

THE STANDARD

Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

VOLUME XXXII

APRIL 15, 1956 — GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

NUMBER 14

MEDITATION

Visited by Majesty on High

"Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations He hath made in the earth. Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah."

Ps. 46:8, 10, 11

Our village received a very special visit by the Lord Christ.

It was a visit of the Majesty on High.

What we really received is a little foretaste of the end of the world.

Some of us went to heaven in the process of that visit. Others are in the hospital because of that visit. Some of us had a brush with death. All of us were deeply impressed by that visit.

God came to us, and He roared: I have never yet heard a voice such as we heard around supper time, Tuesday evening, April 3, 1956. It sounded as though a thousand express trains were traversing the sky.

His footsteps were seen; He walked from the Southwest to the Northeast, skirting our village: everyone was aware of His august presence.

And we were afraid: many cowered in the basement of their homes, while God ravaged their properties(?). He flung houses and barns far and wide. Such debris was mixed with black muck and the dust of the earth. He snuffed out the lives of some of us, broke the bones and the flesh of others: they were left moaning in His wake.

Oh yes, no one can dispute it: God walked among us; His Christ paid us a special visit; He left desolation, death, pain and misery.

But also awe, the awe of the childlike fear of Jehovah.

One man said: My Jehovah was beautiful in His raging! And that man lost half of his worldly goods, and his life was in jeopardy.

Yes, I have seen Him too.

His pathway through Hudsonville was about 3 or 4 city blocks from my dwelling.

* * * *

But in it all is a terrible accusation.

We have paid attention to this little walk of God, a walk whose results are still among us in many ways. We have paid marked attention to that little walk. Both the good and the bad, the saints and the wicked, the church and the world have seen Him, heard Him, and marked His works. The blue-coats of the State Police are still among us, as are the members of the State Guard, or National Guard. Life has still not returned to its normal beat.

Everyone is still talking about that little walk of Jesus through Hudsonville, visiting us. He is constantly among us. From the time when Zacharias sang his song of salvation until now, Jesus and the God of our salvation has His march among us, and He always speaks, shouts, beckons and calls to us His people.

Zacharias sang: THE DAYSPRING FROM ON HIGH HATH VISITED US!

And He is still with us.

He promised: And Lo, I am with you alway!

And He kept His word.

Jesus is constantly walking through Hudsonville.

And He is constantly singing His song of the eternal Covenant of God's grace.

He sings that song as a lullaby at the cradle of the Covenant babies. He sings and He speaks of the everlasting love of God when we are very young and as we gather as little boys and girls in catechism and Christian schools. His speech and His works become plainer to us as we grow up. Oh, how wonderful is His voice from the pulpit Sunday after Sunday, year after year.

His song of the Covenant: I love you so much that I died for you on the accursed tree.

And you can hear it in Hudsonville, both in the home and from the pulpit.

And His footsteps drop with fatness. He leaves in His

wake regeneration, conversion, faith, justification and sanctification. But also glorification when Hudsonville's children go to heaven.

Last Tuesday He left in His wake a picture of the desolation of hell. After I saw it for the first time I grew very still. It was awful.

But when Jesus is conducting Business As Usual, He leaves in His wake the glories of the Christian, the blessings of salvation, and we are blest.

Now here is the terrible accusation: we can see Christ in His Usual Business day after day and night after night, year after year and life-time after life-time, and we stay calm and orderly.

"How are things?"

"Oh, so so!"

After all, His daily and nightly walk through the village is much more beautiful than His special visit last Tuesday, is it not?

Everyone wanted to get into Hudsonville. It took hundreds of special blue-coats and guardsmen to keep the crowds from hindering disaster cleanup. Last Sunday afternoon I had me a time getting out and getting back into my village.

But we do not need the cops on Sunday!

How easily we leave our place empty on Sunday during worship of God who is in our very midst day and night?

How easily do we fall asleep during the service, skip the reading of God's Word after a meal, and a prayer or two?

Tuesday He came and said: "This is the way of My final coming, when the heavens and the earth shall be destroyed by fire, tornado and earthquake, and then the hearts of men shall fail them because of My terror!"

We heard it and paid attention. Oh, how we paid attention!

But, every waking and sleeping hour He is in our very midst and says: "I love you with an everlasting love, and all My endeavour is to get you with Me in the new earth and the new heaven. I move the heavens and the earth and the depth of hell to get you away from the world, the devils and the powers of sin. I send angels and My Holy Spirit of grace Who explains and applies My precious Word so that you may eat and drink spiritually and be satisfied. I am a flaming wall of fire around you and your children so that no harm may come near your dwelling. I suffer no man to do you wrong. I give men for thee and nations for thy salvation. Oh, I do love you and your seed and I have unutterable salvation in store for you. Listen to Me, My people: I, the eternal God am thy Refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms!"

That is what God, what Jesus, what the Spirit sayeth unto the churches.

And do we pay as close attention to it as to last Tuesday's tornado?

There is our accusation.

* * * *

Yes, I do know that the tornado came so that the wicked will have no excuse in the day of His final coming.

I know, too, that this tornado came as a sign of His final coming so that the church might take courage and know that her deliverance is nigh.

But I also am persuaded that the tornado came to shake the church awake, to direct us to His more beautiful Voice of the Gospel, to remind us of His daily and nightly Presence among us.

The church was crowded Sunday morning. And they tell me that such was the case in the other churches in our little village.

The tornado calls us to a rededication, to a reconsecration. It did that to me.

We have given our answer to God's visit in our communal prayer.

And we tremble at His presence now.

For God says: "Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth."

God desires to be exalted. And, let us never forget it, He *will* be exalted. Therefore He walked through our town on a bias: on a line from the Southwest to the Northeast. And even the dogs saw Him and trembled.

And He was exalted. Even by the reprobate, all though they will not admit it. Some of them took time out to insult Him: I saw a headline in a daily paper which called it a "brutal" tornado! It carries the proof with it that God was exalted. It was the wicked's answer to His footsteps. When God says in their hearts: I am God and there is no other God; then they say: There is no God!

Did you note that the daily papers did not connect the tornado with God and His Christ?

But we are still, Father!

We know that Thou art God.

And we exalt Thee, even while we cower in the Southwest corner of our basements.

* * * *

Yes, we are still.

And we are going to listen as never before. That is our promise to Thee.

On our plea for grace to keep our promise.

And we are reassured, for Thou continuest: "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our Refuge!"

God was seen for a few minutes.

He was clothed in black, the black swirls of dust, muck, trees, planks and bodies of men and animals.

We saw Him for a few minutes such as He will be seen again in the clouds of darkness of the final tempest, the final tornado of the last Day, the *Yom Jehovah*.

But He is still with us, even though we have often forgotten.

He is still with us in His dear Son.

He was in a hurry to come on Pentecost: the sound of a fiercely driven wind.

And He never left us.

He is so intimately close to us that the theologians are still fighting about the two natures of Christ. Oh, God is very close to Man.

Do you realize that the sentence: "The Lord of Hosts is with us" is a name of Jesus?

Immanuel means God with us. Well, for the name of God in the sentence, my text has: The Lord of Hosts.

He came wellnigh two thousand years ago, and united Himself with man, and henceforth we are Zion, the city of God. His finger touched the earth; it was the greatest Tornado the world has ever seen. It was dark too. It was the Son of God dying on the accursed tree. There God embraced us with all our sin and guilt.

And then the Tornadoes of God began to howl. It was an eternal Tornado of wrath of Almighty and Holy God.

And when the tornado was over, it became still.

It was very still in the garden of Joseph.

The stillness of the peace of God that stole over and within the church of God.

That stillness shall last through all eternity.

That is our Refuge.

The papers say: get to the basement. They even say and specify the exact corner which is safest: the Southwest. Or under a table or a bed if you have no basement. I have no quarrel with the scientist. We must use the means.

But there is a Refuge that is better, far better.

We hide in the shadow of the Cross of our Jesus.

And all is well. Amen. Hallelujah!

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. Hanko. All our men are welcomed to attend this meeting.

Rev. M. Schipper
Jay Bomer

THE STANDARD BEARER

Semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July and August

Published by the REFORMED FREE PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION
P. O. Box 881, Madison Square Station, Grand Rapids 7, Mich.

Editor — REV. HERMAN HOEKSEMA

Communications relative to contents should be addressed to Rev. H. Hoeksema, 1139 Franklin St., S. E., Grand Rapids 7, Mich.

All matters relative to subscriptions should be addressed to Mr. G. Pipe, 1463 Ardmore St., S. E., Grand Rapids 7, Michigan.

Announcements and Obituaries must be mailed to the above address and will be published at a fee of \$1.00 for each notice.

RENEWALS: Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order.

Subscription price: \$4.00 per year

Entered as Second Class matter at Grand Rapids, Michigan

CONTENTS

MEDITATION —

- Visited by Majesty on High.....313
Rev. G. Vos

EDITORIALS —

- The Apostates of 1953 and the Three Points.....316
Rev. H. Hoeksema

AS TO BOOKS —

- De verkiesing Gods, by G. L. Berkhouwer.....317
The Seven Deadly Sins, by Billy Graham.....318
Rev. H. Hoeksema

OUR DOCTRINE —

- The Triple Knowledge (Part III — Of Thankfulness)....318
Rev. H. Hoeksema

FROM HOLY WRIT —

- Exposition of I Corinthians 1-4 (13).....321
Rev. G. Lubbers

IN HIS FEAR —

- The Sabbath in His Fear (7).....323
Rev. J. A. Heys

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH —

- The Church and the Sacraments (Baptism 3).....325
Rev. H. Veldman

THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS —

- The Exposition of the Canons of Dordrecht.....327
Rev. H. C. Hoeksema

DECENCY AND ORDER —

- The Office of the Deacon.....329
Rev. G. VandenBerg

ALL AROUND US —

- Rev. Knott's Open Letter.....331
Rev. M. Schipper

CONTRIBUTIONS —

- Teaching Citizenship333
Rev. G. M. Ophoff

EDITORIALS

The Apostates of 1953 and the Three Points

The second statement to which the apostates subscribe, let us remember, is: "Our act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter into the kingdom of God."

According to explanation by Bellflower (Doezema), this may mean to the consciousness of the believer that all the requisites of salvation are fulfilled in Christ is a prerequisite to enter into the kingdom of God or to lay hold on the claim to the riches of Christ.

In other words, *before* (pre-requisite) we enter into the kingdom of God, we must live in the consciousness that all the blessings of salvation are in Christ and are fulfilled in Him.

I will admit that this is implied in the second statement. Only, it makes it much worse.

It is Reformed and Scriptural, according to the Baptism Form, "that we cannot enter into the kingdom of God, except we are born again."

This means, of course:

1. That before we enter into the kingdom of God we are unregenerate, in the darkness of sin and death.
2. In that darkness we cannot, will not, and cannot will to enter into the kingdom of God. Nor can we fulfill any prerequisites to enter into that kingdom. If God should require of us any good works at all in order to enter into His kingdom, the case would be absolutely hopeless.
3. That before we can possibly enter the kingdom of God, not we, but God must do something: He must regenerate us. And regeneration is absolutely a work of God, without our aid or cooperation.

But, according to Bellflower, we must not only convert ourselves before we enter the kingdom of God, but we must live in the consciousness that Christ has fulfilled all the requisites of salvation. That, of course, is the consciousness of Faith. In other words, while we are outside of the kingdom of God, unregenerate, lying in the darkness of sin and death, we must live in that consciousness which is the consciousness of faith!

This is worse than the statement itself. In fact, it is sheer nonsense.

To my mind, it merely proves that this second statement to which the apostates subscribe cannot be interpreted in a sound sense and that they themselves realize it very well.

However, Bellflower does not positively state that this is the interpretation. It *may be*. But it also may mean something else. In fact, Bellflower offers another possible explanation. It is this: "Such a statement may refer also to the progressive entering the kingdom as we are called to a godly walk, and to run the race set before us, to turn from self to Christ."

Let us examine this interpretation.

Remember that this is supposed to be an interpretation of the statement "our act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter into the kingdom of God."

The crux of the whole matter is in that one term **PRE-REQUISITE**.

And this term is the predicate of the first term: **OUR ACT OF CONVERSION**.

The question, therefore, is: what is first?

Are we in the kingdom first or do we convert ourselves before we enter into the kingdom? Do we repent and turn away from sin to righteousness, before we are in the kingdom of God, or do we convert ourselves and repent in the kingdom of God? Or, to use the language of Bellflower, do we fulfill our calling "to a godly walk, and to run the race set before us, to turn from self to Christ," before we enter the kingdom of God even "progressively" or can we fulfill this calling only in the kingdom of God? Or, to express it in still different words: are we, after we once are regenerated, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, ever outside of that kingdom? Is, in our act of conversion, man ever first, or is God always the author?

We say: once regenerated is always regenerated: regeneration can never be lost. Once ingrafted into Christ is always to remain in Him: the principle of faith can never be lost. Once in the kingdom of God is always to be in the kingdom of God: there are never any prerequisites to enter into the kingdom of God. Our act of conversion is always, even progressively and repeatedly, the fruit of God's grace of conversion. God is always first.

To be sure, the believer may, for a time, lose the consciousness of being regenerated and of being in the kingdom of God because of his sin, because, for a time, he lives according to the old man rather than according to the new.

Our Reformed fathers were well aware of this as is evident from the Canons of Dordrecht, ch. V. There we read in Art. 4:

"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 the Holy Scripture, demonstrates."

Again, in Art. 5 of the same chapter we read:

"By such enormous sins, however, they highly offend God, incur a deadly guilt, grieve the Holy Spirit, interrupt

the exercise of faith, very grievously wound their consciences, and sometimes lose the sense of God's favor, for a time, until on their returning to the right way by serious repentance, the light of God's fatherly countenance again shines upon them."

The question that concerns us here is whether this "returning unto the right way by serious repentance" is a prerequisite to enter into the kingdom of God? Is, in this act of conversion, God first or man? This question is also answered by the Canons. In V, 6, we read:

"But God, who is rich in mercy, according to his unchangeable purpose of election, does not wholly withdraw the Holy Spirit from his own people, even in their melancholy falls; nor suffers them to proceed so far as to lose the grace of adoption, or to commit the sin unto death; nor does he permit them to be totally deserted, and to plunge themselves into everlasting destruction."

And in 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 once more, V, 8:

"Thus it is not in consequence of their own merits, or strength, but of God's free mercy, that they do not totally fall from faith and grace, nor continue and perish finally in their backslidings; which, with respect to themselves, is not only possible, but would undoubtedly happen; but with respect to God, it is utterly impossible, since his counsel cannot be changed, nor his promise fail, neither can the call according to his purpose be revoked, nor the merit, intercession, and preservation of Christ be rendered ineffectual, nor the sealing of the Holy Spirit be frustrated or obliterated."

What do these passages teach?

1. That believers, by following the lusts of the flesh, certainly may, for a time, lose the sense of the favor of God and, therefore, the consciousness that they are in the kingdom of God.
2. That, nevertheless, even then, they are not outside of but in the kingdom of God, for they are still regenerated, and the incorruptible seed of regeneration can never be lost.
3. That the fact that they come to repentance is not due to any merit or effort of their own for, as far as they are concerned, they would surely perish; but is due only to God's sovereign grace, who preserves in them the seed of regeneration according to his eternal counsel of election.

The conclusion of it all is that our act of conversion, whether in its initial sense or in its repeated and progressive

stages, is never a pre-requisite to enter into the kingdom of God. It is always as being regenerated and, therefore, as being in the kingdom of God, that we perform our act of conversion and walk in a new and holy life.

Bellflower (Doezema) is in error.

And all the apostates who subscribe to this second statement are also in error.

Principally, the trouble is that they depart from the Reformed truth of God's sovereign grace.

That was the error of the Christian Reformed Synod of Kalamazoo in 1924, when they adopted the theory of common grace in the Arminian sense of the word, especially when they adopted the error that the preaching of the gospel is a well-meant offer of salvation, on the part of God, to all that hear the gospel.

And that is, principally, the error of the two statements which the apostates maintain and because of which they caused schism in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

The attempt is always to make man do something in respect to his salvation. This is the error of all Arminianism. Usually, on the part of those that are in the Reformed Churches, and intend to remain members of them and even ministers in them, this attempt is camouflaged. Terms are employed that are doubtful and ambiguous. This was the case with regard to the Arminians of the seventeenth century. At that time, when the Remonstrance was published, many people in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, could not understand what was wrong with the followers of Arminius. This is no less true of the two statements to which the apostates subscribe. And Bellflower (Doezema) camouflages the statements still further by their attempted interpretation.

We may be glad and are thankful to the Lord that He opened the eyes of our churches in time and that the apostates revealed themselves when they did.

May the Lord give us grace to remain faithful! H.H.

AS TO BOOKS

De Verkiezing Gods (God's Election), by G. C. Berkhouwer. Published by J. H. Kok, N.V., Kampen, the Netherlands. Price f 11.75.

This book belongs to the series "Dogmatical Studies." In it Dr. Berkhouwer discusses the doctrine of election from various viewpoints. After an introductory chapter on the limit of reflection, the author discusses his subject from a dogma-historical viewpoint, then discusses: election and arbitrariness, election and mystery, election in Christ, election and reprobation, election and preaching, supra- and infra-lapsarianism, election and assurance of salvation, and then has a final chapter on what the author calls the great misunderstanding.

I intend to discuss this book at some length in *The Standard Bearer*, not exactly because Berkhouwer discusses my view at great length and presents a caricature of it, but because of the importance of the subject and also because, to a large extent, I do not agree with the author's presentation of the material. Although there is much that is commendable in the book, and I certainly recommend it to our ministers and students, I do not like the approach and the general tendency of the book. Hence, I consider it worthy of a more elaborate discussion than can be accomplished in a mere book report.

I just wish to make a remark or two now.

On p. 159, the author refers to Calvin when he writes that "God reconciles himself because He loved us." And the same is repeated on p. 160: "God is reconciled in Christ." I checked this reference in Calvin's Institutes, and he does, indeed, write this: donec reconciliatus est in Christo. But this is a serious error, nevertheless, and Berkhouwer should have called attention to it. God is not reconciled to us, but we are reconciled to God.

On p. 252, Berkhouwer makes the error, and that, too, three times, of finding the statement about Pharaoh's hardening his heart in Genesis instead of in Exodus.

For the rest, see future Standard Bearers. H.H.

The Seven Deadly Sins, by Billy Graham. Published by Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. Price \$2.00.

The term "seven deadly sins" originates, as you may read in an introduction to this book by the well-known Billy Graham, from pope Gregory the Great in the sixth century. These are the sins of pride, anger, envy, impurity, gluttony, avarice, and slothfulness. Why these sins are more deadly than others is difficult to see. I think that I could possibly add seven others to them.

This book contains seven messages of Billy Graham delivered in different places. They are not profound expositions, but popular sermons, as we might expect from him. They present interesting reading material of a light nature.

Besides, as we may also expect from Billy Graham, he does not preach the truth of sovereign grace, but is thoroughly Arminian: "open your heart to the regenerating grace of Christ . . . ask the Holy Spirit to come into your heart . . . you can have complete and unqualified victory by surrendering completely to Christ . . . if you will bring your life to Jesus Christ, God will forgive every sin you have ever committed . . . eternal life is within the reach of every one of you . . . the Saviour is as near as your yielded will, or He is as far away as you want Him to be," etc. etc.

No wonder mere men like to hear Billy Graham. But this is not the truth. H.H.

OUR DOCTRINE

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

AN EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

PART III — OF THANKFULNESS

LORD'S DAY 52

Chapter III

Prayer for Deliverance from Evil

The question may be asked whether it is necessary for the Christian constantly to utter this second part of the petition, throughout his entire life. There are those that deny this. They are called perfectionists. According to them, he that utters this prayer confesses that he is not yet completely delivered from the dominion of the devil and from the power of his evil nature. And therefore these people claim that the believing, redeemed, regenerated, sanctified Christian cannot properly take this prayer upon his own lips, at least not always, and not throughout his entire life. This may be a very suitable prayer for the unconverted or for the partially unconverted, who is not under grace but under sin, but not for the believer. It is true that the Christian certainly must pray for constant grace of God to fight the battle against the devil and all sin; for he realizes that he cannot stand without the grace of his Father in heaven. But to pray for deliverance from the dominion and power of the devil and of sin would be a denial of the work of grace accomplished in Christ Jesus and applied to him by the Holy Spirit. The believer, they emphasize, is already delivered from evil, and therefore cannot properly pray this petition, at least not every day and during his entire life.

According to this doctrine, which is defended by all that make salvation dependent on the free will of man, it is possible for the child of God in this world to attain to perfection and to walk without sin. And of course, they appeal for this teaching to the Word of God. In the first place, they appeal to those passages of Holy Writ that command the child of God to walk holy and to be holy as God is holy. Cf. Matt. 5:48; II Cor. 7:1; I Pe. 1:15. Secondly, they point out that the Word of God calls the church holy. Cf. I Cor. 2:6; II Cor. 5:17, etc. In the third place, they appeal to the examples of perfection and holiness of the saints on earth, such as Enoch and Noah, who walked with God. And finally, they appeal to passages that apparently teach perfection in the child of God, as, for instance, I John 3:9 and I John 5:18. There are many other passages of Holy Writ to which they appeal. Scripture teaches, for instance, in Rom. 6:14: "For sin shall not have dominion over you:

for ye are not under the law, but under grace." And: "But God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine that was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." Rom. 6:17, 18. And again: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." II Cor. 5:17. And once more: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Eph. 2:10. And we are admonished: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lust thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." Rom. 6:12, 13. How then is it possible for that Christian, that is thus delivered from all the dominion of sin and the devil, to pray, "Deliver us from evil?"

This view of the perfectionist is spiritually very shallow and superficial. Reformed people usually have a much profounder insight into Holy Writ, and at the same time a more sober view of the reality of the life of the child of God in the world. They take the reality of sin over against the righteousness and holiness of God far more seriously than the perfectionist. A theory that claims that the child of God is able to live perfectly in this world, and that he can actually attain to perfection, must necessarily lower the criterion, or standard, of perfection. He who takes sin seriously, and has any idea of the righteousness and holiness of God, certainly cannot be satisfied with the outward keeping of some of the commandments of God. But he understands that God demands truth in the inward parts. And the child of God who knows himself and gains an ever deeper insight from a spiritual, ethical point of view into his own sinful heart and existence will not easily be tempted to imagine that his walk is perfect before the Lord. He is too vividly conscious of the very opposite. Those that claim that the child of God is able to attain to perfection usually speaks in a very superficial way about their conversion to God. They commonly speak of some very gross sins in which they used to walk and from which now they are delivered. Formerly they were drunkards, or lived in adultery; but since they were converted, they live soberly and in chastity. Little they speak of the inner fountain of the heart, out of which are the issues of life. Lack of proper self-knowledge is the basis of their imagination that they can walk perfectly before God. Sin is excused, and the life of sanctification consists in the external walking in some of the commandments of God. The teaching of the perfectionist, moreover, leads to a neglect in regard to watching and prayer. Of a daily seeking refuge in the cross of Jesus Christ, in order there to find forgiveness of sins and peace of mind and heart, they have no need. And

therefore, from a spiritual point of view perfectionism is a very serious error.

In this connection we need not in detail go into the refutation of the Scriptural arguments of the perfectionist. We of course readily grant that the Lord God demands holiness in life and conversation of His people. In fact, we emphasize this demand with far more seriousness and in a far deeper sense than the perfectionist. But from this demand of God does not follow the possibility that the Christian can live perfectly according to that demand, and without sin. It may also be granted that the church of Christ in the world is called holy, and that she is actually holy in Christ Jesus. But it is true at the same time that the church possesses that holiness in Christ only in principle. In the same epistles in which the church and the saints are called holy in the Lord the believers are rebuked because of all kinds of sins and corruptions. And as far as the texts are concerned that apparently teach perfection in this life, it is very evident from other parts of the same epistles in which those expressions occur that they mean perfection only in principle. Truly, in I John 3:9 we read that he that is born of God cannot sin, because His seed remaineth in him. But in the same epistle, in I John 1:8, we also read that if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. And as far as examples in Holy Writ are concerned, that are supposed to teach that the saints can and do walk in perfection before God in this world, we may certainly remark that in the entire cloud of witnesses in the old dispensation there never was one that lived without sin before God.

Besides, we may remark that only he that is regenerated and that is a new creature in Christ Jesus can and will pray the petition, "Deliver us from evil." The natural man is dead in trespasses and sins. He is not free. He is enslaved to sin. Sin has dominion over him. And this dominion of sin does not signify that the sinner is outwardly shackled, and compelled to sin against his will and against the desires of his inmost heart, but that he is bound from within. His heart is corrupt. His will is perverse. His mind is darkened, so that he can neither truly discern nor will that which is good. He is motivated by enmity against the living God. For: "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Rom. 8:7. He agrees with sin. He loves darkness rather than light. How then could such a man ever begin to long for and to cry out for deliverance from evil? True, the wages which sin pays even in this life may sometimes be too bitter for him, so that he could long for deliverance from certain sinful habits, in order to escape their bitter consequences. But sin as such, sin as it is transgression of the law, he cannot possibly hate. Nor does he feel the dominion of sin as a yoke from which he would fain be delivered. The prayer, "Deliver us from evil," therefore, is the cry that is pressed from the regenerated heart. Yes, indeed, the believer in

Christ is a new creature. He is born of God. He is regenerated. And this does not mean merely, that he has reformed himself, that he has been cured from some bad habits, so that he used to be a drunkard, but drinks no more, or used to commit adultery, but now leads a clean life, or used to swear, but now utters no more profanity. But it means that his inmost heart has been radically changed. In his inmost heart, whence are the issues of life, he has received a new life, the resurrection-life of our Lord Jesus Christ. And in that inmost heart Christ, through His Spirit, has taken up his abode, and will never, even for a moment, leave it again. The Christian, therefore, is no longer a slave of sin. He is free from the dominion of the evil one. He is changed from death to life, from darkness to light. Old things have passed away; behold all things are become new!

But does this mean that the believer, regenerated and called out of darkness into light is completely perfected, so that there is no sin left in him whatsoever? There is perhaps no one who, in the face of the testimony of Scripture to the contrary, and in the face of reality and every-day experience, would dare to make such a claim. O, indeed, the Word of God teaches us that he that is born of God cannot sin, which means that exactly in as far as he is born of God, or in the capacity of one that is born of God, he cannot commit sin. But the same Scripture, as we have already quoted, teaches but too clearly that this does not imply that the believer as he is in this world is completely free from all the pollution of sin. In fact, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." I John 1:10. And the apostle Paul gives us an inspired picture of his own experience in Rom. 7:15, ff.; and it is quite impossible to apply this to his state before he was regenerated and converted: "For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Such is the testimony of Holy Writ. Such is also the daily experience of every Christian that takes the trouble to examine himself before the face of God. He has a new heart. And in that inmost heart of his he is united with Christ. But he has an old nature. And in that old nature there are the old motions and ruts of sin, motions of the lust of the flesh and the

lust of the eye and the pride of life. And his life is a continual battle. Always again he must hear the truth as it is in Jesus, "to put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of (your) his mind." The Christian in this world has a small beginning, a principle, of the new obedience. But there is still the old flesh, that hankers after sin.

During his whole life, therefore, the Christian must fight the battle of faith against the devil, the world, and his own flesh. And in that battle, looking forward to the final victory, he always must pray, "Deliver us from evil." Perhaps you remark that in the way of watching and praying and of constant battle the believer can overcome and gain the final and perfect victory over sin in this life, so that he reaches a state in which he sins no more. Or, you reason that the Spirit does not only regenerate God's elect, but also sanctifies them, and that in the process of sanctification the believer is gradually delivered from his old nature and reaches perfection. But neither of these two views is correct in the light of Holy Writ. As to the latter, sanctification consists so little of a gradual regeneration of our whole nature, body and soul, that, on the contrary, in the way of and through the work of sanctification the Christian is not delivered from his old carnal nature whatsoever, not even in the smallest degree. Always he has but a small beginning of the new obedience, a small principle of the new life, no matter how old he becomes or how truly he is sanctified by the Spirit of God. Sanctification simply does not consist in a gradual shedding of our old nature. That old sinful nature always remains, and goes with us to the grave. Only in and through death are we delivered from the body of this death, not before. By sanctification we do grow in the knowledge and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are strengthened in our faith. We become more fervent in love, are confirmed in hope, receive more light and understanding of the perfect way, more strength to fight the battle and to subject the body of this death to the service of righteousness. But the old nature, with its carnal lusts, remains until we breathe our last. And it is exactly those Christians that are spiritually most sensitive and that have advanced farthest on the way of sanctification that will most deeply bemoan their imperfect state, and confess that they have but a small beginning of the new obedience. It is they that feel the need of the constant prayer, "Deliver us from evil."

And as to the former statement, that we even with our sinful nature always present can so fight and watch and pray that it is possible to live sinlessly, one has but to take sin seriously, and then cast a look into his own inner life, in order to know how thoroughly untrue such a statement is.

H.H.

"The sovereignty of God, no matter how beautifully confessed, when belied in practice, can never be a source of comfort."
—HHK.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of I Corinthians 1-4

13.

We now come to the very beautiful and instructive passage in I Corinthians 2:10-16, which teaches us the underlying and secret reason why, we, the church, understand the Mystery of God in Christ, and why it is that the world does not understand these same Mysteries of faith.

The reason: God has *revealed* it unto *us* by His Spirit and He hath *hid* these same things from the wise and prudent.

Thus we read in the verses 10-11 as follows: "*But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.*"

Why does Paul stop to give this instruction to the church at Corinth? Is it that the church may begin to boast of a certain superior knowledge; must she begin to glory in her knowledge? Of course, such can never be the case. Had Paul not clearly made this understood when he calls our attention to the manner of our calling in Chapter 1:26-31? Is not the sole reason of all salvation such that we boast in the Lord, saying, O the depths both of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His ways and His paths past finding out! Out of Him, through Him and unto Him are all things. To Him be the glory both now and forever more?

Such is the clear design of God in all things in creation and in recreation. And, therefore, surely Paul does not give this instruction concerning the reason why we understand and the princes of this world do not, that the Christian should boast in the flesh.

Rather this instruction is given in order that we may truly learn to say: For what maketh us to differ from another? And what have we that we have not received? And, if we have received it, why should we glory as if we had not received it? (See I Cor. 4:7)

And surely such instruction was necessary for the church at Corinth where the consciousness of having received all by grace was so very sadly lacking. And, lest we exalt ourselves and be deceived by our own lusts, we hasten to add that we too need this instruction! Also in this respect we too often learn from painful experience how we have not yet profoundly learned this lesson: that, by nature, we are thoroughly Pelagian and Arminian, so that, even though it is our earnest confession that all salvation is of the Lord, we nevertheless find that according to the flesh we boast in our own superiority and accomplishment above others.

Paul learns to say: I labored more abundantly that they

all, yet, not I, but the grace of God which was with me! I Cor. 15:10.

Practically Paul says in these verses: What are you that you are not by God's grace in Christ? And what have you that you have not received?

Principally-theologically he "makes" this practical point clear by showing how all our understanding of the Mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven is *given* us to understand. It is all *gift* from God. However, it is such a gift of God that it is His sovereignly free gift. He gives it to whom He wills. It is not of him that willeth, not of him that runneth, but of God that giveth mercy!

That God has made a distinction between men and men, between the church and the world is stated by Paul in the very first sentence in verse 10. This is particularly noticeable in the original Greek. The "unto *us*" (eemin) is emphatic. It is placed in the emphatic position in the sentence. Literally we read "*Unto us* for revealed God through the Spirit." It is true that Paul certainly emphatically teaches that *God* has revealed this "hidden wisdom in Mystery." He alone could reveal it and He could reveal it only through His Holy Spirit. However, that is not the emphasis here. Paul is waging a polemic against party-strife and schism in the congregation, and the congregation must learn to see the implication of the gift of knowledge so that she may cease boasting in the flesh. And, therefore, we must see that God made a distinction between us and the world in that He revealed it unto us and not to the world!

Here is a marvelous matter to note. The very instruction which takes away all our boasting in the flesh and causing us to glory alone in the Lord is interpreted by unbelievers and all moralists as causing men to be careless and profane. But that is not because such are the facts, but simply because this Mystery of lowliness of mind and godliness has not been revealed unto them.

That one, to whom this *mystery* of God, all that is in Christ, has been "revealed," cannot possibly boast in man, is not only clear from the content and manner of the grace of God itself, (forgiveness of sins, hungering for righteousness, etc.) but also follows from the truth of God's *revelation* through the Holy Spirit.

This will become clear from just a cursory study of the term "reveal" in Scripture.

The term employed by Paul in verse 10 is "apokaluptein," a word which is commonly translated by the English term, "to reveal" and not by the term "to make manifest." The latter is generally the translation of the Greek verb "Phaneroin."

It is of interest to read what Thayer in his Greek-English Lexicon (Dictionary) has to say about the term "apokaluptein," to reveal. He writes the following about this verb: "It is a disclosure of truth, instruction, concerning Divine things before unknown—especially those relating to Christian salvation—given to the soul by God Himself, or by the

ascended Christ, especially by the operation of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 2:10) and so to be distinguished from other methods of instruction."

In this term of revelation we do not simply deal with the outward manifestation and confrontation with God's revelation in creation and in the written Word, but we here also come face to face with inward illumination of the *mind* and *heart* of man, that is, of the Christian! It is an impartation of the knowledge of God's wisdom in the Cross, imparting this knowledge to the "soul" of man, so that he is not merely a psychical creature but so that he is *constituted* a "spiritual man."

That such is the notion of "revelation" in Scripture is certainly convincingly and clearly taught in the well-known Scripture passage of Matthew 11:25, "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou has hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast *revealed* them unto babes."

In this text in Matthew 11 the "hiding" spoken of certainly is not to be understood in the sense that the Gospel was not made manifest to them. They had clearly understood the Gospel with their natural understanding. However, it was not with an understanding of faith and hope in God. The latter was not given to them. And so, while they clearly understood, they did not understand, and, while they emphatically heard the Word proclaimed, yet did they not see it as the Word of life. It was a hard doctrine! Hence, the "hiding" here must be understood in the sense that it was hid from them spiritually. They only heard it as "natural," as psychical men!

However, as soon as the eyes of the heart are enlightened by the Holy Spirit and knowledge is given to the eyes of the mind, then the mind of Christ is given. And that is "revelation," the uncovering of the mysteries of the Kingdom as they are "*revealed* out of faith unto faith."

Such is also clearly taught in Ephesians 1:17, 18, where Paul informs the congregation of his prayer for her that she may have and enjoy a richer, fuller and more mature understanding of all that is of God in Christ for the church. We read there "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and *revelation* in the knowledge of Him, the *eyes of your understanding* being enlightened"

It is quite evident that the Spirit of revelation (apokalupsis) is a Spirit which is "revelational" in that it "enlightens" the eyes of the heart. Thus also Paul has a great knowledge in the Mysteries of God, as it has not been made known to other generations, by virtue of and *according to revelation!* God has revealed His Son in Paul. And thus the scales of unbelief and misunderstanding no longer blind his eyes. He can see because it has been revealed unto him in such a way that the seeing eye and the hearing ear has been given unto him.

Such is the implication of the term also in Rom. 16:25 and other passages of Holy Writ.

The above interpretation is corroborated by a study of the use of the term which in the New Testament is translated "to make manifest."

It is rather important to notice that the noun "manifestation," in Greek; phaneroosis, is only employed twice in the entire New Testament. Both times it is used by Paul.

A very interesting usage of the term we find in I Corinthians 12:7 where we read, "But unto each has been given *the manifestation* (ee phaneroosis) of the Spirit unto which it is profitable for the members."

In this entire passage Paul is not speaking of God's revelation of the Mysteries to us, enlightening our eyes, but is speaking of the manifestation of the Spirit *in* and *through* us; in each member of the body the Holy Spirit is manifested in the body. Here we see the multiformity of the gifts of the Spirit in the one body of Christ, the living members of the church.

Here Paul would scarcely have employed the term "revealed."

Surely, surely, what is "revealed" (apokaluptien) is here implied and presupposed, but what is *revealed* unto us by the Spirit of God is *manifested* through the self-same Spirit.

Bishop Trench writes about the term "apokalupsis" (to reveal) the following note-worthy observation, "Joined with (optasia) appearance it is by Theophylact; distinguished from it in this, that the optasia (appearance) is not more than the thing shown or seen, the sight or vision, which might quite possibly be seen without being understood; while the (apokalupsis) revelation includes not merely the thing shown and seen, but also the interpretation or unveiling of the same." Paragraph XCIV, page 331, Syn. of N. T.

While of the term (phaneroosis) manifestation, Trench writes in the same paragraph that the honor of revealing either the second or the first coming of Christ has not been accorded to this term.

From all this it is very evident that Paul in our passage in I Corinthians 2:10, 11 certainly has more in mind with the term "revealed" than simply the objective manifestation, and that he wills the congregation to understand and confess that their very knowledge and believing acceptance of the truth is also from God in Christ.

It would lead us too far afield to demonstrate how this very evident truth is transgressed by the "first point" of 1924. However, the following syllogism will demonstrate why the categorical question "what grace do the reprobate receive in the preaching?" was indeed to the point and rooted in sound exegesis, and not in rationalistic preconceptions:

1. Grace and "revelation" (apokalupsis) are essentially one and the same.
2. Nothing is "revealed" to the world; it is only re-

(Continued on page 324)

IN HIS FEAR

The Sabbath in His Fear

(7)

Services of divine worship are over.

We frequented the house of God.

There still remain many hours left on the Sabbath.

But our observance of that day is no longer required?

By whose rule and consent?

You will find nothing in Holy Writ that declares that the day consists in only one and one half to three hours. You will not find that the Church is presented in Holy Writ as seeking the minimum of that which is recorded in the Heidelberg Catechism. And there is so much activity that ought to be performed upon that day that he who conscientiously looks to the day will find it too short for all the spiritual activity for which that day calls.

To begin with there are our young people who must be considered. The Sabbath is given also for them and ought to be used by them in spiritual exercises. We cannot approve of their wasting a Sunday afternoon in chasing here and there in their cars to make a holiday out of that part of the Sabbath. And where afternoon services are held instead of evening the same thing holds true for the evening. Our young people should have something spiritual to do on the day of rest as well as the adult.

We do not hesitate to state that the Sabbath rather than some night in the week is the ideal time for our young people's societies to meet. Indeed, it means another trip for those who live a distance from church, but is that any different when they have their society during the week? It still is another trip. And we ought to have insight enough to see and understand that it is a trip that is worthwhile. The argument of "another trip" is simply an excuse which we fail to use when it is for material, carnal reason that require our going back to the vicinity of our place of worship (or perhaps much farther). Besides, they spend the whole afternoon or evening going some other place and lose all idea even that it is the Sabbath. Late in the afternoon the thought might forcefully present itself to them that they have to hurry home for supper because they must get ready to go to church again. Or if all services of divine worship are over by three-thirty or four o'clock in the afternoon, the rest of the whole Sabbath is turned into a weekly holiday for doing the things of the flesh. These things ought not so to be.

Let us be charitable in this respect and assume that there is some good reason for having a young people's society on another night during the week. For the sake of presenting this matter, let us assume that a place of meeting cannot be secured for the afternoon or evening for this reason or for that; the fact remains that the Sabbath is there for being

filled with spiritual exercises. Let the young people then prepare, and let's capitalize that, PREPARE for their society discussion. They will always receive benefit from the discussion in the measure that they prepare to derive benefit from the discussion. We live in an age wherein these things are shoved aside so easily and wherein so little interest is shown by the youth of the church in studying God's word that we feel constrained to write boldly and state that this is not the Sabbath in His fear.

The parents are to a great extent to blame for this situation themselves. Father and mother sit there reading the Reader's Digest or sad to say some utterly worldly novel in a magazine that never claims to seek the spiritual wellbeing of its readers or of some current novel that is gripping for the senses and entertaining to the flesh but utterly void of the fear of God! Even worse are those situations in homes where the movies of yesteryear and their present day successors are witnessed by father and mother on the television screen. We do not hesitate to say: The fear of God is not in it! Such things are definitely in the category which we listed before of things that choke the word that has been sown. The fear of God is not in anyone of those things. And such activity is not keeping the Sabbath in His fear.

No better time either, for father and mother to study God's Word and prepare for their society meeting. The activity of the youth often is a very accurate mirror of what goes on in the home. Father and mother who never set the example for their children by having the word of God in their hands for anything more than a hurried reading of it at the table after meals are revealed as a rule by children who come to society in total ignorance even of what part of Holy Writ it is in which their lesson is to be found. Excellent helps are provided for them. Sets of prearranged questions are there for them to study that they may find the answers. And they have not so much as looked at these helps and questions. Nor has father and mother even insisted on it. Instead father and mother defend the child and maintain that he has to have some recreation, etc., etc. But let it be remembered that the Sabbath must be kept in HIS fear and that is the One Whom we will have to satisfy with our excuses and not man.

The Sabbath also is a wonderful time to begin, at least, with the instruction to the children of their catechism lessons. Read to them the story out of the Bible so that they know the story on which their questions and answers are based. Teach them early in life the significance of the Sabbath and that God has prepared a part for them also.

It makes your Sabbath busy.

Who would want or dare to deny that?

But for what else has God *given* it?

He *gave* that Sabbath. He made it for man and did not make man for it. And therefore it is sinful when we *take* it for our flesh. We may not take it away from the reason for which He has given it. Then we take it in vain. That Sabbath we may not take in vain anymore than we may take His

name in vain. For remember that His name is in all His works. And to take the day which speaks of His work of salvation for carnal pursuits and fleshly pleasures is to take that day in vain and is to sin against the living God.

The same holds true for those whom God has detained home through illness, tending the sick or by inclement weather or the like. In the measure that we are able to turn to God's Word on the Sabbath, meditate upon it, read good spiritual literature, in that measure we ought to fill the day likewise. Father goes to church in the morning while mother tends the little babe. Well, she is usually kept so busy getting that noon time meal ready that the more important things of the soul and of spiritual life must be relegated to the background. The Sabbath behaviour often can be paraphrased thus: Seek ye first the things of this life, food and drink, ease and comfort; and all these spiritual things will be added." We actually live and reveal on the Sabbath that we so think. *Seeking* the kingdom of God is of far less importance than the seeking of the things of this life. Father stays home in the afternoon; and while baby sleeps he takes his nap also or else wiles his time away with worldly books and avocations. Let him read spiritual material. Let him study his society lesson. Let him instruct the other children that stay home with him in their catechism work.

Sure, that is work for him.

The flesh rebels against it.

But can we honestly say before God that He has not given us the day exactly for such things?

You want to visit the bedridden and sick in the hospitals on Sunday afternoon or night.

Nothing wrong with that.

Jesus, in connection with visiting the sick in Matthew 25:34, says that to visit the sick is to visit Him and that such are blessed of His Father and inherit the kingdom.

But make it a Sabbath visit then in His fear.

Give the sick the benefit of the Word of God which you might hear and might enjoy. Do not make your visit one on the same carnal sphere and level that the world practices. If you plan to go to visit the sick think of them when you go to church in the morning and make a mental note of the things that you hear that you also intend to bring to their attention. You will find more joy in listening to the Word yourself that morning or afternoon.

It means work, this keeping of the Sabbath in His fear.

And if it is done properly it is going to keep you busy, so busy in fact that you will see the foolishness of asking: may I do this and may I do that today? You will not find time for these, nor will you care for them.

We speak of the Sabbath as being a foretaste of the Eternal Sabbath. Such it is for the child of God who keeps it in His fear. For that Eternal Sabbath will indeed be an everlasting day of work, of praising and glorifying God in word and in deed.

There is no room in that eternal Sabbath for the spirit-

ually lazy and spiritually disinterested. But as the angels in heaven are ceaselessly active in the worship and service of God, so shall all those for whom this rest remains be active there. And they will begin thus to live in this life.

* * * *

In the February 1 issue of *The Standard Bearer* we wrote the following, "It is not a day given us to forsake and leave divine services behind and to fly by the fastest plane across more than half of our country, from the West Coast to the Great Lakes region, to try to cast our illegal vote at a consistory meeting where we intend to defend heresy."

The brother involved wrote us and assured us that this never took place. He did attend divine services twice that particular Sabbath; and we are glad to make the correction after receiving this word from him.

We are glad to do this for two reasons.

First of all we have no interest or delight in misrepresenting anyone or of accusing anyone falsely of anything. We had been misinformed by one whom we considered in a position to know the facts and who would have no reason for misrepresenting them. Since the facts are otherwise we gladly say so at this time.

In the second place we are glad to make this correction because, although in a series of articles such as we have begun and now have concluded, it is necessary to mention specific acts that are not to be practiced, we are happy when we hear of instances that reveal that the Sabbath has been kept in His fear.

J.A.H.

FROM HOLY WRIT

(Continued from page 322)

vealed to us by God's Spirit.

3. No grace is given in the preaching to the "unbelieving" reprobate world in the preaching.

Does this make a Reformed christian proud and boastful? Such has always been the contention of the world of unbelievers and Arminians!

But Paul says: Thus it is, indeed, that no flesh might glory before God, but that he, who glorieth, may glory in the Lord.

(To be Continued)

G.L.

"A christian too conversant with people of the world, resembles a bright piece of plate too much exposed to the air; which, though in reality it continues plate still, yet grows tarnished, and loses its fine burnish, and needs a fresh cleansing and rubbing up."

— Toplady

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

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

BAPTISM (3)

Continuing our quotation of Augustine, in connection with his views on baptism, we quote the following: "For that sins which have been remitted do return upon a man, where there is no brotherly love, is most clearly taught by our Lord, in the case of the servant whom He found owing Him ten thousand talents, and to whom He yet forgave all at his entreaty. But when he refused to have pity on his fellow-servant who owed him a hundred pence, the Lord commanded him to pay what He had forgiven him. The time, then, at which pardon is received through baptism is as it were the time for rendering accounts, so that all the debts which are found to be due may be remitted. Yet it was afterwards that the servant lent his fellow-servant the money, which he had so pitilessly exacted when the other was unable to pay it; but his fellow-servant already owed him the debt, when he himself, on rendering his accounts to his master, was excused a debt of so vast an amount. He had not first excused his fellow-servant, and so come to receive forgiveness from his Lord. This is proved by the words of the fellow-servant: "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." Otherwise he would have said, "You forgave me it before; why do you again demand it?" This is made more clear by the words of the Lord Himself. For He says, "But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants which was owing him a hundred pence." He does not say, "To whom he had already forgiven a debt of a hundred pence." Since then He says, "was owing him," it is clear that he had not forgiven him the debt. And indeed it would have been better, and more in accordance with the position of a man who was going to render an account of so great a debt, and expected forbearance from his Lord, that he should first have forgiven his fellow-servant what was due to him, and so have come to render the account when there was such need for imploring the compassion of his Lord. Yet the fact that he had not yet forgiven his fellow-servant, did not prevent his Lord from forgiving him all his debts on the occasion of receiving his accounts. But what advantage was it to him, since they all immediately returned with redoubled force upon his head, in consequence of his persistent want of charity? So the grace of baptism is not prevented from giving remission of all sins, even if he to whom they are forgiven continues to cherish hatred towards his brother in his heart. For the guilt of yesterday is remitted, and all that was before it, nay, even the guilt, of the very hour and moment previous to baptism, and during baptism itself. But then he immediately begins again to be responsible, not only for the days, hours, moments

which ensue, but also for the past, — the guilt of all the sins which were remitted returning on him, as happens only too frequently in the Church." — end of quote.

We have already remarked on this quotation of Augustine in our previous article. First, the eminent Church Father apparently teaches in this quotation, part of which appeared in our preceding article, 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. And, secondly, he teaches that 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.

Another lengthy quotation from Augustine, in which he discusses the penitent thief that was crucified with Jesus is of importance, and we quote it as follows: "But what is the precise value of the sanctification of the sacrament (which that thief did not receive, not from any want of will on his part, but because it was unavoidably omitted) and what is the effect on a man of its material application, it is not easy to say. Still, had it not been of the greatest value, the Lord would not have received the baptism of a servant. But since we must look at it in itself, without entering upon the question of the salvation of the recipient, which it is intended to work, it shows clearly enough that both in the bad, and in those who renounce the world in word and not in deed, it is itself complete, though they cannot receive salvation unless they amend their lives. But as in the thief, to whom the material administration of the sacrament was necessarily wanting, the salvation was complete, because it was spiritually present through his piety, so, when the sacrament itself is present, salvation is complete, if what the thief possessed be unavoidable wanting. And this is the firm tradition of the universal Church, in respect of the baptism of infants, who certainly are as yet unable "with the heart to believe unto righteousness, and with the mouth to make confession unto salvation," as the thief could do; nay, who even, by crying and moaning when the mystery is performed upon them, raise their voices in opposition to the mysterious words, and yet no Christian will say that they are baptized to no purpose.

And if any one seek for divine authority in this matter, though what is held by the whole Church, and that not as instituted by Councils, but as a matter of invariable custom, is rightly held to have been handed down by apostolical authority, still we can form a true conjecture of the value of the sacrament of baptism in the case of infants, from the parallel of circumcision, which was received by God's earlier people, and before receiving which Abraham was justified, as Cornelius also was enriched with the gift of the Holy Spirit before he was baptized. Yet the apostle says of Abraham himself, that "he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith," having already believed in his heart, so that "it was counted unto him for righteousness." Why, therefore, was it commanded him that he should circumcise every male child in order on the eighth day, though

it could not yet believe with the heart, that it should be counted unto it for righteousness, because the sacrament in itself was of great avail? And this was made manifest by the message of an angel in the case of Moses' son; for when he was carried by his mother, being yet uncircumcised, it was required, by manifest present peril, that he should be circumcised, and when this was done, the danger of death was removed. As therefore in Abraham the justification of faith came first, and circumcision was added afterwards as the seal of faith; so in Cornelius the spiritual sanctification came first in the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the sacrament of regeneration was added afterwards in the laver of baptism. And as in Isaac, who was circumcised on the eighth day after his birth, the seal of this righteousness of faith was given first, and afterwards, as he imitated the faith of his father, the righteousness itself followed as he grew up, of which the seal had been given before when he was an infant; so in infants, who are baptized, the sacrament of regeneration is given first, and if they maintain a Christian piety, conversion also in the heart will follow, of which the mysterious sign had gone before in the outward body. And as in the thief the gracious goodness of the Almighty supplied what had been wanting in the sacrament of baptism, because it had been missing not from pride or contempt, but from want of opportunity; so in infants who die baptized, we must believe that the same grace of the Almighty supplies the want, that, not from perversity of will, but from insufficiency of age, they can neither believe with the heart unto righteousness, nor make confession with the mouth unto salvation. Therefore, when others take the vows for them, that the celebration of the sacrament may be complete in their behalf, it is unquestionably of avail for their dedication to God, because they cannot answer for themselves. But if another were to answer for one who could answer for himself, it would not be of the same avail. In accordance with which rule, we find in the gospel what strikes every one as natural when he reads it, "He is of age, he shall speak for himself."

By all these considerations it is proved that the sacrament of baptism is one thing, the conversion of the heart another; but that man's salvation is made complete through the two together. Nor are we to suppose that, if one of these be wanting, it necessarily follows that the other is wanting also; because the sacrament may exist in the infant without the conversion of the heart; and this was found to be possible without the sacrament in the case of the thief, God in either case filling up what was involuntarily wanting. But when either of these requisites is wanting intentionally, then the man is responsible for the omission. And baptism may exist when the conversion of the heart is wanting; but, with respect to such conversion, it may indeed be found when baptism has not been received, but never when it has been despised. Nor can there be said in any way to be a turning of the heart to God when the sacrament of God is treated with contempt. Therefore we are right in censuring, anathe-

matizing, abhorring, and abominating the perversity of heart shown by heretics; yet it does not follow that they have not the sacrament of the gospel, because they have not what makes it of avail. Wherefore, when they come to the true faith, and by penitence seek remission of their sins, we are not flattering or deceiving them, when we instruct them by heavenly discipline for the kingdom of heaven, correcting and reforming in them their errors and perverseness, to the intent that we may by no means do violence to what is sound in them, nor, because of man's fault, declare that anything which he may have in him from God is either valueless or faulty." — end of quote.

In this lengthy quotation we would briefly note the following. First, the statement of Augustine, namely: "so in infants, who are baptized, the sacrament of regeneration is given first, and if they maintain a Christian piety, conversion also in the heart will follow, of which the mysterious sign had gone before in the outward body," certainly sounds strange to us. Did Augustine, who believed in unconditional predestination and in the utter depravity of the human nature, actually believe that a maintaining of a Christian piety must precede the conversion of the heart? This is unthinkable, it seems to me. Or, did he simply mean that the two are inseparable? Secondly, it is stated by some (we have not been able to verify it) that the thief must have been baptized by the sprinkling of the blood or by the water from Jesus' side. We must remember that it was taught that there is no salvation without baptism, and it is evident that the penitent thief had not been baptized. In this quotation, however, Augustine makes an exception in the case of the malefactor on the ground that recourse to the administration of the sacrament could not be had because of the want of time. Thirdly, Augustine again affirms that the spiritual benefit of baptism is only for those who amend their lives. And, fourthly, the learned church father has also something to say, in this quotation, about the baptism of infants. He declares here that in the case of infants the faith of the Church, as represented by the godfathers and godmothers, functions for the child. The infant cannot answer for itself; hence, it is unquestionably of avail for their dedication to God when others take the vows for them. And we may certainly conclude from these quotations of Augustine that great significance was attached to the sacrament of baptism. H.V.

IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies' Aid of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Redlands, California, hereby wishes to express its sincere sympathy to the family of, Mr. Herman De Vries, in the loss of their Wife, Mother and Grandmother,

MRS. MARTINA DE VRIES

May the Lord comfort the family through His Word and Spirit, and may we rest assured, that our loss is her gain.

Rev. H. H. Kuiper, President

Mrs. E. Van Voorthusen, Secretary

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 9. This purpose proceeding from everlasting love towards the elect, has from the beginning of the world to this day been powerfully accomplished, and will henceforward still continue to be accomplished, notwithstanding all the ineffectual opposition of the gates of hell, so that the elect in due time may be gathered together into one, and that there never may be wanting a church composed of believers, the foundation of which is laid in the blood of Christ, which may steadfastly love, and faithfully serve him as their Savior, who as a bridegroom for his bride, laid down his life for them upon the cross, and which may celebrate his praises here and through all eternity.

Except for the rather inaccurate “the foundation of which is laid in the blood of Christ,” which might more simply and correctly be translated by “founded in the blood of Christ,” the above translation is correct, though we might also add the term “notwithstanding” is commentary rather than translation. The latter term might have been left out, and the phrase in which it appears simply translated: “the gates of hell vainly opposing.”

This article immediately reminds one of that beautiful fifty-fourth answer of the *Heidelberg Catechism*, concerning the holy catholic church: “That the Son of God from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends, and preserves to himself by his Spirit and word, out of the whole human race, a church chosen to everlasting life, agreeing in true faith . . .” And certainly, ever since the Synod of Dordrecht, that answer of the *Catechism*, which, of course, was already the accepted creed of the Reformed Churches at the time of the Synod, must necessarily be viewed in the light of this further explanation of the *Canons*.

Before treating in detail the meaning of this article, let us briefly note some of its salient features. In the first place, remember that the article falls under the heading of “the death of Christ, and the redemption of men thereby.” This may seem strange at first glance, but it is nevertheless true, and, we may add, quite proper. To be sure, it does not treat the death of Christ and the redemption of men thereby as such. It speaks of the gathering of the church, and that too, as the powerful accomplishment of the everlasting purpose of God’s love. But, as becomes evident from a study

of the Rejection of Errors in this chapter, it indeed deals with the subject of the death of Christ and redemption in so far as this doctrine was corrupted by the Arminians. The Arminian view of atonement, — in connection, let it be added, with their view of predestination, — left it an open question (speaking from their point of view, now) whether there would ever be a church at all, and whether at any given time in history there would be a gathering of believers. That all depended, in the Arminian view, on whether there were any men who would believe in Christ and actually appropriate the forgiveness of sins that was obtained by Christ for all men and every man. And it is in this connection that the fathers here state the necessary consequence of the Reformed and Scriptural view of particular atonement. In the second place, note once again that you find in this article the same organic view of the truth that pervaded the previous article. The truth is one. And though you can distinguish that one truth into various doctrines, — a doctrine of election, a doctrine of atonement and redemption, a doctrine of salvation, of the application of the benefits of Christ to His people, etc., — you can nevertheless never separate these doctrines from each other and still maintain the unity of the truth. And so the fathers again trace the one line of the one purpose of God, conceived in eternity, and realized all through history, even to the day of its final consummation in the new creation.

As to the contents of this article, let us note, first of all, that by “this purpose” we are referred to Article 8: the “purpose” is defined there. According to that article, “this purpose” is briefly “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.” Moreover, the article speaks of the fact that this purpose has *from the beginning of the world* been powerfully accomplished. Hence, the article teaches that long before Christ actually died and atoned for the elect, God was powerfully accomplishing His purpose that the “quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of his Son should extend to all the elect, . . . thereby to bring them infallibly to salvation.”

We may note, in the second place, that the article emphasizes that this purpose *proceeds out of everlasting love towards the elect*. Here the fathers clearly take the position, therefore, that the atoning death of Christ can only be explained out of God’s everlasting love towards the elect. This is important. It is not thus, that God was filled with hatred toward us, but that Christ intervened and removed the cause of that hatred, and that only then did God become moved with love toward us. But it was ever thus, that in Christ Jesus God loved His elect from all eternity. And that love is therefore sovereign and free. It is not even thus, that God’s purpose that the saving efficacy of the death of

His Son should extend to all the elect is before that love. No, the purpose to save proceeds out of that love. And the realization of that purpose proceeds out of that love. The most precious death of His Son, together with all the saving benefits connected with that death, is a marvellous revelation of everlasting divine love.

In the third place, notice that the article speaks of ineffectual, or vain, opposition against that purpose of God and its realization. This opposition it denotes by the Scriptural expression "the gates of hell." The expression undoubtedly stands for all that proceeds through those gates, all that is of devilish, hellish origin. It includes the devil and his host, and their allies, the world, the children of their father the devil, and the very flesh of the elect. And their methods of opposition are many and manifold. In the battle against the purpose of God they employ persecution and reproach, suffering and death and destruction, fire and sword and imprisonment, the temptation of false doctrine and the vain philosophy of men, all kinds of attempts to falsify the preaching of the gospel. They make use of the dominion of sin and the power of the flesh. They employ the temptations of the treasures and pleasures of the world. And always their purpose is to destroy the church and to frustrate the realization of the purpose of God, namely, that the saving efficacy of the most precious death of His Son should extend to all the elect, and that thus they should be brought infallibly to salvation.

That is history.

From the beginning of the world God was powerfully accomplishing that purpose. And from the beginning of the world the gates of hell opposed that purpose.

Thus it was in the old dispensation. Always the gates of hell tried to destroy the holy line, and, ultimately to prevent the appearance of the Great Seed of the woman. Before the flood already that is evident in the history of Cain and Abel, in the intermingling of the daughters of men with the sons of God, in the persecution that preceded the flood until only Noah and his eight were left. After the flood the same attempt is manifest at Babel, in the history of Israel in Egypt, in the wilderness, in Canaan, where that holy line was assaulted from within and without, in the history of the captivity, in the devilish attempt of Haman, in the dark period of the 400 years.

Thus it was in the time of the Savior Himself, from His birth at Bethlehem until His death on the cross. Always they tried to destroy Him and to prevent Him from accomplishing His redeeming purpose. When the gates of hell could not succeed in keeping Him from His purpose to be obedient to the Father's purpose, they attempted finally to destroy Him on the cross.

Thus it was all through the new dispensation until the present time. One need only think of the persecution of the apostles, of the persecution of the early church by the Roman emperors, of the many forces of opposition exercised through

the Romish Church; or one need only study the history of the development of doctrine, including the very history of the Arminian controversy from Dordt to the present, with its repeated cycle of apostasy from the truth; or one need only open his eyes to all the temptations and allurements of this present world; and that consistent effort of the gates of hell to destroy the church and to prevent the realization of God's purpose becomes very evident.

But always God accomplished His purpose, and the opposition of the gates of hell was vain. Vain was that opposition, in the first place, because no matter how furious it was, and no matter how much destruction it seemed to accomplish, God always maintained His cause and preserved His church. But in the second place, the frustration of its vanity reaches its peak,—and undoubtedly this is what moves the powers of darkness to foam and froth in fury,—in this, that the Lord God, according to His everlasting purpose of love, so directs and controls that very opposition that it must serve the realization of His purpose. Never was that more clearly revealed than at the cross itself, where indeed wicked men nailed God's precious Son to the accursed tree, but all according to His determinate counsel and foreknowledge, so that they were but instruments in the realization of His purpose, "that the saving efficacy of the most precious death of His Son should extend to all the elect." And how that very fact infuriated the powers of darkness becomes evident in their raging attempt to down the cause of the church immediately after Pentecost,—an attempt that was again so frustratingly vain because it only served the growth of the church and the spread of the gospel.

And so the fathers proceed, and say boldly that this purpose will "henceforward still continue to be accomplished." O, to be sure, this comforting assurance is based upon past history. But that is not its foundation ultimately. On the basis of the doctrine of conditional election and conditional salvation, the doctrine of free will, this certainty could never be attained, neither with regard to the individual believer nor with regard to the church as a whole. But on the basis of past history *as it is the divine accomplishment of the divine purpose* this assurance is absolutely established. The whole elect church shall be saved most assuredly. Not one of them shall perish. For if Jehovah of hosts accomplishes His own purpose, a purpose proceeding from everlasting love, who shall ever hinder it?

The result, therefore, is that the elect are in due time gathered together into one, and that there never is wanting a church composed of believers, founded in the blood of Christ. This has reference, first of all, to the present. The Lord takes care that there is always a church on the earth. Never is the line of the church broken in history. Always there are the 7000 that have not bowed the knee to Baal. And it has reference, in the second place, to the final gathering of all the elect, the complete body, in eternal glory. Then all

(Continued on page 330)

DECENCY and ORDER

The Office of the Deacon

ARTICLE 24

"The deacons shall be chosen, approved and installed in the same manner as was stated concerning the elders."

In Articles 24 to 26 of the Church Order the office and function of the deacons is described. Mention is also made of the deacons in Article 37 where it is stated that they may be added to the consistory by local regulation where the number is small. Article 40 stipulates the time, purpose and manner in which the periodic Deacon's Meetings shall be held. In Article 83 we find another reference to the deacons in connection with their assisting the poor who, out of necessity, are compelled to move from one place to another and lack the financial means to do so. Finally, Article 30 of the Netherlands Confession mentions the deacons as forming part of the Council of the church. Although this office is also mentioned in other places, these are the main references in our Confessions. To the matters that concern this office we now direct our attention.

In the above quoted article mention is made of the election, approbation and installation of the deacons. The article merely states that all of this shall be conducted in the same manner as was stipulated concerning the elders in Article 22. Since we have already written about this matter in detail, we shall not reiterate here what was afore written but will concern ourselves with other matters that pertain to this particular office.

A. *Its Origin and History*

The oldest and most generally accepted view of the church has it that Acts 6:1-6 records the origin of the office of the deacons in the New Testament church. According to this passage the office grew out of a special emergency in the congregation of Jerusalem, in consequence of the complaint of the Hellenists, or Greek Jews, against the Hebrews, or Palestinian Jews, that their widows were neglected in the daily ministration at the common love-feasts. (Agapae) The mere fact that the word "deacon" is not found in this passage does not conclusively disprove the claim of Mayer and other of the more authoritative interpreters that, "from this first regular overseership of alms, the mode of appointment to which could not but regulate analogically the practice of the church, was gradually developed the *diaconate*, which subsequently underwent further elaboration."

On the matter of the origin of this office there are, as may be expected, divergent views. Some hold that Acts 6 speaks of no ecclesiastical office at all but simply mentions a special service which the men appointed were required

to render to the church at that time. Others point to the fact that two of the men appointed, Philip and Stephen, also engaged in the ministry of the Word and, consequently, claim that this appointment included both the office of elder and deacon. It cannot refer to the office as we know it in our circles today since our deacons do not preach. When, however, the passage in question is considered in the light of later passages such as Philippians 1, I Timothy 3, etc., it seems proper to conclude that Acts 6 relates the beginning of a permanent and essential office in the church.

Upon the decease of the apostles and especially during the second century of the New Testament era, the office of the deacon underwent a radical change and degradation. Originally the church was governed by the Elders or Presbyteries. These became distinguished in two groups. The one group assumed the position of Bishops, corresponding somewhat to the office of the high-priests in the Old Testament, while the other group of elders became common or ordinary priests. Thus did the deacons receive a position subordinate to the priest. They were regarded as occupying a position similar to that held by the common Levites under the Old Dispensation. Their rank was then inferior to the priests, even as these were again inferior to the Bishops and thus birth was given to the *Orders* as maintained by the Romish Church to the present day.

When then in the course of time the primary functions of the deacons were absorbed by other institutions as the sick and the poor were placed in hospitals and alms-houses and the orphans into orphan asylums, this office was divested of its sacred rights and assigned other duties of assisting in the public worship, especially at baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Justin Martyr, one of the earliest church fathers, describes the work of the deacons as follows:

"The deacons distributed the bread and wine at the Eucharist after they were blessed by the presiding officers, and also carried them to the sick. They arranged the altar, presented the offerings of the people, read the Gospel, gave the signal for the departure of the unbelievers and catechumens, recited some prayers, and distributed the consecrated cup (in the absence of the priest, the bread also), but were forbidden to offer the sacrifice. Preaching is occasionally mentioned among their privileges, after the examples of Stephen and Philip, but very rarely in the West."

Hilary, the Deacon, in his commentary on Ephesians 4:11 says that originally all the faithful preached and baptized, but that in his day the deacons did not preach. In some cases they were forbidden, in others authorized to preach. The *Pontificale Romanum*, however, defines their duties and privileges with the words: "It is the duty of the deacon to minister at the altar, to baptize, and to preach."

At the time of the Reformation of the 16th century, Luther attempted to restore the office of deacon to its rightful place but was unsuccessful. In the Lutheran church, the

office as defined in Scripture, has no place even today. The work of mercy is left to the Civil Government and the term "deacon," when used, is applied to those who act as assistant ministers or, in some cases, to those who belong to organizations that are trained for general, unofficial christian services.

Calvin, who regarded the diaconate as one of the indispensable offices of the church, and the care of the poor as their proper duty, had more success in restoring this office in the church to its rightful place although the degree of success was not always the same in all Reformed Churches. In the church of Hesse (1526) it was prescribed that each pastor should have at least three deacons as assistants in the care of the poor. The church of Basel in 1529 made a similar provision. In the Dutch and German Reformed Churches the deacons are "to collect and to distribute the alms and other contributions for the relief of the poor, or the necessities of the congregation, and to provide for the support of the ministry of the Gospel."

In Congregational or Independent churches the deacons hold a very important office, taking the place equivalent to that of the lay elders in the Presbyterian churches. In Methodist circles the deacons constitute an order in the ministry, as also in the Episcopal church. They are ordained by the bishop to administer baptism, solemnize matrimony, assist the elder in administering the Lord's Supper and to do all the duties of a traveling preacher. Traveling deacons must exercise their office for two years before they are eligible to the office of elder. Local deacons are eligible to the office of elder after preaching four years.

We believe that this last mentioned characteristic of Methodism is an error that in practice is frequently found in a slightly modified form also in our own circles. The conception is not strange that the office of the deacon is of inferior rank and, therefore, a stepping stone to the higher office of the elder. After one serves a term or two as deacon he may be considered as possible material for the office of elder. Without this internship, his prospects of being chosen as an elder are greatly reduced. This error has its origin in a misconception of the nature and distinction of two equally important offices of the church. In view, therefore, of the history and the current misconceptions of the office of the deacon, it may be profitable to carefully re-examine the whole matter in the light of Holy Writ. In this way we can perhaps arise to a better understanding of the Biblical import of the office and avoid or eliminate some of the practical abuses which are inflicted upon it and so restore it more fully to its proper place and function in the church. It is indeed lamentable when an office that is as spiritual as that of the Deacons is regarded by even those who hold it as no more than an "administrative function" in the church and who are loath to engage in any spiritual labor connected with their office but consider that all such work belongs exclusively with the elders and that their task is completed when they have accounted and disbursed the monies of the church. Further-

more, with such things as Social Security, Pensions, Government Relief, etc. being as common as they are today, what has happened to the duty of the deacons to care for the poor? If this office of Scripture is to be preserved we shall have to restore it to its proper place and examine carefully those things of our present complex society that threaten its annihilation.

With this in mind we will briefly consider, D.V., such matters as: (a) The Idea or Nature of the Office; (b) The Qualifications for the Office; (c) The Functions or Duties of It; (d) The Matter of Deaconesses; (e) The Diaconate and the Question of Government Relief; (f) The Deacons and Institutions of Mercy; etc.

(to be continued)

G.V.d.B.

THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS

(Continued from page 328)

who according to sovereign election belong to the body of Christ shall be finally gathered together. And the divine purpose, and therefore the holy calling, of that church is, both here and to all eternity, to steadfastly love, faithfully serve, and celebrate the praises of Him, Who as a Bridegroom for His bride, laid down His life for them on the cross. *Soli Deo gloria!*

H.C.H.

Holy Father, Thou hast taught us
We would live to Thee alone;
Year by year, Thy hand hath brought us
On through dangers oft unknown.
When we wandered Thou hast found us,
When we doubted, sent us light;
Still Thine arm hath been around us,
All our paths were in Thy sight.

In the world will foes assail us,
Craftier, stronger, far than we;
And the strife shall never fail us
Till our death shall set us free.
Therefore, Lord, we come believing
Thou canst give the power we need,
Through the prayer of faith receiving
Strength, the Spirit's strength indeed.

We would trust in Thy protection,
Wholly rest upon Thine arm,
Follow wholly Thy direction,
Thou our only guard from harm;
Keep us from our own undoing,
Help us turn to Thee when tried;
Still our footsteps, Father, viewing,
Keep us ever at Thy side.

ALL AROUND US

Reverend Knott's Open Letter.

In the *Reformed Guardian* of March 25, 1956, the Rev. E. Knott, former minister of the Protestant Reformed Church of Kalamazoo, writes *An Open Letter* to the Reverend John H. Piersma, who also was once a member of the Protestant Reformed Churches and now minister of the Christian Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. The *Open Letter* is a reply to an article written by the Rev. Piersma in the *torch and trumpet* of January on which article we also reflected in the February 1st issue of the *Standard Bearer*.

The reader may recall that the Rev. Piersma tried to answer the question "No Hope for Reunion?" the reunion, of course, referring to the schismatics who left us with the Christian Reformed Church. What we commented and conjectured in our article of February 1st appears now from Knott's *Open Letter* to becoming true. We said then that he really wants to go back to the Christian Reformed Church, but he wants the latter church to forget about the Three Points of 1924. He doesn't want to be knocked down by those Three Points as Van Weelden was, but he wants to go in standing up.

Here are a few snatches of what Rev. Knott writes:

"Dear Brother Piersma:

Perhaps this isn't the best way to express our feeling about your comment in the January issue of *Torch and Trumpet*. But in view of the much discussion of the matter in our circles, and perhaps, in a more limited way, in yours, we would like to make a few remarks in reaction to your article 'No Hope for Reunion?' praying always that the Lord may indicate the direction that we must go in these days of unsettledness and strife.

It is to be understood, of course, that what we say expresses only our own viewpoint. I represent no group or faction in our churches; I am expressing my own conviction only, although we hope, of course, that we may all be agreed with respect to this position. I say this so that in the event some contact is made and some discussion with the Christian Reformed Church initiated, my position is not used either as a hindrance or as a wedge to impede or gain the final end. We are only concerned that all such discussions be held openly and understandingly and that decisions be reached in the proper light of good exegesis of the Word of God.

And in order that we may be properly understood, I wish to state candidly that as far as I am concerned union with the Christian Reformed Church is not an impossibility. In that respect we have not changed from the very beginning of our history. But whether union with the Christian Reformed Church is desirable and workable is another question. It must also be stated plainly that we

are not looking for an easy way into the Christian Reformed Church, nor are we going to sacrifice the position for which we have stood as churches. By that last statement I do not mean to take the attitude that we must be vindicated or that we must have 'the satisfaction of knowing that we were right'; nor that I expect the Christian Reformed Church simply to come over to our position. But I do mean that as churches we are convinced that we have had, and do have, an understanding of the truth of the Word of God that cannot and may not be sacrificed simply for the sake of church union.

We appreciate that there are those in the Christian Reformed Church that now express themselves with respect to the matter of contact with our churches. In the past this has not been so. We are happy, too, that it has been recognized that we do stand in the Reformed tradition and have stood in that position from the very beginning. Often we have wondered whether the Christian Reformed Church was aware of the testimony of its own Synod. We are thankful that discussion may take place between brethren in the Christian Reformed and Protestant Reformed Churches on issues that have always separated us in the past. We recognize that the Christian Reformed Church stands closest to us in tradition, confession and life."

From the above quotation it appears that Knott talks out of two sides of his mouth. Out of the one side he says "as far as I am concerned reunion with the Christian Reformed Church is not an impossibility." Out of the other side he says it is questionable whether such a reunion is desirable. Of course, he does not mean the latter. As I see it this is just a case of friendly sparring. What he really says is, "You understand Christian Reformed Church that if you take us back we will both have to give in a little. You tell us that you really did not mean to be so Arminian in 1924 and we will tell you that we believe you. We have a feeling that many of your men today do not feel as strongly for the Three Points as your older leaders did. So if you will be so kind to tell us that in so many words, there should not be much difficulty in effecting a reunion."

It is also evident from the quotation of Knott that he is completely finished with us. When he says "We recognize that the Christian Reformed Church stands closest to us in tradition, confession and life," it is clear that he is thinking only of reunion with the Christian Reformed Church. He has no intention of repenting from his schism and returning to us. Our tradition, confession and life is not to be considered. This becomes still more plain in what we quote next.

"Less than acceptable in this connection is the vindictive position taken by Rev. H. Hoeksema in the *Standard Bearer* of March 1, 1956 (Vol. 32, No. 11, pp. 244, 245) in which he presumes to give those whom he calls the 'apostates' (referring to our churches) the advice to quickly return to the Christian Reformed Church as, in

his opinion, they agree with the doctrinal position of that church anyway. Rev. Hoeksema is in no position to give advice to our churches. And his prophecy: 'As a separate church they will not continue to exist seeing that they have no principle ground on which to stand as such. They will have to be swallowed up by some church,' sounds like an echo of what was said of us as churches at the beginning of our history. The consistent misinterpretation and suspicion which has been continually raised by Rev. Hoeksema and the ecclesiastical destruction wrought by him in the past few years nullifies the confidence we had in his leadership in past years, and renders him unable to speak in our case. And the impossibility of approaching us, of which he speaks to the world, is an impossibility only in his own mind and conscience, an impossibility of his own making."

It is evident from this quotation that Rev. Knott does not like good advice, and that he doesn't want the Christian Reformed Church to think he is an "apostate." Was that not good advice which Rev. Hoeksema gave? Is there anything wrong with telling those who really belong together that they should no longer live apart? This is not only Rev. Hoeksema's advice, it was also the advice of our Classis East in which Knott and others embraced a doctrine really no different than that of the Christian Reformed Church. In fact, Knott et al defended a doctrine which is even stronger than that of the Christian Reformed Church. The latter church said: "God offers salvation to all who hear the gospel." Knott et al say: "God promises salvation to all of you if you believe." The Chr. Ref. Church said: "Due to common grace the reprobate can do works of civic righteousness." Knott et al say: "The natural man outside of the Kingdom of Heaven must convert himself before he can enter." Essentially both say the same thing only Knott et al are a little stronger. What Knott et al say, may not be said in the Prot. Ref. Churches. It may be said in the Chr. Ref. Church. Therefore Knott et al belong with those in whose midst they may say what they believe. Therefore Hoeksema and our Classis East gave them good advice. But Knott doesn't like this good advice, especially when it comes from Rev. Hoeksema. That Knott et al are "apostates," should be obvious to all who know the difference between what is Arminian and Reformed. Since Knott et al once belonged to the Prot. Ref. Churches which are Reformed, and left those churches because he embraced heresy, Knott et al have no other appellation than "apostates." That Knott et al lost confidence in Hoeksema's leadership is not due to the reason he gives, but to their refusal to be subjected to the "proper light of good exegesis of the Word of God" which he prates about in the first part of his letter. But Knott says more:

"But it must also be clearly stated, Rev. Hoeksema notwithstanding, that we are standing on the same principles and the same position with respect to common

grace and the other things that separate us as we have from the beginning of our history. Even though it is true that Rev. Hoeksema may not speak for us anymore, it is not true that we do not speak the same language as before; and *that* we do not consider an element of weakness, but of strength

The matter of the interpretation of the "three points" of the Synod of Kalamazoo has been, and is now again being discussed. And there are those who maintain that we have misinterpreted the position of the Christian Reformed Church, that an acceptable, Reformed explanation can be given the "three points." Rev. M. Monsma is also quoted by Rev. Hoeksema (S.B., March 1, 1956) as saying: 'And it also remains a fact that most of those that left us simply followed a few leaders who read, in the declarations of Kalamazoo, things for which the Synod would never have considered itself responsible . . .'

Can the brethren in the Christian Reformed Church make something different of the declarations of the Synod now than that which was surely intended then? . . . Why has the Christian Reformed Church been silent all these years if what we said had no basis in truth? Why the action of Classis Sioux Center if this is not the case? . . . Until the Synod speaks again and officially explains its declarations of 1924, or repudiates them, the only conclusion that can be reached on the basis of all the evidence is that those who were and are critical of these expressions are correct . . . It is not a matter of following a few leaders, a matter of accepting interpretations, but a matter of conviction based on the Word of God and which has been strengthened through the years as the Christian Reformed Church has lived with the declarations of Synod and her confessional life has developed along exactly those lines and has been reflected in the practical matters of the church."

After Rev. Knott calls attention to one of these practical matters, namely, the stand of the Chr. Ref. Church re unions; and then makes a brief reflection on Piersma's statement that "contact may even bring to light that the Three Points of 1924 are not necessarily a hindrance but an aid to unfettered Gospel preaching," in which he says: "The preaching of the Word of God must be free, guided only by His own revelation to us. If the ideas expressed in the three points are confessional and Scriptural, no binding is necessary other than that which is laid on us by the Scripture itself," he closes with the following:

"And so I say again: reunion with the Christian Reformed Church is not impossible, but as I see it, not very likely. We are Protestant Reformed, standing on the same position we have maintained through the years. Whether we keep the properties, or even eventually the name, there is no one who will be able to take the truth away from us . . . But we will not compromise, will not simply be swallowed up, will not cease to exist by de-

fault. I wish to maintain before all the world that we are standing on our historical position and are willing to talk from that basis.

Suppose we would approach the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church and request discussion of the differences that divide us, or for correspondence as sister churches, or some form of official contact, what would the reaction and the answer be? Has the time come when those who stand closest together in the Reformed tradition, but who are separated, may fight the common fight to gether? Has the time come when personal animosities and differences can be laid aside and we can sit together and discuss the problems? We hope so — and pray that it may be so; but can also understand that such a way is beset with many obstacles.

Greetings from house to house.

— E. Knott.”

Knott says: “We are Protestant Reformed,” but this is deception that will not go down with us or the Christian Reformed Church. Does Knott not know that the Chr. Ref. Church knows what is Protestant Reformed? He has to say this in order to make some semblance of a stand before the courts of our land to retain the properties he and his group have confiscated. For the rest, he does not care for what is Protestant Reformed in name or substance.

M.S.

CONTRIBUTIONS

TEACHING CITIZENSHIP

The subject that has been given me is “Teaching citizenship.” Now a citizen is a member of a state or nation or let us say kingdom. Citizenship is the state of being vested with the rights, privileges and responsibilities of a citizen. I know that you teachers who gave me this subject do not have in mind membership in the church but rather citizenship in a worldly state, definitely these United States of ours. So I conclude that what you really want of me is that I shed all the light that I possibly can on this question, namely how must citizenship in this United States of ours be taught by us, if our instruction on this subject is to merit being pronounced truly Protestant Reformed.

As I progress with my subject, I shall refer now and then to the book on this subject that was placed in my hand and that is being used here as a textbook. Allow me to say in passing that I have read the book from cover to cover in the few days that it was in my possession. I believe that I have succeeded pretty well in digesting its content. I know what is in the book. Of course, the fault that you and I have

to find with this book is that the instruction contained in it is not Protestant Reformed, is not rooted in Reformed principles of thought. The author’s horizon includes only this earth. It shuts out the God and Father of Christ. The author failed to discern the connection between the earthly and the heavenly. What he therefore presents in his volume is not true wisdom. Yet in its way it is a good book on the subject. It contains a good deal of useful information and its style is clear. But it’s not Protestant Reformed, certainly. And, therefore it is a good thing that you teachers are purposed to write your own textbooks. For that is what we need.

But let me get on with my subject. Seeing that this course deals with citizenship in the worldly state, it’s this state that should receive our attention first of all. This entity should be defined. A state — the body politic — is a community of persons dwelling together within the limits of territory under one head or government. It should be made plain that the state is a foundation of God, that this is so seeing that man is His creature, and that government is His institution. It must be made plain that government is not the result of sin, that even though sin had not entered the world, there still would have been government, that the parent father and the parent mother would still have received authority to govern their children and to instruct them in the ways of God. It must be made plain that what resulted from the entrance of sin into the world is the vesting of the rulers with sword-power for the punishment of evil-doers and for the protection of them that do well.

Herewith has also been answered the question whether it is sinful to be a citizen of a worldly state. How could this be, if the state is a divine institution, a foundation of God. One may as well ask whether it is sinful to be a member of the family and of the nation into which he was born and to which he belongs. For what is the body politic but a family of men organized under a single independent government?

These things having been made plain, I would take up the matter of the relation of the rulers in the state to Christ now exalted at the right hand of God. According to the Scriptures, Christ is the Lord of lords and the King of kings. He is the King of every ruler in these our United States, of our chief executive, of the congress, of the judges in our land, of the governors of our states, of the mayors of our cities, in short of every one the world over vested with authority to rule over others. It is Christ who selects them for their places of authority and who seats them in these places. Their authority is His authority, that it is He who vests them with the power to rule. It is to Him, therefore, that every ruler in the world, in every worldly state, is responsible. Without exception all rule not by His grace — except they be true children of God, but by His power. In the final judgment day it is to Him that they shall have to give account of how they used their power.

Christ then is indeed the Potentate of potentates. And He

also actually reigns in the midst of His enemies, of the godless rulers of this world. Necessarily so since it is only by His power that they exist, live and move and have their being, He being also Son of God as God. Accordingly, in all their wickedness, in all their ethical opposition to His will and commandments, they, the godless rulers in the state, are always doing the very thing that He has determined, are, in other words, serving the counsel of His father, which is also His counsel, He being God, so that the ends of His kingdom are being promoted also through the wickedness of the godless rulers in the world. How superbly capable He, therefore, is to gather and protect His church, which is His body. I do not pause here to quote the Scripture, seeing that it is well known among us that the above views are indeed contained in the Scriptures. I take it that you know how to distinguish between the kingdom of Christ's power and the Kingdom of His grace. The former includes also the reprobated wicked; the latter only His elect people.

Further, a course in citizenship should next take up the matter of the forms of government. According to our text book there are basically but two forms of government, namely monarchy or totalitarianism and Democracy. This, of course, is correct. These two forms of government should be defined, explained and compared. It should be made plain wherein the two agree and wherein they differ. The text book tells us that they are opposites. This is not true if what we are talking about is true, biblical democracy.

What is a monarchy? A monarch is a sole, supreme ruler. Accordingly, a monarchy is a state ruled over by such a monarch. Here the executive, legislative and judicial branches of the government converge in the person of one man. His will alone is the supreme law of the land, if of course there are no constitutional limitations on his power. This is an absolute monarch. What to say about this form of government? If the absolute monarch were Christ, there would be no cause for alarm. Fact is that, as the vice-gerent of Jehovah, Christ is absolute monarch both in His kingdom of power and in His kingdom of grace. Said He not, "Unto me is given all power in heaven and on earth." In this point of view the kingdom of heaven is an absolute monarchy. Christ has all the power, all authority and might. But earthly rulers, being what they are, mere men and sinful men, are not trusted with absolute rule. They are so apt to develop into insufferable tyrants.

From the point of view of the power that they were allowed to exercise, the kings of Israel were not absolute monarchs, and the kingdom of Israel was not an absolute monarchy. There were limitations on the powers of Israel's kings. They were bound in their rule by the whole of Jehovah's law — civil and ceremonial as well as moral — that He had given to His people through Moses as His organ. "And it shall be, when he — the king — sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of the law in a book out of all that which is before the priests and

the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear the Lord His God, to keep the words of this law and these statutes, to do them; that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment to the right hand, or to the left, to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel" (Deut. 17:18-30). Besides, "He shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses; forasmuch as the Lord hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth no more return that way. Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away. Neither shall he greatly multiply unto himself silver and gold" (Deut. 17:16, 17).

Israel's kings were not lawgivers at all. The sole lawgiver in Israel was Jehovah. And according to His law the kings judged the people. There were still other limitations on their powers. They might not perform priestly functions. And they could also be criticized, and their sins denounced by Israel's prophets, as speaking for God. It all shows that Israel's king was Jehovah, that His will alone was law, and that the rulers in Israel's throne reigned merely as His vicars. In this point of view the kingdom of Israel was an absolute monarchy. This, of course, is true, though not in the same sense, of every ruler of every worldly state. This brings us to the question, what is a democracy? According to the conception of the world, that is of men in whose thoughts there is no place for God, a democracy is a government by the people (from *demos* the people and *kratein* to rule). The idea is that all the people without exception are rulers and that properly there is no king, monarch, among them. It is government in which the supreme power originates with the people and is delegated by the people to the rulers. It is a government of the people (*of* genitive of source) by the people and for the people as the supreme and ultimate authority. In this conception the people are God and the rulers in the state the servants of God the people. Here the distinction between rulers and the ruled, between king and subject cannot exist. For if the people are God all are rulers.

Further, a state, body politic, is said to be pure democracy if the people in it exercise their power directly as when, for example, the people assemble and by majority vote determine what shall be the law of the land. The state is said to be representative democracy if the people in it exercise their authority by a system of representation. But, so it is said, in either case government is by the people.

Now this is democracy according to common conception. But it is a type of democracy that merits being pronounced the lie. The conception of which this type of democracy is the embodiment had its birth in the minds of the leaders of the French Revolution. It is not certainly a brain-child of John Calvin as some people even of Reformed persuasion would have us believe. Was John Calvin an atheist? That is

what this type of Democracy is. It is deistic, atheistic as to its character.

What then is true democracy? Is there, can there be, such a thing as true democracy? There can be and is certainly. To bring out what true democracy is we can do no better than to compare it with monarchy. As ought to be plain from what thus far has been presented, the difference is not that in a monarchy the king rules by divine right, that is by the power of God and of Christ and that in a democracy the magistrates rule by the power of the people. In a democracy as well as in a monarchical form of government all authority is Christ and originates with God. And so, the difference is not this certainly that in a democracy the king is servant of God and that in a democracy the rulers are servants of God the people. In other words the difference is not this, namely, that in a monarchy the authority, right of rule, is a thing with which the ruler is vested by God and that in a democracy all authority originates with the people and is delegated by the people to their rulers. The difference, therefore, is not this, namely, that in a monarchy the king is truly a ruler and that in a democracy the distinction between rulers and ruled does not really exist in that here all the people are rulers. And, therefore, in this point of view the difference between monarchy and democracy is not, cannot be essential, basic. I speak now, of course, of true democracy. If the monarchy is absolute the difference is that in this form of government all power, right of rule, is concentrated in the person of one man, while in democracy authority at least in these United States of ours is divided between the president, the congress formed of many persons, and the judges of the Supreme court. Again, if the monarchy is absolute there are no constitutional limitations on the power of the ruler, while in a democracy there are such limitations of the power of the rulers. Also, in a democracy the people have the right guaranteed by the constitution to indicate by majority of vote the persons that Christ has selected for the various places of authority. In a monarchy the people do not have this right. For here the kingship is hereditary and when the ruling dynasty becomes extinct the succeeding ruler has usually come to power by force of arms. This is the testimony of history.

But let us hear the textbook on the question of the difference between monarchy and democracy. He writes, "In dictator countries the individual citizen amounts to little or nothing. Whatever one man, the dictator wants is law. The citizen exists merely to serve the government. He is forced to serve the army even in times of peace. He can be arrested and kept in jail or concentration camps without trial. His home is invaded by "inspectors" and policemen. He can read in the paper and hear over the radio only what the governments wants him to read and hear. He is not a free and independent person."

A democracy cannot be characterized by such abuses, the author of these lines meant to say. But we must remember

that the underlying cause of all the troubles by which a people are afflicted is sin and in the final analysis are not owing to its form of government, whatever that form may be. Democracy is said to be government by the people. But if that people be godless, life in a democracy can become as unbearable for the true people of God as in a totalitarian state like that of modern Russia. This should be explained to the pupil. It should be made clear that it will not do for us to put our trust in democracy.

What then is true democracy? We could also state the question thus: What is a safe democracy? What are the principles of truth in which it is rooted? The following:

First, that the state, the body politic, is an institution of God and not of men.

Second, that the state, the body politic, is an organism in which each member occupies his own God-ordained place.

Third, that in this body God has instituted the office of rulers, that these offices therefore are the creation of God and not of man.

Fourth, that God has given for the office of rulers in the body politic not all but some rulers. In this body politic all, therefore, are not rulers but only some are rulers and the others are the ruled, that, accordingly, the right of rule is given of God not to all the members in the body politic but only to those members given of him for this office or offices.

Fifth, that, accordingly, the rulers in the body politic receive their right of rule, that is, authority, not from the ruler but directly from Christ, the Lord of lords and the King of kings.

Sixth, that the members of the body politic indicate by majority of vote the persons selected by God for the office of rulers.

Seventh, that as in the human body the head serves all the rest of the members and the members the head, so in the body politic the ruler serves the ruled and the ruled the rulers and each other.

Eighth, that in the body politic the supreme law in the land is the will of Christ as revealed in His Word.

Ninth, that the body politic, the ruled and the ruler or rulers must exist for Christ's God to obey and glorify him.

This is a true body politic, whatever one may wish to call it, democracy, monarchy or both. True democracy is an ideal. It is not found on this earth, except in principle within the sphere of the true church. For true democracy is a state in which God is all and in all through Christ and in which obedience to God, therefore, spells perfect liberty. The true democracy is the kingdom of heaven, Christ's gift unto His people only, that will one day appear with Christ in glory.

Let us add a word about the duty of God's believing people as citizens of a worldly state. Their duty is to be in subjection to their rulers in the state. Let us quote the Scriptures here, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of

man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king as supreme; or to the governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. As free and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king" (I Peter 2:13-17).

Of course, when the commands of earthly rulers are in conflict with the will of God as revealed in the Scriptures, God's people must refuse obedience; for God must be obeyed more than man. Then they must endure being punished for their disobedience, in other words suffer for well-doing. Such is the will of Christ, "Servants be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward (that is, according to the Greek, the perverse, the unfair). For this is thank worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully" (I Peter 2:13ff). Never may God's people rebel, that is make war against their sovereign in the worldly state, take up arms against him in an effort to free themselves from His tyranny, if he be that kind of a ruler. Scripture forbids revolution on the part of the believers against their rulers in the state.

The textbook has much to say about planning for citizenship by which it means preparing for citizenship. To teach these principles of truth is to prepare the child for citizenship. The child in whose heart these principles take root by the grace of God will turn out to be the ideal citizen.

According to the textbook there are many problems that beset our democracy. This certainly is true. The textbook mentions a few of these problems. There is the problem of making a living. There is the problem of conservation of soil, of our forests, of fish and game and minerals. There is the problem of crime, of delinquency, of public health, of national debt. There is the problem of distribution of wealth and income. Wealth and happiness are not well distributed, says the text book. The text book mentions several more problems also the problem of world peace. Preparing for citizenship consists, says the text book, in all the citizens thoroughly acquainting themselves with all the problems and in working toward their solution. But as believers we know, of course, that in this godless world there are no real and abiding solutions for the world's grave problems; that, instead of being solved, they will only continue to multiply, and that this is due on the one hand to sin and on the other hand to the fact that the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness, Rom. I:18. Yet our textbook is really optimistic. All these problems, it says, can and will be solved by democratic processes. The optimism of our textbook may in a sense and measure be justifiable. Certain it is that in the kingdom of the anti-christ, the

form of government of which will in all likelihood be some kind of democracy, life is going to be real pleasant for all such that are willing to bear the mark of the beast. But for the true people of God life in this kingdom is going to be excessively hard, seeing that they will not be allowed either to buy or to sell in their unwillingness to bear the mark of this kingdom. But this kingdom, when at the height of its glory, is going to be destroyed. And there shall be new heavens and a new earth on which righteousness shall dwell. It is to Christ's appearing, therefore, that God's believing people look forward. It is in Christ's God that they put all their trust and not in a form of government, whatever that form may be. Also these things must be taught if the course in citizenship deserves to be pronounced Protestant Reformed. Only then is the child being truly prepared for citizenship in a worldly state.

There are still many questions left unanswered. Here are some of them: 1) what is the relation that obtains between state and church? 2) Are the magistrates in the worldly state under necessity of maintaining also the first table of the law? 3) May a believer run for office in the state? 4) Are we morally obliged to vote? 5) May we, believers, cooperate with the men of this world in their effort to solve the world's problems? If so, to what extent? May we, for example, cooperate with them in their effort to establish world peace? Can world peace in this sinful world be ever anything else than a temporary cessation of arms? Then there is the question of the four freedoms — freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom of want, freedom from fear — that the textbook lauds as "our ideal of peace," and the question of the so-called "inalienable rights of man." And so there are many more questions that one teaching this course in a Protestant Reformed school should prepare himself to deal with.

G. M. O.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 3, 1956, our dear parents,

MR. and MRS. HERMAN MULDER (nee Boorsma)

will celebrate their 50th Wedding Anniversary.

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

Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Mulder
Mr. and Mrs. Harold Mulder
Mr. and Mrs. John Mulder
Mr. and Mrs. William Mulder

Grand Rapids, Michigan

"... But I have prayed for you that your faith fail not; and, when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." — Luke 22:32

REPORT OF CLASSIS WEST

March 7, 1956.

Classis West convened at Edgerton, Minnesota, Wednesday, March 7, 1956. The meeting was held in the Runals Memorial Hall, where our Edgerton church conducts its services.

Rev. H. H. Kuiper was the president of the day and the Rev. H. C. Hoeksema functioned as clerk. An enjoyable atmosphere characterized the gathering, particularly because of the favorable decision of the Michigan Supreme Court. This decision was received in the spirit of thanksgiving to the Lord and in humility. To be recognized as Protestant Reformed Churches also lays upon us the solemn obligation to conduct ourselves as such in the midst of the world.

The classis decided to remind the synod of the fact that the synodical committee has thus far been inactive and to ask the synod to consider the advisability of continuing it. Classis also decided to request the synod to appoint a committee to draw up a proposed set of rules for parliamentary procedure to be followed on our synodical meetings. Another instruction, also received from our South Holland church, to overture Synod to take the necessary steps to guarantee the publication of the Acts prior to December 1 of the year in which the synod meets, was also adopted by the classis. And a fourth request of our South Holland church to change the date of our classical meetings was adopted so that Classis West will meet from now on the third Wednesday of the months, March and September. The classical committee was given power to change the date in case of conflict with Good Friday.

A request from one of our churches to receive permission to call ministers whom they had called within the past year was denied.

The classis also decided to ask the ministers of Classis West to contribute two more sermons before the September Classis.

That we are called to struggle in an imperfect church again became manifest at our classical meeting. The classis was called to treat a protest which had come to our gathering from one of our churches.

The following appointments were scheduled as follows:

For Doon: March 25, E. Emanuel; April 8, H. Veldman; April 22, H. C. Hoeksema; April 29, G. Vanden Berg; May 13, J. Heys; May 27, H. Veldman; June 3, E. Emanuel; June 17, J. Heys; June 24, H. C. Hoeksema; July 8, H. Veldman; July 22, G. Vanden Berg; July 29, H. C. Hoeksema; August 5, E. Emanuel; August 19, J. Heys; August 26, G. Vanden Berg; September 16, H. H. Kuiper; September 23, R. C. Harbach.

For Pella: April 8, J. Heys; May 6, H. Veldman; June 17, G. Vanden Berg; July 8, E. Emanuel; August 19, H. C. Hoeksema; September 16, R. C. Harbach; September 23, H. H. Kuiper.

Delegates to our Synod in June were voted as follows:

MINISTERS

Primi

J. A. Heys
H. C. Hoeksema
G. Vanden Berg
H. Veldman

Secundi

E. Emanuel
R. Harbach
H. H. Kuiper

ELDERS

Primi

H. Huiskens
R. Regnerus
W. Terpstra
C. Vander Molen

Secundi

H. J. Blankespoor
M. Gaastra
P. Hoekstra
P. A. Poortinga

Various subsidy requests were received from our churches of Classis West, treated, and sent through to Synod.

We may also report that the classis decided to overture Synod to make provision for future eventualities in cases of local litigation by Synodical assessment.

Our meeting next September, September 19, will be held, the Lord willing, in Oak Lawn. The Classis concluded its meeting in the conviction that the Lord is with us and that we may face the future with confidence because our strength is in the Lord. The Rev. H. Veldman concluded our gathering with thanks to God.

Rev. H. Veldman
Stated Clerk