

THE STANDARD

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

VOLUME XXXII

MAY 1, 1956 — GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

NUMBER 15

MEDITATION

ASKING HELP OF THE LORD

"And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the Lord: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord. And all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives, and their children."

II Chron. 20:3, 4, 13

The things which happened to God's people in the old dispensation are types; those things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

So wrote the Holy Spirit through Paul in I Cor. 10:11.

I have chosen one of those things which happened unto Judah during the days of king Jehoshaphat.

That king is a lovely person. I am attracted to him.

To be sure, he was a sinful person, even as we all. But by and large, he was a lovely person.

Note the context of my text.

He appointed judges in Judah, and gave them a charge.

Thus: "And said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment. Wherefore now let the fear of the Lord be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, not respect of persons, not taking of gifts."

And also this: "And he charged them, saying, Thus shall ye do in the fear of the Lord, faithfully, and with a perfect heart. And what cause soever shall come to you of your brethren that dwell in their cities, between blood and blood, between law and commandment, statutes and judgments, ye shall even warn them that they trespass not against the Lord, and so wrath come upon you, and upon your brethren: this do, and ye shall not trespass."

Add to this the testimony of the Holy Spirit found in

chapter 17:3-5: "And the Lord was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim; but sought to the Lord God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel. Therefore the Lord stablished the kingdom in his hand"; and we see the wondrous manifestation of God's grace in this man Jehoshaphat.

* * * *

Well, it came to pass after this also that the Moabites, Ammonites and the Edomites came against Jehoshaphat to battle.

And that was a very mean thing to do, as we can see from Jehoshaphat's prayer, where he rehearsed in God's ears the history of God's people when sojourning from the Red Sea to the promised land. Israel had not invaded their borders but turned aside from them. And see now, says Jehoshaphat, how they reward us, O God!

And he feared exceedingly.

And under these circumstances Jehoshaphat seeks the Lord for help against this great multitude of enemies.

According to the measure of the flesh there was no might in Judah against this great host. They must have been far superior to Judah's and Benjamin's armies, both in number and weapons. Otherwise it is difficult to interpret Jehoshaphat's fear. It says in the text: "And Jehoshaphat feared." He was not unused to war, and appears a man of valour.

And under these circumstances we read that he sought the Lord.

And his commandment went out to all Judah and Benjamin to gather themselves in Jerusalem to also seek the Lord for help against this great multitude.

* * * *

Now all this has typical significance for us upon whom the ends of the world have come.

We may safely forget about these Moabites, Ammonites and Edomites, and concentrate on their New Testament equivalent.

Such is often the case with Judah and Benjamin of our day.

We are surrounded by the hosts of the devil who have just one urge, and that urge is to destroy the church from the face of the earth.

This urge is devilish.

In his own name he is against the church, and he is against the church because of the fact that Jesus has His abode in the heart of that church, and he is against the Christ of God because he hates God above all.

And this murderous hatred he translates into the heart of the world, both as to the heart of the reprobates, and to an extent, into the flesh of God's own elect church.

And so the church is in danger oft.

And the greatest danger of all is sin.

You remember the counsel of Bileam: make God's Israel sin, and the wrath of God will come as a matter of course.

And the reason?

Sin incurs guilt; and guilt is liability to punishment; and the punishment of guilt is death, everlasting death.

There is an eternal tornado of the wrath of God against sin and guilt of man.

Hence, the greatest enemy against the church of God is sin.

* * * *

In such a situation the church seeks for God, the Lord.

Look at Jehoshaphat, and with him, Judah and Benjamin.

They gathered together for to seek help of the Lord.

And that is the right place for help.

His name is Jehovah, that is, the faithful Covenant God who created the heavens and the earth, who had redeemed Israel out of Egyptian bondage. That speech was before the face of pious king Jehoshaphat. Oh, how he must have thought of that faithful Covenant Jehovah when the messengers came to tell him of the great multitude of enemies that gathered at his borders.

This Jehovah had given great and glorious promises.

Let me tell you in a few little words. He had said to the father of Israel: I am thy God and the God of thy seed. That's all, and it is enough.

Help from God they sought.

Well, that help is God Himself.

Listen! You sing of it often: "Thou art my Saviour and my Help; Come Lord, and tarry not!"

God is the help of Israel.

Well, Jehoshaphat believed in the help he sought as is shown conclusively when they gather themselves to go up to that great host of the children of the devil.

Imagine: they set in the forefront of the army a company of singers, and this is their song: "Praise the Lord, for His mercy endureth forever!"

How the strategists, the generals and the captains of the world must have laughed!

But notice, dear reader, how the king really set Jehovah,

and more particularly, His promise in the forefront of the valiant men of Judah: God's mercy endureth forever!

And they imagine themselves already the victor, for they say and sing: Praise the Lord!

Here you have a concrete, historical example of what Paul would teach so many years later: We are more than conquerors through Jesus Christ who loved us.

Oh yes, we will find Jesus in this text. Later.

But note here how Jehoshaphat and Judah go to the Lord Jehovah for help.

* * * *

And so does the church of all the ages.

No, we are not fighting the Moabites and their ilk. They are gone forever.

But we need help against their New Testament equivalent.

And we go to the same God.

We sing to God: "My lowly state and bitter need!"

Sinners, worthy of hell and damnation, every day and night.

The devil going about in Hudsonville and Grand Rapids, seeking whom he may destroy.

The God-hating world round about us, always watching, watching, waiting for an opening to lay us low.

And so we go to God, just as Jehoshaphat and Judah.

And through faith, born of the grace of God, we say to one another: "Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them: for the Lord will be with you."

Concretely, the last clause: THE LORD WILL BE WITH YOU! is Jesus Christ, assuming the whole battle alone! *Immanuel! Jehovah with us!*

* * * *

The last question approaches: Help: how?

Well, Jehoshaphat, that lovely person will tell you.

They sought the Lord; he proclaimed a fast; they asked help of the Lord.

And they did so as a Covenant people.

Allow me to point this out to you.

First, "they gathered themselves together."

Second, they came "even out of all the cities of Judah."

Third, "all Judah stood before the Lord."

Fourth, "with their little ones, their wives, and their children."

This last point is pathetic: their little ones!

That is Covenant endeavour. God's people are not an aggregation of individuals; oh no, they are a "chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people."

I glean this from the New Testament. Things did not change essentially in this New Dispensation.

And they approach the living God Jehovah as a nation, according to the style of the Covenant which is made with

believers and their seed, because they are going to plead on the Covenant promises. Listen to them: "Art Thou not our God, who didst drive out the inhabitant of this land before Thy people Israel and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend forever?"

Therefore the little ones too, and their wives and children. Thus we see Judah before the Lord in Jerusalem.

* * * *

Instinctively, spiritually, the Church of God has always known this: it was taught them by the Word of God. Do we not read that in the days of Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the Lord? And that name of all names is Jehovah! Hallelujah!

Yes, we also seek the Lord. We have our Jehoshaphats.

First, it shows that we lost Him. By nature we also are children of wrath.

Second, it shows that principally the Church was found of Him already; for we are His Covenant people.

Third, it shows that the church realizes that their all is in Him. We manifest in our hearts that food, comfort, the earth and the flesh is nothing to us. "There is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." We have our fasts.

Fourth, it shows that the highest and the deepest source of our seeking is the love of God.

Fifth, it shows Covenant life: the streams of love and friendship seek their source upon the mountains of God's holiness together. Amen. G.V.

CALL TO SYNOD

Pursuant to the decision of the last Synod, the Consistory of the Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, Illinois, hereby notifies the churches that the 1956 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches will convene on Wednesday, June 6, D.V., at 9 a. m. in the above-mentioned church.

The pre-synodical service will be held on Tuesday evening, June 5, at 7:30 p. m., in the South Holland Church. The Rev. C. Hanko, president of the previous synod, is scheduled to preach at this service.

Synodical delegates are requested to gather with the Consistory before the service.

Consistory of the Prot. Ref. Church
of South Holland, Illinois,

H. C. Hoeksema, President
Wm. T. Terpstra, Clerk

NOTICE!

The Editorial Staff of the *Standard Bearer* will meet, the Lord willing, in South Holland, Illinois, at the home of Rev. H. C. Hoeksema, on Thursday evening, June 7, 1956. The members of the staff will please view this announcement as an official notice.

Rev. H. Veldman, Secretary

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

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EDITORIALS

The Election of God

According to Berkouwer and according to the Prot. Reformed

I believe with *all my heart* and *without any reservation* that: "Election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, before the foundation of the world, he hath out of mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of his own will, chosen, from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault, from their primitive state of rectitude, into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ, whom he from eternity appointed the Mediator and Head of the elect, and the foundation of salvation. This elect number, though by nature neither better nor more deserving than others, but with them involved in one common misery, God hath decreed to give to Christ, to be saved by him, and effectually to call and draw them into his communion by his Word and Spirit, to bestow upon them true faith, justification and sanctification; and having powerfully preserved them in the fellowship of his Son, finally, to glorify them for the demonstration of his mercy, and for the praise of the riches of his glorious grace." Canons I, 7.

In the words that are underscored in the above sentence, "with all my heart" and "without any reservation" you may discover the difference between Berkouwer's view of and approach to the doctrine of election and that of the Protestant Reformed man.

I believe with *all my heart* and *without any reservation* "That the elect in due time, though in various degrees and in different measures, attain the assurance of this their eternal and unchangeable election, not by inquisitively prying into the secret and deep things of God, but by observing in themselves with a spiritual joy and holy pleasure, the infallible fruits of election pointed out in the Word of God—such as a true faith in Christ, filial fear, a godly sorrow for sin, a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, etc."

Again, I say that in the underscored words you may find the difference between the conception of election and the approach to it between Berkouwer and the truly Protestant Reformed man.

I believe with *all my heart* and *without any reservation* that "The sense and certainty of this election afford to the children of God additional matter for daily humiliation before him, for adoring the depth of his mercies, for cleansing themselves, and rendering grateful returns of ardent love to him, who first manifested so great love towards them. The consideration of this doctrine of election is so far from encouraging remissness in the observance of the divine commands, or from sinking men in carnal security, that these in the just judgment of God, are the usual effects of rash presumption, or of idle and wanton trifling with the grace of

election, in those who refuse to walk in the ways of the elect."

I am convinced, by reading Berkouwer's book, that he cannot subscribe to the words I underscored above; the truly Protestant Reformed man does.

I believe with *all my heart* and *without any reservation* that God sovereignly rejects as well as elects according to Canons I, 15: "What peculiarly tends to illustrate and recommend to us the eternal and unmerited grace of election, is the express testimony of sacred Scripture, that not all, but some only are elected, while others are passed by in the eternal decree; whom God, out of his sovereign, most just, irreprehensible and unchangeable good pleasure, hath decreed to leave in the common misery into which they have willfully plunged themselves, and not to bestow upon them saving faith and the grace of conversion; but permitting them in his just judgment to follow their own ways, at last for the declaration of his justice, to condemn and punish them forever, not only on account of their unbelief, but also for all their other sins. And this is the decree of reprobation which by no means makes God the author of sin (the very thought of which is blasphemy), but declares him to be an awful, irreprehensible, and righteous judge and avenger thereof."

Also to this decree of reprobation, even in its infralapsarian form as it is presented in the above Canon, Berkouwer does not subscribe with *all his heart* and *without any reservation*; the truly Protestant Reformed man does.

I believe with *all my heart* and *without any reservation* that it is the unconditional promise of the gospel that believers in Christ shall be saved, and that this gospel must be preached to all to whom, in his good pleasure, he sends it; according to Canons II, 5: "Moreover, the promise of the gospel is, that whosoever believeth in Christ crucified, shall not perish, but have everlasting life. This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be declared and published to all nations, and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction, to whom God out of his good pleasure sends the gospel."

It may seem strange, in view of the fact that he thinks that he can quote this passage of the Canons against the Protestant Reformed believer in election and reprobation, but it is a fact, nevertheless, that, not Berkouwer, but only the truly Protestant Reformed man can confess this with all his heart and without any reservation.

This is especially true because the truly Protestant Reformed man also confesses with *all his heart* and *without any reservation* the following: "For this was the sovereign counsel, and most gracious will and purpose of God the Father, that the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of his Son should extend to all the elect, for bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith, thereby to bring them infallibly to salvation: that is, it was the will of God, that Christ by the blood of the cross, whereby he confirmed the new covenant, should effectually redeem out of every

people, tribe, nation and language, all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation, and given to him by the Father; that he should confer upon them faith, which together with all the other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, he purchased for them by his death; should purge them from all sin, both original and actual, whether committed before or after believing; and having faithfully preserved them even to the end, should at last bring them free from every spot and blemish to the enjoyment of glory in his own presence forever."

This, too, Berkouwer, judging from his book, cannot confess *with all his heart and without reservation*.

Again, the Protestant Reformed man believes and confesses *with all his heart and without reservation* that man is completely dead in sin and that he can be changed only by the sovereign grace of God alone, without any help or cooperation on the part of man. This is according to the Reformed Confessions in Canons III, IV, 3, 4, 10, 11:

"Therefore all men are conceived in sin, and by nature children of wrath, incapable of saving good, prone to evil, dead in sin, and in bondage thereto, and without the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, they are neither able nor willing to return to God, to reform the depravity of their nature, nor dispose themselves to reformation.

"There remain, however, in man since the fall glimmers of natural light, whereby he retains some knowledge of God, of natural things, and of the difference between good and evil, and discovers some regard for virtue, good order in society and for maintaining an orderly external deportment. But so far is this light of nature from being sufficient to bring him to a saving knowledge of God, and to true conversion, that he is incapable of using it aright even in things natural and civil. Nay further, this light, such as it is, man in various ways renders wholly polluted, and holds it in unrighteousness, by doing which he becomes inexcusable before God."

So much about the state of the natural man, dead in sin and misery. On the other hand, as to the absolutely sovereign grace whereby this dead sinner is changed from death into life, from darkness into light, the same Canons have the following:

"But that others who are called by the gospel, obey the call and are converted, is not to be ascribed to the proper exercise of free will, whereby one distinguishes himself above others, equally furnished with grace sufficient for faith and conversion, as the proud heresy of Pelagius maintains; but it must be wholly ascribed to God, who as he has chosen his own from eternity in Christ, so he confers upon them faith and repentance, rescues them from the power of darkness, and translates them into the kingdom of his own Son, that they may show forth the praises of him, who hath called them out of darkness into his marvelous light; and may glory not in themselves, but in the Lord according to the testimony of the apostles in various places.

"But when God accomplishes his good pleasure in the

elect, or works in them true conversion, he not only causes the gospel to be externally preached to them, and powerfully illuminates their minds by His Holy Spirit, that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God; but by the efficacy of the same regenerating Spirit, pervades the inmost recesses of the man; he opens the closed and softens the hardened heart, and circumcises that which was uncircumcised, infuses new qualities into the will, which though heretofore dead, he quickens; from being evil, disobedient, and refractory, he renders it good, obedient, and pliable; actuates and strengthens it, that like a good tree, it may bring forth the fruit of good actions."

All this the truly Protestant Reformed man believes and confesses *with all his heart and without any reservation*; but Berkouwer does not.

Finally, the truly Protestant Reformed man also believes and confesses *with his whole heart and without any reservation* that God infallibly preserves the elect unto final salvation in Christ by his Holy Spirit, as it is expressed in our confessions, Canons V, 6, 7: "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, and forfeit the state of justification, or to commit the sin unto death; nor does he permit them to be totally deserted, and to plunge themselves into everlasting destruction.

"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 again in Canons V, 9: "Of this preservation of the elect to salvation and of their perseverance in the faith, true believers for themselves may and do obtain assurance according to the measure of their faith, whereby they arrive at the certain persuasion, that they ever will continue true and living members of the church; and that they experience forgiveness of sins, and will at last inherit eternal life."

All this the truly Protestant Reformed man believes and confesses wholeheartedly and without any reservation; Berkouwer does not.

H. H.

"Forsooth the knowledge of sin is out of the law in as far as all sin finds its measuring-rod in the law, and, therefore, is lawlessness; (anomia) but that man learns to see and acknowledge sin in its true nature is due to the Gospel and must be viewed as a fruit of faith."

Bavinck's Dogmatics, p. 146, *Faith and Conversion*

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

We perhaps all have heard the claim made occasionally that one has lived a whole day, a week, a month, a year, perhaps, without committing any sin. But a claim of that kind is based on a very superficial notion of sin, and is the result of a very cursory examination of one's self. Perhaps we are in a position to make such a claim if we mean that for a day or week, or even a longer period, we were never angry, or spoke a profane word, or flew into a rage, or cursed and swore, or stole, or committed adultery. But how about the true, positive standard, that all things must be done to the glory of God and must be motivated by the pure love of God if they are not to fall into the category of sin? Would anyone have the courage to claim that every word he spoke and every deed he did were perfect according to that standard? Or let us turn from the audible word that passed our lips and from the external deed that was performed, to the secret recesses of our own inner life, to our thoughts, to our desires, to our emotions, to our motives or hidden inclinations. Who is there, that calls himself a Christian, and that takes things seriously, that lives before the face of God conscientiously at all, who would dare to claim that all his thoughts were of God, that all his desires were pure, that all his emotions were motivated by the love of God and of the brother, that never a sinful inclination arose from the dark recesses of his hidden life, for a week, for a day, or even for an hour? I emphatically deny that there is a man on earth, or that there ever was or will be, outside of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who was the only sinless man in all the history of this world, that could honestly step forward and say, "I am that man." And I deny that there is any serious-minded Christian that will ever lay claim to a sinless day in this world. On the contrary, he will confess that all he does, that even the very best of his works, are defiled with sin, and that with none of them would he dare to appear in judgment before God. And it is that Christian, who is perfect in principle, but very imperfect in the body of this death, who, looking at the sinful nature that is always with him and that makes it impossible for him ever to perform anything that is not defiled with sin, cries from the depths of his regenerated heart: "Our Father Who art in heaven, deliver us from the evil one and from all evil."

In the light of the preceding, the question probably will be asked whether this prayer for deliverance from evil is merely an expression of longing for the perfection of heaven, and whether it does not apply to our present life whatsoever. Is it merely eschatological? Does not God hear this prayer even now, while we are in this world? Even though this were the case, that there were no answer to this prayer except after death, the believer would still have to utter this cry for deliverance every day of his life.

Nevertheless, this is not the case. Our Father in heaven hears this prayer even now, while we are still in the body of this death. And when He does hear this prayer, the firstfruit is that we increase in that grace whereby we may cast an even deeper glance into the inner recesses of our own existence, and discover more and more sins and more corruptions in our sinful nature. Sins we never noticed before then come to stand clearly before our consciousness. Secondly, the answer to this prayer results too in our growing more sensitive, so that we begin to consider sinful what formerly we approved, and so that we begin spontaneously to approve that which is excellent. Further, the answer to this prayer reveals itself in this, that we become more deeply sorry for our sin and our sinful condition, bemoan them in sackcloth and ashes before our God, and that we more earnestly seek and find the blessedness of His forgiving grace. Still more: in answer to this prayer God gives us grace to fight the battle against sin. He gives us the knowledge of "that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God," and instills into our hearts a deeper and greater love of that perfect will. He causes us to watch and pray, and gives us more abundant grace to put off the old man and his deeds, and to put on the new man, as the elect of God, "bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering," and, "charity, which is the bond of perfectness." Col. 3:12, 14. In short, He gives us grace to put on the whole armor of God, that we may fight the good fight of faith, and that in this fight we may not be defeated and overcome, but persevere even unto the end, that no one take our crown. And thus, being replenished by His grace daily, we continue to pray, and indeed cry more fervently as our prayer is heard: "Our Father Who art in heaven, deliver us from evil."

Yet, the final answer to this prayer will not be heard until we arrive at perfection in eternal glory, as also the Heidelberg Catechism suggests in that last clause of Question 127: "... till at last we obtain a complete victory."

O, indeed, our Father in heaven hears this prayer even while we are still in the flesh and in this present world, in the midst of all kinds of temptations. Nevertheless, He will not deliver us to the utmost until death comes to open the door for us into the heavenly perfection. This prayer is heard, first of all, when the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, and we enter into the house of God not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. But in the last analysis, final perfection and deliverance from the evil one and from

all evil, from all sin and corruption and from all the effects of sin, does not come until the day of the Lord, when He shall raise our corruptible and mortal bodies into the glory of incorruptibility and immortality, and give us our place forever in the heavenly tabernacle of God in the new creation. In last analysis it is to that perfection that this prayer looks forward. And it is with his eye on that glorious state of perfect righteousness that the believer utters this prayer: "Deliver us from the evil one."

From this it is evident what is the spiritual disposition required to utter this final petition of the Lord's Prayer in spirit and in truth. In general, it is the disposition in which we earnestly long for complete perfection. It implies a deep and growing spiritual knowledge of our sinful condition, a profound consciousness of sin. It presupposes a deeply rooted hatred and abhorrence of sin, of all sin, and that too, because sin is contrary to the will of God and dishonors His holy name. It presupposes that he who utters this prayer is moved by a strong resolution to fight against all evil and to keep all the commandments of God. For how shall one bring this prayer before the face of the Holy One as long as there is even one sin which he nourishes and presses to his bosom? There is, moreover, in this prayer the expression of a deep consciousness of our utter dependence upon the grace of God, and of the truth of the words of Jesus, "Without me ye can do nothing." As long as we imagine that in any sense we can deliver ourselves from evil, this prayer has no room in our hearts. And so, this last petition is motivated by the love of the bride for the Bridegroom and by the desire to be like Him at His coming. Yea, come, Lord Jesus; and come quickly!

Chapter IV

The Doxology of the Lord's Prayer

The conclusion of the Lord's Prayer is called the doxology, which means an ascription of praise or glory to God.

This doxology, we may note at once, as also the Heidelberg Catechism, in Question and Answer 128, emphasizes, is connected with the whole prayer by the conjunction *for*: "*For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.*" It therefore assumes the character of a reason, a reason for the fact that we pray, that we pray to our Father Who is in heaven, and a reason also for the contents of our prayer. Thus also the Heidelberg Catechism, which explains: "*For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever*"; that is, all these we ask of thee, because thou, being our King and almighty, art willing and able to give us all good; and all this we pray for, that thereby not we, but thy holy name, may be glorified for ever."

We may view this doxology as a reason for the preceding from a threefold point of view. In the first place, we may say that it is most intimately connected with the sixth petition, and assigns a reason for it. Especially that sixth petition implied an acknowledgement of the supremacy and sovereignty

of our God, even over all the forces of temptation and over all the powers of evil, so that we cannot be led into temptation but by the will of our heavenly Father. Triumphantly, as it were, the doxology supplies the reason for the contents of this petition. For it acknowledges that there is no sovereignty, no rule, no power, and no glory in anyone else but in our heavenly Father. *Thine*, not the devil's, not men's, not all the power of the world and of the flesh, but *Thine* is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. In the second place, it supplies the motive and the ground for the entire prayer. We prayed as we did because our heavenly Father's is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. That is the reason why we addressed Him as our Father in heaven. That is also the reason why the first place in our prayer, and, in fact, the first half of all the petitions we made were devoted to God and His cause: His name, His kingdom, His will. And that is the reason, too, why we asked of Him for our daily bread, for the remission of our sins, and for the deliverance from evil. But lastly, although this is not true as far as the connection with the Lord's Prayer is concerned, we may also look upon this doxology as a most beautiful conclusion and climax of the entire Heidelberg Catechism. Our little book of instruction commenced with the confession of the Christian that his only comfort in life and death is that he belongs to his faithful Savior Jesus Christ, Who so preserves him and cares for him that without the will of his heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from his head. That confession of the Christian's comfort in life and death was the keynote of the entire Catechism, and was maintained throughout. And in this last Lord's Day, particularly in Answer 128, our little instructor closes with the ground for that very confession: "Our Father Who art in heaven, *Thine* only is the kingdom, *Thine* only is the power, *Thine* only is the glory forever. That Thou art our God and Father in Jesus Christ our Savior is indeed our only comfort in life and in death."

The doxology had its place in the Lord's Prayer from earliest times. To us it would appear very strange and abrupt if ever we would close the Lord's Prayer with the sixth petition. However, if you consult your Revised Version of the Bible, you will discover that these words are omitted. And that they do not occur there is a question of textual criticism. This omission means that it is now quite generally accepted on the basis of sound investigation of the original manuscripts of the New Testament that the doxology does not belong to the text of the Lord's Prayer as originally given by our Savior to His disciples, and that it was inserted later.

I cannot enter into the discussion of this critical question here. All I wish to say now is that even though it must be admitted that the preponderance of the original manuscripts of the New Testament is in favor of its omission from the text in Matthew, it is safe to assume that the church will always continue to close the Lord's Prayer with this particular conclusion.

We may say too that there is good reason, not only for the continuance of this custom, but also for considering these closing words as quite Scriptural, and therefore for treating it in our discussion as a genuine part of the Lord's Prayer. Not only does this prayer without the doxology come to a very unnatural, abrupt close; but doxologies of this kind abound in Scripture, so that the closing words of the model prayer may certainly be said to be inspired as to their contents. Even in the Old Testament, especially in the Psalms, we have some very beautiful ascriptions of praise to Jehovah. Think, for instance, of the close of Ps. 103: "The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all. Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the Lord, all ye his angels; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure. Bless the Lord, all my soul." And Ps. 150, which is one grand ascription of praise to the Lord, closes with the words: "Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord." And the same is true of the New Testament. Are not the words with which the apostle Paul closes the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans a glorious doxology? "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." In Phil. 4:20 we read: "Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen." And the apostle John, in his introduction to the book of Revelation, writes: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." The four and twenty elders fall down to worship Him that sitteth upon the throne, saying, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power, for thou hast created all things, and by thy pleasure they are and were created." Rev. 4:11. And all creation breaks forth in praise unto God and the Lamb in these words: "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." Rev. 5:13. And the holy angels respond to the praise of the redeemed church in glory, "Saying, Amen: blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might be unto God for ever and ever. Amen." Rev. 7:12. Hence, it seems to me that the Lord Jesus never intended us to close our prayers abruptly with the sixth petition and with the word "evil," and that, textual criticism notwithstanding, the Revised Version had served us better by leaving this beautiful doxology in the body of the text.

As we have already stated, the close of the Lord's Prayer

is an ascription of praise: in it we adore the Most High. And this is after all the essence, the deepest meaning, of all prayer. The highest purpose of prayer is not to receive something for ourselves. Oh, this is true too: in prayer we desire something, we ask something from God. Principally we always ask for His grace, and we long to enter into His covenant fellowship. But the chief purpose always is that we may adore Him and glorify His holy name. In prayer we desire grace to know Him, in order that we may taste Him as the sole fountain of all good, and thus ascribe all praise and honor and glory to Him alone. Only conceived of in this light can we understand that prayer is the chief part of thankfulness. In prayer we desire to receive in our own consciousness an impression of the goodness, of all the wonderful virtues and glory of the Most High. And having become deeply conscious of the wonders of His Being, we then adore Him and express His wonders before one another and before the whole world, but also, and principally, before His face. And such adoration is the highest expression of gratitude. Our thankfulness is certainly not expressed in this, that we attempt to do something for Him. For God is the all-sufficient in Himself. He is the only fountain of all good. And we can add nothing to that fountain. All we can do is ascribe praise to Him, and adore the wonderful virtues of His Being. Thus it is in all Scripture. In Ps. 116, to mention just one illustration, we find that the psalmist has tasted the wonderful grace and goodness of Jehovah. For he was in deep trouble. The sorrows of death compassed him, and the pains of hell gat hold upon him. He found trouble and sorrow. vs. 3. But he called upon the name of the Lord, and the Lord helped him out of all his distress. Thus he tasted the virtues of the Lord, as he expresses it in vs. 5: "Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful." And what will he do now? Will he attempt to do something for the Lord in return? On the contrary, he realizes deeply that he can never repay the Lord for all His benefits, as he expresses it in verses 12 and 13: "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord." To glorify and adore the Most High is the sole proper way of thanksgiving for His benefits.

Such is the idea of this doxology at the close of the Lord's Prayer. It still addresses the Lord, our God, our Father Which is in heaven; yet not any more in humble petition, but in adoration. The believer here tells the Lord something. He praises Him in His face, and in exultation declares that His is the kingdom, His is the power, His is the glory, and that too, forever.

Let us first try to understand the meaning of these closing words, in order then to inquire into their significance and relation to the whole of this perfect prayer.

Three things we ascribe in this doxology to God: the kingdom, the power, and the glory.

It will be evident that the words "for ever" are meant

to modify all three, the kingdom, the power, and the glory, so that the meaning is: Thine is the kingdom for ever; Thine is the power for ever; Thine is the glory for ever. And the whole doxology, as well as the whole of our prayer, is closed with the solemn assurance of faith and confidence, "Amen."

Each of these three elements of the doxology we must explain a little more in detail.

Thine is the kingdom forever. In these words the child of God ascribes to his Father in heaven absolute sovereignty over all things, undisputed, exclusive, and forever. This means, first of all, that God has the sole authority, the exclusive prerogative to rule, not only over His kingdom as it is established in Jesus Christ our Lord, but absolutely over all things, over all creatures in the entire universe. He is sovereign Lord! But these words also declare that God actually has the dominion, that He always does rule with sovereign might, and that no one is ever able to deprive Him of the reins of government. Two things, therefore, are expressed here: "Thou, O Father in heaven, art the only rightful Sovereign over all things, and must be acknowledged as such;" and, "Thou, O Lord of heaven and earth dost actually govern all things, so that nothing ever betides in all the wide creation without Thy sovereign will." Do not overlook the fact that the exclusiveness of this dominion of the Most High is emphasized in this doxology. We are taught here not to ascribe dominion, some dominion, the highest authority and sovereignty, perhaps, to God, while there is also some authority in the creature. But absolutely and exclusively, all authority and dominion is ascribed to God alone. For we are instructed to say, "Thine is *the* kingdom." God is not *a* sovereign, while there are other sovereigns beside Him, or perhaps under Him. But He is *the* Lord, the sole Sovereign, the only Potentate of potentates, in heaven and on earth. He alone is the authority. His only is the power to rule. There is absolutely nothing excluded from this kingdom of God. He always rules alone. For He is God, and there is none beside Him. That is a bold statement to make in this world of sin and corruption, in which the powers of darkness always appear to dispute the sovereignty of God, and often seem to have considerable success in their attempt to rebel against the Most High. Perhaps it would be easier for some to take this doxology upon their lips if they might change its tense into the future, and say: "Thine will be the kingdom, when all things shall be finished." For many people it would seem rather difficult to believe that God always has the dominion. They have a rather dualistic conception of things. The devil and all the power of darkness, so they think, do also have dominion; and for a time at least they successfully oppose the kingdom of God. Their consolation is, however, that God's dominion is more powerful and more efficient than the kingdom of darkness, and that in the end God will overcome them all. They look upon the relation between the Most High and the devil and all the powers of darkness as similar to that of an earthly sovereign over against a host-

ile invader and pretender to the throne who is temporarily successful, but who will ultimately be expelled by the king, who will then hold undisputed sway in his domain.

But such is not the meaning of this doxology.

To ascribe such a meaning to it would not be to the glory of God, but would rather be to belittle and to profane His holy name, the name of our Father Which is in heaven.

God's is *the* kingdom!

And notice that we should add here too: *forever!* This modifier does not merely look to the future, when all the powers of darkness shall be destroyed. It has reference to the present and to all the past as well. God always did rule. He always does rule. And He always will rule as the sole and absolute Sovereign over all things. Even when the devil and all the powers of darkness appear to rule, it is God alone that rules. Even when they think they rule, as in the vain imagination of their foolish minds they no doubt do, it is God only that has the sole authority over all things. As we read in the second Psalm: "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." He does not even have a battle to fight to maintain His rule; He simply rules. He does not defend His dominion; He has dominion. God is the Lord forever. That is what the believer who understands something of the sovereignty of his Father in heaven means when he says, "Thine is the kingdom forever."

The same exclusiveness must be emphasized in our explanation of the second element of this doxology: "Thine is the power forever." The word that is used here in the original for "power" signifies inherent force, or energy, to accomplish something. There is another word for "power" in Scripture, the word that is used, for instance, by our Savior when He says, "Unto me is given all power in heaven and on earth," and which emphasizes the notion of authority. The term that is used here in the doxology, however, is the word from which our English term "dynamic" is derived. It denotes ability to do things. This is here ascribed to God. His is the power to accomplish whatsoever He wills. There is no limit to this power of God. Only His own Being, or Nature, determines what He is able to do and what He wills to do. For notice that also here the ascription of praise to the Most High is exclusive and absolute: "Thine is *the* power." This is not the same as saying that God is very powerful, that He is more powerful than any other being, or even that He is supremely powerful. It means that He is all-powerful, for the simple reason that all power is strictly His. Not only the power that is within God is His, but also the force and ability of the creature is from Him and is His. And without Him there is no power anywhere in all this wide creation.

H.H.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Prophecy of Zechariah

The sixth vision — The Flying Roll, chapter v. 1-4.

1. *Then I turned and lifted up mine eyes, and looked and behold a flying roll.*

2. *And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll; the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits.*

3. *Then said he unto me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole land. For every one that stealeth shall be cut off on this side according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off on that side according to it.*

4. *And I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name; and it shall abide in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof.*

1. The visions must have followed one another in close succession, seeing that they came in one night. No sooner, perhaps, had the interpreting angel finished explaining the two olive branches than the prophet's attention was attracted by a new sight. He turned and lifted up his eyes and looked and behold a flying roll. Among the ancients written documents were preserved in the form of rolls. It was flying, moving swiftly over the earth perhaps now in this direction, then in that seemingly as it chose.

2. The prophet took careful notice of the vision. For when the interpreting angel put to him the question, "What seest thou?" he was able to reply that he saw a flying roll twenty cubits long and ten cubits broad. That its dimensions were discernible shows that it was unfolded. As a cubit is estimated at eighteen inches, it was of considerable size. The measurements indicate the scope of the judgments, namely the covenant people, the house of God, the church. For the figures were those of the tabernacle as stated in Exodus xxvii. This may explain how the prophet was able to tell the dimensions of the roll. He knew the size of the Holy Place.

3. The prophet having related his observations, the interpreting angel explains the visions. *This is the curse* — From expressions occurring in the succeeding verse it seems that inscribed on one side of the roll were the words, "cursed is every one that stealeth," and on the other side, "cursed is every one that sweareth," that is, "sweareth by my name" (verse 4). Yet the roll was not presented to the prophet to be read but was made to fly. As a flying roll it symbolized the curse.

The curse is a potent word of God like every word of

His. For they proceed out of His mouth. Because He speaks them they are words laden with His power to which there is no limit. The word of God, therefore, is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword. It pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow. It calls those things which be not as though they were. It raises the dead, makes the blind to see, the deaf to hear and the lame to walk. It justifies and cleanses from all sin and fills with the peace that passeth all understanding. Then His word is one of blessing, which He always speaks to His people.

But there is also the word of cursing. It goes forth over the whole land. It pursues the wicked, surrounds them on every hand, penetrates their being, fills them with nameless woe and finally casts them into perdition — the thief and he that sweareth. This is the curse.

He who swears falsely calls upon God's name to bear witness to the lie. He is the hypocrite, the pretender in God's house. He is a friend of the world and poses as a friend of Christ. He serves mammon under the pretence of serving God. He bears upon his person the mark of the beast and the sign of the covenant. Though the cup of the platter be full of extortions and excesses, he cleans only the outside thereof. Like the whited sepulchres he appears beautiful outward, but within he is full of hypocrisy and iniquity. He is a wolf in sheep's clothing, representative of false religion, anti-Christ.

And therefore he also steals. For he loves the world and that which is of the world, the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes and the pride of life. He commits thefts punishable by the magistrate but is also adept at stealing without clashing with the law. But the sinners in Zion shall be destroyed.

4. *And I will bring it forth* — Literally, *I have caused it to go forth*. It has already started on its mission of judgment. Its destination is the houses of the evil doers. *Shall remain* — literally lodge overnight. But it will not sleep but will perform its deadly work. *Shall consume* — It shall execute the judgment that it announces. House and occupants shall be consumed. *With the timber thereof and the stones thereof* — that is utterly.

The two expressions of verse 3 "on this side . . . on that side" mean: on this side of the roll . . . on that side of the roll. Others take the expression to mean, "From this side of the land . . . from that side of the land according to the curses of the roll." But this is not so good. For then we have this verse by implication saying that no thieves were found on this side of the land and no perjurers on the other, which of course is too unlikely.

The prophet had just received the good tidings, symbolized by the candlestick and the olive branches: not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. The house of God shall be built. No earthly power shall be able to prevent it. For before Zerubbabel the great mountain shall become a plain. This spelled blessing upon the second temple, blessing upon the temple as centrally

realized through the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ, and his exaltation at the right hand of the throne of God, and blessing finally upon the New Jerusalem, but also curse over the house of God. Christ came and with Him the Kingdom of Heaven. All who were born of the Spirit entered it and the others were excluded. Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple burned and the Jewish state as the typical city of God came to an end. Thus the curse hit its mark and this mark the house of God. The consummation of the curse will come at the appearing of Christ. Then the house of God will be finally and permanently cleansed from the race of men always bent on destroying the temple of God.

Vision VII—The Woman in the Ephah, 5-11

5. *Then the angel that talked with me came forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, I pray, and see what is this that goeth forth.* 6. *And I said, What is it? And he said, This is an ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This is their eye through all the land.* 7. *And, behold, a piece of lead was lifted up, and this is a woman sitting in the midst of the ephah.* 8. *And he said, This is wickedness. And he cast her in the midst of the ephah. And he cast the weight of the lead upon the mouth thereof.* 9. *And I lifted up my eyes, and saw, and behold, two women came forth and the wind was in their wings, and they had wings like a stork's wings, and they lifted up the ephah between earth and heaven.* 10. *And I said to the angel that talked with me, Whither are these taking the ephah?* 11. *And he said unto me, To build for her a house in the land of Shinar, and it shall be settled there upon its own base.*

There is a close connection between this vision and the preceding. The message of the former is that the church, the house of God, will be cleansed of the wicked by the curse of God when it strikes to destroy. But the curse does not always strike. True, it is always operative in the church, hardening the reprobated wicked through the Gospel and thereby preparing them for their eternal destiny, which is perdition. But the curse strikes to destroy the church only at times, namely, when as a result of the multiplication of the wicked in her, she has become the false church, thus only when she has filled up her measure of iniquity and thereby become ripe for judgment. This took place when Christ came and His heavenly kingdom with Him. Having atoned by His death the sins of His own, He was raised from the dead, exalted in the highest Heavens and returned to His own in the Spirit. And they entered the kingdom by a living faith in Him. And the rest as hardened filled up their measure of iniquity. They swore falsely. They were lustful men. As carried away by their lust they devoured the widow's houses and robbed their abominations in a cloak of righteousness. The exalted Christ sent among them prophets and wise men and scribes. But they hated them, for their works were evil. And so they killed and crucified them and scourged them in their synagogues and persecuted them from city to city. So upon them came all the righteous blood shed upon

the earth. For the curse struck. Jerusalem was destroyed And the sinners perished in her. And their house was left desolate unto them.

Christ continued through the ages to gather His church. The house of God is being built, His temple reared. The rooms in the Father's house, where Christ prepared a place for each one of His sheep, are being filled and shall continue to be filled until the whole house is full. And this house is the true church, Christ's body, the great family of redeemed.

But there is the church institute on earth. In it is found the carnal seed as always. For all is not Israel that is of Israel. And the carnal seed is hardened as always. And this hardening process is the curse of God in operation. He curses them. He gives them over always to do things which are not convenient; but filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful. And so, when the cup of iniquity is again filled up, the curse of God will strike the house of God and the sinners in it will be destroyed, then at the final appearing of Christ.

It is this hardening process in preparation for the judgment over the house of God, of its being struck by the curse, that this next vision sets forth by symbol and word.

5, 6. The prophet is exhorted to look. He is told to lift up his eyes and to see what is going forth. Lift up his eyes he must. It may indicate that he was again as in a sleep, lost in contemplation of the messages of the previous visions. The prophet sees something but fails to understand what it is. That which cometh forth is an ephah, he is told. Its size cannot be determined. Speaking in general terms, it may be compared to a bushel. But it must have exceeded the size of a bushel, seeing that it was large enough to hold a woman. The interpreting angel immediately proceeds to explain it. The prophet is told that what he sees is an ephah going forth, and further that this is their "eye" through all the land. The pronoun "this" refers to the ephah. It, the ephah as containing the woman, which the prophet has not yet seen, is their "eye." Whose eye? Doubtless the reference is to the wicked of the land, among the covenant people, they that swear falsely and steal. This — the ephah as containing the woman — is their "eye." What does this mean? There is a great number of suggested interpretations. The Hebrew word rendered "eye" has also the meaning of "form," "figure." So in Lev. xiii. 55, and in Ezek. i. 5. Doubtless so, too, here in this verse of our prophet. The meaning then is that the woman in the Ephah is the form of, symbolizes, represents the wickedness of the ungodly in the land. The question is whether the ephah also has symbolical significance. In other words, should the symbolism be extended also to the ephah. Doubtless it should. For why otherwise should it be specified that the container is an ephah. According to

some, the ephah symbolizes worldly business. This is doubtless correct. If so the woman in the ephah symbolizes wickedness in business, that is, business as practiced by the wicked.

7. While the interpreting angel was still speaking, the cover was lifted from the top of the ephah called in the text "a piece of lead." Now the prophet sees the content. *And this is a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah* — A better translation is, "And, behold! a piece of lead was lifted up; and (behold) this! one (lone) woman sitting in the midst of the ephah." The idea is that nothing else was in the ephah.

8. The interpreter proceeds to explain the meaning of the woman in the ephah. *This is wickedness* — This, namely the woman in the ephah, is wickedness, that is, symbolizes wickedness, the wickedness of the whole land.

As the cover is lifted up, the woman tries to escape, but the angel throws her back and replaces the lid upon the mouth.

9, 10. These verses describe the removal of the ephah from the land. Lifting up his eyes the prophet sees two women coming forth. They appear as the agents appointed to remove the ephah. They are supplied with wings like those of a stork. The stork is an unclean bird (Lev. xi. 19). This places the two women in the category of symbols of wickedness. The wind is in their wings that they might proceed with greater swiftness. They lift up the ephah between earth and heaven and bear it away. The prophet inquires where they are going. 11. The angel replies that they were taking "her" that is, the woman to the land of Shinar — Babylonia (Gen. x. 10; xi. 2), in the final analysis the Babylon of the book of Revelation, thus the kingdom of the anti-christ. There they are to build a house for her. And it shall be settled upon its own base, meaning that her stay there is to be permanent.

As was stated, the woman in the ephah symbolizes the wickedness of the ungodly in the holy land. Symbolized in the final instance is the ungodly themselves in their wickedness. The woman in the ephah is their sign, emblem, token, their badge, coat of arms, so to say. Hence, it is the ungodly in the house of God themselves that shall be removed, not simply sin in the abstract. This removal must not be conceived of as a deportation by invading hostile armies. For the vision plainly indicates that a spiritual force is at work here operating from within and not a physical force applied from without. The wicked of our vision are the Babylonians in the church. They lust after the world and that which is of the world. And so they go into the world, though not necessarily in a local sense, under the impulse of their lust of the material advantages to be had in Babylon and of the worldly prospects that Babylon holds forth to her devotees. And so these people become more and more revealed as lovers of Babylon, of her idols — the lusts of the flesh, the

lusts of the eyes and the pride of life. At the same time they are esteemed as members of the church. They occupy the places of authority in the church and set the tone. When this has come to pass the church is again apostate. She is then the woman that John saw in his vision — the woman sitting upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns, and arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornications. And upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth. Then the curse will again strike. And Babylon shall fall.

G. M. O.

IN MEMORIAM

The Men's Society of the Manhattan Protestant Reformed Church hereby wishes to express its sincere sympathy to one of its fellow members, Mr. John Kamerman and his family, in the loss of his brother,

MR. HAROLD KAMERMAN

May the Lord sustain the bereaved in their sorrow and comfort them with the assurance that He does all things well and that there remaineth a rest for the people of God.

Andrew Leep, Sec'y.

IN MEMORIAM

The Men's Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, extends its sympathy to Mr. John Dykstra, one of its members, in the death of his daughter-in-law

MRS. HERMAN DYKSTRA

May our Heavenly Father comfort the family in this time of sorrow.

Rev. G. M. Ophoff, President
R. Kamminga, Secretary

IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies' Aid of First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, mourns the loss of one of its members,

MISS JENNIE KUIPER

whom the Lord took unto himself April 10.

We hereby express our sincere sympathy to our President Mrs. H. Hoeksema and family in the loss of her sister.

We find comfort in these words: "Oh, how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!" Ps. 31:19.

Mrs. J. Vander Wal, Vice President
Mrs. J. Van Winsheym, Secretary

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of I Corinthians 1-4

14.

We will not repeat what we have written concerning the general argument of Paul here in these chapters. We only wish to remind the reader that Paul is not engaged in a general, abstract discussion of theology, but rather is engaged in a down-to-earth polemic with party-strife and schism in the church of God at Corinth.

Paul, therefore, marshalls the evidence against such conduct and also shows the deeper inner motives which are and should be ours as God's peculiar people in the earth.

Hence, we have here christian, pedagogical instruction of the highest order.

And now the verses 10 and 11 which we have copied for you in the former Article. We will refer in this essay particularly to 10b and 11, where we read "*for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For who among men knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him? Thus also no man knoweth the things of God save the Spirit of God.*"

Here we receive instruction which is *de profundis*. Here is a Word of Revelation, which may be classified as belonging to those things which Peter calls "in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest . . . to their own destruction." Now the latter we need not do. For God hath revealed these matters also unto us by His Spirit. Although these matters are profound, too vast for our finite mind, since the finite cannot comprehend the infinite God, (*finitus non capax infinitum*) yet we may here believe in the clarity and perspicuity of the Scriptures and apply the rule that Scripture interprets Scripture. And, applying this rule, we believe that this profound instruction concerning the work and activity of the Holy Spirit in the Godhead, as well as in the economy of salvation, was written for our instruction, correction, reproof that the man of God, the spiritual man, may be thoroughly furnished unto every good work.

Let us attempt to understand this instruction of Paul concerning the work of the Holy Spirit which is called "searching."

The Spirit in this passage is, of course, none other than the Third Person in the Holy Trinity. He is a *person*. He thinks, wills, acts, teaches, gives, longs, desires, is grieved, etc. He is a *Divine* Person. He is co-equal with the Father and the Son. And that activity and work of the Spirit which is specifically his work in distinction from the Father and the Son are here mentioned. This is mentioned here not for a speculation beyond the limits of revelation to "pry curiously into the deep and secret things of God," but rather these pro-

found realities are revealed here in as far as they are necessary for our life and walk in this world. The Bible knows of no knowledge for knowledge's sake and of no theology for theology's sake. All things are of us, we are of Christ and Christ is God's.

We believe that we cannot "fully comprehend" these realities. This limitation of our understanding, however, does not mean that Scripture gives us a blurred vision. On the contrary, we have here a rather clear picture given to us of the work of the Holy Spirit, and we are not to reduce this "revealed picture" to something which we cannot so put together as to see the proper relationship of ourselves to God, His counsel, His Christ, His Spirit, and the proper attitude and conduct which are becoming to us for this very revelation's sake.

We notice then, first of all, that the term in English "search" is the translation of the Greek verb "*ereunaw*." From Homer down this verb meant: to search, to examine into. A. T. Robertson in his *Word Pictures* cites Moulton and Milligan's *Vocabulary* on this term. According to them the term is used for a professional researcher's report, and (*ereutai*) searchers for customs officials.

In the New Testament Scriptures this verb is employed by Christ Himself. In John 7:39 we read that Jesus says to the Pharisees, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think to have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." And, again, in John 7:52 the term is used by the Jews against Nicodemus when they say to the latter, "Art thou also of Galilee? *Search* and look for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet."

Paul employs the term in various instances. In Romans 8:27 Paul ascribes to the Holy Spirit of Christ in the church the activity of being one, who prays for the church, and this prayer is understood and answered by God as "He who *searcheth* the hearts." Thus also Christ speaks to John on Patmos when the latter is told to write to the church in Thyatira. God is there called "He that *searcheth* the reins and hearts."

From all these passages which speak of "searching" we may infer the following:

1. That when used of men it is an activity of searching the facts, it is empirical searching. One then goes through the records and archives to look for facts whereby one can arrive at legitimate conclusions. Thus the Jews are told to do by Jesus and thus also Nikodemus is chidingly told to do by the Jews relative to where prophets originated in the past.

2. However, as soon as it is employed of Divine searching of the hearts the "searching" takes on a different character. Yes, even so, the facts are searched out and set in order. But the searching is such that the deepest motives and impulses of a man are investigated, determined and set in array before the eye of those who are thus searched out. Such is Divine searching of man!

3. In our text, however, the object of this search is not

said to be "God," but the "deep things of God"! And this is the activity of the Holy Spirit of God. And Paul makes this clear, brings it down to our understanding by the analogy of the self-conscious knowledge of a man, of any and every man amongst men. There are really no exceptions. The *searching* of the Spirit is such, therefore, that of all the things which God has planned and purposed for our glory, there is nothing in this which is not searched out by the Spirit, thoroughly understood by Him, so that He cannot fully comprehend it. Here is *Infinitus capax Infinitum*, the Infinite Spirit understands, comprehends and, therefore, can "search" the deep things of God. And it is for this reason that He can make them known to us, reveal them unto our heart and mind. (See former article on the notion "revelation" in distinction from "manifest.")

The question is: what are we to understand the term "deep things of God" as referring to?

As we see it there are two possible alternatives.

The first of these is that "deep things of God" *simply* refers to the things which God has prepared for those loving Him. (Verse 9) And, again, it then simply refers to the things God has "freely graced upon us" (Verse 12) It is then an operation of the Holy Spirit whereby He searches out the plan, the counsel of God and the entire Divine economy of salvation. This plan of salvation, the Mystery hid and now revealed in Christ are then the "content" of the deep things of God.

The second alternative is, that the "deep things of God" refer to hidden purposes, the love, grace, mercy of the Godhead itself, the vast depths of His essence and being. And it is in this sense that the translation both in the Holland and in the German language understand the term. They translate the plural "ta batha" (deep things) "depths." In the Holland version we read "de diepten Gods," while in the German version we read "die tiefen Gottes."

Now what are we to say of these two alternatives; which is the correct one exegetically?

We first of all wish to point out that in Holy Writ the term "bathos" is never, when applied to God, used as a substantive. It is always used as a circumscription of God, or of one or more of His attributes and perfections. But it never stands by itself. Thus God is never designated as "The Deep One." God is never reduced to a hidden abstract "Deep." God is His virtues and all his virtues are one. And when Paul wishes to indicate that this is above and beyond the searching and tracing out of man, even when some of these virtues are manifested by God in time in His righteous judgments, then he cries out in wonderment and adoring worship: O the depths, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable are His ways and His paths past finding out . . .! No, Paul does not say: God is a mighty Deep! He speaks of the depths of *the virtues* of God, his

knowledge, wisdom and power. There is God, Who has depths to His virtues. And they are such that "out of Him and through Him and unto Him are all things; to whom be the glory both now and forever, Amen!"

Such is clearly the case in Romans 11:33-36.

But here in I Corinthians 2:10, 11 then?

We should notice that Paul is here giving the *reason why* the Holy Spirit of God can and does surely "reveal" unto us the hidden Mysteries of God, things which can only be known because they are revealed into our minds and hearts by the Spirit. And that He *can* and *does* perform this wonder of grace in our hearts is because His is this peculiar task in the Godhead, and this same task in the Godhead is also His task in the Creature created after God's image in Adam and recreated after the same image in Christ Jesus our Lord.

With the foregoing in mind concerning the peculiar personal subsistency of the Spirit in the Godhead, we would call attention of the following elements in the text:

1. That Paul evidently distinguishes in the text (verse 10b) between "all things" and "the deep things of God." These two expressions point to two different areas of investigation by the Spirit. The "all things" clearly points toward the creation of God. "All things" which are created by the Word, so that nothing was created which was not created by Him. John 1:1-3. While in the term "deep things of God," or "depths of God" refers to something antecedent to, beyond and above the laws and manner of life of all things. The "depths of God" is something basic to the "all things." One, who can search *all things*, cannot yet search the depths of God, but one who can search the "depths of God" can surely search "all things." Such searching will be different. There is something very climactic in the "searches all things, *yea*, the deep things of God."

Just what these depths of God are will certainly always remain above and beyond our searching mind and understanding.

We leave it thus.

For only thus can there be real meaning to Paul's insistence, that, He who instructs us, reveals the Mysteries of God to us, is competent with a *Divine competency*!

Forsooth we cannot separate the attributes of God from the "depths" of God": These attributes are such that we speak of them as *de profundis*. Here we bow our heads and worship. We boast; only we boast in the Lord, our God.

And when thus we have received it by the Spirit, who is so mighty in His activity that He can fathom the depths of God, we will once and for all cease boasting in man, and glory alone in the Lord.

And let all, who boast in the Lord, boast not in the superficial, but let him boast in the simplicity of God's virtues, which virtues are God Himself, and which have unsearchable depths!

G. L.

IN HIS FEAR

This Godless "Lucky Number" Craze

That is right!

We call it a godless craze!

Such it is and such it must be considered to be because the fear of the Lord is not in it.

You go to the store, and for so many dollars' worth of purchases you get numbered tickets to which you sign your name. These you drop into a container, keeping a stub for identification, and wait for the day that someone will reach in and pick out one ticket, the "lucky" one, which will designate the "winner" of a new automobile, a new deep freeze, a new refrigerator or the like.

It all is a godless procedure; and those who walk in His fear will not participate in it.

Appealing it surely is to the flesh. A "good" advertising scheme it surely must be, for you may be sure that it would not be practiced so repeatedly and so universally if the sponsor did not profit *greatly* by it. By getting a few more pennies of purchase from each customer he more than offsets the price of the "prize" which he, in the first instance, got at a great discount from the manufacturer because he too is anxious to have his product advertized.

No one is so foolish in this day of "enlightenment" is he? that he thinks that by "giving away" some object the dealer is really generous and anxious to do his customers a good turn. The world unashamedly testifies that this is "good business tactics" and makes no attempt to leave the impression that the dealer is walking in His fear, that he is being so kind, so generous, so concerned with the well-being and prosperity of his customers. He is not walking in the way of Romans 12:8, "... he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity ..." And because he is not doing it in the spirit that God commands us to give, it is not in His fear. And it is godless!

The sin is not simply in the "prize" seeker, the one who covets the "lucky number" and that which is given to the holder of such a number. It is also in the dealer who tempts his customers into covetousness by his "lucky number" project. He tempts men to break the tenth commandment. This he does because in his own heart he has already coveted the trade that has been drifting to his competitor down the street. Because he covets his neighbour's trade he has no scruples to lead his customers into coveting for the benefit of his own pocketbook.

Even in this so-called "enlightened" age men are so spiritually illiterate that unless you rewrite the tenth commandment to read, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his *trade*, nor his very efficient and capable employee, (man servant or maid servant) ..." they cannot see these things in the law of God.

What is worse they do not *care* what that law says.

So we repeat: The fear of the Lord is not in it. It is a godless practice!

The merchant will not only sell his merchandise; he will sell the souls of his customers to the sin of covetousness and idolatry. Walking in a way which is not in His fear, he will also set up a scheme which depends for its execution upon the sinful covetousness of man and his inherent trust in "luck" and "Fate."

The fear of the Lord is in no business venture that fosters and thrives on a walk that is contrary to God's holy law.

Our objection to this whole "lucky number" craze is not that it is getting something for nothing.

How could we ever object to a thing on that basis?

There is not and cannot be anything ethically wrong in receiving something for nothing. There is nothing ethically wrong with giving a thing to others as a free gift. Scripture approves of that and advocates it. "It is more blessed to give than to receive," are the words of the Saviour Himself. And after all, all that we have, we have received from God as a free gift. He has given freely all that which exists. He *sells* nothing. He is not in business. He makes no "deals," either with man or with any other creature. All that man has whether it be in the realm of the natural or in the realm of the spiritual he has received as a free gift from God.

That object is not always given in His grace. Often it is given simply in God's providence without His grace entering into the matter at all. He always bestows good gifts but He does not always bestow them in His goodness to that individual who receives them. The same good sunshine He bestows upon the elect and upon the reprobate. He sends the same cheering rain upon the fields of the godless that He sends to His elect children. Both receive these absolutely free. The one, however, receives them in God's grace; the other receives them in His wrath and simply because the Sovereign God has planned a certain work for that godless man to perform and because He supplies him with all the means that His counsel be fulfilled. And then righteously and sovereignly He heaps everlasting destruction upon this receiver of all these things because he used them for his flesh and not in His fear.

But the point remains: All that any creature—even the holy angels before God's face in heaven—has he has obtained as a free gift from God.

Does anyone buy the cheering rain?

True, some have hired men and purchased dry ice to seed the rain clouds in desperate attempts to obtain moisture for their parched land. But did they buy those clouds from the living God?

Does the sun rise in the East each morning because men have dropped their coin of filthy lucre in some slot and so purchased eight to fourteen hours of light? Does the darkness settle at eventide because men failed to make another deposit in the slot?

The answer is self-evident.

We have no objection when the merchant gives a valued possession to his customers. If he does it, as Paul writes the mind of God on this matter, in simplicity, that is, gives it because he wants to give it and not gives it in order to soften up his customer to give him more business, we cannot and would never object. That would be in His fear. But to give little in order to get more is not according to the Word of God. Then we must remember Jesus' words: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." "He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity" not with duplicity.

This "lucky number" business is godless for another reason than that we obtain so valuable an object merely by signing our names to a little ticket. We do not even sign our names to get freely so valuable a gift from God as that which men often call a "million dollar rain."

The "lucky number" craze is godless because it rules out the living God, does not recognize Him, renders no thanks unto Him and cannot be done before His face and to His glory.

Let us explore this matter together more carefully for a few moments.

We shall begin with that last element. This "lucky number" craze cannot be done to God's glory.

If we measure all things according to that standard we will find that many of the things that we practice are godless. That, nevertheless, must be the standard for judging all things; and we must not glibly use words and refuse to accept their meaning. A thing that is godless is just exactly that: a thing without God, a thing that subtracts God, a thing that has no use for Him, forgets Him, denies Him, yea, positively, opposes Him.

We are reminded at once of the definition of good works in the Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day 33. It hews to the line and unequivocally declares, "Only those which proceed from true faith, are performed according to the law of God, and to his glory; and not such as are founded on our imaginations, or the institutions of men."

Does anyone dare to maintain that one can walk in His fear while not walking in good works? Does anyone want to maintain that godlessness has any concern for God's glory? Does anyone want to uphold that which has no concern for God's glory?

Those three things presented in the Heidelberg Catechism are so Scriptural that there is no argument against them. "Without faith it is impossible to please God," Hebrews 11:6. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin," Romans 14:23. "Fear God and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man," Ecclesiastes 12:13. "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven," Matthew 5:16. "That ye should show forth the praise of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light," 1 Peter 2:9.

This whole "lucky number" business militates against all these characteristics of good works and conforms to none of them.

To be sure, there are "religious" organizations that will raffle off a new automobile. From organizations whose avowed purpose is to help the indigent, the maimed and afflicted you can buy "chances" on a new Buick, a new Pontiac or the like. We have repeatedly seen such displays and advertisements. That does not, however, make this evil practice to be one that is to the glory of God. You cannot glorify Him with an evil work. When one resorts to evil works in order to fulfill one's "desire" to glorify God, you may be sure that he did not desire to glorify God. To murder is sin. It always is. And he who murders an enemy of the Church must not say that he did so to glorify God. Even the civil authorities will punish the man who claims to have performed his act of murder because the one slain opposed the truth and the cause of Christ. Similarly, a "lucky number" raffle cannot be called glorifying God simply because the proceeds are to be used for some work of "charity." A man who sets out to glorify God will never seek such a godless way to realize his desire to glorify God.

That such "lucky number" projects are not to the glory of God and cannot be such ought to be evident from the fact that no man yet sponsored or participated in one because of his love for God's glory. The merchant does not, for otherwise he would give to the poor and indigent, without having his deed published, and without seeking a reward of patronage or further advertisement of his "good" deed. The customer does not participate to the glory of God's name because in the way of "luck" rather than trust and faith in God he sought a thing he coveted for himself; and if he dared he would pray to God to keep from the others whose names are on such "lucky number" tickets that "prize." The Word of God says, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others," Philippians 2:4.

We hope to have more to say of this matter next time.

J. A. H.

NOTICE!

The Adams St. Prot. Ref. Christian School has two teaching positions open for the 1956-'57 school year. We need a teacher for our Second Grade and a Kindergarten teacher (Half-days the full term or all day the second term). Interested qualified persons are invited to make application to the Educational Committee in care of the school, 1150 Adams St., S. E., Grand Rapids, Michigan.

"The lack of comfort in the soul of many Christians is due to a woeful lack of the sense of proportion in expenditure of their energy. Only spend your energy in the direction of the spiritual according to the measure its riches excell the mundane; apply the injunction to seek first the Kingdom of heaven and his righteousness—and amazing comfort will flood the soul."

—HHK.

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

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

BAPTISM (4)

In addition to the fact that great significance was attached to the significance of baptism during the second period of the Church in the New Dispensation which period we are now discussing, we may also observe that the baptism of infants was generally in vogue during this time. The following quotation from Philip Schaff's History of the Christian Church is of interest: "Augustine brought the operation of baptism into connection with his more complete doctrine of original sin. Baptism delivers from the guilt of original sin, and takes away the sinful character of the concupiscence of the flesh, while for the adult it at the same time effects the forgiveness of all actual transgressions before baptism. Like Ambrose and other fathers, Augustine taught the necessity of baptism for entrance into the kingdom of heaven, on the ground of John 3:5, and deduced therefrom, in logical consistency, the terrible doctrine of the damnation of all unbaptized children, though he assigned them the mildest grade of perdition.

"The council of Carthage, in 318, did the same, and in its second canon rejected the notion of a happy middle state for unbaptized children. It is remarkable, however, that this addition to the second canon does not appear in all copies of the Acts of the council, and was perhaps out of some horror omitted.

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

"As to infant baptism: there was in this period a general conviction of its propriety and of its apostolic origin. Even the Pelagians were no exception; though infant baptism does not properly fit into their system; for they denied original

sin, and baptism, as a rite of purification, always has reference to the forgiveness of sins. They attributed to infant baptism an improving effect. Coelestius maintained that children by baptism gained entrance to the higher stage of salvation, the kingdom of God, to which, with merely natural powers, they could not attain. He therefore supposed a middle condition of lower salvation for unbaptized children, which in the above-quoted second canon of the council of Carthage — if it be genuine — is condemned. Pelagius said more cautiously: Whither unbaptized children go, I know not; whither they do not go, I know.

"But, notwithstanding the general admission of infant baptism, the practice of it was by no means universal. Forced baptism, which is contrary to the nature of Christianity and the sacrament, was as yet unknown. Many Christian parents postponed the baptism of their children, sometimes from indifference, sometimes from fear that they might by their later life forfeit the grace of baptism, and thereby make their condition the worse. Thus Gregory Nazianzen and Augustine, though they had eminently pious mothers, were not baptized till their conversion in their manhood. But they afterward regretted this. Gregory admonishes a mother: 'Let not sin gain the mastery in thy child; let him be consecrated even in swaddling bands. Thou art afraid of the divine seal on account of the weakness of nature. What weakness of faith! Hannah dedicated her Samuel to the Lord even before his birth; and immediately after his birth trained him for the priesthood. Instead of fearing human weakness, trust in God.'

"Many adult catechumens and proselytes likewise, partly from light-mindedness, and love of the world, partly from pious prudence and superstitious fear of impairing the magical virtue of baptism, postponed their baptism until some misfortune or severe sickness drove them to the ordinance. The most celebrated example of this is the emperor Constantine, who was not baptized till he was on his bed of death. The postponement of baptism in that day was equivalent to the postponement of repentance and conversion so frequent in ours. This custom was resisted by the most eminent church teachers, but did not give way till the fifth century, when it gradually disappeared before the universal introduction of infant baptism.

"Heretical baptism was now generally regarded as valid, if performed in the name of the triune God. The Roman view prevailed over the Cyprianic, at least in the Western church; except among the Donatists, who entirely rejected heretical baptism (as well as the catholic baptism), and made the efficacy of the sacrament depend not only on the ecclesiastical position, but also on the personal piety of the officiating priest." — end of quote.

In connection with this quotation of Philip Schaff we would make a few observations. In the first place, it is certainly correct that the baptism of infants does not really fit into the Pelagian system. However one may view the sig-

nificance of the sacrament of baptism, it is certainly the sacrament of the washing away of our sins, whether that washing actually occurs in the child to whom the sacrament is being administered or whether that washing must be understood conditionally, upon the condition of the faith of the one baptized. The latter view, for example, is closely related to the modern Liberated conception of the sacrament which would view the baptism of infants as God's bestowal upon that child of the promise, which promise will actually become realized and effective in the child only when it believes when it comes to years of discretion. I am sure that we can easily understand that the pelagian, denying original sin and pollution, really has no place in his system of thought for the sacrament of baptism as administered to infants. Why should the infant, which is not affected by original sin and guilt, receive the sacrament of the washing away of sins which do not characterize it? Secondly, it is plain from this quotation that great significance was attached to baptism. By it both original and actual sins (as before baptism) were removed. However, this power was not attributed to the water of baptism as such, but only on condition of repentance and faith. And it was held that in the case of the baptism of infants the faith of the Church, as represented by the godfathers and godmothers, functioned for the child. And, thirdly, it is also plain from this article or quotation that the baptism of infants was generally in vogue during this period. It is true that this practice was by no means universal. Attention is directed to Gregory Nazianzen and Augustine. But they afterward regretted it. And Gregory admonishes a mother that she should by all means have her child baptized.

Incidentally, Augustine, too, speaks of the baptism of infants. This appears in a quotation from him which we quoted in a previous article, as example in the following words: "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." We have already called attention in a previous article to the strange impression which these words make upon us. But, be this as it may, it is evident from these words of the eminent church father, that the practice of infant baptism was endorsed by him. And Seeberg declares that Augustine, in his struggle with the Pelagian view, strongly emphasizes infant baptism, declaring that new-born children are either sinful or not sin-

ful, and, in the case of the latter, not in need of the sacrament of baptism.

Finally, it was taught during this second period of the Church in the New Testament (300-750 A.D.) that there is no salvation without baptism. Augustine once wrote that "no one attains to God without baptism." And, having discussed the penitent on the cross, he concludes his remarks as follows: "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 . . . 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." In this quotation Augustine again affirms that salvation and the conversion of the heart are inseparable. Hence, there is no magical influence to be ascribed to the water of baptism. But he also affirms that man's salvation is made complete through the two together, namely: baptism and the conversion of the heart. Hence, baptism is necessary unto salvation.

Leo the Great (he was the pope from 440 to 461) declared: "No one can be released from original sin except through baptism." And Gregory the Great (he was the pope from 590 to 604) declared that "Those dying without the sacrament pass on to eternal death."

This concludes our discussion of the significance of the sacrament of baptism during this second period of the Church in the New Dispensation. We have noted that tremendous significance was attached to this sacrament. But we have also noted that no magical power was ascribed to the water of baptism. The power of the sacrament was only on the condition of faith and repentance. In our following articles we will conclude our discussion of the Church and the Sacraments during the second period of the Church by calling attention to the development of the doctrine concerning the Lord's Supper.

H. V.

"It is the duty of Christians to be constantly watchful over the peace and purity of the church, and not allow those who cause scandals and divisions, by departing from the true doctrine, to pursue their course unnoticed. With all such we should break off every connection which either sanctions their opinions and conduct, or gives them facilities for affecting evil."

Charles Hodge, Comm. on Romans, page 714

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

REJECTION OF ERRORS

(The true doctrine having been explained, the Synod rejects the errors of those:)

Article I. Who teach: That God the Father has ordained his Son to the death of the cross without a certain and definite decree to save any, so that the necessity, profitableness and worth of what Christ merited by his death might have existed, and might remain in all its parts complete, perfect and intact, even if the merited redemption had never in fact been applied to any person. For this doctrine tends to the despising of the wisdom of the Father and of the merits of Jesus Christ, and is contrary to Scripture. For thus saith our Savior: "I lay down my life for the sheep, and I know them," John 10:15, 27. And the prophet Isaiah saith concerning the Savior: "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand," Is. 53:10. Finally, this contradicts the article of faith according to which we believe the catholic christian church.

In considering the Rejection of Error of this second chapter of our *Canons*, it will become evident, in the first place, that the Remonstrants cannot possibly teach that Christ actually atoned for our sins by satisfying the justice of God against sin. If they would teach this, they would be compelled to teach also that all men are actually saved, since God in justice could not possibly damn anyone whose guilt of sin has been removed. But since they will not accept the consequence of universal salvation, they have but one alternative, namely, to deny the vicarious atonement of the Christ. Especially because in our day many an Arminian still seems to believe and to teach the atonement and freely speaks the language of those who believe in vicarious atonement, it is necessary that we clearly understand this. If you accuse an Arminian of not believing in the atoning blood of Christ, he will in all probability with holy horror reject your accusation and maintain vehemently that there is forgiveness of sins only in the blood of Christ. Nevertheless, the consequence of the Arminian error that Christ died for all and every man is exactly such that he must deny that Christ actually atoned for and removed the guilt of any man. It

was this consequence that led the fathers to take such a serious view of the Arminian error, and which also today should cause us to take a serious and uncompromising view of this error. And this aspect of their error comes into clear light in this negative portion of Chapter II.

In the second place, it will become evident that the deepest root of the Remonstrants' error concerning the atonement lies in their denial of the particular, or limited, character of that atonement, that is to say, their denial of sovereign predestination. And, in fact, this becomes evident especially already in the very first article of the Rejection of Errors.

At the same time, — and this perhaps also explains the fact that even today many Arminians *appear* to believe in the atonement, — we must remember that these statements of error which the Synod rejects are not the Arminians' literal statements. That is not to say in any wise that the Synod makes false accusations here. But no Arminian heretic would ever make these statements in this bare-faced form: that would be too frank an admission of error. When the Arminian teaches these errors, he does so in a vague and under-cover manner. But in the articles of Rejection the fathers analyse the Arminian teachings, draw out the consequences of their teachings, and expose their errors. But they do so in a manner which prevents any Arminian from denying the truth of these accusations.

And in the third place, it will become evident that the Arminians are themselves guilty of the very gross errors with which they charge their Reformed opponents. This is indeed noteworthy, for it is a favorite device of heretics. Thus, in this case, the Arminians charged the Reformed with denying the perfect sacrifice of Christ and with teaching that there was a defect and insufficiency in Christ's sacrifice. But, as becomes plain already in the very first article of the Rejection, the Arminians themselves are guilty of this very error, for they actually teach that Christ might have died without ever actually saving a single sinner. And how terribly insufficient and defective would such a sacrifice be!

Let us now turn to the details of this first article.

The error rejected is stated in the first sentence of this article. And we may note the following elements in this accusation:

1. The Arminians teach that the death of Christ would lose none of its meaning and significance even if no one would actually be saved. Christ's death would remain perfectly complete in all its parts, as to its necessity, profitableness, and worth, even though the merits of His redemption were never applied to anyone.

2. The Arminians must maintain this because they make separation between the merits of Christ's death and the application of those merits to the sinner, and because they cause the application of those merits to depend upon the free will of the sinner.

3. The Arminians maintain, — and this is the root of the entire error, — that Christ did not die for a particular and definite people, but that He died merely in general, in order to establish a general possibility of reconciliation. That this is the root of their error is plain from the way in which the fathers state it: "That God the Father has ordained his Son to the death of the cross without a certain and definite decree to save any, so that . . ."

Now, let us first of all ask the question: do the fathers here present a fair analysis of the Arminian error? In order to answer this question we might, as did the fathers, do a great deal of research, and examine all the Arminian writings on the subject. But it will be sufficient to refer merely to the *Five Points of the Remonstrance*. Recall, first of all, how the fathers expose the Arminian view of predestination as it is veiledly expressed in the First Point of the Arminians. The Arminians, remember, taught that God "hath determined . . . to save . . . those who . . . shall believe on this his Son Jesus, and shall persevere in this faith and obedience of faith." And the fathers exposed in the First Head of Doctrine their error of a conditional, non-sovereign election, their error of a changeable decree of election, and their confusing error of various kinds of election, general, indefinite, particular and definite, incomplete and complete, revocable and irrevocable, non-decisive or decisive, conditional or absolute. Already in this light the fathers are fully justified in saying that God ordained his Son to the death of the cross without a certain and definite decree to save any. For the Arminian election is an election of no one unto nothing. There is no single element of certainty in it, except the certainty of failure and damnation! Not a single definite person did God ordain His Son to save. For it all *depended* . . . It depended on MAN, who might believe, or then again, might not believe. It depended on MAN, who might persevere in faith and obedience, but who also indeed might not persevere.

But even the second article of the Arminians is quite sufficient to establish as true the accusation of the fathers here. There they taught that "Christ, the Saviour of the world, died for all men and for every man, so that he has obtained for them all redemption and the forgiveness of sins." You ask: how, in the light of the fact that the Arminians speak of *all men*, can the fathers accuse them of teaching that Christ was ordained without a certain and definite decree to save any? The answer lies in the Arminians' own further statement: ". . . yet that no one actually enjoys this forgiveness of sins except the believer." This seems a perfectly innocent statement by itself. But taken in connection with the foregoing, it means exactly what the fathers say. Christ might have died without saving a single individual. It might indeed have been so that Christ had obtained for all men redemption and forgiveness, but that no man enjoyed this redemption and forgiveness because no man would believe. They made separation, fatal separation, between the merits of Christ and the application of those

merits. The former were Christ's; the latter was utterly dependent on man's free will.

Hence, already here the Arminian stands guilty of denying that Christ actually atoned for anyone. He must either let go of the error that Christ died for all, or he must relinquish all claim that Christ atoned. An atonement for all is an atonement for none!

Hence, the fathers are fully justified in their three-fold charge.

In the first place, they accuse the Arminians in this doctrine of despising the wisdom of God and the merits of Jesus Christ. What a foolish God is the God of the Arminians, who gives His Son to the death of the cross, and who then lets the merits of that most precious death of His Son lie wasted and unused. What a foolish God that would be, who would give His Son to the death of the cross and who would "run the risk" that no one would be saved by the death of His Son. And remember: a foolish God is no God at all! And how insufficient and defective is the death of Jesus Christ when it is possible that no one is saved by that death at all, and when, by the Arminians' own admission, it is an actual fact that many for whom Christ died actually go lost. How, in truth, this error is a despising of Christ's merits! For how impossible it really becomes to maintain that Christ's death could exist perfect, complete, and intact in its necessity, profit, and worth, when actually that death was effectual to save no one!

In the second place, they accuse the Arminians of contradicting the Scriptures. And this is so obvious that it needs no explanation. Does not John 10 speak of Christ's sheep (a distinct and definite number of people) and of the fact that Christ knows them even when He lays down His life? And does not Isaiah 53:10 speak long centuries before Christ died of the absolute certainty that Christ shall see His seed? But how could this certainty exist if Christ was ordained to the death of the cross without a certain and definite decree to save exactly that seed, known and chosen of God the Father from eternity?

And finally, the fathers justly accuse the Arminians of denying an article of faith, that concerning the holy catholic church. It makes little difference whether this reference is understood as referring to the *Apostolic Confession*, or whether it is taken as referring definitely to the already adopted expressions of the *Heidelberg Catechism* (Q. 54) and the *Netherland Confession* (Article 27). The Arminians deny all three. If Christ died for all, but atoned for none definitely, and with certainty saved none, then I cannot with "certain knowledge" and "heartly confidence" believe that there is an holy catholic church. And it surely becomes impossible to maintain those clear and concise statements of the *Heidelberger* and the *Netherland Confession* concerning the church.

And therefore, let us, with the fathers, with all our heart reject this Arminian error of a general atonement.

H. C. H.

DECENCY and ORDER

The Office of the Deacon

B. *An Office of Mercy*

The word from which the term "deacon" is derived and that also expresses the idea of the office we are at present discussing is the Greek word "diakonos." It is rather interesting to note that of the thirty times that this word appears in the noun form in the New Testament (it also appears in the verbal form), it is translated by the English word "deacon" only three times in the King James version. These three references are Philippians 1:1, I Timothy 3:8 and 12.

Seven times the same word is translated by the word "servant." The servants in the parable of the marriage of the king's son are called "diakonoi" (Matt. 22:13). Jesus says in Matthew 23:11 that "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant (diakonos)." The same thought is expressed in Mark 9:35. At the wedding in Cana the mother of Jesus tells the servants (diakonoi) to do whatever the Lord tells them to do (John 2:5). And in Romans 16:1 the apostle commends to the church at Rome a woman named Phebe, who is a sister in the Lord and a servant (diakonos) of the church which is at Cenchrea. To render service is a fundamental idea of the word "deacon."

Most frequently, however, the term is translated in our English Bibles by the word "minister" in which also the idea of serving is predominant. In twenty places this translation is found. A few examples are: Matt. 20:26, Romans 13:4, 15:1, I Cor. 3:5, Gal. 2:17, Eph. 3:7, 6:21, Col. 1:7, 23, 25, etc. Although today the term "minister" is commonly applied only to those office-bearers of the church who labor in the Word and doctrine, it should be noted that the New Testament term for "deacon" is translated by that word two-thirds of the time. A "deacon" is a "minister."

This, however, should not lead us to confuse the offices of the church as though there were no more distinction between the office of the minister and that of the deacon. The conclusion would certainly be unwarranted to say that ministers are deacons and deacons are ministers without any further explanation. It should be remembered that the word "diakonos," used with respect to both ministers and deacons, simply denotes "one who serves" and, consequently, "a servant." Ministers (elders) and deacons have this in common with respect to their offices that they are servants . . . servants of Christ. In this respect there is no difference. The one is not a higher office than the other; the one is not a spiritual office in distinction from the other which is then regarded as secular. Not at all. Both are equally important spiritual offices instituted by Christ in the church and differing only in the nature of service that is required of them.

The two terms as we commonly use them merely denote two phases of the one office of serving in Christ's church.

The offices of Christ's church reflect the service which Christ Himself has rendered. In the highest sense of the word Christ is *The Servant* (minister, diakonos) of God so that apart from Him there is no real service of God possible. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister (diakoneo), and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). As such He functions as the Prophet, Priest and King of God and of this three-fold office of Christ we have a beautiful reflection in the offices in the church. The prophetic office is reflected in the teaching ministry of the church as performed by the ministers of the Word. The kingly office is reflected in the ruling ministry of the church as performed by the elders. The priestly office is properly reflected in the ministry of mercy as performed by the deacons. If this is not the case there is something wrong and the church should take steps to revise the functions of the deaconate so that they do reflect this ministry.

Certainly then the function of the deacon consists in much more than that one serves as an accountant, book-keeper, and custodian of the church's money. These tasks are only of secondary importance and must serve simply as means through which the principle idea of the office is attained. Even then they are only helpful means and are not in themselves necessarily *essential*. The deacons are called to the office to dispense the mercies of Christ and to do that requires much grace and compassion of love. It does not require grace to "count the collections, write out a few checks, pay the monthly bills and deliver a few baskets of groceries to the poor, etc." These things any man with a sense of integrity and normal intellectual ability is able to do but that is not yet performing the task of a deacon.

"To use the office of a deacon *well*," as the apostle Paul writes in I Timothy 3:13 is something else. That means that the office is raised to the level of the spiritual and through it the true mercies of Christ Jesus are made manifest and by these the poor and indigent are comforted and assisted in their afflictions. To be sure they are also given food and raiment for the body and such things as they have need of but only when these things are bestowed upon them *in mercy* is the office of the deacon functioning or, otherwise stated, is Christ functioning through the office. Mercy is first.

What is mercy?

Mercy is related to those other ethical perfections mentioned in God's Word, such as love, goodness, grace, long-suffering, etc. We may speak of it in a two-fold way, as a virtue of God's own Being and as a disposition of God revealed to His people in Christ. The latter in turn is again reflected in the people of God who also manifest mercy.

In respect to God Himself, mercy may be considered as one of His ethical perfections which may be defined as that attribute of God according to which He is in Himself, and eternally wills to be, infinitely blessed as the ultimate and

only good. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 1:1) means that God realizes the perfection of mercy in Himself. He is blessed. He is good. He is eternally free in the absolute sense of the word from misery or affliction. Mercy is perfected in God.

In regard to His people who are in the midst of the world, we may speak of Divine mercy as that attribute of God according to which He is affected toward them with an eternal desire or will to bless them and make them blessed as He is and, furthermore, it is for that very reason also the power of God according to which He perfectly delivers His people from all the misery and deepest woe of sin and death and raises them to the highest possible blessedness of eternal life and glory wherein they forever taste that He is good. Mercy is never common nor are all men the recipient of this blessing. "By His mercy He *saved* us." (Titus 3:5) The revelation of God's mercy is in Jesus Christ and especially do we see this in all of His High Priestly work wherein He not only lays down His life as a sacrifice and atonement for our sin, delivering us from the curse of death, but also in His continuous intercession for us through which He receives from the Father all the spiritual blessings in heavenly places which in His mercy He bestows upon His own. Christ is our merciful High Priest Who ministers to us God's mercy. He is the Minister (diakonos) of mercy.

In general it may be said that God's people are certainly called to also reflect that mercy of God in Christ toward one another. "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, bowels of mercy" (Col. 3:12). Such is our calling. This, however, must not be confused with a false show of mercy which is only an attempt of man to be good to his fellow man while leaving him in his sin. That does not reflect God's mercy, and, therefore, it is not mercy at all. It is the very opposite. That is also why Scripture says, "The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel" (Prov. 12:10). To manifest true mercies implies that we are first of all the recipients of the "mercy of the Lord which is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him" (Ps. 103:17). Surely it is impossible to reflect that which we do not possess. And the reflection of genuine mercy is then this: "By mercy and truth iniquity is purged; and by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil" (Prov. 16:6). Mercy is inseparable from *the truth*! "Mercy and truth are met together" Ps. 85:10. "Mercy and truth shall go before thy face," Ps. 89:14. "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee," Prov. 3:3. "Mercy and truth shall be to them that devise good," Prov. 14:22.

Hence, true mercy is that affection of one toward another whereby the one desires and seeks to lead the other in the way of the truth in which way is the attainment of the only blessedness. Mercy is not first of all pity toward those that are hungry, naked and destitute but mercy pities them that are held in bondage by the powers of evil and the lie. The

former follows the latter but where it is practiced without the latter, it is cold cruelty.

In a more particular sense of the word, the office of the Deacon is that office in Christ's church through which in an official capacity the mercies of Jesus Christ are manifested. As to how this is to be done, we shall have occasion to write, D.V., in connection with the next Article of our Church Order but in the present connection we want it made clear that the calling of the deacon is firstly to reflect the *Priestly* functions of Christ in his office as much as it is the duty of the elder to reflect Christ's *Prophetic* and *Kingly* functions in his office. The beautiful task of the deacon is to apply the salve of mercy to the sore wounds of God's afflicted and distressed people. If he fails to strive toward this he does not serve the office well.

We have frequently encountered the erroneous notion that only the elders must be men versed in the Scriptures and of a high spiritual stature since the nature of that office requires this while it is then sufficient if the deacons be honest, men of business ability since their duties concern only the material and earthly things. Such a notion is based on an altogether wrong understanding or no understanding at all of the office of deacon and when it is applied in the church and used as a standard by which men are judged qualified for the office, the result is that the office soon becomes so degraded that it is virtually impossible to find in it any semblance of the spiritual idea it is supposed to express. Into such a state of deterioration many a deaconate of our day has lapsed. To bring it back to that which it ought to be according to Scripture, it is necessary that the church carefully choose men who are qualified according to the standards of Holy Writ. To these qualifications we will, D.V., direct attention the next time.

G.V.D.B.

"Why was the Bread of Life hungry, but that He might feed the hungry with the bread of life? Why was the REST itself weary, but to give the weary rest? Why was the Prince of Peace in trouble, but that the troubled might have peace? None but the Image of God could restore us to God's image. None but the Prince of Peace, could bring the God of peace and the peace of God to poor sinners."

— Dyer

"How inconsistent the Christian can yet be! On the one hand he, rightly, condemns man's aspiration in Adam to cast off God's sovereign rule—on the other, he daily attempts to displace the only Judge of heaven and earth, by haughtily judging his fellowmen, forgetting the stern injunction: "Judge not, that ye be not judged."

HHK.

Would your church treasurer eagerly trade the amount you actually gave to your church, for the amount your tax return claims you did?

— Anon.

ALL AROUND US

Love Thy Neighbor for God's Sake.

This is the title of Rev. H. Hoeksema's latest book in the series on the Heidelberg Catechism, but also the heading of one of the book reviews appearing in *torch and trumpet*, p. 23, of the April, 1956, issue. The reviewer is the Rev. L. Mulder of Neerlandia, Alberta, Canada.

Here is what this reviewer said about Hoeksema's book:

"Rev. Hoeksema's wish to complete his exposition on the Heidelberg Catechism has almost been fulfilled. He plans to do it in ten volumes, so that all that remains is one volume dealing with the Lord's Prayer. Says the author, 'I look forward to completing it.' As we can expect from this author, he deals with his subject in a scholarly and rather exhaustive fashion. Several chapters are sometimes devoted to one single Lord's Day.

"It goes without saying, I suppose, that Rev. Hoeksema reveals himself in his writings as one who violently disagrees with the Christian Reformed Church on matters of common grace and the covenant of grace. Whenever these subjects enter into the scope of a particular Lord's Day, he unhesitatingly shows his colors. That is the main objection I have to a brilliantly written book. Rev. Hoeksema proceeds from a presupposition which is dangerously related to a certain brand of rationalism. This is not the place to enter upon a debate pertaining to the salient differences which exist between him and us, but the fact is they are there, permeating all of his dogmatics.

"His view of divorce and remarriage can be stated in simple terms. The marital bond is indissoluble, hence no marriage not even for the innocent party in case of fornication. He does not enter into the problems which arise because of remarriage.

"'God's promises are for the elect and for them only' is a phrase which recurs rather frequently throughout the book. That of course was to be expected and does not surprise us in the least. It means, however, that his books, valuable as they are, should be handled and used by discerning people."

This reviewer reminds us of a little boy with a pea-shooter peeking through a knot hole in a board fence enclosure. Like a mighty general he imagines himself to be as he threatens the passers-by with his "big gun," the pea-shooter. He can do no great bodily harm, but neither can he be apprehended for his threatenings.

So the Rev. Mulder hides safely behind the enclosure of the doctrine of common grace, while peering out he makes great sweeping charges. He will allow you no room for debate on the issue of common grace, but at the same time he makes the sweeping charge of "rationalism," and by im-

plication he means to assert that the promises of God are general and, I have no doubt, he also believes they are conditional; for that would follow a general promise.

Here we have another illustration of what these poor men say when they do not know what else to say. Yes, indeed, Hoeksema is a great theologian, his writings are "exhaustive," "scholarly," "valuable," etc., but we must have nothing of his doctrine. No word is written to prove his rationalism, and nothing is said to show that the promises of God are general and conditional, and no Scriptural evidence is produced to show that Hoeksema's view on "divorce and remarriage" is contrary to the truth. Of course, we can conclude he is shooting only with a pea-shooter. Not dangerous therefore is he. And who would be so silly to try and climb the fence to apprehend the "general"? There is always the possibility one might tear his trousers. And who likes to hand out money to the tailor needlessly?

The National Council and N. B. C.

Both in the *Presbyterian Guardian* of March 15, '56, and in *The Banner* of April 13, '56 appear articles relative to the condemnation by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. of the National Broadcasting Company because of the latter's decision to consider granting time for the broadcasting of religious programs, particularly the Billy Graham program.

It appears from both of these articles as well as from the March 7th issue of the *New York Times* that both the N.B.C. and the Columbia Broadcasting System have heretofore been holding firm against the sale of time to religious groups. It also appears that the reason why they have refused this time for religious programs is the pressure the National Council of Churches has brought to bear on them. These churches it seems have a monopoly and have industriously endeavored to keep off the major net works all orthodox religious programs that would militate against their liberalism. Only the Mutual Broadcasting System and the American Broadcasting Company which have national hook-ups have given time to other religious groups. There are, we are told, only seventeen religious programs apart from the program of the National Council that are aired on the major net works. The Back to God Hour and the Lutheran Hour are among these seventeen. Of course there are many smaller stations, independent stations, that carry many other religious programs, such as those which broadcast our own Reformed Witness Hour.

We are also told that the Synod of 1955 of the Chr. Ref. Church approved the idea of using the facilities of the N.B.C. for the expansion of their program when the funds would permit. But until now this has not been done because the N.B.C.'s policy on selling religious time had not been finally determined. The editor of the Back to God department in *The Banner* pleads that "these modern apostles of tolerance (meaning the National Council of Churches — M.S.) now prove their tolerance! Let them rejoice that N.B.C.

has now made it possible for historic Christianity to be heard!"

The writer in the Presbyterian *Guardian*, however, poses some problems connected with the decision of the N.B.C. He tells us that "it can hardly be expected that radio stations should bear the cost of religious broadcasts. Some means should be devised for the costs at least being met by the broadcaster. On the other hand, the multiplicity of religious groups that would demand time, if free time were available, would make an impartial distribution of time by the net works or stations almost impossible. They would naturally resort to giving time to groups of churches or councils that were deemed 'representative.' This in effect would eliminate from the air broadcasts characterized by 'conservatism' or 'orthodoxy.'

"On the other hand, charging for broadcasts has the result that only those can broadcast who can pay the relatively high costs of radio time. This also results in certain groups being favored, and others rejected, not on the grounds of their religious content, but their ability to pay.

"We doubt there is any satisfactory answer to this problem. The best approach to a solution would seem to be the establishment of broadcasting stations owned and operated by those religious groups that desire to broadcast, with channels made available to them in accordance with reasonable government controls."

Radio broadcasting of our distinctive Reformed heritage has been of personal interest to me for a number of years, and I am sure that it has been also to our churches which have sponsored various programs, one of which, the Reformed Witness Hour, will soon celebrate its fifteenth year on the air. Even though we cannot talk in terms as big as let us say the Chr. Ref. Church as far as dollars and cents goes, so that we are ready to make a decision to obtain time on a national hook-up, we are nevertheless interested in any future possibilities.

We are fully aware, and have been for a long time, that the day is not far hence when the freedom to disseminate our views via radio will be denied us. In fact, as the articles above referred to evince, the National Council, representing modernistic churches, has almost from the beginning of religious broadcasting had a monopoly on the major net works, and by dint of power has kept other religious broadcasts of an orthodox or conservative nature off the air. We were therefore not a little surprised to learn that somehow the N.B.C. has for the time being at least determined to change its policy. Perhaps this was due to the fact that the Billy Graham program is fast becoming popular through the popularity of its central figure. Broadcasting companies, like the publishers of books, are interested in that which the populace wants, and is willing to buy.

It stands to reason that the National Council is highly displeased with this decision since, if Billy Graham can

get on the N.B.C. System, other religious programs, including really conservative programs, may also succeed in getting on. And this would seriously jeopardize the position and prestige of the National Council.

There is also another thought suggested by the article in the Presbyterian *Guardian* which has often come to my mind. I refer to the matter of obtaining an independent religious radio station. There are those who have succeeded in this. Moody Bible Institute of Chicago is one illustration. We have also thought of the possibility of collaborating with other religious organizations to realize such a station. But the problems involved in either method are so many and great that the whole idea seems prohibitive. For one thing there are many strict governmental regulations that would have to be reckoned with. To put up a private radio station with enough wattage to make it worth while is also prohibitive from a financial point of view. And perhaps the most difficult of all to realize is collaboration with other religious groups in the establishment of a religious broadcasting company. I can hardly visualize this possibility unless all could agree not to be distinctive in presenting his own views. And the latter is impossible of course as I see it.

So the only means left to us, for the present at least, is the use of several smaller stations on which we can buy time to re-broadcast the program that emanates from Grand Rapids. We remind our readers that this is an effective medium still available to proclaim our Protestant Reformed conceptions to many thousands who otherwise would never hear of us. How wonderful it would be if our people would become thoroughly enthused and contribute enough so that time on several more stations could be obtained in strategic points in our land and in Canada. We would exhort you to give this serious consideration and the next time opportunity is given for you to contribute to the Reformed Witness Hour that you reflect your enthusiasm with a generous response.

M.S.

"In the New Testament the term mystery (musterion) is the name for the wonders and deeds of God, which were formerly hidden, but which have now been revealed."

H. Bavinck, Reformed Dogmatics, Vol. LV, page 443

"The word *mystery*, according to the common Scriptural sense of the term, does not mean something obscure or incomprehensible, but simply something previously unknown and undiscovered by human reason, and which, if known at all must be known by revelation from God. In this sense the gospel is called a mystery, or "the wisdom of God in mystery, that is, a hidden wisdom, which the wise of this world could not discover, but which God has revealed by His Spirit."

Charles Hodge, Comm. on Romans 16:25-27