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MEDITATION

Jesus' Resurrection

Luke 24:13-35

It must have been rather late in the afternoon when two of the disciples of Jesus left Jerusalem for the village called Emmaus. Rather late, because the distance was about 7 miles and when they arrived there, it was toward evening and the day was far spent.

And what a day it had been!

On the afternoon of that day of Jesus' resurrection, we see two men leaving the gates of the holy city in order to direct their steps to the village called Emmaus.

We shall do well to be quiet. We want to listen in on their conversation. They are certainly enwrapped in it. Question follows question, remark follows remark. They speak and ask again. And ever the same answer: No, we cannot understand why Jesus had to die! Oh, why did He have to die? Who can understand that awful cross? Here we had placed all our hopes on this wonderful prophet. He would be the great general who would lead our legions in order to once more vanquish the armies of God's enemies. But no, without striking one solitary blow, He gave Himself to a handful of soldiers and servants, armed with swords and sticks. When they scolded Him and struck Him, He grew silent. He even rebuked one of us when we would strike and kill and destroy!

And yes, now He is gone! Nevermore to return. And did we not love Him? Oh, we love Him still even though He is gone forever. For He was so good and wise and wonderful in all His words and deeds! Our hearts are weeping within us for the Christ of God who died and went His solitary way!

And thus they talked and talked.

* * *

But, wait, here is another sojourner on the way to Em-

maus. Let us fall back and see what He wants. Listen, He will speak to our downcast friends.

What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another as ye walk, and are sad?

Oh, oh, that question found no friendly home. We can see that in one glance. The one, named Cleopas, turns himself impatiently to the questioner with somewhat of a stern rebuke: Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?

Oh, let us not be hard on Cleopas. The intended rebuke has a rather weighty reason. The things that happened there in Jerusalem were to them the most terrible that could have happened. Their very lives and hopes for the future were all wrapped up in Jesus of Nazareth. We can understand the annoyance of Cleopas and his friend. Besides, the things alluded to are about the most important ones of all the ages. So important that Paul after due study and contemplation, born of the Holy Spirit of God, came to the conclusion that Jesus' cross would have to be the sum and substance of his preaching. Come now, stranger, are you the only stranger here in Jerusalem? Dost thou not know of the cross of Jesus?

But our stranger on the road to Emmaus insists: What things?

And then the floodgates of their hearts are opened. The words gush out. You cannot help but notice how eagerly they relate the whole grievous story in well chosen words, the whole sad problem, including the main question that bothered them: "and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him!"

Two things stand out in their version of Golgotha and all that related to it. First, that they could find no place for that cross. Everything else concerning Jesus they could understand, nay, worship. He was a prophet, mighty in deed and word before God and all the people. In a few words you have all their happy experience of the last three years. They had been witnesses of the power of God unto salvation. The dead arose, the sick were healed, the elements were but servants in His hand, the poor received life and substance. And unto the spiritually hungry the Gospel was given. But

that Cross, oh, that Cross! We find no place for that cross. We thought that He would be the promised redeemer from the yoke of the heathen. But no. He was crucified and is now dead and buried three days.

* * *

And the second thing we **note** is their love for the Christ. Listen to Cleopas, he will tell you. Certain women have been at His **grave**. They tell of a vision of angels, of the **unbelievable story** that He lives — but, stranger, Him, oh, Him they saw not!

But as soon as they are silent again, He says to them: O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Your problem is no problem at all. You find no place for that awful cross, do ye? Well, that cross is the Divine answer to all your sad questions. It fits with Heavenly accuracy. But you have been and are fools and slow of heart in believing. Had you read your Bibles with more belief in your hearts you would have seen that the Christ of God in order to be Christ ought to suffer the things that you could not understand, in order that He might enter into His glory!

Don't you know the Scriptures?

Come, let us begin with Moses. Don't you remember the first Paradise and the happy pair of mortals that dwelled there? How they sinned and how Jehovah slaughtered an innocent animal in order to cover their nakedness? See the flood of innocent blood that was shed in history by sacrifices and offerings. Come with me and I shall show you, slow of heart, the cross in Isaiah's prophecy. Listen to the roaring of the Christ in the psalms of David. You will hear the exact words that reverberated the hills of Judah a few days ago.

* * *

No, we have not the exact words of the sermon, but we have the beautiful text. It is the Bible. It is the exposition of the Son of God.

And here is the emphasis: Christ must suffer and die in order to enter into His glory. Do you see it, Cleopas? Together with your friend?

It must happen. There was a Divine necessity. God wanted to glorify Himself in His children. The elect children of God whom He loved, had by His determinate counsel fallen into sin and subsequent guilt. Yet He loved them even while they were sinners. And He determined to have them with Him in heaven forever. And since the Son of God was **made their Head in His counsel that Son must needs suffer and die for them, so that He might bring all these sons and daughters to glory.**

The two wayfarers have grown silent. Not one question they asked. Far from interrupting the stranger, they have hung on every word He uttered: They drink in every word, every phrase, every thought expressed. Their eyes shone,

their faces lit up, their every mien and bearing expressed exultation.

What strange, passing strange scene we are witnessing.

A preacher of the Word of God. Yes, but He is both subject and object of His sermon. He preached the Christ and He is the Christ. What authority rung in every word.

And what audience to this perfect sermon. They are silent in admiration. They are taught heavenly wisdom. O happy souls. Would you not have liked to be there? But then, let us make no mistake. We have the sermon in Old and New Testament. And when the Holy Spirit has opened our heart we also may sit at Jesus' feet to listen and drink of the water of life. And we do unto God's praises.

* * *

But watch the closing scene.

Talking and listening the miles have dwindled away. There are the first houses of Emmaus. They approached their own dwelling. But the stranger held Himself as though He would go farther.

But no, stranger, no, that may not be. Please, enter our dwelling. There must be more to say, to listen, to enjoy. This is heaven to our souls. Our hearts are burning within us and it is all because of Thy words and sermon.

Sweet, simple, lovable children of God! They had enjoyed the bread of angels. And would fain prolong such bliss. It is not every day that we may sit at the feet of such a Teacher and Preacher. Oh, the Saviour's audience was indeed appreciative.

Yes, they constrained Him. It has become history. Cleopas said: Abide with us, fast falls the eventide! The day, O stranger, is far spent! Note the words that convention dictates. Their plea is: Abide with us! And here are the reasons, O stranger! It is toward evening. And: the day is far spent! Yes, but Jesus knew the real reason: they had learned to love this stranger. Their shining eyes have told their story.

* * *

And He went in to tarry with them. Angels hovered near their Lord and His children. Scene of heavenly harmony and bliss. Our hearts grow weary with longing for heaven and heaven's God.

Yes, and He was invited to sit at meat with them.

And then the second miracle happened. The first miracle was that Jesus would deign to appear to them in earthy garb. As long as their eyes were holden, that is, as long as their eyes just functioned as earthy eyes should function, they would not know Him. But now the second miracle happened.

When He took bread, blessed it, and brake, and gave to them, their eyes were opened and they knew Him.

Do you not notice how the mouth of Cleopas already

opens to say: My Lord and my God!? But too late. He vanished out of their sight. Why? Because no manner of misery, despair, sorrow or anything could ever blot out the image of their Lord whom they had learned to know through His Word. No enemy or devil could ever obliterate the image of Jesus that dwelled in their hearts through the Holy Ghost that was given unto them.

Are they sorrowing because Jesus disappeared out of their midst? Oh, why should we ask such a foolish question. Watch Cleopas and his companion. They rose up the same hour and back they went the same journey to Jerusalem. They will multiply the joy that burns within them. Oh, why do you think we speak and sing and make music this day?

The day is far spent and yet our Lord abides with us. And He shall abide until life's journey is over. Then again He will take the chief seat at the table of the Lord in His Father's house. To take the bread and bless and give it.

Unto our eternal joy and singing.

The Lord is risen indeed and appeared unto His own. Hallelujah! Amen.

G.V.

Announcements

Eastern Ladies' League

The Eastern Ladies' League meeting will be held in the First Protestant Reformed Church on Thursday, April 26, at 8 p.m. Our speaker for the evening will be Rev. G. Vos, who has chosen for his topic, "A Vision of God." Remember the date and be sure to plan on being present for an evening of Christian fellowship and for the edification of one another.

Mrs. Gerrit Pipe, Vice-Secr.

Men's League

The annual meeting of our Men's League will be held April 19 at the Fourth Church. The speaker will be Rev. H. Hanco. All our men are welcomed to attend this meeting.

Rev. M. Schipper
Jay Bomer

"Gracious God and Father, we thank thee through Jesus Christ, that Thou hast been pleased to give this our fellow-brother repentance unto life, and to cause us to rejoice in his conversion. We beseech thee, show him thy mercy that he may become more and more assured in his mind of the remission of his sins, and that he may receive from thence inexpressible joy and delight, to serve thee."

From Prayer of "Readmitting Excommunicated Persons"

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EDITORIALS

The Apostates of 1953 and the Three Points

To the camouflaged interpretation of the second statement of De Wolf by Bellflower (Doezema) we will call attention presently.

First, however, we must call attention to the second and third points of Kalamazoo 1924 for our subject speaks of the apostates and the three points. We will, therefore, quote the second and third points in order to see whether or not and in how far the apostates subscribe to them as they, undoubtedly do to the first point.

The second point reads as follows:

"Relative to the second point, which is concerned with the restraint of sin in the life of the individual man and in the community, Synod declares that there is such a restraint of sin according to Scripture and the confession. This is evident from the citations of Scripture and from the Netherlands Confession, Art. 13 and 36 which teach that God by the general operations of His Spirit, without renewing the heart of man, restrains the unimpeded breaking out of sin, by which human life in society remains possible . . ."

And the third point:

"Relative to the third point, which is concerned with the question of civil righteousness as performed by the unregenerate, though incapably of doing any saving good, can do civil good. This is evident from the quotations from Scripture and from the Canons of Dordrecht III, IV, 4, and from the Netherlands Confession, Art. 36, which teach that God, without renewing the heart, so influences man that he is able to perform civil good. . . ."

It is evident at once that the second statement to which the apostates subscribe is not directly implied in these points.

Only, we must emphasize that this second statement is so much worse than the doctrine contained in the second and third points, that the apostates should have no scruples to subscribe to these.

Notice that both, the second statement of the apostates and the second and third points of 1924, speak of the good that the unregenerate man can do.

The second and third points speak of the good of so-called civic righteousness. The second statement of the apostates refers to conversion.

The second and third points of 1924 emphasize that man of himself, unless God renews the heart, cannot do any saving good. The second statement of the apostates teaches that the natural man, before he enters into the kingdom of heaven, must and does convert himself. For they teach that "our act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter into the kingdom of God."

The second and third points of 1924 do, at least, ascribe

the so-called civil good to a restraining influence of the Holy Spirit. The second statement of the apostates does not mention the Holy Spirit, but speaks only of man's act of conversion which he must accomplish before he can enter into the kingdom of God.

The point I want to emphasize is that, if the apostates subscribe to the second statement condemned by Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches, they certainly cannot possibly have any scruples to adopt the second and third points of 1924.

The best they can do is follow Van Weelden, say *peccavimus*, we have sinned, and beg to be received again in the Christian Reformed Church. There is, perhaps, room for them there. As they have revealed themselves now, there is no room for them in our churches. We want to maintain the pure Reformed truth, as long as God gives us grace to do so. We maintain this truth also over against the heresy of the "Three Points." The apostates do not. We are only glad that they revealed themselves in time, before their corrupting influence spread any farther.

But it is alleged sometimes that we misinterpret this second statement of the apostates. They offer their own interpretation which differs from ours.

Let us examine this indictment.

It is in this connection that I briefly must refer to the interpretation offered by Bellflower (Doezema).

The first possible interpretation they offer is as follows:

"This second statement with contextual reference (sic!) among other things may refer to the requisites of salvation and may give prominence to the idea that these must be in the consciousness of one as fulfilled in Christ before such an one can and may lay hold on the claim of the riches of Christ and His kingdom."

Is this clear to you?

I confess that, to me, this statement is not very lucid. It needs a good deal of careful interpretation and analyzation before one can understand it. This is the reason why I spoke of a camouflaged interpretation. The second statement of the apostates is rather clear. It is that "our act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter into the kingdom of God." But if the above interpretation by Bellflower is supposed to be a commentary on that statement, the commentary surely is in greater need of explanation than the statement itself. I will not say that this camouflaging and darkness is intentional. It is possible that Bellflower could not quite see how one could interpret this second statement in such a way as to give it a Scriptural and Reformed appearance. But this does not alter the fact that this is a very dark commentary. And darkness and confusion it is very often in which heretics seek shelter.

But let me make an attempt to analyze this dark commentary on a clear statement.

1. It strikes us, first of all, that Bellflower does not want to take responsibility for its own interpretation of the second statement of the apostates. It does not say that its interpretation is the correct and only possible one. On the contrary, it employs very doubtful language: "This second statement with contextual reference *among other things* may refer to the requisites . . ." The second statement *may* mean this, but it also *may not mean* this. It is one interpretation among others. You may have your choice! Only, by all means, do not adopt the interpretation of Classis East and the only interpretation which the words permit. It does not mean that our act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter into the kingdom of God! Not only did the original author not mean this, but also the words themselves, though they are plain English, do not even suggest this! This according to Bellflower.

2. But what do they mean, then? Well, first of all, they refer "to the requisites of salvation . . . as fulfilled in Christ." Mark you well, the words "our act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter into the kingdom of God" do not, in the first place, refer to a PREREQUISITE, but to requisites of salvation. Moreover, they do not refer to anything we do or must do (our act of conversion), but to all that was done by Christ. And so, reader, whenever you should hear that you must convert yourself before you can enter the kingdom of God, you must understand that the meaning of these words is: you have to do nothing; Christ fulfilled all the requisites!

Which are those requisites which Christ fulfilled, or rather, which God fulfilled in Christ? Briefly, they are explained in the first part of our Baptism Form. According to that Form we are by nature children of wrath "in so much that we cannot enter into the kingdom of God, except we are born again." But the triune God fulfills all the requisites of our salvation. "For when we are baptized in the name of the Father, God the Father witnesseth and sealeth unto us, that he doth make an eternal covenant of grace with us, and adopts us for his children and heirs, and therefore will provide us with every good thing, and avert all evil or turn it to our profit. And when we are baptized in the name of the Son, the Son sealeth unto us, that he doth wash us in his blood from all our sins, incorporating us into his death and resurrection, so that we are freed from all our sins, and accounted righteous before God. In like manner, when we are baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost assures us, by this holy sacrament, that he will dwell in us, and sanctify us to be members of Christ, applying unto us that which we have in Christ, namely, the washing away of our sins and the daily renewing of our lives, till we shall finally be presented without spot or wrinkle among the assembly of the elect in life eternal."

These are the requisites of salvation as they are all fulfilled in Christ.

All, absolutely all that is requisite unto our salvation:

the covenant of grace, adoption unto children, the washing away of our sins, justification before God, the gift of the Spirit, His dwelling in us and His application of all the blessings of salvation to us, even unto eternal glory.

To be sure, there is another "part," not party, to this, that we love the Lord, fight against sin, and walk in a new and holy life before God in the midst of the world. But all this is the fruit of God's part. There are no PREREQUISITES.

Well, then, Bellflower (Doezema) understands the second statement of the apostates: "our act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter into the kingdom of God" as meaning really exactly what our Baptism Form teaches: all the requisites of salvation are fulfilled by God in Christ; we have nothing to add to our salvation; we can do nothing before we enter into the kingdom of God.

Can you read this interpretation in this second statement?

I cannot. Nor, I am sure, can anyone else.

3. But there is more to this commentary on the second statement. Bellflower does not simply state that the second statement of the apostates means that all requisites of salvation are fulfilled in Christ. That would be a little too obvious. But it explains that "before such an one can and may lay hold on the claim to the riches of Christ and His Kingdom" the requisites of salvation "must be in the consciousness of one." I suppose that this is the way in which Bellflower attempts to explain the term PREREQUISITE in the second statement of the apostates. The consciousness of the believer that all the requisites of salvation are fulfilled in Christ is a prerequisite to lay hold on the claim to the riches of Christ and his Kingdom.

Do you understand, dear reader, that this is the same as our act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter into the kingdom of God?

I do not. Nor does anyone. Not even Bellflower.

But more about this next time, the Lord willing.

H. H.

"And whereas he hath heretofore by his sins offended many, grant that he may, by his conversion, edify many."

Prayer of Readmittance

"Grant also that he may steadfastly walk in thy ways to the end: and may we learn from this example, that with thee is mercy, that thou mayest be feared; and that we, counting him for our brother and co-heir of life eternal, may jointly serve thee with filial fear and obedience all the days of our life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord . . ."

Prayer of Readmittance

"Law and Gospel both are factors in man's conversion; the law points us pedagogically to Christ, but the Gospel also casts its light back upon the Law."

Bavinck's Dogmatics, page 146, Faith and Conversion

OUR DOCTRINE

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

AN EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

PART III — OF THANKFULNESS

LORD'S DAY 52

Chapter Two

God's Sovereignty Over Temptations

Finally, there is what we may call the foe within the gates, our own flesh, which is always inclined to seek the things that are below, not the things that are above, and readily lends an ear to the siren-song of temptation. Oh, yes, the believer is indeed regenerated. He has a new heart. And according to that new heart he loves to walk in the way of the Lord and to seek the things that are above. As the Canons of Dordrecht have it, in V, 1, 2: "Whom God calls, according to his purpose, to the communion of his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and regenerates by the Holy Spirit, he delivers also from the dominion and slavery of sin in this life; though not altogether from the body of sin, and from the infirmities of the flesh, so long as they continue in this world. Hence spring daily sins of infirmity, and hence spots adhere to the best works of the saints; which furnish them with constant matter for humiliation before God, and flying for refuge to Christ crucified."

It is, therefore, quite impossible that we should ever escape temptation as long as we are in the flesh and in the world. As soon as we open our eyes in the morning, we are in the midst of temptations. When we walk the streets or ride the bus to our place of work, we meet with temptations everywhere. When we sit down in the evening to read our paper, temptations meet our eye. And when we close our eyes in sleep, temptations remain with us in the silent watches of the night, even in our dreams.

Nor is it the will of God that we should make the attempt to escape temptations and to withdraw ourselves from the world. Men have tried to do this, and failed. Men have sought the seclusion of the monastic cell and the solitude of a lone pillar in the desert for their dwelling place; but the temptations often were multiplied. But even apart from the impossibility of such escape from temptations, it is the will of God that His people should be right in the midst of the world, and that they should fight the good fight of faith, that no one take their crown. Surely, then, the sixth petition cannot possibly mean: "Give that we may never meet with temptations."

Nor do we do justice to the positive and definite form of this prayer when we interpret it as if it meant nothing more than that God may preserve us in the midst of temptations. To be sure, this is implied. We know that we must meet

with temptations in the midst of the world. We realize that we can never escape the evil triumvirate of the devil, the world, and our own flesh. We are conscious too of our own weakness. We cannot possibly stand and gain the victory in our own strength. Before we are aware of it, even the evil desires arise in our soul, the sinful thought occupies our mind. And we feel that we are in constant need of God's preserving grace if we are to stand in this bitter fight. And surely, our Father in heaven infallibly preserves His people unto salvation and glory, even if they fall. If I may refer once more to the Canons of Dordrecht, V, 7, "For in the first place, in these falls he preserves in them the incorruptible seed of regeneration from perishing, or being totally lost; and again, by his Word and Spirit, certainly and effectually renews them to repentance, to a sincere and godly sorrow for their sins, that they may seek and obtain remission in the blood of the Mediator, may again experience the favor of a reconciled God, through faith adore his mercies, and henceforward more diligently work out their own salvation with fear and trembling." And thus the sixth petition surely means that we turn to the God of our salvation in Christ, the same that called us out of darkness into His marvellous light, and pray: "Our Father Who art in heaven, hold Thou my hand. Give Thou me grace. Uphold Thou me by Thy almighty power. Give Thou me light and understanding, that I may always know Thy way; and always sanctify my heart by Thy Spirit and Word, in order that I may not suffer defeat, but have the victory in the midst of my enemies."

Still, if we would say no more, we would fail to do justice to the terms of this sixth petition.

These terms ought to convince us that the conception is far more positive and bold: "*Lead* us not into temptation."

This surely is an acknowledgment of the absolute sovereignty of God even with respect to sin and evil, even over the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh, so that we cannot be overcome by temptation unless God Himself leads us into it. It is evident that by these words of the sixth petition temptation is considered as a snare into which we are led. To be sure, into this snare of temptation we are led by the devil and his host, by the world, by the lust of our own sinful heart, and by the pride of life. But the child of God, praying from the depths of his regenerated heart, knows that above them all, and that too, as their absolute Lord, stands his Father in heaven. Who employs the devil, the world, and even his own sinful flesh for His adorable, sovereign purpose. In the ultimate sense of the word the believer can never fall into sin, and thus be ensnared in the temptation, unless God, the only Potentate of potentates, leads him into it. And deeply conscious of this sovereignty of God with respect to all temptations, he does not pray that he may never meet with temptation, nor only that in the midst of temptation his Father in heaven may preserve him, but very positively, "*Lead* me not into temptation."

This truth too is confessed by the Reformed churches in

the Canons of Dordrecht, V, 4, although in this article it speaks of God's "righteous permission," rather than of His strict and absolute Lordship in regard to temptations: "Although the weakness of the flesh cannot prevail against the power of God, who confirms and preserves true believers in a state of grace, yet converts are not always so influenced and actuated by the Spirit of God, as not in some particular instances sinfully to deviate from the guidance of divine grace, so as to be seduced by, and comply with the lusts of the flesh; they must, therefore, be constant in watching and prayer, that they be not led into temptation. When these are neglected, they are not only liable to be drawn into great and heinous sins, by Satan, the world and the flesh, but sometimes by the righteous permission of God actually fall into these evils. This, the lamentable fall of David, Peter, and other saints described in Holy Scripture, demonstrates."

There arise, of course, two or three questions here that must be briefly considered, and answered as far as this is possible. The first is whether we do not make God the author of sin by thus presenting the matter. Our answer is: God forbid! For, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." Jas. 1:12. God has no delight in sin, but hates it. Even when He leads us into temptation, it is our own sinful flesh that deceives us and that has delight in iniquity. Yet the Bible teaches us plainly that it is He that leads His people even when they stumble and fall. Did you never read in the Scriptures that God in His anger against Israel moved David to number the people? II Sam. 24:1. And do not God's people in Isaiah pray: "O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our hearts from thy fear?" Isa. 63:17. And what else could be the meaning of this sixth petition, "Lead us not into temptation," than that God alone ultimately has the power to ensnare us in our own sinful lusts? And what else is necessary for Him to do, in order to lead us into the trap of sin, than to control and arrange for all the circumstances of the temptation, cause us to meet them, and then withhold His grace from us for a season, or even to move our own sinful flesh? Not He, but we ourselves are the author of our own sin, even when He so leads us that we fall into sin through the temptation.

The second question is this: but why should the Lord ever so lead His people that they stumble and fall?

There may be several reasons, but a very common one is that He desires to teach us a lesson, that we may be cured of our own pride and conceit and self-confidence. Perhaps we have a deeply rooted personal weakness or sin of character, and God lets us go all the way of that sin, in order that we may learn to abhor it. Perhaps we are proud, and God causes us to stumble over our own pride, that we may be humbled. Perhaps we are forever walking on the very edge of the world, and God lets us slip right into the world, that we may be cured of our carelessness, and be sanctified.

Perhaps we are playing with the fire of worldly pleasures, and God causes us to burn ourselves badly, that we may learn to keep our garments clean. The apostle Peter was inclined to trust in self and to boast in his own strength. And the Lord warned him. But the more he was warned, the more loudly he boasted that he was ready to go with Jesus into prison and into death, and that he would never be offended. And God prepared all the circumstances for Peter's temptation. He let him climb the full height of his self-confidence, in order then to withdraw His grace and Spirit from him, though not entirely, and expose his utter lack of strength, by leading him into the trap of temptation when he denied his Lord. And thus the Lord sanctifies and reforms His children in a pedagogical way, that they may be saved. But the sincere child of God is deathly afraid of this extreme remedy. He dreads it. He hopes that it may never be necessary. And therefore he prays: "Lead me not into temptation." There is in this prayer, first of all, the expression of a deep abhorrence of all sin and a sincere desire to fight against it. He who utters this prayer and then wilfully seeks the temptation is a hypocrite. There is, in the second place, a profound sense of our own weakness and helplessness. the confession that without the constant help of the grace of God we must needs perish. And there is, finally, the confidence in that all-sufficient grace of God that is able to uphold us in the fight, even unto the end, when we shall have the perfect victory. Watch, then, and pray: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. But when we are weak, then we are strong. For God perfects His strength in our weakness.

Chapter III

Prayer for Deliverance from Evil

The second part of the sixth petition contains the prayer for deliverance from evil.

The Heidelberg Catechism does not make a sharp distinction between the first part of this petition and the second, except perhaps in the very last clause. It explains: "... since our mortal enemies, the devil, the world, and our own flesh, cease not to assault us, do thou therefore preserve and strengthen us by the power of thy Holy Spirit, that we may not be overcome in this spiritual warfare, but constantly and strenuously may resist our foes, till at last we obtain a complete victory."

Nevertheless, a distinction must be made, as the very contrast between the two clauses of this petition implies.

We may say that the words, "Deliver us from evil," express positively what was implied negatively in the prayer against temptation. This we already indicated in the preceding chapters. The meaning of the entire petition may be paraphrased as follows: "Lead us not into the snare of temptation; but, on the contrary, deliver us from evil." The second part of this petition, therefore, implies more than the first part. To be delivered from evil has a wider significance

than merely to be preserved from temptation. The praying child of God has not fully disburdened his heart before his Father in heaven as far as his relation to the dominion and power of sin is concerned by the prayer for preservation against the temptations that encompass him on all sides in this world. He must say more. Preservation can only be a temporary measure. It is not final. It does not lead him to the goal for which he strives. The shipwrecked sailor certainly appreciates the life preserver or raft to which he clings on the storm-tossed ocean, because it saves his life for the time being. Yet, to him that life-belt or raft can never be more than a temporary means to keep him from drowning. And constantly he is on the lookout for a ship or cruiser that will bring him to the safe harbor, or for the shore on which he may land. The soldier realizes that he must be fully equipped for defensive and offensive warfare. He needs his entire armor. Yet, he looks forward to the time that he can put down his armor because the battle is won, and he can return home in peace. The same is true of the militant Christian in the midst of this present world. Through a strange and hostile country, in which all kinds of dangers threaten him constantly, and always the enemy seeks to destroy him, he travels to the perfection of the city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. And therefore he needs protection. He puts on the whole armor of God and seeks the grace of God to preserve him in the midst of temptations. But he cannot be satisfied until the final goal is reached. He longs for the day when his enemies shall be no more, the dangers of sin and death no longer threaten him, the day of complete salvation and perfect victory. To that final state of perfection he looks forward when he prays, "Deliver me from evil." Essentially, therefore, this last part of the sixth petition is eschatological.

A question may be raised, and is raised, as to the proper rendering of the text. Should we read, "Deliver us from evil," or, "Deliver us from the evil one," that is, the devil? The original does not help us because it can be translated both ways. *ton poneerou* may be the genitive either of *ton poneeron*, the evil, or of *ho poneeros*, the evil one. Our Authorized Version prefers the former, and so do the Latin, German, and French translations of the text. But the Holland translation reads: "*Verlos ons van den booze*, Deliver us from the evil one." And the same translation is found in the Revised Version of our English Bible. If we adopt the rendering, "Deliver us from evil," there is still another question. Is the reference only to moral evil, to sin and corruption, or is physical evil, suffering and death, also included? The original word may imply both: it may mean bad or evil in a physical sense, or it may refer to evil in the moral, ethical sense of the word.

Now as far as the form of the original word for "evil" in this prayer is concerned, it may be translated either by "the evil one" or by "evil." But the consultation of several passages of Holy Writ leads us to the conclusion that Scrip-

ture is preponderantly in favor of the rendering "the evil one." This is evidently the meaning of the word in Matt. 5:37: "But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of the evil one." It certainly is the meaning in Matt. 13:19, where the same word is used in the original as in our prayer: "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which is sown in his heart." And the same is true in vs. 38 of the same chapter: "The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one." The words of Jesus' sacerdotal prayer in John 17:15 should properly be translated in the same way: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one." The same is evidently true of I John 2:13, 14: "I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." Here the wicked one evidently cannot refer to any other than the devil himself. To the devil also refers Eph. 6:16: "Above all, taking the shield of faith, whereby ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." And once more, in I John 3:12 we read: "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother." Also here the word "wicked one" refers evidently to Satan himself. We may consider too the close relation between this prayer and the petition against temptation, together with the consideration that the devil is the great tempter from the beginning, which leads to the same conclusion.

We come, therefore, to the conclusion that the proper translation of the last part of the sixth petition is: "Deliver us from the evil one." However, this does not limit the prayer, but rather makes it more comprehensive. While asking for deliverance from the devil and his power, and therefore mindful of the fact that the sinner is a slave of the evil one, the believing Christian in this prayer is, nevertheless, taught to pray for deliverance from the power of all sin and corruption and evil. For only by being sanctified himself and by being cleansed from all the pollution of sin is the child of God set free from the dominion of the devil. And although this refers emphatically to liberation from sin, moral, ethical corruption, yet it should be evident that this does not exclude, but rather include, evil of every kind, also suffering, sickness, sorrow, and death. For the latter are surely the wages of sin. In its comprehensive sense, therefore, the prayer looks forward to the state of final perfection in the new heavens and the new earth, where there will be no night, and God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes. H.H.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Prophecy of Zechariah

7. *Who art thou, O great mountain* — The reference is to a lofty mountain outside of Judea in contradistinction to Mt. Zion that in comparison with it was but a little hill. But on Mt. Zion dwelt Jehovah in His holy temple. Hence, Mt. Zion was emblematic of the church and the great mountain symbolized the mighty world-power the final appearance of which will be the anti-christian world-state, the Babylon of the book of Revelation. At the time of our prophet this world-power had taken on flesh and blood in the persons of the kings of Persia. To this world-power Zerubbabel and his despised little flock — Zion — was in bondage. The statement “who art thou, O great mountain” is more of an exclamation than a question. It means: Who dost thou imagine thyself to be, O great mountain, O world-power, that thou exaltest thyself against Zion, my people, Zerubbabel, in the final instance Christ. The boasting of the world-power is foolishness. It is too ridiculous for words. In the language of Ps. 2, “He that sitteth in the heavens laughs.” Yes, Jehovah laughs. The reason is stated in the succeeding sentence (of our prophecy). *Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain* — Before the governor of the covenant people, that is before Christ whom he typified, the world-power shall be overthrown over and over through the ages to come and this by terrible revelations of God’s might and power in all manner of dreadful plagues including war. In the meantime Christ will gather His church not by power nor by might but by His Spirit and His word. With the church gathered, the world-power will be made to pass away forever. And there will be new heavens and a new earth on which shall dwell righteousness.

This, of course, is not a new promise in the sense that it had not before been proclaimed. It had been proclaimed over and over only not in this form and by these types and symbols. In substance it had already been published right after the fall. For essentially there is but one promise.

But there is more to the promise as here proclaimed to Zerubbabel. *And he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, Grace, grace unto you* — This scripture can best be understood when placed alongside of the other passages in Holy Writ where mention is made of the headstone. Ps. cxviii. 22, “The stone which the builders refused is become the head of the corner,” that is the headstone. Is the reference here in the first instance to Zerubbabel’s temple? That is, is the psalmist speaking of a stone that became the head of the foundation of Zerubbabel’s temple, despite its being rejected by the builders? It is not likely that the headstone of Zerubbabel’s temple (nor of Solomon’s for that matter) went through such a history. According to another

view, the reference is in the first instance to the people of Israel as to a headstone rejected by the heathen but chosen of God and precious. A better view is, that the psalmist is speaking directly of Christ, foretelling his crucifixion and death at the hands of the leaders in Israel and His exaltation to the position of head of the foundation of God’s spiritual temple. Thus though rejected by the builders, He became the head of the corner. This, in the words of the psalmist, is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. The headstone then is Christ. So in Isaiah xxviii. 16, “Behold it is I who have laid in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone of a sure foundation — He who believes shall not be confounded.” And so in Zech. iv. 7, “And he shall bring forth the headstone thereof.” Here, too, the headstone is the corner-stone, that is Christ, and not, as some have it, the gable stone, that is the top stone completing and crowning the building. Appearing in this verse is a Hebrew word for head that is the same as that occurring in the other passages quoted above, so that as joined to stone it must denote the same stone, namely the corner-stone. And this stone is Christ (I Peter ii. 6, 7). If so, the pronoun *he* denotes Jehovah and not Zerubbabel. Jehovah will bring forth the Christ. (On this idea see iii. 8). *With shoutings, Grace, grace* — Jehovah graced Him with His Spirit without measure. Beholding His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, His people shouted, Grace, grace. And unto them was now grace and salvation because of His having been brought forth. And as the Spirit-filled headstone He removed all iniquities of His people on the great day of atonement at Golgotha, swallowing up unto victory all their enemies. And therefore the great mountain shall surely be made a plain before Zerubbabel.

New message of encouragement, 8-14.

8. *Moreover the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying,*

9. *The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you.*

10. *For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel even those seven; they are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth.*

11. *Then answered I and said unto him, What are these two olive trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side thereof?*

12. *And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two olive branches which through the golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves?*

13. *And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my Lord.*

14. *Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.*

8. *Moreover* — In addition to the promise contained in verse 7.

9. *Shall also finish it* — The same hands — those of Zerubbabel — that began the building enterprise shall surely bring it to completion. The fulfillment of this promise is recorded in Ezra vi. 15, "And the house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king." That such is here the promise plainly shows, it seems to me, that the *headstone* of the preceding verse is not the *top most stone* completing and crowning the building and that, therefore, the idea also of this verse is that Zerubbabel shall bring it forth, that is carry to completion the building enterprise. For then the prophet so good as literally repeats himself in this 8th verse, which is not the case. The prefatory verse "Moreover the word of Jehovah came unto me" indicates that the succeeding two verses (9 and 10) contain an additional promise.

Thou shalt know — The completion of the temple shall constitute the undeniable evidence that the prophet was sent of Jehovah and spake as His organ the word that He put in his mouth.

10. *For who hath despised the day of small things?* — The construction here is much disputed. What will help us to arrive at clarity here is our first determining what is to be understood by the "day of small things." First to be considered is the word "day." It denotes in the first instance the dispensation of grace that had set in with the turning of Judah's captivity. The "small things" are what Jehovah had already wrought in that day. As moved by His Spirit — for not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts — the remnant that He had preserved for Himself in Babylon had returned to Jerusalem. And the temple was in process of being rebuilt. These were the small things of that day. Indeed, were these things not so small as to be hardly worth mentioning when compared with what still had to be done before it could be said that this post-exilic community had been delivered out of all its troubles? Jerusalem was still in a state as sad as ever what with her walls still broken down, her gates burnt, and most of her dwellings rubble. Yes, the Lord had turned their captivity. But comparatively speaking only a handful had returned. And they formed but a small community, poverty-stricken and beset on all sides by hostile powers. Yes, it was a day of small things.

"But who will despise this day of small things?" There can be no valid reason why the statement may not be maintained as a question. It is not unlikely that there were those in the community, unbelieving men, who were guilty of this very thing, and that the question, therefore, must be taken as a rebuke and as a call to repentance. For, surely, the day of small things — small from a human standpoint — must

not be despised. For it will surely be followed by a day of big things. Jehovah has said it. But the trouble with these sceptics was that they had not the faith to live by His promises. So, looking at the day of these little things, they despised it in their hearts. The real trouble with these people was that they despised the day of big things. With the temple completed, Jehovah will again be dwelling in the midst of His people. Everywhere is distress, but when Jehovah has returned to His holy temple the whole land and every place in it shall be filled to overflowing with goodnesses all the fountains of which are in Him, i. 17). As towns without walls shall Jerusalem be inhabited for the multitude of men and cattle therein. And Jehovah will be to her a wall of fire round about, and will be to the glory in the midst of her (ii. 4, 5. See there). Yes, there is a day of big things coming, — a day to be ushered in by the appearing of the church with Christ in glory, and a day in which God's tabernacle will be with men forever. But it has no appeal for unbelieving men. This explains their despising the day of small things, not really small, I repeat, but small in the eyes of unbelieving men.

Yet in a certain point of view this day, this present dispensation of the world is a day of small things truly — small, insignificant, apparently without promise, seemingly doomed to come to nought. There came forth a shoot out of the stump of Jesse. That shoot was Christ. Men cut Him away. He died on a crucifix. That apparently was His finish. But in reality it was His victory, the beginning for Him and His people of a day of big things. Set for an ensign of the people the Gentiles now seek after Him. And His rest is glorious (Isa. ii. 10). The mustard seed is indeed the least of all seeds. So the kingdom of heaven in this day of small things. It is the least of all kingdoms. But, there is a big day in store for it. For, like the mustard seed, when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge among its branches (Matt. xiii. 31). The church in the world is only a little flock, despised and persecuted like her Saviour in His state of humiliation. But a day of big things is in store for her. She shall be given the kingdom. The holiest of men have in this life but a small beginning of true obedience. But the day is coming when the righteousness of Zion shall go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth (Isa. lxii. 1). Yet considering of what big things these small things are in the beginning, this day of small things is at once a day of big things.

The succeeding clause is a promise that the day of big things shall surely come and that therefore the man that despiseth the day of small things can have no dawn, unless he repents and changes his attitude. *For they shall rejoice and see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel even those seven; these are the eyes of Jehovah, which run to and fro through the earth.* The thought may be clarified by a free rendering: "For these seven eyes of Jehovah, which run to

and fro through the whole earth, shall rejoice when they see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel. *Those seven* — The reference is to the seven eyes of the stone (iii. 9. See there). *These* — Also this demonstrative looks back to the eyes of the stone. The thought conveyed then is that the eyes of the stone are the eyes of Jehovah, that is, they symbolize His eyes. But they are at once the eyes of Christ, seeing that, as was explained, the stone symbolizes Him. So, the seven eyes are ascribed both to Christ and to Jehovah. Also in Rev. v. 6 these eyes are spoken of as belonging to the Lamb, that is to Christ and to God. For the verse in Revelation goes on to explain that the eyes are the seven Spirits of God sent forth in all the earth. The seven Spirits are the one Spirit that Christ merited for His people. This then is the correct paraphrase of the truth set forth: The triune Jehovah through Christ in His Spirit, closely observing, as He does, all that takes place on this earth, and implying that He works all things according to the counsel of His will, rejoices at seeing the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel, that is in the hand of Christ, whom Zerubbabel typified. *Plummet* — Literally stone of tin. Indicated is a weight of tin, attached to a line and used by builders to denote a vertical direction. The plummet in the hand is commonly taken as indicating the work in which Zerubbabel was engaged, namely in that of building the temple. But a better view is that what it indicated is not his being addressed to the task of building the temple but of measuring the temple as built (see on ii. 2). In the final instance the message then is this: Jehovah shall behold what He has accomplished — through Christ in His Spirit He has gathered His church — and He shall be refreshed. Implied is the thought that the church shall surely be gathered, that thus the day of big things shall certainly dawn for God's redeemed people, and that therefore the day of small things must not be despised.

11—14. The prophet's request for an explanation of the two olive trees.

11. *Answered* — see on I. 10. *What are these two olive trees?* — Said to be standing upon the right and the left of the candlestick. In verse 3 they are located beside the bowl because it serves for receiving and containing the oil.

12. Without waiting for a reply to his first question he addresses a second one to his companion. But looking away from the olive trees he now concentrates on the two branches. The reason is not stated. It is doubtful whether it was owing to the fact that they were the only branches bearing fruit; or that in some other respect they were different from the rest. A sufficiently plausible explanation is that it was through the two branches that the trees were connected with the candlestick and that, therefore, it need not be assumed that the prophet was distinguishing between the two branches and the trees. There is another translation of 12b: "What are the two olive branches, which are beside the two golden spouts, that empty the golden oil out of themselves?" But

this is not so good. The Hebrew as literally translated reads: "What are the two branches, which by the hand of the two golden spouts, are emptying from upon themselves the golden (oil)? *What be the two olive branches?*" — The word translated "branches" is used elsewhere for *ears of corn*. The selection perhaps is owing to the shape of the branches. *Which through the two golden spouts* — The last word occurs only here in the Old Testament, and its meaning is uncertain. *Spouts* (R. V.) is probably correct; *pipes* (A. V.) is not so good, a different word is used in verse 2. Doubtless it denotes the receptacle and channel which received the oil from the branches and transmitted it to the bowl; perhaps funnel-like cups, one connected with each branch. *Emptying the oil out of themselves* — This is then the picture: The means of connection between branches and bowl were the spouts. By the latter the oil was received from the branches and transmitted to the bowl. The means of connection between the bowl and the seven lamps were the 49 golden pipes. By the latter the oil was received from the bowl and transmitted to the lamps.

13. *And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these be* — This verse is identical to verse 5 (see there).

14. *Then said he, These are the two anointed ones* — Literally, *the two sons of the oil*. The last word has the article in Hebrew, indicating that it denotes the well-known oil, namely the oil used in officially anointing. The answer of the interpreting angel may be regarded as applying to the two trees as well.

The symbols of this vision set forth the same truths as those of the discourse of Christ in which He declares himself to be the true vine and His people the branches and His Father the husbandman. Corresponding to the vine are the two branches (including the trees) of our prophet's vision. The pipes and the lamps answer to the branches of the vine, and the light of the candlesticks to the fruit that the branches bear. If Christ is the vine, then also in the final instance He is the olive trees and the branches of the vision, that is the channel of grace. And if His people are the branches of the vine, then also they are the golden pipes of the vision including the lamps. Should the branches become separated from the vine, they could do nothing. They could bear no fruit. They would wither and die. So, too, the pipes and the lamps in the vision. Should they become separated from the olive trees, they would go out. So, too, the church, should she become separated from Christ. For the seat and channel of the life of the church is not the church, is not the branches, is not the golden pipes and the lamps but Christ. But the fountain of Her life is Christ's Father, the triune Jehovah. The fulness of the Godhead that dwells in Christ is the Father's. The Father fills Him in order that He may urge the Father's life in Him into His branches. "Abide in me," says Christ, therefore, to His people. "For

(Continued on page 301)

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of I Corinthians 1-4

12.

Let us continue in our exposition of I Cor. 2:6-9 in this essay. In our former article we might discuss, rather in detail, the "pedagogical approach" of Paul here in this polemic with the church of God at Corinth. We shall not repeat. Nor shall we lose sight of this implicit pedagogy of Paul in this letter.

On the contrary, we shall constantly keep in mind that Paul is addressing those who are "sanctified in Christ" and that they are such since they are "called saints" who have been called into the fellowship of His Son. (Chap. 1:1-9). Neither shall we overlook the fact, that Paul here makes a contrast between the church and the world in our text, that is, between those who are "perfect," having the mind of Christ, and those who are "the rulers of this world" and who do not know the wisdom of God in the Mystery of godliness that is great!

This building upon this contrast between the church and the world is the only sound pedagogy; it is the pedagogy of Scripture which says: "*since ye are the perfect in Christ — walk as such saints!*" Do I still hear someone mutter under his breath: "Condition!" I reply: speak up, don't whisper and mutter and weep, but just try to make this: *prerequisite act!* Then the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, will cut off your evil machinations by the very roots! Try to speak this "wisdom" in the godless world unto their sanctification, and try to find a fit pedagogical motive for this in Scripture and in the Reformed Confessions! It simply cannot be done. Wherefore let us not attempt to be wiser than God with whom is understanding from the days of yore!

Howbeit, Paul says: we *speaking wisdom* amongst the perfect!

In this passage three matters still claim our attention.

In the first place, we should further notice what the text here emphasizes. Paul does not at all *speaking* the language of the rulers of this world. These rulers of this world speak the language of those who are the victims of the *Vanity of vanities*, which the Preacher sought out and set in writing in the Book of Ecclesiastes. They go in circles in their wisdom, the "vicious circle" of all things and, therefore, must surely in their wisdom *constantly be destroyed*. Such is the import of the passive, present participle: *toon katargoumenoon*. They are everlastingly engaged in the battle of earthly, natural and demonical consideration. Their vision and activities are limited to the earthly. They have no eye for the Lord of glory, a new heaven and a new earth. Such is the principle of all the Kingdoms of this world. Hence, they are engaged in the pursuit of making *this world* a better place to live in.

But all these attempts do not simply *end* in failure, but they are a failure in their very essence and nature. Think of all the attempts of the world for the settlement of the world's ills, as it bleeds out of a thousand wounds. Wars and rumors of wars are the order of the day; all is vanity, and all is perishing.

Could Paul possibly preach such wisdom?

On the contrary he speaks wisdom amongst the perfect. And it is a wisdom which the world *does not know*.

It never is the controlling directive in their life.

For what is wisdom?

Wisdom is more than theory. It is more than intellectual knowledge and pursuit. Wisdom is practical and it always views life, its problems, its solutions from the viewpoint of the best means to the highest end. Such is wisdom in the world as they don't understand the Word of the Cross. And such is also the wisdom in those who live by the Word of the Cross and in its saving power through the Holy Spirit.

The wisdom of the Cross, the wisdom of God in Mystery, that is, a wisdom only known by God's revelation, both objectively in the coming of Christ and subjectively by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, is never *known* by the rulers of this world. They serve Satan, and, therefore, receive this power to rule. He is the prince of *this world*. John 14:30. Under this ruler of this world the rulers of this world are "inspired" unto a walk of the false prophet. They *cannot* see the plan of God unfolding *while* they see it being unfolded by God before their very eyes. It is hid from them. Not that the Gospel is not clearly proclaimed by Christ, the Apostles and all the faithful witnesses of the Word of the Cross. Nay, this worldly wisdom is his since God's wisdom is not "revealed" unto them in the "inner man," enlightening the eyes of their hearts!

Here is Divine drama. Here is infinite tragedy that cannot ever be turned into a "Divine Comedy"! Here a Dante must be quiet and certainly be brought to nought! Ah, here Schopenhauer must speak in the midst of the ruins of civilization of the "Vanity of vanities," without saying with the Preacher: the sum of the whole matter is this; fear God and keep His commandments, for such is the whole duty of man! All he can say in the bitterness of his spirit: I cannot agree with Leibnitz that this is "the best possible world"!

Shall we glorify all this "wisdom of this world"?

God forbid!

Nay, we shall try to see with sanctified eyes that God's ways are in the Holy Place, even when evil men fail to see this way of God, which is veiled in "Mystery," and which can only be known by those to whom it is revealed!

Does not Paul say in his great sermon, recorded to us in Acts 13, and spoken in Antioch of Pisidia in the Jewish synagogue, that "they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew Him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them *in condemning* Him, and though they found no cause

of death in Him, yet desired they Pilate that He should be slain . . ." Acts 13:27. And, again, do we not hear Jesus stop the mouth of the Sadducees, three days before His crucifixion, telling them that they *know* neither the Scriptures nor the power of God? And were these Sadducees not "rulers of the world," enemies of the Cross of Christ and of His glorious resurrection, and thus ignorant of God's wisdom in the Lord of glory?

But there is more in Scripture which clearly casts much light on this ignorance of the rulers of this world.

Is there anything that quite shows the Divine irony in taking men in their own craftiness like the speech of Caiaphas? This high-priest in Israel, after the order of Aaron, unwittingly utters the full wisdom of God, without realizing it, when he says, "Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, *that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.*" Remarkable utterance of Caiaphas! It reminds us of the utterances of Balaam when Israel is in the desert of Sinai. For the Holy Spirit in John tells us, "And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation. And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." And to make the Divine Wisdom all the more majestic, according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God they make a formal resolution on this meeting where Caiaphas spoke, that all attempts will be made to put Jesus to death, albeit not the death of the Cross. See verse 53 idem.

And to the bitter end we may see this wisdom of men and the Wisdom of God in their interrelation and interplay. Think of the short notice in John 18:31, 32, where we read, "Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is unlawful for us to put any man to death." And now notice carefully what the Divine record says here: "That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled which he spake, signifying what death he should die."

Here we see that the rulers of this world do not know the Wisdom of God in Mystery, as the Christ in this Wisdom is the embodiment of all the power and grace of God. He becomes unto us from God wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and complete redemption! And while this is being realized they do not understand the Scriptures nor the power of God.

Had they understood they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.

But now it never entered into the heart of man the things God was performing on the Cross for His own. Caiaphas laid down his head that night and smiled in the thought that he had influenced the Sanhedrin to a decision in regard to this man who was a danger to the nation, bringing down the wrath of the Romans upon their heads. He did not understand. And the entire Sanhedrin will push their program

to the end, only to be called out into the night in which Jesus is betrayed. And Pilate will not be able to not condemn an innocent man to death, and crucify the Lord of glory, in spite of the pleadings of his wife that he have nothing to do with this man.

Oh, had these known it their "wicked hands" would not have crucified our Lord.

Yes, the wisdom in mystery never entered into the heart of *man*. It entered really into the heart of no one. Not even into the heart of the disciples nearest to Him. Peter will defend Him, and then, when this is not permitted by Jesus, he will deny Him thrice. And it did not enter into the heart of any flesh and blood. Only when it is revealed, and to whom it is revealed, is this Mystery known. And the rest continue in their worldly wisdom and, therefore, are perishing.

These latter receive no grace under the preaching. It is hid from them. They still do not understand the "Mysteries of the Kingdom." Where is the Arminian "common grace" which a certain church in 1924 tried to combine with the Kuyperian theory of "general grace?" It too perishes!

Nay, says Paul, "we speak wisdom amongst the perfect."

And we?

We shall say it with Paul. We shall speak the Word of the Cross. It defies all human *unbelieving* logic, while it is the highest Logic of faith itself.

And thus we will glory in the Lord, believing that the Lord of glory will lay all the unbelievers low, and will crush them with the Majesty of His rod of iron. G. L.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

(Continued from page 299)

without me, you can do nothing," and in the words of our prophet, "Not by power, nor by might, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." *That stand by Jehovah of all the whole earth.* That is where Christ stands everlastingly as Mediator of God and man — He stands before His Father, the Jehovah of the whole earth.

But there is finally this question, namely whether in the first instance the two branches symbolize Joshua the high-priest, and Zerubbabel the prince. This is the prevalent view among the commentators. It all depends on whether it can be said that each in his official capacity was in a sense serving as a channel of the Spirit, that is of grace. Perhaps in a sense they did, seeing that each typified Christ in his own way and seeing that Jehovah through them as His organs instructed, blessed and ruled His people.

G. M. O.

No; let the world cast out our name,
And vile account us if it will;
If to confess our Lord be shame,
Oh, then would we be viler still.
For thee, O Lord, we all resign,
Content that Thou dost call us Thine.

SHOULD ELDERS BE PERMANENTLY IN OFFICE

In the sphere of Presbyterian church government there exist chiefly two conceptions as to the length of time to which an elder is elected to serve in the office. On the one hand, there are those who maintain that an election to the office of elder constitutes a permanent appointment. Under this conception one elected to the office of elder remains an elder for life, or until such a time when he ceases to be a member of that particular denomination. Even the inability to exercise the duties of office due to age or other circumstances, or transfer of membership from one congregation to another does not terminate his eldership. Hence, a member of that particular denomination, if once elected to the office of elder, is an office-bearer for life. This conception is generally referred to as permanent eldership.

The other conception existing in the sphere of Presbyterian church government is commonly called term eldership. According to this conception elders are elected to office for a limited time only, at the expiration of which those elected cease to hold office, and after which they must be re-elected in order to hold office once again. According to this conception then, an election does not constitute a permanent appointment, but rather a limited one, which terminated according to rules and regulations existing at the time and place of election to the office.

The former of these two views is perhaps the most ancient, probably existing, in practise at least, since the days of the apostolic church. Permanent eldership, although in a modified form, was most likely practised from the days of the early church until such a time, when, prior to the Reformation, the office of elder literally disappeared under the Roman Catholic hierarchy. And then again, after the Reformation, when the office of elder once more received its rightful place in the church, the practise of permanent eldership also re-asserted itself in the Protestant church. Historically, therefore, this view has the pre-eminence.

For, term eldership has its historical birth recorded for us on the pages of the Reformation. At this time, especially through the instrumentality of Calvin, the re-institution of the office of elder to its rightful place in the church is accompanied by the first appearance of the practice of term eldership. Term eldership, therefore, is of comparatively recent beginnings, while permanent eldership was practised from the time that the office was in the church.

However, in spite of its comparative youth, term eldership is still maintained exclusively in the Reformed churches, in our country as well as in Europe. Fact is, that under the influence of Calvin, the Reformed churches maintain term eldership to the extent of incorporating this conception, as normative and regulatory for the churches, in the Church Order of Dort (1618-19), Article 27. Moreover, in maintaining term eldership practically, and in harmony with Article

27 of the C. O., the Reformed churches actually discard the conception of permanent eldership as having no normative or regulatory value, regardless of its historical precedence.

In this light the question, Should elders be permanently in office? evolves into the more concrete question, Is term eldership to be maintained, to the exclusion of permanent eldership, as normative and regulatory for the church of Christ in the world? And in answering the question in this form we take a more positive approach to the Reformed conception and practice, and, if possible, can thus better re-affirm our position over against that of those maintaining permanent eldership.

To the question, Is term eldership normative and regulatory for the church in the world? the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., as officially maintaining permanent eldership, gives a negative answer. For she positively asserts that, whereas Scripture is definitely silent on this matter, while at the same time the early church practised permanent eldership, and that under the guidance of the apostles, permanent eldership thus is both normative and regulatory for the church. Term eldership, therefore, has neither the sanction of Scripture nor the apostles, nor of the early church by way of precedent; permanent eldership, on the other hand having at least the sanction of the apostles as well as that of the early church, and is therefore, according to them, the rule that must be followed.

Our fathers, however, interpreted the silence of Scripture, as well as the silent sanction of the apostles with respect to the practise of the early church, in a different light. According to them a modified form of permanent eldership was practised with a view to prevailing circumstances. Few were the men, who only recently converted from Judaism and heathenism, were capable of exercising the office and duties of elder. Hence, for the good of the early church, these men were retained in their office. Hence also, the practise of permanent eldership need not be the norm for the church.

Then too, our fathers, still smarting from the painful bondage of the Roman Catholic hierarchy from which they were only recently delivered, too clearly understood that because of following the precedent set by the early church, the church of pre-Reformation days had literally lost the office of elder altogether, and therefore, also her liberty. For, in subjecting the office of elder to the precedent of permanent eldership, she in turn had allowed herself to be brought under the subjection of willfully wicked men. And under this subjection she lost all her liberty, as well as the ability to carry out her calling as church, namely, to continuously subject herself to her Lord, and that as antithetically opposed to all wickedness and powers of darkness. Permanent eldership had proved itself, not only as void of normative value, but as detrimental to the church in the world.

Through the practise of permanent eldership men were elected to the office of elder until such a time when they

could no longer serve or until by reason of death others had to be elected to take their place. And, as is always the case in the world, the church is continually attacked by the powers of darkness, which, in seeking to gain the rule over the church, were at the same time seeking her overthrow. And as was the case already in the early church, so also throughout the pre-Reformation days the offices were often attacked through the instrumentality of wicked men, in order that through the offices the entire church might be brought under the scepter of Satan. In gaining control of the office of elder men were able to subject the preaching of the Word to the realization of their sinful lust for power and glory. Through the exercise of the office also the congregation could be brought under subjection to their carnal desires. And all this actually took place, with the result that man, under the guise of the authority of Christ, raised up for himself an infallible pope, whose word became law, and before whom every knee must bow. Such was the result, inevitably so because of sin, of the practise of permanent eldership. And no wonder, then, that our fathers in experiencing the glorious liberty of the church of post-Reformation days would not again subject themselves to a mere precedent.

Positively, however, the fathers of the Reformation also began to understand, and at the same time set forth the true relation of the office to the church, as well as the relation between her calling as church and her liberty to select men for the office of elder, and to determine the length of time to which they are appointed to serve.

The calling of the church in the world is one according to which she must, as antithetically opposed to all the powers of darkness, the devil and the world, as well as her own sinful flesh, subject herself to her rightful Lord. In the world then, she is called to be a separate people, distinct from the world as it lies in darkness, and thus manifest herself as the people of the Living God, as the body of Christ, and as subject to Him alone. And one aspect of this calling lies in the fact that to her belongs the task of appointing men to the office of elder in the church. That is, in the office the church has the only channel through which Christ exercises His authority and rule over His people. And He has been pleased to use men as instruments to carry out His rule. When, therefore, in appointing men to the office, the church chooses faithful men, she by that very deed manifests that she subjects herself to the rule of her Lord. Fact is, that when the church faithfully appoints men of her number, who manifest themselves as subject to the rule of Christ, she essentially fulfills her calling in the world. In the appointment of God-fearing men capable of ruling her in the name of Christ, the church at the same time opposes the powers of darkness which also seek to rule over her. And if, at any time, she fails to give diligence in appointing the proper office-bearers, by that very token she manifests rebellion against her Lord and subjection to the powers of darkness.

Hence, her very first calling as church in the world is to manifest her loving obedience to Christ by appointing faithful office-bearers.

Moreover, this calling of the church in the world is a continuous calling. Always and ever, as long as she is in the world and in the flesh the church is called, antithetically over against them, to manifest her loving obedience to her rightful Lord, and thus to manifest herself as God's peculiar people, His wonder work of grace. Never may she rest from this calling. Nor can she. The powers of sin and darkness and her own flesh unceasingly attack her. Always they wait for an opening through which to gain the rule over the church. She cannot cease her vigilance. Nor may she. For her Lord calls her to continual obedience to Him.

With a view to this calling the fathers of the Reformation understood that no longer could the church follow a precedent of the early church, which was practised in the light of circumstances. But rather, in harmony with her continuous calling, she must be at liberty to continually appoint or re-appoint men to the office of elder, in order that she would thus be able to reassure herself that she could subject herself to her Lord. At no time may she regulate her affairs here below in a manner that would hinder her as to her calling, and thus also enable the powers of darkness to bring her into bondage. She, the church of Christ, must so regulate her life in the world that she maintains the liberty wherewith Christ has made her free.

Therefore, not permanent eldership, but term eldership is today normative in the Reformed churches. Such is in harmony with, and conducive to, her calling as the church in the world, as well as to her manifestation as the body of Christ.

G. Lanting

"But when God accomplishes his good pleasure in the elect, or works in them true conversion, he not only cause the gospel to be externally preached to them, and powerfully illumines their mind by his Holy Spirit, that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God; but by the efficacy of the same Spirit, pervades the inmost recesses of the man; he opens the closed and softens the hardened heart, and circumcises that which is uncircumcised, infuses new qualities into the will, which though 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."

Canons of Dort, III, IV, Article 11

"Give thy blessing to our admonitions, that we may have reason thereby to rejoice again in him, for whom we must now mourn, and that thy holy name may be praised, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath taught us to pray"

From Prayer of "Form of Excommunication"

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

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

BAPTISM (2).

We introduced our preceding article with the observation that great significance was attached to the sacrament of Baptism during this second period of the history of the Church of God in the New Dispensation. By it both original and actual sins (committed before baptism) were removed. That this power was ascribed to this sacrament appears from several quotations. We concluded our preceding article with the promise that we would quote Augustine in connection with his views on this subject. However, before we quote this learned Church Father, let us first of all quote from Philip Schaff who presents the views of Augustine as follows:

"In Augustine we already find all the germs of the scholastic and Catholic doctrine of baptism, though they hardly agree properly with his doctrine of predestination, the absolute sovereignty of divine grace and the perseverance of saints. According to his view, baptism is the sacrament of regeneration, which is, negatively, the means of the forgiveness of sin, that is, both of original sin and of actual sins committed before baptism (not *after* it), and positively, the foundation of the new spiritual life of faith through the impartation of the *gratia operan* and *co-operans*. The subjective condition of this effect is the worthy receiving, that is, penitent faith. Since in the child there is no actual sin, the effect of baptism in this case is limited to the remission of the guilt of original sin; and since the child cannot yet itself believe, the Christian church (represented by the parents and the sponsors) here appears in its behalf, as Augustine likewise supposed, and assumes the responsibility of the education of the baptized child to Christian majority."

Reinhold Seeberg, in his book: *The History of Doctrines*, writes as follows, and we quote: "The opposition between the Donatistic and Catholic churches was based upon their different conceptions of the sacraments. From the time of the Council of Arles (A.D. 316-H.V.), the great point of discussion was whether baptism and ordination administered by an unworthy person retained their validity. Augustine's views concerning the sacraments, by an inner necessity, determined his attitude upon this question. The sacraments are gifts of God and the moral condition of the administrator cannot detract from the value of the gift conveyed: "What he gives is, nevertheless, real (*verum*), if he gives not what is his own, but God's" (c. litt. Pet. ii. 30. 69; unit. eccl. 21. 58). Only thus is the result certain and salvation dependent upon God, not upon men. It is not the intercession of men, but that of Christ, which helps us (d. litt. Pet. i. 3, 4; c. ep. Parm. ii. 8. 16). No reason is shown why he who cannot lose baptism

itself can forfeit the right of administering it. For each is a sacrament; and each is given to man by the same consecration—the one when he is baptized, and the other when he is ordained: therefore, in the Catholic church (we again remark that this must not be confused with the Roman Catholic Church of today—H.V.) neither dare be repeated" (c. ep. Parm. ii. 12. 28). This is explained by the fact that these sacraments *impart to the recipient a permanent character* (I underscore—H.V.): "just as baptism, so ordination *remains whole* in them" (ib). Baptism and ordination impress upon man a fixed "*dominical character*." This military form of expression implies that, as there is a military brand (*nota militaris*) whose significance continues through the whole life, so also baptism and ordination have a perpetual and indelible (the term employed by the Middle Ages) force for the recipient (c. ep. Parm. ii. 13. 29). There remains in him something sacred, a *sanctum*. The spirit is preserved to him, not in a moral sense, but in the sense of an official equipment The peculiarities of the separate sacraments may be briefly stated. Baptism, as the *sacramentum remissionis peccatorum* (bapt. V. 21. 29) works the forgiveness of sins, primarily the forgiveness of the guilt of original concupiscence; in this consists its chief efficacy (cf. p. 314). Augustine frequently speaks of a blotting out of sins (e.g., by baptism . . . sins are destroyed). Discrimination is to be made between this forgiveness once granted and the recurring forgiveness of daily sins in response to the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer. Augustine, however, made the latter dependent upon the former: "by that which is given once it comes to pass that pardon of any sins whatsoever, not only before but also afterward, is granted to believers." Prayer, alms, and good works would bring no forgiveness to the Christian if he were not baptized . . . The first blessing is the *forgiveness of sins*, which man receives through baptism. With it begins *renewal* (*renovatio*), which finds here its basis. Sin is, therefore, forgiven through baptism. Concupiscence, however, yet remains even in the baptized; but it is no longer sin, because God no longer so accounts it . . . Hence, Christ died as a sacrifice for sin, as our representative, and He arose as an evidence of the new life brought to us by Him. We have a reflection of this in baptism, as we die to sin and live through the washing of regeneration (42). All, therefore, have need of baptism. Children thereby die to original sin, and adults also to the further sins actually committed (43). The aim of baptism is the "remission of sins" (44 and 51; cf. *supra*, pp. 322, 349)." Finally, Seeberg quotes the decrees of Orange, which synod met in 530 or 531 to put an end to the Semipelagian controversy: "The leading ideas of this doctrinal decision are as follows: Both Pelagianism and Semipelagianism are in conflict with the "rule of Catholic faith." By the sin of Adam, he himself and all his posterity were ruined in body and soul. Not only death but sin also, has through Adam come upon the whole human race (1, 2, 3). "No one has of himself anything except falsehood and sin"

(22a). The free will has been inclined and weakened in such a way that man of himself can neither believe in God nor love Him (25b). If man even before the fall was unable without the help of his Creator to maintain his original integrity, "how shall he be able without the grace of God to recover what he has lost?" (19). The grace of God works in us the impulse to call upon God and to strive after purification, as also faith. Grace is an "infusio et operatio" of the Spirit (4). That we believe, and that we will or are able to do these things as we ought, is wrought in us through the infusion and inspiration of the Holy Spirit (7, cf. ib.: "in consenting to and believing the truth"). The faith thus inspired by God impels us to baptism (25 H., p. 152). It is baptism which renews our will: "the choice of the will, weakened in the first man, cannot be repaired except through the grace of baptism" (13)." — thus far the quotation from Seeberg.

In the writings of Augustine against the Donatists we quote the following (it is well to remember that Augustine, in these quotations, is contending with the Donatists who maintained that the sacrament of baptism as administered by heretics should not be recognized. Cyprian, too, maintained this position. Augustine, however, did not favor rebaptism. Nevertheless, in these quotations Augustine gives expression to his views on the sacrament of baptism — H.V.): "What if he approached baptism itself in deceit? were his sins remitted, or were they not? Let them choose which they will. Whichever they choose will answer our purpose. If they say they were remitted, how then shall 'the Holy Spirit of discipline flee deceit,' if in him who was full of deceit He worked remission of sins? If they say they were not remitted, I ask whether, if he should afterwards confess his sin with contrition of heart and true sorrow, it would be judged that he ought to be baptized again. And if it is mere madness to assert this, then let them confess that a man can be baptized with the true baptism of Christ, and that yet his heart, persisting in malice or sacrilege, may not allow remission of sins to be given; and so let them understand that men may be baptized in communions severed from the Church, in which Christ's baptism is given and received in the said celebration of the sacrament, but that it will only then be of avail for the remission of sins, when the recipient, being reconciled to the unity of the Church, is purged from the sacrilege of deceit, by which his sins were retained, and their remission prevented. For, as in the case of him who had approached the sacrament in deceit there is no second baptism, but he is purged by faithful discipline and truthful confession, which he could not be without baptism, so that what was given before becomes then powerful to work his salvation, when the former deceit is done away by the truthful confession; so also in the case of the man who, while an enemy to the peace and love of Christ, received in any heresy or schism the baptism of Christ, which the schismatics in question had not lost from among them, though

by his sacrilege his sins were not remitted, yet, when he corrects his error, and comes over to the communion and unity of the Church, he ought not to be again baptized: because by his very reconciliation to the peace of the Church he receives this benefit, that the sacrament now begins in unity to be of avail for the remission of his sins, which could not so avail him as received in schism.

"But if they should say that in the man who has approached the sacrament in deceit, his sins are indeed removed by the holy power of so great a sacrament at the moment when he received it, but return immediately in consequence of his deceit: so that the Holy Spirit has both been present with him at his baptism for the removal of his sins, and has also fled before his perseverance in deceit so that they should return: so that both declarations prove true, — both, 'As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ;' and also, 'The holy spirit of discipline will flee deceit;' — that is to say, that both the holiness of baptism clothes him with Christ, and the sinfulness of deceit strips him of Christ: like the case of a man who passes from darkness through light into darkness again, his eyes being always directed towards darkness, though the light cannot but penetrate them as he passes; — if they should say this, let them understand that this is also the case with those who are baptized without the pale of the Church, but yet with the baptism of the Church, which is holy in itself, wherever it may be; and which therefore belongs not to those who separate themselves, but to the body from which they are separated; while yet it avails even among them so far, that they pass through its light, back to their own darkness, their sins, which in that moment had been dispelled by the holiness of baptism, returning immediately upon them, as though it were the darkness returning which the light had dispelled while they were passing through it."

We will continue with this quotation of the eminent Church Father in our following article. However, we should notice the following in this quotation, also in that part which we will quote, the Lord willing, in our following article. First, Augustine apparently teaches here that a person's sins are removed at the time of baptism but that they return in consequence of his deceit and if he walks in ways of sin and evil. This certainly appears to be a strange doctrine to us. Augustine, however, expresses himself thus because of the power which he ascribes to the sacrament of baptism. Secondly, the benefit of baptism is only on the condition of repentance and faith. He does not ascribe magical power to the water as such of the sacrament. H.V.

"Granted that the sorrow of sin increases proportionately to the knowledge of sin and growth in grace, yet from its very inception such sorrow belongs to conversion, and is an essential counterpart of the newness of life. Luke 15:16; 18:13; Acts 2:37; 9:6; 16:3."

Bavinck's Dogmatics, page 144, Faith and Conversion

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 8. For this was the sovereign counsel, and most gracious will and purpose of God the Father, that the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of his Son should extend to all the elect, for bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith, thereby to bring them infallibly to salvation: that is, it was the will of God, that Christ by the blood of the cross, whereby he confirmed the new covenant, should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation, and language, all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation, and given to him by the Father; that he should confer upon them faith, which together with all the other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, he purchased for them by his death; should purge them from all sin, both original and actual, whether committed before or after believing; and having faithfully preserved them even to the end, should at last bring them free from every spot and blemish to the enjoyment of glory in his own presence forever.

There are in the above version of this article no serious deviations from the meaning of the original Latin, and the few minor departures we will not here note.

It is in this eighth paragraph undoubtedly that we find the very heart of the entire Second Head of Doctrine. Here is the key to the understanding of all the other articles of this chapter of our *Canons*. Without this article, it is safe to say, it is impossible to maintain any real distinction between the Reformed and the Arminian doctrines concerning "The Death of Christ, and the Redemption of Men Thereby." Ignore this article, for example, and you can very easily read an Arminian content into the well-known fifth article, concerning the promise of the gospel. Take Article 3 in separation from Article 8, and you will readily conclude that also the fathers of Dordrecht after all believed in general atonement. Read Article 6 out of the context of Article 8, and you cannot explain that there is no defect or insufficiency in the sacrifice offered by Christ on the cross. Nor, in Article 7, when taken apart from this eighth article, can you truly maintain that those that believe are indebted for their salvation solely to the grace of God. And that our fathers intended this article to occupy exactly such a key position in relation to the rest of the chapter is evident from their use of the conjunction "for," which indicates that here is the reason, the basis, for all the doctrinal constructions of the death of Christ and the redemption of men in the foregoing articles. Here

at last we have the Reformed construction of the doctrine of Christ's atonement as such. Here Dordt comes directly to grips with the statement of Article II of the Remonstrance: "That, agreeably thereto, Jesus Christ, the Saviour 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." This is the doctrine denoted by the name "limited atonement," — a name which surely may be used, provided we understand clearly the *limitation* of that atonement.

And a more beautiful and clear expression of the doctrine of Christ's atonement it is difficult to find in any other creed. Its first beauty is its conciseness: the fathers speak here language that allows but one meaning, and that too, language that anyone can understand. This doctrine is simple and lucid, and finds at once a place in the heart of the simplest believer. Secondly, its beauty consists in the fact that it presents the death of Christ and the redemption of men thereby in its organic position in the whole scheme of our salvation, as it stands unbreakably connected with the fountain and cause of every saving good, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, with the goal of that salvation, namely, that we are at last brought "free from every spot and blemish to the enjoyment of glory in his own presence forever."

Let us note the elements of this article a little more in detail.

In the first place, the article throws all emphasis upon the sovereign decree of election: "This was the sovereign counsel, and most gracious will and purpose of God the Father, that the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of his Son should extend to all the elect, for bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith, thereby to bring them infallibly to salvation." And again: "It was the will of God, that Christ by the blood of the cross . . . should effectually redeem . . . all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation, and given to him by the Father." Here, therefore, we are concerned with the question: for whom did Christ die, and, how was it determined for whom He should die? Or, theologically stated, the question is: what was the will and intention of God in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ?

The Arminian is usually said to teach general, or universal, atonement. And this is, to be sure, correct in a sense. But if atonement be taken in the sense of "quicken and saving efficacy of the death of Christ," then also the Arminian limits this atonement. He does this in devious ways, and by means of a very involved process of reasoning. But after all, he too must face the facts that not all men are actually saved, and that the Scriptures speak of election and of the fact that Christ laid down His life for the sheep. And so he limits atonement also. But he limits it after God, according to the Arminian conception, has made it general. Christ's atonement is limited by the will of the sinner. And so he actually

denies both the sovereign counsel and most gracious will and purpose of God, and the quickening and saving efficacy of the death of Christ.

But we must understand, therefore, just what is meant by "limited atonement." It means that Christ died, *according to God's intention, for all the elect, and for them alone*. It means that God never intended anything else than that the quickening (life-giving) and saving efficacy (efficacy is actual power and energy to save and to make alive) should extend to the elect only. And, as would follow from all that the Fathers have stated already in the First Head of Doctrine, it means that this counsel and intention of God, both concerning the death of Christ and concerning the elect for whom He died, is sovereign (The Dutch has here "gans vrije raad," i.e., "most free counsel," which is in harmony with the Latin *liberrimum consilium*.), most gracious (gracious in the highest conceivable degree, i.e., with no element of works involved whatsoever). Any other conception of election than that which is maintained by the *Canons*, that is, a sovereign, eternal, unchangeable, definite, personal election, vitiates and makes null and void any real saving efficacy in the death of Christ. And it is worthy of note not only that the *Canons* here make the limitation of atonement a divinely sovereign limitation, but that they literally speak of the purpose of God in the sense of *intention*. For the English "purpose" in this article is the Latin *intentio*. God's counsel, His will, and His intention are identified in the article. There is absolutely no room left for another purpose, will, intention, or counsel of God according to which He after all desires the salvation of all men.

In the second place, the article emphasizes that the atonement of Christ is effectual. The most precious death of His Son has *quickenings and saving efficacy*. It was God's purpose that Christ should *effectually redeem* His elect. Now, surely a thing is not efficacious if it does not actually accomplish that which it is designed to accomplish. In fact, it cannot be called efficacious if it only partly accomplishes what it is designed to accomplish. If then Christ's death is designed to accomplish the atonement for and redemption of all men and every man, and if, after all, all men and every man are not redeemed, but some men go eternally lost, then Christ's death is not effectual. And if it is not effectual for the redemption of some men, then I cannot be certain that it is effectual for the redemption of any men at all. That Christ effectually redeems can only mean that He died for certain men, and that now those men are actually redeemed and saved to all eternity. But that can only be maintained on the basis of the truth that it was God's intention in the most precious death of His Son to redeem the sovereignly chosen elect, and them only. Further, this effectual redemption means, according to the article, that Christ actually acquired for all the elect, and for them only, all saving gifts. He justified them by paying their debt of guilt, and thereby he purchased their complete salvation, all the blessings that

are implied in that salvation. The article emphasizes especially the gift of "justifying faith." This is undoubtedly done for two reasons: 1) Justification is the primary blessing of salvation: if we are justified, righteous before God, it can never fail that He will bless us with all the blessings of life eternal. And, 2) The faith whereby we are justified was by the Arminian made the condition of salvation, and therefore the human limitation of Christ's atonement. But this can never be. Also the justifying faith belongs to the quickening and saving efficacy of Christ's death. It belongs to our salvation. And it can therefore never be a condition of salvation. And thus, all the blessings of salvation were acquired for us once and for all time when Christ laid down His life for His sheep. All our salvation is in the blood of the cross, in it alone, and in it surely and effectually!

But, in the third place, the article insists on the entire picture of salvation. Lest in any wise it should be imagined that the work of Christ ceases at the cross, and that after the blessings of salvation have been objectively acquired for us by Christ, the work of men begins, the fathers add that it was God's "most free counsel, and gracious will and intention" that Christ should "confer upon them (the elect) faith, should purge them from all sin, both original and actual, whether committed before or after believing (which implies that just as our faith, repentance, works cannot be a condition of our salvation, so our sins even after we believe cannot deprive us of our salvation), should faithfully preserve them even to the end, and should finally bring them free from every spot and blemish to the enjoyment of glory in his own present forever."

It is all of God in Christ, therefore. Our election, our redemption, the purchase of all the blessings of salvation, the actual bestowal of those blessings, from faith through justification and sanctification and preservation to eternal glory, — all is sovereignly and effectually bestowed upon us by God in Christ.

Two questions force themselves to the foreground:

1. How, in the light of this article, can any Reformed man dare to maintain the error of a well-meant offer of salvation on the part of God to all men?

2. Where in this view of the *Canons* is there room, not only for the notion of faith as a condition of election, but for the idea of faith as a condition of anything at all in our salvation?

H.C.H.

Notice

Notice to those eligible to teach, who love our Prot. Ref. faith, who feel the need for our covenant youth — The Free Christian School Society of Edgerton, Minn., is in need of a Principal to teach grades five, six, seven and eight.

Please send applications to:

Board, Free Chr. School Society
H. Miersma, Secretary
R.R. 1, Box 116, Edgerton, Minn.

DECENCY and ORDER

Family Visitation

(Concluded)

The interrogation of family visiting must cover every phase of life. In addition to the civil and social sphere, discussed in our last writing, the following should be considered:

(2) *The Family Life*: "Dwell on the condition of family life. Begin with the head of the family and then you might ask whether family worship is faithfully maintained, family prayers uttered, the Scriptures read at stated times each day with the family and its truths commented upon and considered. If the answers to these inquiries is negative, there is room for admonition. Bind upon his heart his calling in this respect and encourage him as much as possible to fulfill it." (G. M. O.)

In this connection it may be well to point out the importance of true, spiritual family life. The christian home is the center in which the seed of the covenant are to receive their basic training. Where this fails, further attempts to train by other agencies will generally prove fruitless. Hence, fundamental to the establishing and maintaining of a christian home is the thorough understanding of such Scriptural matters as, "Parental Responsibilities" and "The Subjection and Obedience Of Children." The rights and duties of parents and children must be defined from the Word of God and not according to modern, humanistic philosophy. When family relationships are not harmonious with the Word of God, the whole of life grows out of kilter. Family visiting may serve to bring to remembrance some apparently forgotten but nevertheless very fundamental truths respecting the home as further suggested in these "Notes" by Rev. Ophof:

"Inquire further after the spirit that prevails in the home? Do the parents put forth the proper effort to make it truly christian? Do they walk together in true christian love and respect for each other, setting an example of love, patience and forbearance so that it is evident to the children that their parents are in the Lord? Are the children taught to obey their parents for the Lord's sake and is this obedience evident in the home? It may be necessary to explain to the family group what this means — obeying parents for the Lord's sake and what it means that children are under father and mother. This matter can also be put to the children. Call attention to and explain the promise fixed to the commandment."

"Inquire next after the religious training of the children. Is the vow that was made by the parents at the time of their presenting the children for baptism being properly and faith-

fully kept? Are the children sent to the christian school and if not, why not? Explain the importance of christian instruction and show conclusively from the Word of God that it is the Lord's will that we establish wherever possible schools for positive Protestant Reformed instruction. Such is our parental calling without any doubt."

(Just as I was writing this article I received a phone call, in answer to an objection I had registered, from the school where three of my children attend. My objection had been to the teaching of the song "Jesus Is Calling" containing the following: "Jesus is waiting, O come to Him now — waiting today, waiting today . . . Jesus is pleading, O list to His voice — Hear Him today, hear him today." The principal said to me, "What's wrong with that? We aren't singing this to those outside but only in the class of covenant children?" I replied to the effect that this made no difference to me, the point is not in who sings it or to whom it is sung but rather in the fact that the song is the lie — thoroughly Arminian, and I proceeded to tell him that it denies the efficaciousness of the calling and presupposes free-will. The outcome of our conversation was that although he knew that we "Protestants" objected to the song, it need not be barred from the school since he agreed with me that it was consistent with the First Point of '24; good Christian Reformed since Rev. H. J. Kuiper had also included it in his hymn book. To this I submit for what else can I do but I ask, "How much Arminian poison will they feed our children before *all* our people awaken to the NECESSITY of schools for Protestant Reformed instruction?" And this is but one of many samples that can be easily furnished.)

"Inquire as to whether the parents cooperate with the ministry with respect to the catechizing of their children? Do they see to it that the children faithfully perform the assigned work and do they assist especially the younger ones? Point out the importance of such cooperation and explain the good results that follow when this work is properly done and what may be expected when it is neglected by the parents?"

"Delineate on the fact that religious training must begin and end at the home. Explain that of all the teachers a child has, the parents are by far the greatest influence either for good or for bad in the child's life; the reason being that there are no people whom the children trust so implicitly as their parents and that, therefore, it is especially the parents by whom the children are willing to be led, instructed, admonished and trained and whom they take as examples. Explain then how necessary it is that parents walk together in the light and in unity of faith before their children and this matter may properly also be impressed upon the hearts of the young people of the family who stand at the threshold of marriage."

And so there are countless matters that, according to varying circumstances, may be considered in relation to the family and family life. It is not impossible that the whole

family visitation be concentrated about this single point. It is well worth while in our generation which is witnessing the rapid abolition of the home.

(3) *Personal Spiritual Life*: Also this matter is of greatest importance and involves so many things that it is impossible to enter into detail here. Inquiry must be made into the matter of consciousness and assurance of salvation. If this is lacking further inquiry must be made into the reason or reasons. The whole matter of the well-being of faith, spiritual growth and daily sanctification should be seriously considered. Do we exercise ourselves consciously day by day in those obligations of the covenant of grace which are so beautifully expressed in our Baptism Form: "That we cleave to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that we trust in Him, and love Him with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our mind, and with all our strength; that we forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and holy life." What is our personal reaction toward the preaching of the Word and how are we affected by it? Do we receive spiritual nourishment from the Word so that we may grow thereby? And in this connection it is well to inquire somewhat into reading habits. Concerning this we quote the following paragraph of Rev. Ophof:

"What is being read by the family? Is it christian or worldly; edifying or soul-destroying? Of course, we do not tell our people that they may not or should not read the daily newspapers but it should be also stated that God's people do not turn to the newspaper or any other secular literature for food for their soul. Explain that the soul of a child (individual) can be poisoned by what it reads as well as the body can be poisoned by food unfit for human consumption. The man of God is in need of wholesome spiritual food and this food is Jesus Christ as revealed in the Word."

Is the Word then diligently and personally studied? And in connection with it, are such supplements to the Word as *The Standard Bearer* and *Beacon Lights* faithfully used? If not, why not?

But in our day the eye is no longer devoted to reading and studying as in former times but now is engaged in picture-seeing. This, especially since in our day television has found a prominent place in many of our homes. Inquiry may be made into the use that is made of that device since the godless world itself admits its morally destructive power. What is being observed on the screen? Is it conducive to our growing in spiritual stature? Is it detracting from other activities which positively tend to spiritual growth? This is a fine practical matter for an honest, serious self-analysis in the presence of God!

(4) *Church Life*: In general this sphere includes not only participation in the institutional functions of the church but also voluntary participation in those spiritual activities which rise out of the organic life of the people of God as

they are united by the Spirit through the bonds of faith to mind the same things. Concerning this Rev. Ophof writes:

"Further inquiry must be made after church life. Is faithful use being made of the sacraments and the preaching of the Word on the meetings of public worship by the church institute as it functions through the teaching ministry instituted by Christ for the feeding of His people? Make plain the sin of neglecting this ministry. Emphasize that there is no salvation for anyone who forsakes this ministry even though that one may be ever so pious in his own way and engage in all Bible reading and prayer. The reason being that to forsake the ministry is to forsake Christ and the means that Christ has instituted for the feeding of His sheep. In this way the great necessity of regular church attendance will become apparent. Stress also that regular use of the Lord's Supper must be made. Ask the sheep if they participate in the church society life? Do they live along with the congregation? Are societies, congregational meetings, etc. well attended? Explain that it is their duty that members in the church, alive to the interest of God's Kingdom, will attend these meetings."

F. Conclusion

In light of all this one wonders then why family visiting is limited to once a year. Practical reasons no doubt prevail. Certainly it is advantageous to be stirred up in these things constantly. Let it be remembered, too, that all of the above is only intended as suggestions and directives to follow and by no means as a complete and exhaustive plan of family visiting. To this much more can easily be added. However, if such a general plan is followed, those performing this work will have no difficulty remaining with the spiritual purpose of their visit. Neither will they suffer from a lack of material but will rather find the time of their visit too short. Furthermore, having investigated the spiritual conditions of the home and having spoken the Word of God with comfort, encouragement, exhortation and rebuke, they may profitably conclude their visit by calling upon God, invoking His benediction upon the labor performed. And the fruits shall redound to His eternal glory through the upbuilding and strengthening of Zion.

G. VandenBerg

"At any rate the Christian knows from experience that, in the same measure that sin is known the better in its real nature, such sin causes profound pain and sorrow. Upright, inner confession of sin is not heard from the lips of the godless but from those of the pious. Psalmists, prophets and apostles offer clear and unmistakable evidence of such sorrow for sin."

Bavinck's Dogmatics, page 144, Faith and Conversion.

ALL AROUND US

Nova Scotia Pastor Understands the Truth.

This is the third and final article we write on this subject in which we continue our quotations from *The Contender*, a paper edited by the Rev. Malcolm R. MacKay of Nova Scotia, an independent Presbyterian minister. Rev. MacKay, so we have seen, agrees with the Rev. H. Hoeksema that the Three Points of 1924 on Common Grace is really a Triple Breach, that the well-meant offer of grace in the preaching of the gospel is the doctrine of Arminius. He contends that the doctrine of Common grace not only militates against the truth of Scripture but it also "disparages the righteousness and justice of God and denies to them their positive and glorious place in His character." Rev. MacKay tells us further that "this teaching says, in effect, that the revelation of God's justice in the damnation of the non-elect is *not* a 'sweet savor' to God."

It is especially to this last idea that the Rev. MacKay devotes the major part of the rest of his articles. After a rather lengthy quotation from Calvin's Commentary on the text in II Cor. 2:15, 16, which deals with the truth that the Word of God is both a savor unto death as well as life, the Nova Scotia pastor asserts that the disparaging of God's justice must of necessity confound the eternal purpose of God. Referring to the well-meant-offer-people, he says "their teaching would put God into the position where He actually is greatly disappointed in regard to His eternal purpose for mankind They say that He ardently desires the salvation of those whom He does not purpose to save. This would confound His eternal purpose. What is all this, in reality, but saying that mankind has gotten himself into such a complicated situation that to a certain extent, at least, God is put into an awkward, baffling position? He really wills to save all mankind—intensely so—but there are certain considerations which have been caused by the fall of man in Adam (these considerations being known only to God, they vaguely say) which prevent Him from saving all and make it necessary for Him to damn some. These considerations, they darkly hint, have to do with His justice. His love wills to save all, but His justice wills not to save all. This teaching fails to present a balanced picture of God's attributes, sovereignty and purpose. Obviously, it does despite to both His love and His justice"

Rev. MacKay further claims that "the Arminian conception of God as baffled, to a degree, is found in *The Free Offer of the Gospel* by professors Murray and Stonehouse." After giving a brief quotation from their writings and a brief criticism of them, the pastor concludes by saying: "As a matter of fact, the non-elect are never brought to salvation. If we take the professors' words at their face value, they would

have God baffled, to a degree, for, at the same time, He equally wills that the non-elect be saved and He does not will that they be saved. And who has put God into this awkward, baffling position? Obviously man, by falling into sin (in Adam). This is sheer Arminianism." MacKay accuses Murray and Stonehouse in their "Conclusions" of summarizing and adopting the Arminian theory about God. And he adds, "However, they also try at the same time formally to maintain the Calvinistic doctrine of the reprobation of the non-elect. Thus we see the two-faced god, Janus, appearing. We may apply a bit of Rev. Hoeksema's criticism of the Kalamazoo declaration as given in *A Triple Breach*. In *The Free Offer of the Gospel*, as well as in the Kalamazoo declaration, Janus turns now and again revealing the Arminian face and the Calvinistic face. However, the face which shows itself the more frequently is that of Arminius. And when Janus comes to a full stop, it is the face of Arminius, not Calvin, that is looking steadily at us."

Rev. MacKay, writing in the November, 1955, issue of *The Contender* under the sub-title "How Reprobation is Denied by Reformed Ministers," says: "The ancient Christian faith (known also since the Reformation as 'Calvinism') teaches without fear or favour the solemn Biblical truth of the eternal reprobation or damnation by God of the non-elect. However, this truth is conspicuous in modern times by its absence from the preaching and teaching of even many of those who profess to hold the Calvinistic Reformed faith. It is not surprising that Arminians reject it and pour their denunciation upon it for they are humanists and therefore naturalists. But it does seem strange at first sight that many 'Calvinists' by their attitude toward and handling of predestination (election—M.S.) and reprobation should be actually advancing the cause of Arminianism. This explains why these Calvinists are quite acceptable to the Arminians and in good favour with them. An excellent explanation of this strange and contradictory attitude of Calvinists toward predestination (election—M.S.) and reprobation is found on page 19 of *Predestination* which is a booklet containing a number of addresses on this subject given by the Rev. Herman Hoeksema."

Then follows a quotation from Rev. Hoeksema's booklet on *Predestination* in which the latter asserts among other things that "this false and ambiguous position (of present-day so-called Reformed preachers—M.S.) has proved more dangerous to the maintenance of the pure truth of Scripture concerning God's sovereign predestination than professed free willism. For under the Reformed flag the entire cargo of Arminian heresy is smuggled into the Church."

Concerning this quotation MacKay writes, "Certainly in the above quotation Rev. Mr. Hoeksema puts his finger upon a radical contradiction in the position of many Presbyterian and Reformed ministers. It is the same contradiction that we noticed last month in the Kalamazoo Synod's declaration

of the Christian Reformed Church and also in *The Free Offer of the Gospel* by professors Murray and Stonehouse. On the one hand it is rightly believed, in accordance with the Bible and the historic Presbyterian and Reformed doctrinal standards, that the love and mercy of God is *particular*, not universal, and is directed only toward the elect. It is also rightly maintained that since the mercy of God is directed only toward the elect, the design of the atonement of Christ is likewise particular, not universal, and is directed toward the elect only. That is to say, God's will, desire, purpose and intention in regard to the atonement is that it applies only to the elect, not universally to all mankind. To summarize, Reformed men are correct in maintaining that the mind of God is absolutely different all down the line in relation to the two classes of men into which His eternal purpose or decree has divided them. However, along with this revealed truth of *particularism*, Reformed men are also holding the false Arminian doctrines of *universalism*. That is, they are teaching that the love and mercy of God are also directed toward the non-elect as well as the elect. And they are teaching, in line with this universalism, that God's will, desire, purpose and intention is for the salvation of the non-elect as well as the elect. Certainly Professors Murray and Stonehouse, for example, teach this in clearest language. This would wipe out the eternal distinction which God has made between the elect and the non-elect. To summarize, they are teaching that the mind of God is the *same* in relation to the two categories of men into which His eternal purpose or decree has divided them. This alleged sameness or universalism in the attitude of God toward all mankind is the spirit of Arminianism and is the forerunner of modernism. It is this, in short, which contradicts the historic Presbyterian and Reformed teaching, and many Presbyterian and Reformed men have either wittingly or unwittingly gone over to this teaching. They say that God universally loves all men, universally desires the salvation of all men, has wrought out a salvation in Christ's atonement that is suited to the needs of all men, and is genuinely and sincerely offered by God to all men. Furthermore, they say that there is nothing to hinder anyone from accepting it and being saved, except his own sin. All this is Arminian to the core, and is being taught by these Presbyterian and Reformed men. And, as Rev. Hoeksema says, in the quotation above, this universalistic teaching of Arminianism 'is emphasized to the exclusion of' the particularistic teaching of the Biblical and Reformed faith. These men have long admitted that the Arminian heresy contradicts the Calvinistic position at every point of doctrine. However, they are attempting to adhere to both positions at the same time. And they are attempting to justify this impossible procedure on grounds that are subtle and ensnaring. They say that although this appears to be contradictory, it is not really contradictory, and that one must hold this apparently contradictory position in order to avoid what is really contradictory, — the clear-cut, consistent position of

Hoeksema (who is in reality only teaching what the Bible reveals) they assert, being really contradictory! Dr. Van Til criticizes Rev. Hoeksema's position in this manner by saying that Mr. Hoeksema imposes a timeless logic upon Scripture. In other words, Van Til is saying that Hoeksema is resorting to rationalism to explain what cannot be humanly explained, — at least not this side of eternity, so Van Til contends. We cannot agree with Van Til in this criticism of Hoeksema. Van Til claims in effect, that it is rationalism for Hoeksema to say flatly that God *cannot* have an attitude of favour toward the non-elect whom He does not intend to save."

MacKay then proceeds to answer the question: "Who is Right: Van Til or Hoeksema?" He considers Van Til's position quite contrary to the plain teachings of Scripture. And goes on to prove that there is "NO FAVOUR OUTSIDE OF CHRIST." Says he, "The new doctrine of a favourable attitude in God toward the non-elect runs counter to the great truth of revelation that the infinitely righteous and holy God cannot show favour to sinful creatures except that His justice be perfectly upheld by the sacrifice of a Mediator to satisfy the requirements of divine justice that has been violated by man's sin. Scripture thunders forth the truth that there is nothing but wrath — no favour — to sinful man outside Christ . . . Yet the common grace theory definitely teaches that God looks not only with favour but with great favour upon those who are outside Christ, and thus have no Mediator. The Bible teaches that the non-elect are not 'in Christ', that is, that they are neither in this world nor in eternity partakers of the work of the Mediator . . ."

Rev. MacKay concludes his articles with showing up "THREE DEADLY RESULTS OF COMMON GRACE." He claims that it: 1. Denies Man's Total Depravity in Sin. 2. Teaches Morals are Relative, not Absolute. 3. Mingles and Unites Church with World.

Since our space is about used up we will not quote what he has to say on these points.

We close with saying once more that we enjoyed very much what Rev. MacKay has written on the matter of Common Grace and the General Offer. We agree with him perfectly on what he wrote. One naturally desires to know more about this writer. Perhaps we will have occasion to read more of his writings, and that too on other subjects. Taking in consideration our different back-grounds it is refreshing to hear from one outside of our immediate circle who understands the Scripture as well as he on the matter of grace. I, for one, would be interested to know what are his thoughts on the Covenant and other related doctrines. If Rev. MacKay reads our comments, maybe he will be so kind to give us this expression.

M.S.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Dear Rev. Hoeksema:

I am writing you in behalf of the Adult Bible Class of the Protestant Reformed Church in Randolph. They have the following question for which they desire some clarification, providing your busy schedule permits time for an answer. If so, feel free to answer directly or in the *Standard Bearer*.

The question is as follows: "How must we understand the words of Psalm 81:12-13 which speak of "my people" in connection with what we read in Isaiah 6:10—"this people"? Is the "my people" of Psalm 81 a reference to Israel (spiritual and carnal seed alike)? If not, and it is a reference only to the people of God, to what extent may we conclude did God give them up "to their own heart's lust?" Do we have here an analogy of what we read elsewhere in Scripture regarding the deliverance of God's people into the hands of the enemy and their captives?

We shall appreciate hearing from you — when time permits, of course.

Sincerely yours in Christ,
The Adult Bible Class,
Randolph Prot. Ref. Church
Randolph, Wisconsin
per: E. Emanuel

Reply:

This particular portion of Scripture has been the center of our interest and attention more than once since 1924. The Christian Reformed Synod of 1924, strange to say, quoted this text as proof to the so-called restraint of sin.

Let me remark the following:

1. The term "My people" in Scripture always refers to the fact that God's people are His peculiar possession according to the election of grace. This is also the meaning of the words in Ps. 81.

2. Secondly, we must understand that, in the old dispensation, and from the viewpoint of Ps. 81, this elect people of God is the nation of Israel. God had chosen Israel as His peculiar people. The holy line ran through this nation. He loved Israel as His own. He had redeemed the people with a mighty arm from the bondage of Egypt. To that redemption of Israel the psalm refers.

3. In the third place, we must understand that the term "My people" never refers to every individual in the nation of Israel. Not all were Israelites that were of Israel: the children of the promise always were counted for the seed and these alone.

4. There was also in the nation of Israel a reprobate shell,

and that reprobate element was often very strong. It is because of this fact that the nation as a whole often departed from the ways of the Lord and that Israel "would none of him." vs. 11. Then the Lord gave it over into their own heart's lust. This was true of Israel according to its reprobate shell, never according to its elect kernel.

5. Even then the Lord loves His people, who suffer with the reprobate. And it is from that love that the words of the Lord must always be explained: "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me I should soon have subdued their enemies."
H.H.

"There is often a great misunderstanding concerning the time of conversion, and too much significance is attached to one's knowing the exact time of his conversion, so that one, after a long period of great anguish and fear, is delivered in a special and wonderful way. However, Scripture does not apply such a standard; it only demands that there be uprightness in our inward parts; sorrow for sin must be real and genuine. God, who knows the hearts, delights in uprightness."

Bavinck's Dogmatics, page 145, Faith and Conversion

IN MEMORIAM

In complying with the wish of our former friend and brother, Mr. Hessel De Jong not to purchase flowers, the Eunice Society of Second donates the money, \$25.00, to the Standard Bearer. May God be near and comfort the relatives of

MR. HESSEL DE JONG

MRS. OTTO HONDEMA

Ps. 62:8, "Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us, Selah."

Rev. M. Schipper, President
Mrs. Fred Bouwkamp, Secretary

IN MEMORIAM

The Mission Committee of the Protestant Reformed Churches extends its sincere sympathies to the bereaved family of its former member

MR. HESSEL DE JONG

whom the Lord suddenly took out of our midst unto the church in glory.

May our covenant God comfort the relatives in the hope of His promise, which sustains us unto the perfect day.

The Mission Committee,

R. Veldman, President
C. Hanko, Secretary