volume contains, first of all, an introduction on the author, the purpose and the time and place when and where this gospel narrative was written, which is followed by the exegesis of the first twelve chapters. The second volume contains the commentary on chapters thirteen to twenty-four.

I need offer very little comment on this commentary. We know that Dr. Greijdanus' is always characterized by thoroughness, and this applies to this commentary also. This does not mean that we agree in every detail with his explanation. We would differ with him, for instance, in his ex-

planation of the linen clothes in the open grave of Jesus after His resurrection. And so there are other details. Nevertheless, I consider this a very good commentary, written in popular form so that it is easily accessible to all that can read Dutch.

Heartily recommended.

H. H.

Hebreen, Jakobus (Hebrews, James) by Dr. F. W. Grosheide. Published by J. H. Kok, Kampen, the Netherlands.

This is a volume belonging to the set "Commentaar op het Nieuwe Testament" (Commentary on the New Testament). It differs from the "Korte Verklaring" in that it is not written in popular style but appears in scientific form and is based on the Greek text. This does not mean, however, that only ministers and students can make use of this commentary. Others may very well consult it with benefit.

The first part of this volume is a commentary on the epistle to the Hebrews, the second part is on the epistle of James. Both contain rather extensive introductions on the authorship, readers, time and place of composition, etc. This is followed by an exposition of the text. Also of this commentary we may say that it is sound and thorough. Dr. Grosheide is a good exegete and writes a very clear style.

We will not make any particular comment. Naturally, one differs here and there with the explanation of the author. But in a brief review this is hardly proper. Hence, let it be sufficient for me to state that I wholeheartedly recommend this commentary to our Dutch readers, particularly to ministers and students who are acquainted with the original text.

H. H.

Geschiedenis der Openbaring (History of Revelation) by Dr. J. H. Bavinck. Published by J. H. Kok, Kampen, the Netherlands. Price f. 12.25.

The title of this book is, to my mind, somewhat misleading, at least, for us in America. Judging by the title we would expect a history of Revelation or of the Holy Scriptures, their coming into existence, etc. But the present volume offers a New Testament History. The sub-title is more correct: "Handboek voor the Kennis van de Bijbelse Geschiedenis" (Textbook for the Knowledge of Bible History).

The present volume reminds one more or less of the well-known work of Edersheim: "The Life and Time of Jesus" although, on the one hand, Edersheim is more elaborate, and on the other hand, it does not extend beyond the time of the Saviour. The book of Dr. Bavinck, after a few introductory chapters, describes the sojourn of the Lord on earth together with His death, resurrection and ascension into heaven as it is revealed unto us in the four gospel narratives. And in the second part, it relates the history as found in the book of Acts, the outpouring of the Spirit, the establishment of the first church in Jerusalem and the extension of the church among the gentiles, especially through the labors of the apostle Paul. It closes with a few chapters about the end

of the apostles, as far as it is known to us, and about the life in the church at the time of the apostles.

A worth while book, which I gladly recommend to the reader.

H. H.

By Grace Alone, by Herman Kuiper, Th. D. Published by Wm. B. Eerdmans Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. Price \$2.50.

This book is a treatise on Soteriology or on the way in which God applies the blessings of salvation unto the hearts of His people in Christ. I am glad, indeed, that I can recommend this book to our readers. The reason is that what the author writes in an introductory note is maintained throughout the book: "There need be no doubt as to what answer the inspired writer of the Bible gives to the very vital question how lost sinners are saved and restored to blessed communion with the Most High. They declare with great emphasis that the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth, who governs the whole universe with such a sure hand that nothing ever comes to pass except that which He has fore-ordained, also works out from start to finish with sovereign and irresistible grace the salvation of His chosen ones." I find that this is, indeed, the keynote of the whole book. In other words, the title of the book is true: "By Grace Alone." Hence, apart from minor criticisms, I am very glad to recommend this book to our readers.

The chapter on "Vocation, Regeneration and Mystical Union" I find somewhat confusing. But, perhaps, this is no wonder.

On page 32 the author quotes the fourth article of the Remonstrance of 1610. He calls it an "excellent affirmation." This is true as far as he quotes it. But the close of the same article certainly mars its excellency beyond repair: "But, as respects the mode of the operation of this grace, it is not irresistible, inasmuch as it is written concerning many that they have resisted the Holy Ghost."

But, read the book for yourselves.

H. H.

"The conceit of merit and justification by our good works is calculated to shake true Christian consolation, to disturb the conscience and lead men to doubt and despair in reference to salvation."

— Ursinus, Page 487, Idem.

"When (christians) hear the denunciation of the law, *cursed is he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them*, and consider their own imperfection, their conscience tells them that they can never perform all these things, so that they are continually led to cherish doubts, and to live in dread of the curse of the law."

— Ursinus, Page 487, Idem.

OUR DOCTRINE

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

AN EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

PART III — OF THANKFULNESS

LORD'S DAY 51

Chapter 1

The Prayer for Forgiveness

In the gospel narratives there are two versions of the Lord's Prayer, the one occurring in Matthew 6, the other in Luke 11. The former is part of the Sermon on the Mount; the latter was given in answer to a request by the disciples that the Lord would teach them to pray. Now in these two versions two different words for sin are used in the petition for forgiveness. In Matthew we find the word that is properly translated by our commonly used English word debts, while in Luke we find the word that in the Bible is most generally used for *sin* and that denotes an aiming at the wrong mark, a striving after a wrong purpose, a missing of the proper mark. We may well combine these two meanings into a single conception, for they belong together. To begin with the last mentioned term, it implies that God has so created us that in all our actions we are engaged as rational, moral creatures, and that therefore we must have an aim, a purpose for which we strive, a reason why we do things, an inner motive that urges us to act. It also presupposes that God has appointed for man the purpose for which he must strive in all that he does, and the motive by which he must be actuated in his whole life. In other words, God sets before man the mark at which he must always aim. That mark is, of course, the highest end of all things, for which, however, man must consciously and willingly strive: the glory of God. In all his life, inner and outward, in his thinking and willing, his desires and aspirations, in his speech and actions, in his personal life and in his relationships to others and to the whole creation, man has the calling to strive for the glory of God. This is the only end, which man must always reach. It is the only mark, at which he must always aim. This implies, of course, that man must always be actuated by the pure motive of the love of God. He must love the Lord his God with all his heart and mind and soul and strength. For only when he is motivated by that love of God can he reach the end and aim at the mark, God's glory. The word for *sin* which we are now discussing means, therefore, that the sinner is missing that mark, not by accident or in ignorance, not in spite of the fact that he exerts all his effort to aim at it, but willfully and deliberately. For by nature he is an enemy of God, and he will not seek God's glory. He deliberately aims at something else, his own glory, the satisfaction of the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the

pride of life. That, then, is sin. Whatever forms sin may assume, in its deepest sense it always means not to live from the love of God, and therefore deliberately to aim at another mark, to strive for another purpose than that of the glory of God. This is closely connected with the meaning of the word for *debts*, which we find in the Lord's Prayer according to the gospel of Matthew. Sin is debt. It is guilt. By not reaching the mark in all our life we come into arrears with God. We did not meet our obligations with the living God. The more we sin the higher we pile up our debt. And seeing we can never pay that debt, we become guilty and liable to punishment.

Now in this fifth petition we pray that God may forgive us our debts. What does that mean? We ask God to do something with our sins. What is that something? We ask Him to *forgive* us our debts. The word used in the original for *forgive* really means to send away, to dismiss. This is very significant, for it denotes that forgiveness is something very wonderful, that the prayer for forgiveness is a very bold and amazing request. It means that we implore God to dismiss our debts, to cancel them, in other words. And this implies, in the first place, that He dismiss them from His own heart and mind, so that He will never recall them again, never make mention of them any more, that He completely obliterates them from His book of remembrance, so blots them out that they can never be found any more. As the Heidelberg Catechism has it, we implore God never to impute our sins to us any more. It means, therefore, that God will never hold it against us that we have always missed the mark, always trampled His glory under foot, always violated His good commandments. But this implies more. In the judgment of God we can never appear as neutral persons. And therefore the prayer for the forgiveness of sins implies something positive. It means not only that God will not impute our sins unto us, that He cancels our debts, but also that He will judge us righteous and so consider us as if we had always been nothing but obedient children, that never once transgressed His holy law. And so this prayer to dismiss our debts implies, secondly, that God will not at all be angry with us for having missed the high mark of our calling, the glory of His name. We know that our sins are a fact. We are aware that God is terribly displeased with all sin. But we ask Him to dismiss our sins from His mind that He will never be angry with us. And again, this too has a positive meaning. For God's attitude toward us cannot be neutral. In this petition we therefore ask for God's favor, for His lovingkindness, His grace, His blessed friendship. So dismiss our debts that they never provoke Thy holy wrath against us, and thus consider us righteous, that we may be worthy objects of Thy favor. Such is the meaning of this petition. And finally, it follows that forgiveness means that God does not deal with us as sinners in His wrath, but that He treats us as righteous in His eternal favor. For in His wrath He must needs curse us, but in His favor He will bless us with all the goodness of His house, eternal life.

Chapter 2

Asking For Complete Remission.

We must not overlook the fact that this is a prayer, a prayer for the forgiveness of sins. In this petition, as well as in all the other petitions of the Lord's Prayer, we ask for something. We desire a blessing of God's grace. We do not merely request that God do something, that He cancel my sins and blot them out, that He dismiss them from His own mind; but we desire an answer from the Most High, so that we feel in our hearts that He heard our prayer.

That for which we ask is, as we have already explained, the blessing of the forgiveness of sins, which, according to the Heidelberg Catechism, implies not only that God does not impute our transgressions to us, but also that He forgive unto us the depravity of our nature.

In this connection we may note that in both passages, in Matthew and Luke, in which the Lord's Prayer occurs, the word for *sin* stands in the plural. In Matthew 6:12 we read: "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." The word for *debt* denotes that which we owe to God, which is that we love God with our whole being, all our mind and soul and strength. In Luke 11:4, however, we read: "And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us." Here the word for *sin*, as we have already explained, means that we miss the mark of the love of God. But what we wish to indicate in this connection is that in both cases the term denoting sin stands in the plural. In Matthew we find "And forgive us our *debts* . . .," and in Luke, "And forgive us our *sins* . . ."

This is significant.

The plural denotes that we have many sins, and besides, all kinds of sins, sins of our whole being, of our entire nature and life. There are, in the first place, secret sins, sins of the mind and of the will. They never come to manifestation and expression in our life and walk. Some of them are even hid in our sub-conscious mind. They are not known even to ourselves, even though we understand very well that they are there. To these the psalmist in Psalm 19:12 refers undoubtedly, when he writes: "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults." But other of those secret sins are known to ourselves only. We hide them before others because we are ashamed of them. Not infrequently we try to cover them up by an expression and manifestation in our outward walk, our facial expression, our words and gestures, which are the very opposite of the thoughts and feelings we have in our mind and heart. They are evil thoughts and desires, thoughts about God and man, vain and rebellious thoughts, dissatisfaction with God's ways, murderous thoughts and desires, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life. But often these secret sins come to expression in the outward manifestation of our life. There are the sins of the tongue, which are so vividly described to us in James 3:2-12: "For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a per-

fect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh." Of these sins of the tongue we are all guilty: sins of profanity, of failure to confess the name of our God where we ought, sins of boasting, lying, slander, backbiting, and blacking the name of the brother. And then, finally, there are the sins of the deed, by which we violate the whole law, and every one of its precepts. To these many sins, which are more than the hairs of our head the fifth petition refers when it puts the word for *sin* or *debt* in the plural.

But there is more.

The plural also denotes that in our prayer for forgiveness we do not deal with an abstract notion of sin, but with very concrete sins, which are known unto us and which we confess in this prayer before God with sorrow of heart. O, it is so easy to approach the throne of grace and ask that God will forgive all our iniquity and all our sin in general. Then we deal with the general concept *sin*, without any specific content. Then there is nothing personal in our prayer. We do not bring our own personal, individual corruptions before the throne of grace and ask concretely for forgiveness. But such is not the meaning of the fifth petition. It presupposes that we have clearly before our mind our concrete, individual transgressions, which we have committed and still do commit when we utter this fifth petition before the face of God.

H.H.

"The error of antinomism did not consist in this, that it postulated certainty in faith but that it made certainty the whole of faith and did not make allowance for other activities of faith, and, therefore, could not have ought else but an intellectual acceptance of the judgment (sententia): your sins are forgiven."

— Herman Bavinck, Geref. Dogmatiek.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Prophecy of Zechariah

The second vision — the four horns and the four smiths, i, 18-21 (In the Hebrews, ii, 1-4).

18. *Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and behold four horns.*

18. *And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What are these? And he said unto me, These are the horns that have scattered Judah, Israel, Jerusalem.*

20. *And Jehovah shewed me four smiths.*

21. *Then I said, What come these to do? And he said, saying, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man lifted up his head, but these are come to terrify them, to cast out the horns of the nations, that are lifting up the horn against Judah to scatter her.*

18. *And I lifted up mine eyes* — It means that a new vision engaged the prophet's attention. Since the visions came in one night, they must have followed one another in close succession. *And saw . . . four horns* — Whether the prophet saw the horns as belonging to animals and, if so, whether to one or to more animals are questions that the text leaves unanswered and thereby it limits the symbolism to the horns. The four horns scattered God's covenant people. This makes it clear that they represented political powers that were hostile to the church. The text states that there were four such kingdoms. According to several expositors the number "four" refers to four points on the compass, that is, to the four directions of the earth and in general to every direction and all directions. The meaning of the expression "four horns or kingdoms," is then taken to be that the church of our prophet's day was beset by enemies on all sides, that from every direction adversaries crowded upon the Jews during the post-exilic period, the Assyrian, Chaldean, and Samaritan on the north, the Egyptian on the south, the Philistine on the West, and Moabites and Ammonites on the east.

But according to others the expression "four horns" does not as such mean "horns on every side," "and should not, therefore, except for a compelling reason, be regarded as having this meaning. And as this reason is wanting, so it is said, the obvious meaning of the expression should be maintained, especially so since it does not exclude, so it is said, but includes the idea that the church of Zechariah's day, as is the case with the church of every day and age, was surrounded on all sides by enemies. And therefore they take the meaning of the expression to be "four horns" (so Keil and others), and not "horns" on every side." That is to say, to the mind of these expositors, it should not be denied that the primary meaning of the expression is "four horns," that directly the reference is to just so many horns or hostile political powers.

The expositors that maintain the expression in its ob-

vious and primary meaning differ somewhat in designating the four horns or kingdoms. Some name Pul, Salmaneser, Sennacherib (three kings of Assyria) and Nebuchadnezzar (king of Babylon). Others name Persia, Macedonia, the Seleucid kingdom, and Egypt. Still others, Assyria, Babylonia, Egypt, and Persia. According to Keil and others the four horns represent the four mighty empires, world powers, of Daniel's vision, — the Chaldean or New Babylonian, the Persian, the Macedonian, and the Roman empire. In favor of this view may be mentioned the following: 1) Jointly these four empires included all the kingdoms of the nations or nearly so of what was then the civilized world. Among the kingdoms included was also that of the Seleucidae, though for a comparatively short time it did exist as an independent kingdom. Much of the time Egypt was under the dominion of the world powers of Daniel's vision. 2) Each following power of Daniel's vision absorbed and superceded the preceding so that in mind and spirit the four were one, the one world power. And the beginning of this power was not Chaldea or the New Babylonia but the Old Babylonia of which the mighty Nimrod was the founder. Nor did this power become extinct with the passing away of the Roman empire but it survived and took on new flesh and blood in the kingdoms represented by the brittle feet and toes of the image of Daniel's vision — kingdoms from the consolidation of which will eventually rise the Babylonian or anti-christian world power of the book of Revelation. In principle Nimrod's kingdom, symbolized by the tower of Babel, Assyria its successor, the new Babylon by which Assyria was absorbed, the rest of the empires of Daniel's vision, the kingdoms represented by the brittle feet and toes of his vision, and the Babylon of John's Revelation are one. Always it is the same diabolical world power the prince of which is satan. That the Persians and Alexander the Great befriended the covenant people is not an objection to this view. Devoid of Saving grace, they were moved by carnal ambition and policy in doing the Jews well.

According to this view then the four horns represent the four empires of Daniel's vision, that is to say, represent the one world-power as constituted of all the kingdoms of the nations of what was then the civilized world and, in the final instance, of all the kingdoms of the nations of this present dispensation of the world but necessarily excluding the kingdoms of the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, the Gog and the Magog of Revelations xx. 8.

Yet it may be doubted whether this is the idea of the four horns of this vision. Verse 21 suggests too plainly that the four horns symbolize all the kingdoms of all the nations of the whole earth at any one time in history without any limitations and not alone the four empires of Daniel's vision. Included therefore are also the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, the Gog and the Magog and that one day, as deceived by Satan, will go up on the breadth of the earth, and encompass the camp of the saints about and the

beloved city (Revelation xx. 8, 9). That these kingdoms, all of which are hostile, are said to be four in number, is doubtless meant to convey the thought that at all times they beset the church on every side, that from every quarter they crowd upon the covenant people.

19. *These are the four horns* — In the first instance all the kingdoms of the nations by which the post-exilic church in Judea was beset on every hand and in the final instance all the kingdoms of all the nations of the whole earth, past, present and future, and by which the church has, is and always will be surrounded on every hand until, at the return of Christ, the world shall be made to pass away forever in order that the church may appear with Christ in glory, *that have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem* — By Israel is meant not Judah but the Israel of the ten tribes. For in subsequent chapters the prophet addresses his Gospel also to the ten tribes, to Ephraim (ix. 13) and to Joseph (x.6). That special mention is made of Jerusalem is owing to the fact that formerly the city was the religious center of the tribes. For in her had dwelt Jehovah in His holy temple. In the person of Nebuchadnezzar the four horns had overthrown Jerusalem, burned her gates, broken down her walls and plucked up the covenant people — the tribe of Judah — from their native soil and removed them to Babylon, in the person of the king of Assyria the four horns had carried away the Israel of the ten tribes to Assyria. To the four horns as represented by the Persians the post-exilic church in Judea was in bondage. In the person of the Seleucid Antiochus iv the four horns inaugurated against the covenant people the severest persecutions recorded in the history of the church. In the Book of Revelation (chapter xvii) the four horns are presented to view under the image of a beast bearing upon its head a woman — the apostate church — upon whose forehead is written, Mystery, Babylon the Great, Mother of Harlots and abominations of the earth, and a woman drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.

Always has and does and shall the church exist in the midst of conflict. Always is she beset by the four horns, that attempt to scatter her. For the church is a new creature in Christ Jesus. And her light shines — the heavenly light that Christ kindles and sustains within her. And, therefore, the kingdoms of the nation, by which is to be understood the reprobated world, know her not, because they know not Him. It is plain, therefore, that if the church is not to be destroyed from the face of the earth at anyone time but, on the contrary is to be gathered through the ages the four horns must be overthrown over and over as they continue to reappear in history. This is the promise of the succeeding verses, — a promise that underlies the good tidings of the previous vision. But now it is proclaimed openly and fully and without reserve.

20. *And Jehovah shewed me four smiths* — Literally workmen, artificers. The word is used of workers in wood as well as in iron and stone. Since it is not stated whether

the prophet saw the horns as having been made of wood or of iron, we have no way of knowing whether it is more suitable to think of the artificers as smiths or as carpenters. It is not impossible that the artificers were armed with hammers or with saws, poised to demolish the horns or to saw them in pieces.

21. *Then I said, What come these to do?* — Question of the prophet concerning the artificers. Unable of himself to understand the symbolism, he turns to the interpreting angel, for an explanation. *These are the horns* — The pronoun "these" looks back to the four horns of the previous verse. *which have scattered Judah* — "Israel and Jerusalem" is the thought to be supplied. *So that no man lifted up his head* — Language descriptive of the state of mind and heart of God's scattered people. They were overwhelmed. They were disconsolate. There was no spirit left in them. The state of mind of the church in Babylonian captivity is touchingly reflected in Ps. cxxxvii. By the rivers of Babylon, there they sat, and wept, when they remembered Zion. They hanged their harps upon the willows, and when their captives required of them a song, they would reply, "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land." Then there is that description of the scattered flock of God contained in the Hebrews (Chapter 11, 36, 37), according to which the faithful had trial of mockings and scouragings, moreover of bonds and imprisonment; were stoned, sawn asunder, tempted, slain with the sword, wandered about in sheepskins and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented. *But these are come to terrify them* — "these," namely the four artificers. "them," that is the four horns. The mission of the four artificers is to terrify the four horns, that is to overthrow, demolish them. *To cast down the horns of the nations* — That "horns" and "nations" are written with the definite article but that the horns and the nations indicated are not further identified show that the reference is to all the kingdoms of all the nations of the earth, past, present and future, without any limitation. And by setting forth the task of the artificers as consisting in overthrowing not alone the four horns by the many as well, the text here identifies the four with the many. This shows that the acceptable view is the one according to which the four horns symbolize not just so many empires but the total of hostile political powers by which the church is beset round about at all times. Certainly, in the first instance the four horns symbolize the hostile powers by which the post-exilic church in Judea was on all sides surrounded. The promise to Zerubbabel is that every one of these hostile powers will be cast down in order that God's little flock may not be overwhelmed by them and as a result the work of building God's house be interrupted or completely and permanently stopped. These kingdoms shall be cast down in order that Jehovah's house may be completed.

But through what agency were these hostile powers to be overthrown? Through an agency symbolized in the vision by the four artificers. It is not stated what this agency is, seeing that this has already been made plain. In the previous

vision appeared horses, some of which were red, some reddish-brown and the rest white. As we saw, the color red, according to the Scriptures (Rev. vi. 4) symbolizes war and bloodshed, and Reddish-brown the working of God's wrath in destruction by fire. Through Haggai as His organ the Lord had said, "Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth; and I will overthrow the throne of the kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, each by the sword of his brother (Haggai ii, 22)." Allow me to quote from my exegesis on this verse, "Indicated are the thrones of the kingdoms of the nations of our prophet's day and in the final instance the kingdoms of all the ages still to come . . . The Lord will overthrow them all and extinguish their glory. *Each by the sword of his brother* — Every man's sword will be against his fellow as was the case with the Midianite hordes with which Gideon did battle in the times of the Judges. But the statement has a more general application. It points to civil war and must be taken to mean that in their wars with one another the kingdoms of the nations destroy themselves as well as each other."

So then, according to these prophetic sayings the agency through which Jehovah would cast down the hostile powers surrounding on every side the post-exilic church of Zechariah's day were the very kings of these powers in their wars with one another in which they would destroy not alone one another but also themselves, their kingdoms. Even at the time that these prophecies were uttered, so I wrote, there were wars and rumors of wars as there are now at the present time. There was war between Persia and Babylon, Persia and Scythia, Persia and Greece, Syria and Egypt. It was all Jehovah's work. Said He not, "I will overturn the throne of the kingdoms of the nations . . ." So it went with the kingdoms of the nations of our prophet's day. And so it continued to go with them through all the ages to the present moment. So it does with them at the present time. The kingdoms of the nations are again talking peace but preparing for war. And so it will go with them through the ages to come until the arrival of that hour in which in their totality they shall be made to pass away forever. And, I repeat, it is all Jehovah's work. It is His way of seeing to it that His church is not destroyed from the face of the earth but abides in order that Christ may continue to gather her until the whole house is full, His temple built.

Still to be noticed is the fact that the number of artificers is equal to the number of horns, so that for each hostile power there is an agency that is ready to crush it. Or shall we say that for each kingdom there is a kingdom or combinations of kingdoms that is ready to cast it down, and all hostile to the church. For the artificers in the vision are not, as some have it, symbolic of worldly political powers truly friendly to the church. But the result is, nevertheless, that the church is not overwhelmed and destroyed.

Chapter ii

The Third vision — the man with the measuring line, 1-13.

The Gospel of this vision is that, with the kingdoms of the nations overthrown and thereby rendered harmless, Jerusalem shall be exalted, Jehovah shall come and dwell in her midst, and many nations shall be joined to Jehovah in that day, and shall be His people.

1. *And I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a man and in his hand a measuring line.*

2. *Then said I, whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof.*

3. *And behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went forth to meet him.*

4. *And said unto him, Run, speak to this young man, saying, As towns without walls shall Jerusalem be inhabited for the multitude of men and cattle therein.*

5. *For I, saith Jehovah, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be to the glory in the midst of her.*

I. *And I lifted up mine eye* — Again indicating that a new vision absorbs the prophet's attention. *A man with a measuring line* — In what sense this is a reiteration of the promise in i, 16 will become plain presently. This man is not to be identified with the interpreting angel, for it is plain that the latter is distinguished from him in verse 3. It is also doubtful whether there is any ground for regarding him as the angel of Jehovah. It seems that the sole purpose of his appearance in the vision is to give occasion for the proclamation of the gladdening that Jerusalem shall be exalted.

G. M. O.

The unbelievers evaluation of time:

"I backward cast my e'e
On prospects drear!
An 'forward, tho' I canna see,
I guess and fear."

— Rob't Burns

The righteous gratefully testify:

"In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never
be put to confusion . . . incline Thine ear unto me,
and save me . . . for Thou art my hope, O Lord
God." Psalm 71.

"Without the grace and continual direction of the Holy Spirit, even the most holy persons on earth can do nothing but sin, as is evident from the examples of David, Peter and others. Yea, without regeneration, no part of any work that is good in the sight of God, can even be begun, in as much as we are *by nature* evil and dead in sin."

— Ursinus, idem

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of I Corinthians 1-4

7.

We are still studying Paul's superb and masterful refutation of the party-strife and schism in the congregation of Corinth; the heinous sin of making a rend in the church of the living God!

They who perpetrate such evils never have a proper and sober consideration of the entire work and design of God in Christ Jesus; they act and speak as if the church were not God's peculiar possession, his dwelling-place in the Holy Spirit. They must be reminded of many things concerning the church, the first principles, the simple rudiments of the Kingdom of God. And if they are not those "who are perishing," but are spiritual men, to whom the wisdom of God is revealed in Mystery, then the reminder of such simple rudiments will be the means of grace to bring them to spiritual *sobriety*, (a nice word in Scripture) for God *works* grace in the hearts of the faithful, of all who believe, whether they be Jew or Gentile — through admonitions, warnings and threatenings!

Thus our Fathers of Dordt so soberly write in Fifth Head of Doctrine, Article 14 "And as it hath pleased God, by the preaching of the Gospel, to begin this work of grace in us, so *he preserves, continues and perfects* it by the hearing and reading of his Word, by meditation thereon, and by the *exhortations*, threatenings and promises thereof, as well as by the use of the sacraments."

This sobriety of the Fathers is a solid building upon the foundation, which Paul laid as a wise master-builder, besides which none other can be laid. And this work of the Fathers of Dordt has stood and shall stand the test of the touch-stone of the Word, serving for the advancement of the glory of God and the comfort of His church. And it is a ministry of sobriety and power which stands four-square upon this foundation of Paul and the careful building of the Fathers! See I Corinthians 3:10-15.

In the very warp and woof of this sobriety just referred to we also meet with the only *practical* wisdom. Here we do not give a certain normative value and validity to life (we moeten ook met het "leven" rekenen) but all life is measured by the very sober realization, that only the Word of God is the Regula Fidei, (rule of faith) and that the *exhortations* are a part of this preaching of the Word, the Regula Fidei. And all that, which does not measure up to *this* canon, this rule of faith, is not faith, but will be manifested in that day to be so much hay, stubble and chaff, which shall be burned with fire. Here the preacher cannot determine where the lines shall be drawn, how high the wall shall be built, but here he finds the lines drawn for him in the A-B-C Book of Scripture and all he does is trace lines! Here also he finds

the walls built which protect him and the church, the walls of Zion, and either he will hide himself in God's Secret Place behind these walls, content to dwell in Israel, or he will be irked by these walls and will them to be broken down as an evil in the City of our God!

Now let each beware how he builds! (I Corinthians 2:10)

Let that also be the prayerful carefulness of the writer of these lines!!

For who are we but ministers through whose preaching of the Word the Holy Spirit works faith in the hearts of the believers; and every preacher in his *own* place; each laboring according to the gifts which God has given him!

Such is sobriety in our evaluation of preachers, and such is also sobriety and power in the heart of every preacher who teaches in the church of the living God.

Let us, therefore, attempt to trace the A-B-C lines of Paul in this first Chapter of I Corinthians. And when we are able to trace these lines of Paul's teaching and admonitions, and to see this great Apostle's *pedagogical approach*, then it will also be evident that we are not spiritual idiots and imbeciles and morons, but that we have a good, healthy and a matured understanding of the Word; workmen who rightly divide the Word and, therefore, need not to be ashamed of it now, nor in that Day!

We will needs have to put spiritual things with spiritual, even as the little child in kindergarten puts natural things with natural by associating the mother bear and the cub, the doll and the doll-house, the mother and the baby, the farmer and his tractor. Such will have to be the spiritual intelligence, in STUDYING our text which intelligence can see the proper meaning of the wisdom of God in the *design* of our salvation, or in the proper relationship of our *calling* and our *faith*, and God's *election* and our *calling*. This is simply the A-B-C of the Scripture.

This is masterfully shown by Paul in our text: I Corinthians 1:26-31!

We read in these verses the following: "*For take note of your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, (yea) and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence, but of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption: that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.*"

We would call your sanctified attention to the following in this Scripture passage:

In the first place, we should notice that Paul in speaking of our "calling" places his finger at the very cardinal point in our christian experience where the wise design of God in

our salvation is indisputably demonstrated. It is exactly in our "calling" that we are given to observe that God's "folly" is wiser than the wisdom of men, and that his "weakness" is stronger than men! It is well to notice that Paul brings up this question, this reality of our "calling," exactly in this connection, and that, too, in his polemic against the party-strife which is rooted in a *desire* to glorify man!

Since Paul brings up the consideration, the *proper* consideration of our calling in his "exhortation" to cut off all boasting of men in the flesh and not in the Lord, we do well to observe what this "calling" implies according to Scripture and the confessions!

We notice the following:

1. That we should heartily agree with H. G. W. Meyer in his Commentary when he rejects the presentation of "calling" as being simply the equivalent of "Betuf," the outward circumstances in which they lived in Corinth, the occupation in their life! Such is contrary to the text and to all that the Bible teaches us else-where in unmistakable language concerning our calling into the fellowship of God's Son!

2. That we should also clearly understand that calling must here not be understood *merely* in the sense of the *external* calling, as seems to be the sense in the well-known passage of Scripture, where Jesus says: "Many are called, but few are chosen." Apart now from the fact that there never is a calling merely to the ear of man, whether it be in the elect, who are "being saved," or in the reprobate who "are being destroyed," it can be safely asserted that our text does not speak of the mere external calling. It speaks not of the calling of all, if they will believe, but our text speaks of the calling which the "brethren" have experienced and do experience in their heart and life, as the Word of the Cross is a wisdom and power of God in their hearts! And that no *mere* "external" calling can effect.

(Nota bene: it is well to observe that the Canons do not speak of the *external* "calling" but do speak of the Gospel being "externally preached." These two are by no means *identical* in Scripture and in the Confessions, even though they must be seen in their proper relationship to one another. Calling is effected *through* the preaching by the Holy Spirit, yet this calling and preaching are never identical. See Heid. Catechism, Question 65, where the answer is, "From the Holy Ghost, who works faith in our hearts *by the preaching* . . .")

3. That it should be clearly understood and also be our believing observation concerning our calling, according to Paul's earnest exhortation in this text, that "calling" here refers to the *efficacious calling* of the Holy Spirit unto true faith and conversion, that is, unto justification by faith, and a walk of sanctification which flows from such a living faith; kindled in our hearts through the Holy Spirit in the preaching of the Word of the Cross!

a. In the first place this is the very clear and explicit teaching of Paul in the first few verses of this Chapter. There he very advisedly and emphatically teaches that the church

at Corinth, who are admonished as the "brethren" in our text, are "called saints," that is, they are saints by virtue of their being "called" efficaciously of God. See verse 2, where we also read that the church is those "being sanctified in Christ Jesus," by virtue of the efficacious calling in Christ.

b. Secondly we should not overlook in determining the nature of the "calling," which must be considered according to Paul's admonition, lest we boast in man, that this calling rests solely upon the faithfulness and the almight of God in Christ. Thus we read in verse 9, "Faithful is God, through whom ye *have been called*" into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. This thus being called *into* (eis) the fellowship of his Son benefits. And this faith the *Holy Spirit* works in our hearts through the preaching of the Word of the Cross!

(Nota bene: When the Canons speak of this "calling into the fellowship with His Son" we hear our Fathers speak the beautiful language of III, IV, Article 11 where we read: "But when God accomplishes his good pleasure in the elect, *or works in them true conversion*, he not only causes the gospel to be externally preached to them, and powerfully illumines their minds by the Holy Spirit, that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God; but by the efficacy of the same regenerating Spirit, pervades the inmost recesses of the man; he opens the closed and softens the hardened heart, and circumcises that which was uncircumcised, infuses new qualities into the will, which to heretofore dead he quickens; from being evil, disobedient, and refractory, he renders it good, obedient, and pliable; actuates and strengthens it, that like a good tree, it may bring forth the fruits of good actions.")

c. Thirdly, when we see the "calling" as the efficacious calling, then alone can we see how Paul can connect this with the election" as he does in this passage, and only thus is this text ammunition against the vainglorying of schism and party-strife. For if the calling is efficacious, then only it is truly a divine work," evidently a supernatural work, most powerful, and at the same time most delightful, astonishing, mysterious and ineffable; not inferior in efficacy to creation, or the resurrection from the dead, as the Scriptures, inspired by the Author of this work, declares . . ." Canons II, IV, Art. 12.

Such is the sobriety with which our Fathers took notice of the *calling* wherewith we have been called.

They maintained the "golden chain" of election, calling, justification, and eternal glory!

More of this in the next instalment, D.V.

G. L.

"Let him be accursed, who says that it is possible to render obedience to the law, without the grace of the Holy Spirit."
— Jerome

IN HIS FEAR

The Sabbath In His Fear

(2)

We may have no God besides Jehovah.

On that we are all agreed.

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me." So reads the First Commandment.

To have graven images to represent God and to worship as gods is a great sin.

Not one of us will deny that.

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth." That we are taught in the Second Commandment.

God's name is holy and must never be used in vain.

We are agreed that He will visit the iniquity of those that hate Him and reveal their hatred by taking His name in vain.

At Sinai God declared "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain."

But that we must love and honor Him in and for His works is maintained only seldom and then with little enthusiasm.

Yet God gave the Sabbath exactly with a view to this.

Indeed, our Sabbath is not the Sabbath of the Old Testament Church. Our calling is not to drop all our toils and labor in order to spend a day in idleness. The value of the Sabbath is not in doing nothing. Instead God gave us the Sabbath that we might be *very* active.

Man was not made for the Sabbath; the Sabbath was made for man, Jesus declared to the faultfinding Jews who complained when He was active in the good work of healing the sick and when He told the healed-one to do the necessary work of taking up his mattress and going home.

Though the Sabbath was made for man, it was not made either for him as a day in which to be idle and to be able to catch up on some much needed sleep; or that he may have a day for his flesh in which he may have time to do the things for which he would not take time during the week because it was too inconvenient or would cost him a little of this filthy lucre. If we will not let go of our works during the week to accomplish a certain thing, we may not ignore the works of God on the Sabbath to steal time for our flesh. That is not why He made it for man.

God gave us one day in seven that we might serve Him in a special way and even to a special degree. And that special way in which we in the New Testament day are to serve God is that we give ourselves to contemplation and consideration of His great and glorious work of salvation. It is a day which He set aside in order that we, unhindered by

our daily toils, might gather with His people to listen to what He has to say to His Church and to sing praises to His name for all His great and glorious works. He demands that we take note of His works! And He gives us a day that we may do this to a special degree, to a degree greater than the other six days of the week provide.

This He has done, first of all, because of His sovereign jealousy according to which He insists that man honor and praise Him. In His works, both creation and of salvation, He reveals Himself as the true and only God besides Whom there can be no other God; Who cannot be represented by any creature since they all owe their existence to Him and are dependent upon Him; and Whose name is above every name and must be revered by all the creatures He has made.

According to the Psalmist in Psalm 19 He reveals Himself to us as our Creator and Redeemer. The Psalmist begins his psalm by stating that the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth forth His *handiwork*. And having spoken of His work of creation the Psalmist then speaks also of the work of salvation accomplished by Him, pointing out the perfection of God's law and that God must and does cleanse us from our faults and makes us upright and innocent of much transgression. Then he utters his prayer: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation (murmuring) of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength (Creator), and my Redeemer."

There is an intimate relationship between these two works of God: the work of creation and the work of salvation. Because He is the creator of all things, all things owe their existence to Him, are His possession and exist for His glory. The rational, moral creature, therefore, must continuously serve Him consciously and willingly. Even in the days of his youth man must remember his creator. Ecclesiastes 12:1. But man does not. Man fell away and in Adam turned away from Him and behaved as though he had the perfect right to use God's creation for his own carnal lusts; as though it were his own possession and as though he might use it to oppose the living God.

And exactly because the Creator is God, this all was according to His eternal counsel. For before the foundation of the world He decreed the work of salvation, Ephesians 1:4. The work of creation was necessary as the very foundation upon which the work of salvation would be wrought. The work of salvation is not to be conceived of as repair work upon the work of creation. The work of salvation was a further step in the eternal plan of God to glorify Himself in a people made like unto His Son, Ephesians 1:5 and 6. We were predestinated before the foundation of the world to be "to the praise of the glory of His grace." It is an unalterable principle according to Scripture that "Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual," I Corinthians 15:46. And in the work of salvation we are *regenerated*; we are born *again*. There must first be the natural birth. There must be a man that is born into this world before there can

be a regeneration. We must first be born from below before there is anything to be born from above. And so in the wisdom of God the work of creation is first as the groundwork and foundation for the Fall and the Cross, for the entrance of sin and the coming of grace. These two: the work of creation and the work of recreation or salvation are not opposed to each other. They do not militate against each other. They are two phases of the one work of God whereby He glorifies Himself in a people made like unto His Son. And that work He commands us to consider and for that work He insists that we praise and worship Him.

The Sabbath was made for man that he might have the opportunity to do this and might thereby enter into the joy of that work and so experience the rest that remaineth for the people of God.

Adam kept the Sabbath and worshipped God and praised Him for all the wonder work of creation round about him. He did not before his fall know God as his redeemer; but he could and did hallow the Sabbath by remembering his creator and by honoring Him for all these wonderful works which He had wrought. At Sinai God gave His perfect law to Moses and through him He revealed to Israel (the Church) which He had saved out of Egypt, the house of bondage, His will that the Sabbath be hallowed. And although Israel could not keep that Sabbath as the New Testament Church can and does keep it today; and although Israel was not ready to observe the First Day of the week; that very Fourth Commandment also served as a schoolmaster unto Christ for Israel, Galatians 3:24. Also in this Fourth Commandment Israel learned that the promises of God are unconditional and that there is hope of attainment of these promises only in Christ, Who will fulfill this Fourth Commandment for His people, and that otherwise salvation is hopeless and impossible.

In this Fourth Commandment Israel also learned that the proper observance of the Sabbath has to do with God's work. We are not to imagine that the regenerated child of God in the Old Testament times simply idled his time away on the Sabbath. There was no church service to attend. The only building for worship was the Temple. There were no Bibles in the homes of the various saints, and the greater share of them could not read them had they had them. But ceasing from their labors their minds undoubtedly were busy with recounting the works of God and instructing their children. And gradually, under the guidance of the Spirit, after the Israelites returned from Babylon and more vividly again were taught by type and symbol the great redemptive work of God, through the salvation out of Babylon and return to the typical heaven, they began to congregate in synagogues to speak and hear from God's Word that work of salvation which He promised to accomplish in Christ. They began on the Sabbath, when they could and should let their daily toils behind, to be busy with God's work and the rest that is the result of His finished work of salvation.

In the second place, God set one day in seven aside be-

cause man has need of such an arrangement in order to honor and worship God properly in this work of salvation. Man is after all a creature. And he is bound on every side by time and space. His mind can be on only one thing at a time. He cannot be driving his truck through heavy traffic and have it upon the mysteries of salvation at the same time. He cannot stand in his thoughts before the cross of Christ and at the same time be teaching a class of pupils the intricacies of a mathematical problem. He cannot plow a straight furrow and at the same time thumb through his Bible to compare text with text and search the Scriptures. Nor can the mother in the home tend to that which is cooking on the stove, set the table, hasten to see why the baby is crying, or feed the washed clothes through the wringer and at the same time give heed to the instruction in God's Word. She must have her mind on her work or the food is burned, her fingers get caught in the wringer, the baby pulls a pan of boiling water upon itself. No, we are creatures of time. And by God's ordinance we have work to do. "Six days shalt thou labor," He declares in His Word. But we also need one day in seven when we may be separated from all these works of ours to be busy with His glorious work of salvation.

The Sabbath was made for man that he need not tend to his punchpress, that he may leave his cumbersome truck in the garage, may close his book of mathematical equations and let his plow stand in the yard. Then he may put his mind on the things spiritual to a degree that was impossible for him during the six days of his daily toil and labor.

No, the New Testament Church does not want to make that day as the other six days. It wants to use that day *fully* for the purpose for which it was given. Does not the Heidelberg Catechism express the sentiment of the New Testament Church in regard to the hallowing of that Sabbath when it declares in the answer to the 103rd question which deals with the requirement of God in this Fourth Commandment: "... that I especially on the Sabbath, that is, the day of rest, diligently frequent the church of God, to hear His Word, to use the sacraments, publicly to call upon the Lord . . ." For that the Sabbath is given us.

In His fear that is the way we will use the Sabbath.

In fact, observing the Sabbath in His fear we will find that the day is one that is filled with spiritual activity and that we find it not long enough for all the things we should and desire to do.

After all, it is a foretaste of the eternal Sabbath, and that eternal Sabbath shall be filled with activity; and unto eternity we will not be finished with it. The worship and praise to God for His glorious work of salvation requires an eternal day for its execution.

The Lord willing we will have more to say of this in the next issue of the *Standard Bearer*.

J.A.H.

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)

Finally, in regard to the four great ecumenical councils, the first of NICE, the first of CONSTANTINOPLE, that of EPHESUS, and that of CHALCEDON: we have already presented their position on this question in connection with their legislation on the patriarchal system. We have seen that they accord to the bishop of Rome a precedence of honor among the five officially coequal patriarchs, and thus acknowledge him *primus inter pares*, but, by that very concession, disallow his claims to supremacy of jurisdiction, and to monarchical authority over the entire church. The whole patriarchal system, in fact, was not monarchy, but oligarchy (oligarchy refers to a government by a few — H.V.). Hence the protest of the Roman delegates and of Pope Leo against the decrees of the council of Chalcedon in 461, which coincided with that of Constantinople in 381. This protest was insufficient to annul the decree, and in the East it made no lasting impression; for the subsequent incidental concessions of Greek patriarchs and emperors, like that of the usurper Phocas in 606, and even of the sixth ecumenical council of Constantinople in 680, to the see of Rome, have no general significance, but are distinctly traceable to special circumstances and prejudices.

It is, therefore, an undeniable historical fact, that the greatest dogmatic and legislative authorities of the ancient church bear as decidedly against the specific papal claims of the Roman bishopric, as in favor of its patriarchal rights and an honorary primacy in the patriarchal oligarchy. The subsequent separation of the Greek church from the Latin proves to this day, that she was never willing to sacrifice her independence to Rome, or to depart from the decrees of her own greatest councils.

Here lies the difference, however, between the Greek and the Protestant opposition to the universal monarchy of the papacy. The Greek church protested against it from the basis of the oligarchical patriarchal hierarchy of the fifth century in an age, therefore, and upon a principle of church organization, which preceded the grand agency of the papacy in the history of the world. The evangelical church protests against it on the basis of a freer conception of Christianity, seeing in the papacy an institution, which indeed formed the legitimate development of the patriarchal system, and was necessary for the training of the Romanic and Germanic nations of the middle ages, but which has virtually fulfilled

its mission and outlived itself. The Greek church never had a papacy; the evangelical historically implies one. The papacy stands between the age of the patriarchal hierarchy and the age of the Reformation, like the Mosaic theocracy between the patriarchal period and the advent of Christianity. Protestantism rejects at once the papal monarchy and the patriarchal oligarchy, and thus can justify the former as well as the latter for a certain time and a certain stage in the progress of the Christian world.

LEO THE GREAT

In most of the earlier bishops of Rome the person is eclipsed by the office. The spirit of the age and public opinion rule the bishops, not the bishops them. In the preceding period, Victor in the controversy on Easter, Callistus in that on the restoration of the lapsed, and Stephen in that on heretical baptism, were the first to come out with hierarchical arrogance; but they were somewhat premature, and found vigorous resistance in Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Cyprian, though on all three questions the Roman view at last carried the day.

In the period before us, Damascus, who subjected Illyria to the Roman jurisdiction, and established the authority of the Vulgate, and Siricius, who issued the first genuine decretal letter, trod in the steps of those predecessors. Innocent I (402-417) took a step beyond, and in the Pelagian controversy ventured the bold assertion, that in the whole Christian world nothing should be decided without the cognizance of the Roman see, and that, especially in matters of faith, all bishops must turn to St. Peter.

But the first pope, in the proper sense of the word, is Leo I, who justly bears the title of "the Great" in the history of the Latin hierarchy. In him the idea of the papacy, as it were, became flesh and blood. He conceived it in great energy and clearness, and carried it out with the Roman spirit of dominion, so far as the circumstances of the time at all allowed. He marks the same relative epoch in the development of the papacy, as Cyprian in the history of the episcopate. He had even a higher idea of the prerogatives of the see of Rome than Gregory the Great, who, though he reigned a hundred and fifty years later, represents rather the patriarchal idea than the papal. Leo was at the same time the first important theologian in the chair of Rome, surpassing in acuteness and depth of thought all his predecessors, and all his successors down to Gregory I. Benedict XIV placed him (A.D. 1744) in the small class of *doctores ecclesiae*, or authoritative teachers of the catholic faith. He battled with the Manichaeans, the Priscillianists, the Pelagian, and other heresies, and won an immortal name as the finisher of the orthodox doctrine of the person of Christ.

The time and place of the birth and earlier life of Leo are unknown. His letters, which are the chief source of information, commence not before the year 442. Probably a Roman — if not one by birth, he was certainly a Roman in the proud dignity of his spirit and bearing, the high order

of his legislative and administrative talent, and the strength and energy of his will — he distinguished himself first under Coelestine (42-432) and Sixtus (432-440) as archdeacon and legate of the Roman church. After the death of the latter, and while himself absent in Gaul, he was elected pope by the united voice of clergy, senate, and people, and continued in that office one-and-twenty years (440-461). His feelings at the assumption of this high office, he himself thus describes in one of his sermons: "Lord, I have heard your voice calling me, and I was afraid: I considered the work which was enjoined on me, and I trembled. For what proportion is there between the burden assigned to me and my weakness, this elevation and my nothingness? What is more to be feared than exaltation without merit, the exercise of the most holy functions being intrusted to one who is buried in sin? Oh, you have laid upon me this heavy burden, bear it with me, I beseech you; be you my guide and my support."

During the time of his pontificate he was almost the only great man in the Roman empire, developed extraordinary activity, and took a leading part in all the affairs of the church. His private life is entirely unknown, and we have no reason to question the purity of his motives or of his morals. His official zeal, and all his time and strength, were devoted to the interests of Christianity. But with him the interests of Christianity were identical with the universal dominion of the Roman church.

He was animated with the unwavering conviction that the Lord himself committed to him, as the successor of Peter, the care of the whole church. He anticipated all the dogmatical arguments by which the power of the papacy was subsequently established. He refers the *petra*, on which the church is built, to Peter and his confession. Though Christ himself — to sum up his views on the subject — is in the highest sense the rock and foundation, besides which no other can be laid, yet, by transfer of his authority, the Lord made Peter the rock in virtue of his great confession, and built on him the indestructible temple of his church. In Peter the fundamental relation of Christ to his church comes, as it were, to concrete form and reality in history. To him specially and individually the Lord intrusted the keys of the kingdom of heaven; to the other apostles only in their general and corporate capacity. For the faith of Peter the Lord specially prayed in the hour of his passion, as if the standing of the other apostles would be the firmer, if the mind of their leader remained unconquered. On Peter rests the steadfastness of the whole apostolic college in the faith. To him the Lord, after his resurrection, committed the care of his sheep and lambs. Peter is therefore the pastor and prince of the whole church, through whom Christ exercises his universal dominion on earth. This primacy, however, is not limited to the apostolic age, but, like the faith of Peter, and like the church herself, it perpetuates itself; and it perpetuates itself through the bishops of Rome, who are related to Peter as Peter was related to Christ. As Christ in Peter, so Peter in his successors lives and speaks and perpetually executes the commission:

"Feed my sheep." It was by special direction of divine providence, that Peter labored and died in Rome, and sleeps with thousands of blessed martyrs in holy ground. The centre of worldly empire alone can be the centre of the kingdom of God. By Peter was Rome, which had been the centre of all error and superstition, transformed into the metropolis of the Christian world, and invested with a spiritual dominion far wider than her former earthly empire. Hence the bishopric of Constantinople, not being a *seeds apostolica*, but resting its dignity on a political basis alone, can never rival the Roman, whose primacy is rooted both in divine and human right. Antioch also, where Peter only transiently resided, and Alexandria, where he planted the church through his disciple Mark, stand only in a secondary relation to Rome, where his bones repose, and where that was completed, which in the East was only laid out. The Roman bishop is, therefore, the *primus omnium episcoporum*, and on him devolves the *plenitudo potestatis*, the *solicitude omnium pastorum*, and *communis cura universalis ecclesae*. (these views Leo repeatedly expresses in his sermons on the festival of St. Peter and on the anniversary of his own elevation, as well as in his official letters to the African, Illyrian, and South Gallic bishops, to Dioscurus of Alexandria, to the patriarch Anatolius of Constantinople, to the emperor Marcian and the empress Pulcheria. Particular proof passages are unnecessary.)

Leo thus made out of a primacy of grace and of personal fitness a primacy of right and of succession. Of his person, indeed, he speaks in his sermons with great humility, but only thereby the more to exalt his official character. He tells the Romans, that the true celebration of the anniversary of his accession is, to recognize, honor, and obey, in his lowly person, Peter himself, who still cares for shepherd and flock, and whose dignity is not lacking even to his unworthy heir. Here, therefore, we already have that characteristic combination of humility and arrogance, which has stereotyped itself in the expressions: "Servant of the servants of God," "vicar of Christ," and even "God upon earth." In this double consciousness of his personal unworthiness and his official exaltation, Leo annually celebrated the day of his elevation to the chair of Peter.

H.V.

IN MEMORIAM

We hereby wish to express our sincere sympathy to three of our members: Mrs. Harry Leep in the loss of her brother and Mrs. Alex Kimm and Mrs. Andrew Leep in the loss of their uncle,

MR. PETER W. ALBERDA

May the God of all grace sustain them in their sorrow and comfort them with the assurance that all His work is perfect and is always done in love to those that fear Him.

The Mary-Martha Society
Manhattan, Montana.

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 4. This death derives its infinite value and dignity from these considerations, because the person who submitted to it was not only really man, and perfectly holy, but also the only begotten Son of God, of the same eternal and infinite essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit, which qualifications were necessary to constitute him a Savior for us; and because it was attended with a sense of the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin.

The contents of this fourth article of the Second Head of Doctrine is surely not strange to anyone who is in the least acquainted with our Reformed confessions. There is really in this article, when considered by itself, no elaboration upon, nor any advance over the expression of the Reformed doctrine concerning the death of Christ as it is found in the *Confessio Belgica* or in our *Heidelberg Catechism*. Especially the latter dwells on this subject at great length. Cf. Lord's Days V, VI, XIV, XV, XVI. This does not mean, however, that the article is useless and could just as well have been omitted from the *Canons*. But it does raise the question as to why it was inserted.

In answer to the foregoing question we may call attention to more than one reason.

First of all, as we intimated in connection with Article 3, the fathers in this fourth paragraph hit upon the real reason for the infinite value and worth of the death of Christ. That value cannot be stated in terms of a mathematical equation; for as long as the worth of the death of Christ is equated to the number of sinners for whom His death was sufficient, then the value of His death is measureable and finite, not infinite. And no matter, then, whether you say that His death was abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of *several* worlds, you still measure in the realm of the finite. In this article, however, the fathers emphasize the truth that Christ's death was the death of the *Son of God*, and therefore of so great value and worth.

In the second place, we must surely view this article in the light of the history of the Arminian controversy as it came to a climax at the Synod of Dordrecht. One of the most important issues at the Synod was that of the Reformed confessions as they were already existent at the time of the Synod, namely, the *Catechism* and the *Netherland Confession*. The Arminians were on trial not merely on the basis of Scripture, but on the basis of those confessions. It was

in that very situation that the Arminians sought to revise the confessions also. But the fathers simply applied the already accepted confessions to the Arminian heresies, and in the process made plain what the Reformed position was in distinction from the Arminian departure. Here, therefore, as in all the *Canons*, there is nothing essentially new, but simply the reaffirmation of the confessionally Reformed position.

And in the third place, in close connection with the foregoing, we must not forget that there actually was a doctrinal issue at stake as to the truth concerning the death of Christ. In the so-called "governmental theory" of the atonement credited to Grotius, the Arminians made themselves guilty of denying the infinite worth and value of the death of Christ, and they taught that God merely reckoned the death of Christ to be sufficient punishment for the sins of mankind. They denied the element of the *satisfaction* of divine justice against sin; and placing divine mercy over against divine justice, they taught that though there was no actual payment of the guilt of sin in the death of Christ, God was nevertheless satisfied to "let the matter go at that," provided that men came to repentance when they viewed the demonstration of the justice and wrath of God in the cross of Christ. And therefore in this fourth article the fathers maintain over against the Arminians that the value and worth of the death of Christ is not merely a matter of divine reckoning without regard to fact, as though God can ever overlook sin and forget justice, but that Christ's death derives its infinite value and dignity from several real considerations, considerations which actually gave it infinite worth and value before God Himself, Whose divine wrath against sin is infinite.

These considerations are as follows:

1) *Christ was really man, and perfectly holy.* According to His human nature, He was born of us, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and possessed a human body and a human soul, a completely human nature, with all the human faculties and powers. At the same time, though He was born in the likeness of sinful flesh, He was perfectly holy, sinless. He had no original guilt, because He was a divine, not a human, person. And He was without original pollution because He was without guilt: the pollution of sin could not come upon Him because of His guiltlessness. And His actual appearance as the Sinless One was wrought not by the supposed fact that He was born from a sinless mother, but through the wonder of His conception by the Holy Ghost.

It is to be noted that according to the language of this article this is denoted one of the considerations in the infinite value and worth of the death of Christ. This is plain from the use of the coordinate conjunctions "not only . . . but also," (*non tantum . . . sed etiam*). The question is: how can this fact be an element in the infinite value of the Savior's death? And the answer is that this is not the primary consideration, but a secondary one. After all, this truth all by itself has nothing to do with the truth that Christ's death is of *infinite* value. If Christ were only man, even though without sin, His death would not be of infinite

value at all. But the fact is that if He was to die, and that too, for *our* sins, He must be such a real and perfectly holy man. And it is in this connection that His real humanity and perfect holiness is a consideration in the infinite value and worth of Christ's death.

2) *Christ is the only begotten Son of God.* All the emphasis in this article falls upon this truth. The Mediator was according to His divine nature "of the same eternal and infinite essence with the Father and the Holy Ghost." And He was a divine, not a human, Person, the Person of the Son of God in divine and in human nature. It was this Person of the Son of God who suffered and died for us, not in the divine nature, but in the human. And because it was the infinite and eternal Person of the Son, therefore His death is of infinite value and dignity.

3) *His death was attended with a sense of the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin.* This third consideration again stands in connection with the preceding. It is only because of His perfect holiness, and only because of the perfect union of the two natures in the one divine Person, that He could and did sense the wrath and curse of God, due, not to His own personal guilt and sin,—for He had none,—but due to us for sin. In a measure, of course, it is true of any man that in death he senses the wrath and curse of God. But how deeply a perfectly holy man, in whom there is no reason for death, and who, on the contrary, stands in perfect harmony with the living God, can sense, consciously taste, that wrath and curse of God in death,—and more specifically, the accursed death of the cross,—we can never imagine. But Christ tasted it! And because of the perfect union between the divine and the human natures in Christ, He was able perfectly to apprehend all the terror, all the fury, all the infinite depth, of the fierce wrath of God against the sins of all His own. What we could never do in an eternity in hell, that He did, when as the Son of God in human nature He tasted absolutely all that is expressed in the words "to be forsaken of God" in a moment of time. And therefore He could and did say in truth: "It is finished!" Such is the wonder of atonement through satisfaction. From these considerations the death of Christ derives its infinite value and worth.

* * * *

Article 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, and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction, to whom God out of his good pleasure sends the gospel.

This is undoubtedly one of the better known articles of the *Canons* in Reformed circles in this country. This fame of *Canons* II, 5 in the past arose from the fact that it was cited by the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church, 1924, as confessional support for the First Point of Common

Grace, which teaches that the gospel is a general offer of salvation, and that this general offer is grace on the part of God. And in a more limited sense this fame of *Canons* II, 5 arises, in our Protestant Reformed circles at least, from the fact that it was frequently used by the opponents of the Declaration of Principles. From this viewpoint, the article is of special interest to the Protestant Reformed reader.

That this is one of the better known articles of the *Canons* does not by any means imply, however, that it is as well understood as it is known. In fact, on the very surface already the contrary would seem to be true. It would indeed be strange if those who are so well-known,—almost I would say 'notorious,'—for their maintenance of the truth of sovereign election and reprobation and of irresistible grace would find opposition in the *Canons of Dordrecht*. And it would be amazing if so thoroughly Reformed a document as the Declaration of Principles would in this one respect be a departure from the confessionally Reformed line of the *Canons*. And it would be stranger still to find the doctrine of general grace maintained in any form, shape, or manner in that confession of the Reformed churches that is pre-eminently particularistic, and that concerned itself with the refutation of Arminianism. But strange things happen. And so let us make a thorough examination of this article with these matters in mind; and let us try at the same time to understand just what is the positive teaching of *Canons* II, 5. And let us not to be unmindful of the historical background of the article when we make this investigation. Is there something general about the gospel? And if so, what?

H.C.H.

WORSHIPPER'S ATTITUDE

"Once more we come before our God,
Once more His blessing ask;
O, may not duty seem a load,
Nor worship seem a task.

Father, Thy quickening Spirit send
From heaven, in Jesus' name,
To make our waiting minds attend,
And put our souls in frame.

May we receive the Word to hear,
Each in an honest heart;
Hoard up the precious treasure there,
And never with it part."

From an old Hymn

'Justification and regeneration are benefits which are connected and knit together in such a way as never to be separated from each other. Christ obtained both for us at the same time.'

— Ursinus, idem

DECENCY and ORDER

Family Visitation

A. The History

The twenty-third article of our church order states that one of the duties of the office of elder is "to visit the families of the congregation, in order particularly to comfort and instruct the members, and also to exhort others in respect to the christian religion." The original rendering of this was much more explicit. It read as follows: "They (the elders) shall faithfully investigate whether they (the members of the church) manifest themselves uprightly in walk and conduct, in the duties of godliness, in the faithful instruction of their households in the matter of family prayers (morning and evening prayers) and such like matters; they shall admonish them to these duties with consideration, but also in all seriousness and according to conditions and circumstances; they shall admonish them to steadfastness, or strengthen them to patience, or spur them on to a serious minded fear of God; such as need comfort and admonition they shall comfort and admonish, and if need be they shall report a matter to their fellow Elders, who together with them that are appointed to exercise discipline; and besides these matters they shall correct that which can be corrected according to the gravity of the sin committed; nor shall they neglect, each one in his own district, to encourage them to send their children to catechism."

It was felt that this redaction was much too lengthy for the purposes of the church order and so it was abbreviated to its present form but the original emphasizes the serious importance of this particular work as well as contains many helpful suggestions which may be profitably heeded even in our present day. If the general thrust of the above article is remembered, the danger of family visitation reverting into a mere custom will be greatly lessened. When the church is correctly instructed in regard to the nature of this work, her members will know what they may expect and when the elders call there will be no attempt to change this official work into a social visit. When the latter is done the whole purpose of family visitation is, of course, defeated. Where this occurs, it is not strange that attempts are soon put forth to abolish this entire practice or substitute it with other measures. This is today's trend in many Reformed circles but the fault does not lie in the practice but rather in the usage to which it is put.

Our church order does not exclude the ministers of the Word from the labor of family visitation although on the surface this might seem to be the implication. Article 16, which speaks of the duties of the ministers, does not mention this work while Article 20, defining the tasks of the elders, mentions it explicitly. It would seem that only the latter are, therefore, to perform this work but this is not correct.

First of all, it must be remembered that ministers are also elders. Secondly, their duties as shepherd of the flock according to the Form of Ordination requires active participation in this work. Thirdly, Article 55 of the Church Order states that "the ministers and elders shall use the means of teaching, of refutation, of warning, and of admonition, as well in the ministry of the Word as in christian teaching and family-visiting to ward off false doctrines and errors, etc." And, finally, the church visitors annually ask the question of the consistory, "Does the minister take part in house-visitation?" Nevertheless, the work itself belongs primarily to the office of overseers, the elders of the church, and the latter should, therefore, not assume the role of a silent companion to the minister but should also take an active part. It is part of their office.

The institution of family visitation is one of the fruits of the Reformation of the 16th century. It is strictly a usage of Reformed Churches and was originated by John Calvin, who also was greatly instrumental in restoring the office of the elder to the churches. It is the loss of this office in both the Romish and Lutheran churches that explains the absence of anything resembling the institution of family visiting. Lutheranism held to the traditions of Rome as much as possible, retained the Confessional and other usages though different in form from those of Rome. This has proved over and again to have been to her detriment. The break from the deformations which characterized the church during the centuries preceeding the Reformation was more clear-cut in the Reformed Churches. They abolished the traditions of men and reestablished the churches in the faith and practices of the apostolic church. The offices were properly restored. The people of God were given a real measure of spiritual liberty and the Word of God was elevated as the sole canon of faith and life. In harmony with this the practice of family visitation was instituted in its present form.

We write, "in its present form" because there are many intimations in the writings of the early church fathers that the early church had some practice which may to a certain extent be considered the antecedent of our Reformed practice of family visiting. In its present form family visitation originates with Calvin but the idea of pastoral care of individual sheep as well as the collective flock is of a much earlier date. That idea is found in Scripture and adorns the office which we are now discussing. The writings of Clement of Alexandria, Cyprian, Chrysostom, Gregory, Augustine, and others indicate clearly that already then there was some form of systematic visitation of the members of the church by the office-bearers. And this is certainly necessary for the effective preaching of the Word as well as the spiritual well-being of the church as we will make clear a bit later.

In this light it is clear that our system of family visitation is not designed or intended as a substitution for the Romish Confessional. Many have and undoubtedly some still entertained this thought. Even Monsma and Van Dellen in their "Church Order Commentary" offer this suggestion although

they also add that it cannot be verified. We quote from page 109, "But in the second place it must be remembered that home-visitation as established by the Reformed Churches took the place of the Roman Confession before the priest. None are permitted to go to mass unless they have been to confession just previous to the celebration of the mass. It may be that our fathers stipulated visits before and after the celebration of the Lord's Supper because of this Roman Catholic usage. We merely suggest the connection, inasmuch as we are not able to verify it at this time. This much is sure, inasmuch as a good many Church members had recently left the Roman Church, and were not well founded in the truth, repeated instruction and constant conferences would be very necessary. It should also be noted that the very first 'major assembly' of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, the Wezelian Convention of 1568, ruled that home-visitation should be conducted by the Elders *every week*. Today, as we know, loyal Roman Catholics still go to confession *every week*."

The idea of the Romish Confessional is clearly described in a little booklet entitled, "Chats With Prospective Converts," written by a Rev. M. D. Forrest. He writes:

"To obtain pardon of our sins we must go to confession — that is, we must tell the priest all mortal sins we have committed since our last good confession, or if one is making his first confession, all mortal sins he has committed since Baptism. We need not to tell venial sins in confession, though it is praiseworthy to do so. You will learn in due time all about sin and its distinctions. Mortal sin is grievous sin—one which destroys our friendship with God and deserves everlasting punishment. Venial sin is a lesser offence against God — one of those faults into which even just souls may fall. A little Catholic girl was once asked by a non-catholic companion why Catholics went to confession to a priest. The Catholic girl is reported to have given this simple beautiful answer: 'When Jesus was on the earth, He forgave people their sins. But He knew everyone's sins, because He is God. When He was leaving this earth, He gave His priests power to forgive sin. But the priest does not know the people's sins, and so they must tell them to him.'"

Certainly the Reformed practice of family-visitation is nothing like this. It is quite the reverse. It does not give the members of the church a periodic opportunity to expose themselves as to their gross and less serious offences. Neither is this necessary for the daily conduct of the members of the church is in itself an open book. The elders in conducting family visitation do not purpose to pry into the hearts of the individual but rather they purpose to instruct, exhort and stimulate believers to a life of sanctification in all its parts.

With the following quotation, taken from Dr. P. Y. De Jong's book, "Taking Heed to the Flock," we can agree:

'It is therefore a mistaken notion to argue that our Reformed fathers, having rid the churches of the confessional, felt the need of some substitute and hence introduced family visitation. In no sense of the word is the latter a substitute

for the former. Rather, in their heroic attempt to purify the church of Christ of unscriptural practices they returned to the Bible and found there a solid foundation for this type of spiritual work. Too long had the church through its leaders ignored an important aspect of her calling. And only by restoring and maintaining the proper spiritual contact between the church's officers and her members were they able to rejoice in an evident revival of spiritual life in the congregation."

Very significant then is this work of the elders of the church. Because of this we purpose, the Lord willing, to consider briefly different aspects of this work, such as, its Scriptural basis, its spiritual nature, objections that are raised to it, methods employed in performing it, and the like. With the above quoted author we too would say, "And those who give it (family visitation) more than passing consideration must agree that it has done much to keep the church strong and pure. This, however does not exclude the possibility of danger. Always when a practice has long continued in the churches, signs of degeneration put in their subtle appearance." May this never happen. May we in the Protestant Reformed Churches faithfully hold fast to this Reformed tradition, arduously cherish this wonderful practice and long enjoy its spiritual blessedness. And for those who desire to read more on this subject, we recommend for the Holland readers, P. Biesterveld's "Huisbezoek" and for the English readers, P. Y. De Jong's "Taking Heed To The Flock."

(To be continued)

G.V.d.B.

"In the same way we may also say, that good works are necessary to righteousness and justification in them that are justified, viz: as a *consequence* of justification, with which regeneration is inseparably connected. But we would prefer *not to use* these forms of speech. 1. Because they are ambiguous. 2. Because they breed contentions, and give our enemies room for caviling. (to raise frivolous objections) 3. Because these expressions are not used in the Scriptures with which our forms of speech should conform as nearly as possible. We may more safely and correctly say, "*That good works are necessary in them that are justified, and that are to be saved.*"

— Ursinus, page 485, Idem.

"Moreover, though we do good works, we do not found our salvation upon them; for we do not work but what is polluted by our flesh, and also punishable. And although we could perform such works (rewardable by grace) still the remembrance of one sin is sufficient to make God reject them. Thus we would always be in doubt, tossed to and fro without any certainty, and our poor consciences continually vexed, if we relied not on the suffering and death of our Savior."

— Belgic Confession, Article XXIV.

ALL AROUND US

"The Song of the Angels."

Such is the title which the Rev. Edmund P. Clowney, Jr., in the Presbyterian, Guardian of December 15, 1955, placed over his article reflecting on the passage found in Luke 2:14 which reads as follows: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men of his good pleasure."

We were pleased with his interpretation of this text. The article is too long to quote in its entirety, so we give you a snatch here and there but especially call attention to the last part which we consider most important and interesting. The reader is no doubt aware of the fact that there are several different translations given to this text. To this I called attention in the October 15, 1955 issue of the Standard Bearer.

In the first part of his article the writer calls attention to a "Hymn of Praise." Writes he: "What is the cause of this angelic joy? Why is the chorale of glory raised on the fields of Bethlehem? As we listen to the hymn of the angels we hear first a pure great shout of praise. *Glory to God in the Highest!* The glory of heaven shines from their song as from their faces. On earth the host of heaven ascribes to God the glory that is His in the heights from which they have come. Wherever the angel hosts may pass at the bidding of God, their faces turn to the lodestar of the great throne. Even from dark Judea, even in the language of shepherds, their burning cry must blend with the praise of seraphim in the heights . . . Surely it is with hymns of awful praise that the hosts of heaven march forth to sanctify God's name upon the rebellious. Before that shout of glory to God the walls of the powers of darkness crumble.

"But this not the cause of the hymn of the angels. They have not come upon the bestial tyrants of earth's kingdom or the polluted priests of earth's idols. They have come upon a little group of the poor and lowly. To despised shepherds they have come with a message from heaven. Their shout of glory to God is the response of heaven to the announcement of their herald — a child is born! . . . The sign that the heavenly archon gives is that this child may be found wrapped in a cloth and lying in a manger.

"How utterly incredible! How can angelic praise which reflects with such fierce purity the glory of the throne be concerned with the child of a sinful daughter of Eve? How can the heaven-centered hosts look with bursting joy to a feed-bin in Bethlehem?

"Yet here is the secret of their rapturous praise. Now that has come to pass which no angelic intelligence could have conceived. The spontaneity of heaven's praise flows from ever fresh revelations of the glory of God . . . Before the worshiping angels God has wrought the triumph of His grace . . . The angelic host could destroy men but it could not save them. Not by angels will earth's new song be sung,

but by the host of redeemed men, under the Prince of their salvation, who is not ashamed to call them brethren.' I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.' (Heb. 2:12).

"The shepherds, not the angels, must sing the new song of Moses and the Lamb. That vast host of light has come because the Lord of Glory has come . . ."

In the second part of his article the author of this article calls attention to "The Promised Peace." Here are some of the things he says about this:

"There is a second strain to the angels' hymn in which the saving purpose of God is declared even as it is adored. Having sung God's glory in heaven the angels also proclaim God's grace on earth: 'on earth peace among men of his good pleasure.' How great the mystery of salvation must appear to angels! In awe at God's coming to earth they ascribe to Him praise in heaven. But on earth His blessing is made known. This strange disordered world is to know His peace. Yet the angels' song does not seem to bring peace but fear. The shepherds shrink from the touch of heaven . . . Is it to this world that peace is proclaimed? . . . Peace! The world professes to long for it, yet it will not seek it. False men exploit the word for propaganda, and the vulture of world Communism is painted by Picasso in the form of a dove . . . yet that which they seek is not the peace of which the angels sang. There is no mistaking the meaning of peace on the lips of angels. They enter a world alienated from God and at enmity with Him but they come as evangelists, not as avengers, and their word of peace is the peace of blessedness, it is peace with God. The secret of the peace they proclaim, as the secret of the joy with which they praise God, is at Bethlehem. There can be no peace without a Saviour, and only the Lord of angels can save lost men . . . The God they worship is holy and cannot look upon sin. The very seraphim who ceaselessly cry, 'Holy, Holy, Holy,' shield their faces before Him who alone is holy.

"How can this Holy God give to his messengers the evangel of peace? . . . He who is the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, is born for His people that He might die for them. The road from Bethlehem leads to Calvary . . . Highest heaven has awaited the climax of God's redeeming work. This is the peace the angels declare. The Son of the woman must crush the head of the Serpent. Though the dragon seeks to devour the child with the sword of Herod, he must fail. And though he makes war with the seed of the woman through the ages, he continues to fail, even as the beast and the false prophet shall fail, for God gives to His own perfect peace."

As I said earlier in this article, it is the last part of Rev. Clowney's article that is to us the most important and interesting. In this last part he speaks "Of God's Good Pleasure." Under this caption he writes as follows:

"Perhaps no hymn is more familiar or more misunderstood: 'Peace on earth, goodwill to men.' For a long generation that isolated legend has appeared on Christmas cards.

We have come to think of it as a Christmas greeting from heaven in which God sends His good wishes of the season. If any misunderstanding could be more blasphemous than that, it is the one which would read this verse, 'peace on earth among men of good will.' God's blessing is thus reserved for the democracies as over against communism, or for cooperative suburbanites in preference to troublesome foreigners across the tracks. Superficially this translation is a plausible rendering of the original. The phrase is 'men of good pleasure.' But both the use of the term in Scripture and the thrust of the angels' praise leave no doubt that this is not man's good will but God's sovereign decree. Those who receive this promise of peace are those who are the objects of God's good pleasure. In love God has 'predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.' (Eph. 1, 5). The men of God's good pleasure are those who are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. The Lord of the angels is a sovereign Saviour. His peace is never a wish but a grant — 'my peace I give unto you.'

"God has not chosen many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble. The massed hosts of glory sing their nativity anthem before a handful of despised herders of sheep . . . Blessed are the spiritual paupers, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are these shepherds, these men of God's good pleasure who say when the angel troop has passed into the vast reaches of the night and they are cold and alone, 'Let us go now even unto Bethlehem . . . ' Blessed they are in their believing haste, and thrice blessed in that faith in which they see the Baby lying in the manger. Shepherds of the field or Magi of the East, — before that Child they are merely men of God's good pleasure — broken hearted sinners who have been brought to their Lord and have entered into peace. Those angels who sang in the fields of Bethlehem sing again in heaven over each poor sinner whom the Great Shepherd lifts to His shoulders and bears home.

"To us through the ages comes the hymn of the angels. We must take it and make it our own. For we and not the angels are the evangelists of this dark world. We must with lip and life give glory to God in the highest, we must sound forth the gospel . . . 'Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.' Only so shall the men of God's good pleasure find their eternal peace in Him. Then the songs of men and angels shall hail the Lord in that grand hallelujah of glory." So far the article.

I am pleased to observe that Rev. Clowney will have nothing of the translation of Luke 2:14 which says: "Peace on earth *among men of good will*." Nor is he satisfied with the translation "Peace on earth, *good will to men*." But the translation must be: "Men of His good pleasure."

Especially delighted I was with the following interpretation of him: "Those who receive this promise of peace are those who are the objects of God's good pleasure. In love

God has 'predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.' (Eph. 1, 5). The men of God's good pleasure are those who are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. The Lord of angels is a sovereign Saviour. His peace is never a wish, but a grant — 'my peace I give unto you.'"

This is not merely Reformed, but Protestant Reformed language, and it is that because it is Scripture. We rejoice when we read of others outside of our immediate ecclesiastical cricle who speak our language.

I am told, and was again recently, that not all the ministers in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church speak as does Rev. Clowney in the above article. How wonderful it is to be a member of a denomination of churches where we have reasonable assurance that the entire ministry speak the same Scriptural language and unitedly teach the same doctrines.

M.S.

CONTRIBUTIONS

An observation by the Rev. M. Schipper in the December issue of the Standard Bearer causes me to take the pen and write of his conclusions: *Non sequitur!* (It does not follow).

I refer to the following from the pen of my colleague: "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 churches continues. And this expression 'playing church' I apply both to the smaller 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 . . ."

Now I could make an observation about the qualification "ridiculous" when applied to a small, struggling church in Christ's Name. But I forbear!

I only wish to voice my own convictions on this matter which is "characterized" by the Rev. M. Schipper, rather than soberly evaluated from Scriptural "motives."

And of this "characterization" above referred to is say: *non sequitur!*

Now if Rev. M. Schipper were writing about an abstract question, it would not matter so much what he writes. Even then I would not agree with him, but I would let the matter rest. However, I believe he is writing about the small, but courageous congregation of Creston. At least I am certain that if the "condition" of being small prevails, Rev. Schipper will have given reason for the faint-hearted to be more faint, and for the courageous to feel that their courage is, after all, fool hardiness! Such need a word of encouragement, rather than to be told that they should simply disband — since it is a matter of ridicule to go on, should others not join their number!

Whether a group, large or small, is "playing church" certainly cannot simply be a conclusion from the fact that

they are small; nor does it follow from the fact, that a group is relatively large, that they are not playing church; nor again does it show that one is playing church when he by-passes another church of his denomination.

One plays church when the reality and sobriety is out of it; when the sacredness of the offices of Christ is not seen and exercised, be such a church *large* or *small*. And one does not play church when the offices are really honored, the Ministry of the Word is maintained, church discipline exercised, the youth instructed in Catechism, the covenant youth admitted to the Lord's Supper upon confession of faith. Such a Church has *the sanction* from the Most High God, and from Him who standeth between the seven candlesticks. And of such a church Jesus says: "I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast *little strength*, and hast kept my word and hast not denied my name."

And this is not changed one iota by the very *accidental* fact, that a few people cannot see the glory of the ministry of the Word and Sacraments, which are being exercised by Christ Himself in such a faithful, be it then small church in number! A mere "placement committee" surely would, by their efforts, not make such a church less one of "playing"; for such a church does not *play church in the first instance!*

Once more I, therefore, say: *non sequitur!*

Fact is, that the little church at Creston became small exactly because she maintained the faith, kept the Lord's Supper pure by excommunicating the unfaithful, who are walking in disobedience to Christ; and she did this in Christ's Name, reading the Form of Excommunication. This small church walked in this courageous way, lest the church would loose its dignity and simply "play church." And in this high and lofty task of "cleansing from evil-doers the city of our God" Rev. M. Schipper participated when Classis East so advised in Christ's Name. That was, I believe, not "playing church" — yet they were but eight families who performed this act in the Name of God!

I would not suggest this stigmatization of "playing church" upon small congregations, but would rather admonish with the sound words of Christ who said: "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Luke 9:62.

And this word is applicable, whether a small group grows numerically or not!

G.L.

Dear Editor,

Will you please accept this short article for contributions.

It is with deep sorrow of heart that I set myself to writing this article, but it is my firm conviction, that the article of the Rev. M. Schipper in the Dec. 15, 1955 issue of the Standard Bearer may not go unchallenged.

Let me quote just a small portion of his article to which I wish to make a few remarks, though I ask those who read this article to reread his article in the above mentioned Standard Bearer, in order to get the full import of my remarks. Quote: "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 pass by them, it is only playing church when the smaller church continues." This small quotation will serve to bring to your minds the article in question.

Rev. Schipper does not go so far as to accuse us of the sin of playing church. But to his mind, that is what we are guilty of. This is a terrible sin, the church, the body of Christ, to play with so holy a thing as that, that is terrible. Oh, if this is true, Oh God give us grace to repent. But do you know what this means, in the first place it surely means this that if the Rev. Schipper has the courage of conviction, he will not preach for us the next time he has a Classical appointment in Creston, for if he does he too is guilty of playing Church. It also means that all we have ever done in the past as a Congregation is null and void, the baptisms that have been administered are void. Our admittance to the Lord's table is also void, our excommunications are void. Oh, if this is all true I shudder, for God is not mocked.

But is it true that we are playing Church? What are the ear marks of the true Church? And if we have the marks of the true Church, then we are not playing Church. The ear marks of the true Church are the pure preaching of the Word, the proper administration of the Sacraments, and the exercise of Christian discipline. I'm sure the preaching of the Word is pure even as in all our other Churches, the administration of the sacraments are properly administered. and as for Christian discipline, I'm sure that none of our Churches bestowed the labour on the schismatics as the Church of Creston, the Church of seven or eight families. I do not say this boastfully, but rather in sincere gratitude to God for His faithfulness for it was and is only by his grace that we were able to do as He has instructed us.

The Scriptures say that where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them.

As for those who pass us by, I am inclined to agree with Rev. Schipper, though that is not necessarily so. They may have very good grounds for remaining in the Church in which they are now members though I must confess I have found very few that are able to do so. But that is their question: "Would we like to have more members?" Of course we would, it would sure make for a more rounded out Church life. But if God with-holds others from joining us, "Shall we complain?" Shall we become discouraged? Shall we discontinue? God forbid, let us strengthen ourselves in the Lord, and go forward in faith. That I am sure is our Calling as a small congregation.

J. King

REPORT OF CLASSIS EAST

held January 4, 1956

at the Hope Prot. Ref. Church

Rev. C. Hanko, chairman of the October Classis led in devotions.

The nine churches of Classis East presented credentials for the eighteen delegates which were accepted. After Classis was declared constituted, the Rev. H. Hanko, following the order of rotation presided. He welcomed the delegates and visitors, and then read the agenda for the day.

The Stated Clerk read the minutes of the October Classis which were then approved.

Elders D. Engelsma and R. De Young were appointed to serve as an expense committee for this session and reported later in the day.

Rev. J. McCollam and elders J. Heys and T. Elzinga were appointed to the Classical appointment committee and their report was later adopted as follows:

CRESTON: Jan. 22, R. Veldman; Jan. 29, G. Vos; Feb. 5, G. Lanting; Feb. 12, M. Schipper; Feb. 19, C. Hanko; Feb. 26, H. Hanko; March 11, G. Lanting; March 18, G. Vos; March 25, J. McCollam; April 1, C. Hanko.

KALAMAZOO: Jan. 15, M. Schipper; Jan. 22, H. Hanko, Jan. 29; C. Hanko, Feb. 12, R. Veldman; Feb. 19, G. Lanting; March 4, J. McCollam; March 11, R. Veldman; March 18, H. Hanko; March 25, M. Schipper; April 1, G. Vos; April 8, J. McCollam.

Subsidy requests were presented by the following: Fourth, Gr. Haven, Creston and Kalamazoo, the latter two only in case they obtain a minister. Holland was granted the right to present their request at the April Classis.

The Stated Clerk and Rev. R. Veldman were appointed to draw up an improved subsidy request blank to be presented to the next Classis for approval.

The reports of the Stated Clerk and the Classical Committee were received for information.

Second Church came with an instruction for Synod, which Classis approved, to change the number of delegates ad examina from three to two.

First Church also came with an instruction for Synod re reconstituting the Psalter Committee which Classis referred back to the consistory for not having sufficient grounds and informing First Church that they can come to the April Classis when their findings will be entertained.

Rev. G. Lubbers who was present at Classis was given an advisory vote.

Elder T. Elzinga closed the morning session with prayer.

The afternoon session was opened with prayer by elder P. Cnossen.

Classis elected the following ministers and elders as delegates to the next Synod:

Ministers:

PRIMI:
C. Hanko
H. Hoeksema
M. Schipper
G. Vos

SECUNDI:
G. Lanting
G. Lubbers
J. McCollam
G. M. Ophoff

Elders:

P. Cnossen
J. M. Faber
A. Haan
J. Kortering

H. G. Kuiper
H. Meulenberg
J. Rust
H. Zwak

Classis decided to meet next time in Fourth Church on April 4, 1956, D.V.

The questions of Article 41 of the Church Order were asked and answered satisfactorily.

Elder A. Haan was appointed to thank the ladies of Hope Church for their excellent catering services.

After a word of appreciation by the chairman for the cooperation he received from the members of Classis, the Rev. G. Lanting led in the closing prayer.

Rev. M. Schipper, Stated Clerk
1636 Martindale Ave., S.W.
Grand Rapids 9, Mich.