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MEDITATION

ASCENSION THOUGHTS

"Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive: Thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." Psalm 68:18

How thoroughly theological is the Word of God!

The Word of God is a loving letter addressed to the chosen race of mankind by our Father in heaven.

And in this letter He tells us in many variations of His glorious work of salvation.

And throughout this letter of God to us, He emphasizes over and over again that it is He which did all the work of salvation.

Salvation is of the Lord!

That is also shown here in Psalm 68, and more in particular in the 18th verse.

Thou hast ascended. . .

Thou hast led captivity captive. . .

Thou hast received gifts for men. . .

And if anyone of us should hesitate and utter his plaint: Lord, depart from me, for I am a despicable sinner, He writes to us:

Thou hast received gifts for the rebellious. . .

How thoroughly theological!

Look where you may, you will find no place in the great work of salvation of which you may triumphantly exclaim: Behold, it is mine!

Indeed you have a place in the scheme of salvation, and that place is the place of the sinner.

You and I appear as the awful, black, filthy spot that must be erased.

We have just one property, and that is sin and guilt.

And that one property you lose, for God takes it and dresses Himself with it, is permeated with it in the form of guilt, and departs on His lonely journey to hell and damnation.

We saw Him go in sulphurous flashes of hellish flames on Good Friday.

* * * *

Yes, we saw Him go, clothed in darkness and gloom of the Crucifixion.

Those three days, part of Friday, all of Saturday, and part of Sunday, are strange days. The whole church of Jesus Christ is weeping. They are as sheep whose shepherd has gone away. They have one solitary theme in all their thought and conversation: that awful cross!

But then came the wondrous story of the resurrection!

The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon!

The tears were wiped away; even Peter's tears, and they were bitter. I know: I have tasted them.

And in their stead came a joy which shall make the new Kingdom of God musical forever.

The Lord arose from death and shame.

And here is the Gospel of the resurrection: the whole Church of Jesus Christ arose with Him. Here is not the place to enlarge on this theme.

For forty days the Lord appeared time and again, and at the last such occasion, He gathered them on the slopes of Mount Olivet. He talked to them of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God; He gave them instructions as to their immediate conduct, as well as concerning the life's mission of the church; and then He blessed them. He spread His holy and loving hands over them, and uttered the blessing. Perhaps He said: The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make His face to shine upon thee and be gracious to thee; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace!

And then, while they beheld, He was taken up into the highest heavens.

Ah, yes, we believe in the Ascension of our dear Lord Jesus.

* * * *

And of that truth my text speaks in Old Testament language.

It is so beautiful, so clear, so wonderful. It could have

been written in New Testament time. It matches the prophecies of Isaiah in his 53rd chapter.

Imagine: this prophet lived hundreds of years before Jesus came. But he certainly understood the Incarnation of Bethlehem; the Atonement on the Cross; the glory of the Resurrection; the majesty of the Ascension; the rich harvest of the Pentecostal Spirit; yes, and even the fulfilment of the blessed Covenant: God dwelling with men!

Beloved reader: in my text you see the counsel of redemption in its entirety.

Come, let us look at it.

* * * *

Thou hast ascended on high.

No, this does not mean the simple Godhead. It is blasphemous to say: the Godhead ascends on high, for the simple reason that the Godhead always dwelleth on high. Ascending presupposes descending into the lowest parts of hell.

Thou here is the Exalted Man Jesus Christ.

And in the same breath I must add: and *with, in* this exalted Man is the Godhead of the Son of God. That is the reason both that Jesus *ascended*, but also that He *was taken up*.

No, I cannot loiter too long with this mystery, for I do not comprehend this truth. Although with equal emphasis I must say: nevertheless, I know this truth. I know it, and worship: God, the Son of God, "is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of the trumpet!" Psalm 47:5.

I believe that we must specially emphasis here that *Jesus the Mediator* went up to God with a shout of triumph.

The Exalted Man Jesus Christ.

As such, He returned to the glory which He had with the Father ere the world was: God out of God, the eternal Word who IS before Abraham *was*, the Son of the Father, the playing Wisdom before the worlds were created.

But this God, this Son, this Wisdom had come down from heaven to assume you and me in the very heart of the generations of the elect: Mary's womb. God, clothed with Man, is our Saviour.

And this is the first chapter of this book of my text: God, clothed with us, ascended! Thou hast ascended on high! It is a shout of triumph, of wondrous victory.

Why?

Because there were eternal doors to shut us out from God and heaven.

They are the eternal doors of the wrath of God and of man.

There is a door that is shut in our faces, and it is the door of a righteous and just God. God cannot have us in His holy heaven the way we are by nature.

And this is the horror, that we do not want to go through that door. There is a door shut unto God in our hard and cruel, our godless and hateful heart. We throw the door of our heart shut in the face of God. And unto all eternity we would never seek for God. If we hear the call of the Gospel

with our natural intellect, we say: Depart from me, I have no pleasure in Thy ways!

And this is the beauty of the Ascension, dear reader, God opens the shut doors.

He opened the door of heaven when Jesus ascended. You may read of that in the Old Testament also. Psalm 24 sings of the command, inspired by God: Ye gates, lift your heads, the glad summons obey! Ye doors everlasting, wide open the way!

And why this command?

The King of all glory shall enter in state!

And this King is God and man reconciled. This King of all Glory is God and Jesus with you and me in His arms. And on Ascension Day we celebrate this fact.

Indeed, Thou hast ascended on high!

* * * *

Thou hast led captivity captive!

That captivity is the captivity of sin and death, of damnation and hell.

These four words are used in God's vocabulary to express our natural estate.

God's elect people are by nature not any different from the poor people whose name is reprobates.

We are damnable sinners, guilty unto death and hell.

And here is the horror of our captivity: we love it. We are bound in our hearts. In our hearts we cling to sin as our natural element. If anyone would come with the key to our prison, we would curse him to his face and say: Leave me alone! They sing: Throw out the lifeline! Well, if and when the lifeline reaches us in the breakers of eternal wrath, we throw it right back. We do not want to be saved.

If there is any fact at all that is sure and steadfast, it is that. When God came in the garments of the suffering Servant of Jehovah, and when He explained His mission, we said: Keep still, or we will kill you! And kill Him we did.

But Jesus came and entered our prison house. He opened the door in His Incarnation, and dwelled among us. And He took upon Himself the whole prison house of death and eternal wrath of God.

And He suffered our Sentence, to the last second of an eternity of dying.

You say that this is nonsense?

How else can I express it?

Does not the Bible teach that Jesus bore the wrath of God in His lifetime. In 33½ years Jesus emptied the *eternal* wrath of God.

I cannot help it if I cannot expound the touching point between time and eternity. I might as well attempt to outline the spot where Divinity and Humanity touch.

But He did. He did overcome death and hell, by suffering it Himself.

And He led that same prison house a captive in His train.

Even death and hell will and doth serve Him in the work of salvation.

Our prison doors are open, and we "walk at liberty!"
Glorious ascension!

* * * *

Thou hast received gifts for men, even rebellious men!
That is the way you must read the text.

It is not so that Jesus received gifts for a catagory of men in general who were not so very rebellious, and that the Lord as an afterthought meditated on a special catagory of rascals among the elect who were so very intractable, so that they also might have comfort in the glorious Ascension. Oh no, but we are all rebellious. Isaiah says that everyone of us turned to his own way. We are all gone away backward, there is none that seeketh God, no, not one.

But Jesus received gifts for us, and what gifts!

I will say more about that the next time, when I must meditate on Pentecost.

Just in outline: they are the gifts of forgiveness of sin, the right to eternal life, adoption unto children, and peace with God.

And the end is glory unspeakable: the Covenant of God realized: God dwells among us forever.

He doth now dwell among us: we walk with Him in consequence.

And God shall be all and in all everlastingly.

Glorious Ascension! 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

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CONTENTS

MEDITATION —

Ascension Thoughts361
Rev. G. Vos

EDITORIALS —

Election and Assurance.....364
As To Conscientious Objectors.....365
Rev. H. Hoeksema

OUR DOCTRINE —

The Triple Knowledge (Part III — Of Thankfulness)....366
The Book of Revelation.....368
Rev. H. Hoeksema

THE DAY OF SHADOWS —

The Prophecy of Zechariah.....370
Rev. G. M. Ophoff

FROM HOLY WRIT —

Exposition of I Corinthians 1-4 (15).....373
Rev. G. Lubbers

IN HIS FEAR —

The Godless "Lucky Number" Craze (2).....375
Rev. J. A. Heys

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH —

The Church and the Sacraments (The Lord's Supper).....377
Rev. H. Veldman

THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS —

The Exposition of the Canons of Dordrecht.....379
Rev. H. C. Hoeksema

DECENCY AND ORDER —

The Office of the Deacon.....381
Rev. G. VandenBerg

ALL AROUND US —

The Court and Church Property.....383
Rev. M. Schipper

EDITORIALS

Election and Assurance

On the whole, as the reader may have gathered from my editorial in the last *Standard Bearer*, Dr. Berkhouwer assumes a rather apologetic attitude over against the doctrine of election in his book on "De Verkiezing Gods." He believes that election in the Reformed sense of the word is the truth according to Scripture; he also believes that it ought to be taught and preached. But repeatedly he warns against over emphasis on this doctrine and that, too, with an appeal to Deut. 29:29.

This apologetic attitude is apparent already in the first chapter of the book which I translated as to its heading: "The Limits of Reflection." In this chapter, the author lifts a warning finger against what he calls caricatures of the doctrine of election, but in which he really means to warn against what I would consider to be the proper place of this doctrine not only in the whole of systematic theology but also in the church. For the truth of election has always been considered the "*cor ecclesiae*," the heart of the church. And that heart must certainly beat in all the preaching and teaching of the church even when this doctrine is not expressly mentioned.

In the very beginning of this chapter the author writes (I translate):

"When we contemplate the things we are, at the same time being impressed with our particular responsibility when we do, indeed, intend to treat of God's election. For even though it must be conceded that the treatment of every part of dogmatics carries with it its dangers and, therefore, demands that we be very careful, in regard to the doctrine of election this calling to be careful and reverent applies in a special measure, and one is spontaneously reminded of the word of Scripture: 'Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.'"

There is expressed in these words a certain tendency, the tendency of an apologetic attitude over against the doctrine of election. Of course, I do not deny that the doctrine of election must be treated with carefulness and reverence. To this we do not object. But I do deny that this applies to this doctrine *in any special measure*. Why, for instance is this not equally true of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, of the Holy Ghost, of original sin, of the incarnation, of the cross and the resurrection of Christ, or regeneration and the application of the blessings of salvation to the elect and to all the other truths revealed in Holy Writ? But Berkhouwer assumes an apologetic attitude over against the doctrine of election. This is the reason why he warns us from the outset to be careful and reverent in a special measure.

By doing so, he weakens his entire position. Especially in our day and in our own country, there certainly is no

reason to assume this attitude for Pelagianism and Arminianism run rampant even in churches that claim to be Reformed.

Dr. Berkhouwer motivates this apologetic attitude by stating that the doctrine of election stands immediately related to the question concerning the assurance of salvation. Writes he: "The most profound questions of human life are here put in order as is clearly evident from the fact that, wherever the doctrine of election is mentioned, directly and inevitably the question about the assurance of salvation follows as a shadow. We confront the undeniable fact that, on the one hand, the doctrine of election is confessed as the deep and untouchable foundation of salvation and, on the other hand, the doctrine of election is being seen as the most serious threat to this certainty. Especially this latter always again draws the attention. One cannot escape the impression that especially here all kinds of caricatures have cooperated to lend such a threatening character to the doctrine of election in the consciousness of many."

And again: "How frequently has not, in theology and preaching, election been interpreted from the viewpoint of a deterministic vision with very serious consequences for the life of the church with the inevitable result of underestimating the offense against the doctrine of election itself. On the background of the confession of God's election—and of the preaching—there then becomes visible a dark conception of God, a conception that has its origin in a mutilation of the biblical testimony, however much one may appeal to all kinds of scriptural passages. In a deterministic or even in a fatalistic way, the counsel of God is then being treated, so that the congregation must needs draw the conclusions, the conclusions of passivism, quietism and . . . torturing uncertainty. Especially this uncertainty always looms up again and—this is the crisis of certainty—it is not being seen and pointed out as the fault of a weak faith and unbelief, but as being the inevitable correlation of the fact of election, which escapes us and continues to escape us in its absolute mystery." p. 9.

And again:

"One can no longer establish the connection between election and comfort, but only between election and fear and uncertainty. The tension between election and certainty is being emphatically put on the foreground and finds its way into the depths of the heart. This tension becomes the problem of the doctrine of election in the form of the question with its different variations: is not the certainty of salvation being threatened and radically attacked by the 'hidden election?' " p. 9.

And once more:

"How frequently did it occur that one, as he was called to a believing acception of the promise of God, could hardly get rid of the fearful question, whether he had the right to accept this promise and to apply it to himself as a promise directed personally to him, and whether he must not first be convinced, in another way (a round about way), of his elec-

tion in order *then* and *thereupon* to receive the promise of God as really meant for him" p. 11 .

I expect to refer to this again.

At this time, however, I wish to point out, that the scriptural doctrine of election or the preaching of that doctrine, no matter how strong and consistent such preaching may be, never leads to passivism nor to uncertainty in regard to one's personal salvation. It is always Pelagianism and Arminianism that creates this uncertainty.

This I hope to show next time, D. V.

H. H.

As To Conscientious Objectors

Recently, in Classis East, a case was treated that concerned a "conscientious objector."

A conscientious objector, as the reader knows, is one who works in a closed union shop, for conscience sake refuses to be or become a member of the union, and is allowed to continue working in the shop on condition that he signs a "charity card" that stipulates that he pay a certain sum to charity equivalent to initiation fees and union dues.

It can only be regretted that an important question of this nature usually arises in our churches in connection with "a case" and that, too, a case of discipline. This distorts the question from the outset. Sides are taken, spirits are aroused, those that are involved become so strongly prejudiced that it is well-nigh impossible for them to express an objective judgment and, besides, all kinds of mistakes are made that must be corrected even before the question itself can properly be discussed.

How much better would it be if an important and extremely practical question of this nature would have come in the way of an overture from the consistory to classis and from classis to synod without any case of discipline attached to it whatever. Then the case of conscientious objectorship could have been placed in the hands of a committee that could have investigated and thoroughly studied the whole matter and report to the next synod.

Now it is too late for this.

Classis East, at least, already has expressed itself on the whole matter, and was obliged to do so.

Nevertheless, I propose to devote a little space to this question in *The Standard Bearer*, not because I wish to criticise the position of Classis East in the matter for I fully agree with its stand, but because *The Standard Bearer* can still discuss the matter objectively, furnish grounds for its stand, and thus serve the purpose of its very existence: to shed light on important matters especially for our Protestant Reformed people, though outsiders may very well avail themselves of this light also.

Needless to say that any reader can voice his objection against what I write, provided his contributions are written in tolerably correct style and evince a proper spirit: the desire to get at the truth of the matter.

We must not have the impression that the question concerning conscientious objectors to the union and membership in the union is a purely local matter or that it concerns our Protestant Reformed Churches only. In our country the Adventists have taken a strong and well motivated stand against union membership and favor the position of the conscientious objector. And the Dutch Reformed immigrants in Canada and Australia face the same problem and favor the same stand. And it appears that their mother church in the old country approves of this stand.

It may not be considered impossible that, in the near future, our churches will also have to set its seal of approval upon the stand of the conscientious objector as the only possible and legitimate stand, unless we want to go out of the world in the literal sense of the word. And the latter is not the position of the antithesis but of Anabaptism.

As to the question itself, we can probably best approach it on the basis of the so-called "charity card" which the conscientious objector is obliged to sign if he would keep his job in a closed union shop.

This card reads as follows:

"I hereby authorize the . . . corporation to deduct an equivalent amount to the current monthly union dues of the first pay of each month. I further authorize and understand that the first payment will include an amount equal to the current monthly dues only, and initiation fee.

"The amount of these deductions will be paid to the union who will pay to the charity I select as follows If I do not select a charity the union will pay to a charity the union selects.

"I fully understand that this contribution does not entitle me to any union membership privileges.

"I submit this authorization and assignment with the understanding it will be effective and irrevocable for a period of one (1) year from this date, or until the termination date of the present agreement between the . . . of the corporation and the union, whichever occurs sooner.

"This authorization and assignment shall continue in full force and effect for yearly periods beyond the irrevocable period set forth above, and each subsequent yearly period shall be similarly irrevocable unless revoked by me within five (5) days immediately before and revocable period hereof. Revocation shall be effected by written notice to the company and the union within such five (5) day period."

The above copy of the charity card is taken from a document presented to Classis East by one of the parties involved in the case.

We will continue this discussion, the Lord willing, next time.

H.H.

"The church of the elect, which is partly militant on earth, and partly triumphant in heaven, resembles a city built on both sides of a river. There is but the stream of death between grace and glory."

—Toplady

OUR DOCTRINE

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

AN EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

PART III — OF THANKFULNESS

LORD'S DAY 52

Chapter IV

The Doxology of the Lord's Prayer

The power of the golden sunlight and of the gentle rain, the power that reveals itself in the sprouting grass and in the blooming flowers, the force of the flashing lightning and of the roaring thunder and of the howling tempest, the explosive power of the bombs that are dropped by the air forces of the warring nations, the energy of the living creature, of man and of beast, of angels and demons, their power to think, to will, to speak, and to act, to sing or to lament, to praise or to curse, to do good or to do evil, — all power is of God. There is no creature in heaven and on earth or in the abyss that has power in itself. It is all of Him, Who created all things and Who constantly upholds them by the Word of His power. This is what the church expresses in this part of the doxology: "Thine is *the* power." And this is true *forever*. It will not become thus in some future age, when all power of opposition and resistance to God's power shall have been overcome. There never was, there is not now, and there never will be any power independently of God, that is able to resist the power of God. Even though the devil and all the wicked in their vain imagination and unspeakable folly purpose in their heart and attempt to oppose the Most High, and even though they may seem often to be successful in their designs to frustrate the work of God, the day of the theodicy will reveal clearly that they could only execute the good pleasure of the Almighty. For His is the power forever!

But if all the dominion and authority and power and might is of God, it follows that His also is all the glory: "Thine is the glory forever." To ascribe glory to God is to say that He is good, that He is infinitely good, that He is the implication of all infinite perfections, of truth and faithfulness, of knowledge and wisdom, of power and might, of holiness and righteousness, of grace and beauty, of love and life. And this infinite goodness of God shines forth, is displayed before our eyes; in all the works of God's hands His glory shines forth. And also in this connection it must be emphasized that there is no glory anywhere that it not of God. There is a glory of the sun and a glory of the moon and a glory of the stars. There is a glory of the heavens and a glory of the earth. There is a glory of the woods and of the mountains, of the rivers and of the oceans. There is a glory of the beasts of the field and of the cattle on a thou-

sand hills. There is a glory of man and a glory of angels. But never is the glory of the creature to be acknowledged. For it is all the radiation of the infinite goodness of God. And the church beholds His glory above all in the face of Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God come into the flesh, the central revelation of the Father, Who was delivered for our transgressions and raised for our justification, and Whom God hath exalted at His right hand, far above all powers and principalities and every name that is named, and through Whom the marvellous power and unsearchable wisdom, the unfathomable love and abundant mercy, the absolute holiness and unchangeable righteousness, the beauty of His grace and the blessedness of His life are revealed. And conscious of all this, the church prostrates itself in worship and adoration, and concludes her prayers with the beautiful ascription of praise: "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever."

Now what is the relation between this doxology and the rest of the Lord's Prayer?

That there is such a definite relation is very evident from the conjunction "for" by which this doxology is introduced, and by which it is connected with the rest of the Lord's Prayer. This is also emphasized by the Heidelberg Catechism, as we have already pointed out. That little word "for" signifies that in this doxology I express a reason for my prayer, a ground for all my petitions. How true it is, and how cogent a reason, and how firm a ground for my prayer there is in this closing ascription of praise to God, is especially evident as soon as we connect the doxology with the address, as, of course, should be done: "Our Father Who art in heaven, to Thee I direct my prayer, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever." In this doxology, therefore, the child of God motivates his whole prayer. He expresses the reason here, first of all, for the fact that he prays at all, and that he prays to his Father in heaven alone. In it he declares: "Our Father, Who art highly exalted above all that is named 'creature,' Who lovest me as my Father from before the foundation of the world, Who hast revealed Thine unfathomable love to me in the death and resurrection of Thine only begotten Son: to Thee, and to Thee alone I pray. In Thee, and in Thee alone, do I put my confidence. From Thee, and from Thee alone, I do expect all good things. To Thee, and to Thee only, I ascribe all honor and praise. For I know that Thou art strong to save and willing to help and deliver me, and that Thou alone art worthy of all adoration: because Thine, O Father, is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever."

But there is more.

This doxology also expresses the reason why the believer prayed as he did, and why he presented before the throne of grace the petitions of this perfect prayer, and that too, in the order which they occur.

What did we ask for in this prayer which the Lord taught us to pray? Negatively expressed, we did not ask for carnal things, for earthly peace and prosperity, for health and abund-

ance. We did not attempt to impose our will upon the will of the Almighty. We did not criticize His government of the world or His direction of our personal lives. We did not make an attempt to prescribe to Him just how He should direct all things. And positively expressed, we prayed for the things that concerned the glory of His name, the coming of His kingdom, the realization of and the obedience to His will, first of all, and subordinated all the rest of our prayer strictly to these highest and most important matters. We prayed for bread for one day, and declared that we would not be anxious for the morrow, even though the bread basket were empty tonight. We expressed before His face that we were sorry for our sins, and that we could have no rest until He gave us the assurance of His blessed forgiveness. We confessed that we dread the temptations, and earnestly implored His preserving grace; that we hate all evil, and long for the day of final deliverance from all corruption. For these things we prayed, and there was not a carnal desire expressed in the whole of our request. One act of worship our prayer was. And the whole concentrated around the living God and His glory. Why? What is the reason that all true prayer must needs be thus? And why does the truly praying child of God realize that no other prayer can possibly be proper and pleasing in the sight of God? The reason is expressed in the close of the prayer, in this beautiful doxology: "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever."

Now we must ask the final question: what spiritual disposition of our heart and mind is required in order to utter this doxology in spirit and in truth? If my prayer is to be more than the mechanical saying of my *Pater Noster's*, or the moving of a bead; if there is to be harmony between the work of my lips and the inner state of my heart when I utter this ascription of praise to God, what must be my spiritual disposition or attitude? The answer is, briefly: the disposition of true worship. And worship means that I have really been in the sanctuary, that I have felt myself in the presence of God, that I have received a glimpse of His infinite glory and beauty of holiness, and that, realizing my own nothingness in His glorious presence, I prostrate myself before Him and say, "O my God!" I said that we receive a *glimpse* of His infinite glory, for more may not be said as long as we are in the present body of this death. We do not yet really stand in the presence of God in all its implications. And a good thing it is that we do not. Those who ever did were almost consumed by the glory of His holiness. Even the seraphim cover their faces in His presence. Isaiah, seeing Him in a vision, could only cry out, "Woe unto me, I am undone." When the glory of Christ's divinity flashed through His humanity, Peter cried out, "Lord, depart from me, for I am a sinful man." And we would do the same thing if in our present state we would really be brought face to face with the infinitely glorious God. But this is now impossible. When we ourselves are changed, made like unto our glorious Lord, we may see Him face to

face. For then we shall be like Him. Now we see as in a glass darkly, even when we pray. We obtain a glimpse of His glory. We behold a reflection of His glorious majesty through His Word, through His Spirit we have the knowledge of Him, not only in our heads, but in our hearts. But this glimpse is sufficient to fill our soul with holy awe in His presence. And if thus we come before the living God in the face of Jesus Christ our Lord, and are really impressed by His infinite goodness and glorious majesty, we realize that we can do only one thing: worship! And O, what a marvellous power of grace it is, whereby the rebellious and cursing sinner is so changed that he prostrates himself in humble adoration before the throne of the Most High, and cries out: "Our Father Who art in heaven, thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever."

Chapter V

Amen

If we have prayed thus, that is, in the manner and according to the contents as explained in the preceding chapters in our exposition of the Lord's Prayer, then, and then only, can we conclude our prayer with the significant word, "Amen."

The Heidelberg Catechism, in Question and Answer 129, explains: "'Amen' signifies, it shall truly and certainly be: for my prayer is more assuredly heard of God, than I feel in my heart that I desire these things of him."

Perhaps in our daily prayers the word "Amen" means little more than that it is a sign that we have finished our petitions and that we have concluded our prayer. But the word has a very profound meaning. And its use at the close of our prayer is very significant indeed. By it we really affix a seal to our entire prayer. By saying "Amen" we really become very bold, and bind the living God to give us just what we asked of Him.

"Amen" is a Hebrew word. It is derived from a verb that means "to establish, to make firm, or to be steadfast and unmoveable." The word "Amen" therefore signifies, as the Catechism explains, "it shall truly and certainly be," it is established, it is absolutely sure. The Lord Jesus often employs the word to emphasize the truth and certainty of His doctrine and then it is translated in our English Bible by "verily, verily." And Christ Himself is called "the Amen, the faithful and true witness." Rev. 3:14. When, therefore, we use the word at the close of our prayers, we say with reference to them: "It is established; it is certain and true."

When, therefore, we thus close our prayers, we do a very serious thing. For then we declare, first of all, before the face of God that in our prayers we were true, that we did not lie when we prayed, that we did not play the hypocrite, but that we are sure that the things we prayed for are the objects of the desire of our inmost heart. O, it is true, even in this respect we have but a small beginning of the new obedience. The Heidelberg Catechism recognizes this when

it explains: "... for my prayer is more assuredly heard of God, than I feel in my heart that I desire these things of him." The flesh even influences the highest expression of gratitude to God. But even though it was with much imperfection, in the word "Amen" we nevertheless express that principally in the uprightness of our heart we desired exactly what we prayed for in the Lord's Prayer. By that word we express that we feel in our hearts that we desire not carnal things, not honor and power and money and carnal lusts and pleasure. For these things are absolutely excluded in the petitions of the Lord's Prayer. By that little word we express that we honestly and sincerely asked for and desired, in the first place, the things concerning God: the glory of His name, the coming of His kingdom, grace that I may do His will and walk in His way. By that closing word we express that we are sure that we are quite satisfied with bread for today, that we long for the forgiveness of sins and that we earnestly desire to forgive one another. By "Amen" we express that we dread the temptations, certainly do not deliberately seek them, that we desire to be delivered from evil, and long for final perfection. In other words, "Amen" signifies that I uttered my prayer in true faith. For he that does not pray in faith is like a wave of the sea, double-hearted and tossed to and fro, as James has it in his epistle, 1:5-8: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways." This is expressed by the closing word of our prayers, "Amen."

Once more, it is true, as the Heidelberg Catechism explains, that "my prayer is more assuredly heard of God, than I feel in my heart that I desire these things of him." But this only expresses still more fully the certainty implied in the term "Amen." For with regard to my desire I feel my imperfection, but with regard to God's faithfulness I am absolutely sure. He will grant me that which I asked for. This must be emphasized. "Amen" does not mean that God will give me something, though it may be the very opposite from what I asked of Him. Thus it is often explained. Many people even seem to consider it a mark of piety to say that even though God does not give us what we asked for, He will surely give us some good thing. But this is not the meaning of the word "Amen." Nor it is pious. For this usually means that we take no pains to pray according to the will of God, but that we ask for all kinds of carnal things. And then the Lord does not hear, and does not give us what we ask of Him. But when we pray anything according to His will, we know that He surely hears us, and that He gives unto us all that we ask of Him abundantly. Hence, at the close of our prayer we say: "Amen. O Father Who knowest the hearts and provest the reins, Thou knowest that my prayer was in truth, and that I earnestly desire these things of Thee.

And I am assured that Thou wilt grant unto me exactly the contents of my petitions."

In the light of all this, we certainly are inclined to hesitate to close our prayers with the word "Amen."

Conscious, therefore, of our weakness and imperfection and of our inclination to pray according to the flesh, rather than according to the will of God, we may well close our series of meditations on the Lord's Prayer with the petition: "Lord, so teach me to pray according to Thy will, that I may be able to say 'Amen,' that I may be assured in my heart that Thou wilt grant all my requests." Then the peace of God that passeth all understanding shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

FINISH

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

CHAPTER I

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand." These words should be sufficient justification of the attempt to expound this last book of Holy Writ, if, indeed, the earnest endeavor by a minister of the Word of God to deliver God's message to the Church of Christ in the world from any part of the Scriptures ever requires an apology. A satisfactory exposition of the book of Revelation is considered impossible by many. The book is so full of symbols and allegories, its true meaning is couched in such mysterious language, that one can never feel sure that he discovered its real sense. And the history of the interpretation of this book of the Bible apparently corroborates this opinion. Many a commentary has been written on the book of Revelation, numerous treatises have been published on individual parts of it, and the explanations offered are as numerous and divergent as the scholars that attempted to expound the book. Thus it is alleged. And the conclusion is drawn that it is better to refrain from any attempt at explanation, or, at least, to wait until "the things that must shortly come to pass" are being realized. If, then, an apology would seem to be in order for offering our own interpretation, we would appeal to the last verse of the passage treated in this chapter. The book is intended to convey a blessing to them that endeavor to acquaint themselves with the contents of it, and that keep the words of this prophecy. It must be possible, then, "to read and to hear," to understand "what the Spirit saith unto the churches" through this part of the Word of God. It may not be possible to satisfy the spirit of curiosity in which many approach this last book of Holy Writ; but one may surely so understand the "meaning of the Spirit," that he receives the blessing that is here promised. And to obtain

this blessing will be more than sufficient reward for our endeavors.

It is quite customary to preface the exposition of the book of Revelation by a discourse on extraneous matters, such as questions concerning the author of Revelation, the time of its composition, and the proper method of interpretation that must be followed. We shall not try to add anything to all that has been written on these questions, neither shall we determine upon a definite method of exposition at this stage. Much has been written about the authorship of the book. I presume that all the internal and external evidence that can throw light upon this question has been presented. And the opinions are still divided: some claim that the author is the apostle John, while others argue that the John that is mentioned as the author in the book itself cannot possibly have been the apostle "whom Jesus loved." It would be quite useless to repeat the arguments employed in favor of the one or of the other view. One who is interested in the question may consult any commentary on this book. And I do not consider the question of any importance. The canonicity of the book does not depend on the apostolic authorship, and the correct understanding of its contents is not contingent upon the proper solution of this question: if it were, Scripture would surely have given us definite information on this point. And this also applies to the question concerning the time when this book was written. Here, too, opinions are divided between an earlier and a later date. Although, therefore, it is our personal conviction that the author is the apostle John, and that the book was written about the year 95 A. D., we do not consider the matter of sufficient importance to add to the mass of material that was already written on these questions.

As to the proper method of interpretation, we would rather let the text speak for itself and let it become apparent from our interpretation which method we prefer, than announce such a method beforehand. Several methods have been applied, and the weakness of them all is exactly that they are methods, and that they have been implied too stringently often, so that the contents of the book of Revelation were forced into their scheme. This is especially true of the church-historical method, according to which the various visions of the book are more or less clearly and definitely traced in the history of new dispensation. But also the futurist and the praeterist method of interpretation must plead guilty of this. According to the former almost the entire contents of Revelation must be considered as referring to the distant future, the time immediately preceding the second coming of the Lord; the latter regards most of the prophecy of this book to have been fulfilled in the past, particularly in the fall of the mighty Roman empire. What must be considered the correct method of interpretation must be determined by the contents of the book itself, and what method we prefer will become apparent in the course of our explanation.

The first three verses of chapter I contain what may be

called the superscription to the whole book of Revelation. It announces the contents of the book: it is a revelation of Jesus Christ and throws light on the things that must shortly come to pass. It informs us how this revelation was received: it was given by God, through Christ, through the instrumentality of an angel, to His servant John, and by John to Christ's servants. And it closes with the beatitude to which we already called attention: "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep the things which are written therein: for the time is at hand."

The book, then, presents itself as "revelation of Jesus Christ." The original word for "revelation" is *apokalupsis*, from which our "Apocalypse" is derived. It denotes the act of uncovering something that is hid, as, for instance the unveiling of a statue. In the biblical sense it denotes that act of God whereby He makes known to us the things concerning Himself and the kingdom of heaven, "the mysteries" of the kingdom of God. For, these things are not of this world. They cannot be perceived by our natural senses. Nor can they be conceived by the natural understanding. They belong to another world than ours, to the spiritual and heavenly order of things "which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man" (I Cor. 2:9). They cannot be apprehended, therefore, unless God reveals them to us, "unveils" them; and unless there be a spiritual eye to see, a spiritual ear to hear, a spiritual mind to understand them. The word revelation, then, denotes that act of God whereby He discloses to us that other world, the things of His heavenly kingdom and eternal covenant.

Now, the text speaks of a "revelation of Jesus Christ." In the original the name "Jesus Christ" stands in the genitive case (*apokalupsis Jeesou Christou*), and the question is, whether this is to be regarded as an objective or subjective genitive. If the latter is correct, the meaning is that Jesus Christ is the subject or author of this revelation, that He is the revealer of the things contained in this prophecy; if the former is the true interpretation of this genitive, the expression denotes that Jesus Christ is the object of this revelation, that He is the One that is "unveiled," revealed in this book. The common interpretation takes the genitive in the subjective sense: the revelation which Jesus Christ gave, of which He is the author. In fact, practically all commentators take this sense for granted, and hardly allow for the possibility of taking the genitive in the objective sense. Yet, we believe that there are important objections against this view, so weighty that we prefer to understand the expression in the objective sense, so that it means that Jesus Christ is revealed to us in this last book of Scripture.

H.H.

"Good works cannot go before regeneration. Effectual grace is that which builds the soul into an habitation of God. Holy tempers and holy obedience are the furniture of the house. And a house must be built before it can be furnished."

—Toplady

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Prophecy of Zechariah

Chapter vi.

Vision viii — the four chariots drawn by horses of different colors, 1-8.

1. *And I turned and lifted up my eyes, and saw, and behold, four chariots came from between the two mountains, and the mountains were mountains of brass.* 2. *In the first chariot (were) red horses, and in the second chariot black horses.* 3. *And in the third chariot white horses, and in the fourth chariot horses speckled and strong.* 4. *And I answered and said to the angel that talked with me, What are these my Lord.* 5. *And the angel answered and said unto me, These are the four winds of the heavens, coming forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth.* 6. *The black horses which are therein go forth into the land of the north, and the white go behind them, and the speckled go forth to the land of the south.* 7. *And the strong went forth, and desired to go that they might pass to and fro through the earth. So they walked to and fro through the earth.* 8. *And he called me and spake to me, saying, Behold, these that go forth into the land of the north have caused my Spirit to rest upon the land of the north.*

This vision terminates the series of eight revelations. It indicates the complete fulfillment of what had been promised by the first vision, to wit, the destruction of the Lord's and His people's enemies.

In the eighth and last vision the prophet sees coming from between two mountains four chariots drawn by horses of different colors. Two go toward the north and one toward the south. The fourth desires and receives permission to go to and fro through the earth. The chariots that enter the land of the north act in this region and thereby cause the Spirit of Jehovah to rest upon the land thereof.

This is the vision. It is not a return to the first vision, though at first glance it may seem that it is, seeing that it employs imagery much like that of the first: horses of different colors and riders. But there is a difference. Here the horses appear as hitched to chariots. The first vision discloses no chariots. Here horses and chariots go forth. There the riders upon chariots stand among myrtles. The last vision. There the riders report on conditions on the earth as they had observed them implying that they had walked to and fro through the earth merely as exploring scouts.

1. *And I turned and lifted up my eyes* — This is the prophet's usual way of saying that another vision engages his attention. *And, behold, four chariots* — It is a mistake to identify the chariots with four empires, that is, world powers. The reason that their number was set at four is that they were sent to the four points of the compass, that is, in

every direction. Of course, they were drawn by horses, and the succeeding verses suggest that they also were manned by charioteers. *And they came from between the two mountains* — The Hebrew has the article, *the* two mountains. In view of the fact that the mountains were of brass, it is doubtful whether the prophet had before his mind two well-known mountains, either Mount Zion and Mountain Moriah or Mount Zion and Mount Olives. The two mountains symbolize the Lord's faithfulness and righteousness, fast and majestically lofty. Indeed, His faithfulness reaches unto the clouds, and His righteousness is like the great mountains, Ps. xxxvi. 6, 7. In the glitter of their brass, that must have been terrible to behold, they stood there as symbols of His anger and judgment, did these mountains.

2, 3. The horses that drew the chariots were of different colors. Red . . . black . . . white . . . speckled. Of the speckled it is said that they were strong. But according to verse 7 strength characterized all of them. So, horses and chariots including the charioteers signified powers. What these powers were is indicated by the colors. The red horses symbolize the powers of war, bloodshed and destruction; the black of scarcity, hunger and distress; the speckled (the pale horses of Revelation vi. 8) of death and the grave. The white horses symbolize the Angel of the Lord, the second person in the Godhead, the same divine person that in the New Testament Scriptures is presented to us as the incarnate Word. For in John's vision (Rev. xix. 11-16) He that sat upon the white horse was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. And He has on His thigh a name written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Here the rider on the white horse plainly symbolizes Christ Himself. And on this earth we see Him in the power of His Word and Spirit by which He gathers His church. It is the power in which on this earth is seen the white horses of Zechariah's vision.

We see also the other horses, see them on this earth but not as horses of the Lord coming from between the two mountains, but as powers of war, bloodshed, destruction, famine, death and the grave. To say, therefore, that they are horses of the Lord is to give expression to an article of faith. For it cannot be proved. For this is their appearance only in the vision, not on this earth. What is more, here they appear as the powers of the violent of the earth, of the Pharaohs, the Nebuchadnezzars and the Alexanders, the Caesars and the Napoleons.

4. *And I answered the angel that talked with me. What are these . . . ?* — Failing to understand the vision, the prophet appeals to his companion, who supplies the desired information.

5. *And the angel answered . . . These are the four winds of the heaven.* — The reply of the angel really identifies the four horses, including the white horse, with the four winds. Doubtless by these four winds is to be understood, therefore, the Spirit of God or rather direct and indirect influence of the Spirit. By the Spirit as operative through the Word

the kingdom of Christ is established in men's hearts, the men of His good will. Also by the Spirit evil men are given up to all manner of wickedness through the lust of their own heart — given up to unrighteousness, covetousness, maliciousness, murder, debate, deceit, Rom. 1:24-29. Also war among the nations is owing to this influence. And the result is the overturning of thrones and the rise and fall of the kingdoms of the nations.

Coming forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth — The four Spirits, that is, the four horses thus influenced by the Spirit, go forth to do their work, the three horses — the red, the black and the speckled — seen on this earth as powers of war, destruction and death. They go forth from standing before the Lord, meaning that they are His servants and do His bidding even as powers of the violent of the earth, kings and rulers that take counsel together, against the Lord and against His anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their chords from us. But God laughs. The Lord holds them in derision. And with reason. They exist by His power. In Him they live and move and have their being, so that in all their ethical opposition to Him they serve His counsel as well as the horses that stand before the Lord's face, as well as war to which these violent men take recourse to establish themselves upon the earth.

6. *The black horses go forth into the land of the north* — The north country, Babylonia, pre-eminently the land of the anti-Christian world-power. Here Satan had fixed himself down. Here was found the devil's headquarters. *And the white horses go behind them* — The white horses seen on this earth in the power of the Gospel. *And the speckled horses go into the land of the south* — Here was found Egypt, the long time enemy of the people of God.

7. *And the strong went forth and desired to go that they might pass to and fro through the earth* — doubtless the reference is to all the horses — the red, black, white and speckled. For they all were strong. This accounts for it that no mention is made in this verse of the red horses. Thus also the black and the speckled horses, that the text here limits to Babylon and Egypt, go through all the earth. Every land, worldly kingdom is thus visited by all the powers symbolized — the power of war, of bloodshed and destruction, the power of scarcity and want, the power of death and the grave. And the result is the continuous rise and fall of the world's kingdoms. So is the way being paved continuously for the white horse seen in the power of the Gospel. For the white horses go after them.

And the horses still go forth — the horses, the power of war, of death and the grave, — go forth over the whole earth. And they are strong, and they become always stronger, more violent, destructive. We think now of the destruction wrought by the last world war, of how the nations of the world rained death upon each other from the air with the result that whole cities were reduced to rubble.

8. But it shall not always be thus. For once more the

angel calls to the prophet and speaks to him saying, *Behold, these that go forth into the north — Bayblonia — have caused my Spirit to rest upon the land of the north* — Babylon shall fall. And God with His people shall enter into His rest there in Babylon and not only there but on the whole earth, then when all the kingdoms of this world shall have become the kingdoms of Christ. Then nations shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things shall then have passed away. And the tabernacle of God will be with men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His people.

G. M. O.

* * * *

THE UNIFYING IDEA OF THE SCRIPTURES

What is this unifying idea? In bringing it clearly to the fore I must begin with calling attention to the following.

1. First to the protevangel of Gen. chap. 2, that is, to the promise of the Gospel as first proclaimed and by the very voice of Christ. The vast importance of this promise must be perceived. It is verily the seed, so to speak, of all the promises thereafter spoken through the centuries of the formation of the Canon of the Scriptures, which is to say that the latter are but the unfolding and development of the Gospel contained in the former.

Students of Scripture rightly speak of a history of revelation. But what is this "history of revelation" but the history of the unfolding and development of the Gospel of the protevangel — an unfolding of this Gospel in and through the discourses of Israel's divinely inspired prophets. There is therefore but one promise essentially. Yet the Bible speaks of promises. But this cannot mean that the "promises" hold forth a Gospel that differs from the Gospel of the Protevangel or that is not as to its substance contained in it. What is meant is simply that the salvation that the protevangel holds is that many-sided and includes a variety of riches — riches of His grace — so wonderful that, if it was to be fully comprehended by God's believing people more and always more light had to be shed upon it. And this light was not withheld. It was given in all the promises thereafter spoken.

2. Now in shedding this needed light, in unfolding the gospel of the protevangel, the Lord availed Himself of definite vehicles of thought.

The question is now: what was the character of these vehicles? Through the ages of the Old Dispensation this character was typical-symbolical. That is to say, through the ages of the Old Covenant the Lord shed the required light through the vehicle of a typical-symbolical language, typical-symbolical institutions such as the sacrifices, and third typical-symbolical mighty works of His such as the deluge and the deliverance of the people of Israel from Egyptian bondage.

Now the line of thought here presented is in full accord with the answer to the 19th question of the Heidelberg

Catechism. The question reads: "From whence knowest thou this?" and the answer: "From the Holy Gospel, which God himself first revealed in paradise; and afterwards published by the patriarchs and prophets, and represented by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law; and lastly has fulfilled it by His only begotten Son."

As was just stated, God shed this required light also through mighty works of His. It means that also the history of the people of Israel is typical-prophetical. To deny this is to deny the unique character of Israel's history, it is to place this history in the category of ordinary history. Also by Israel's history the required light was shed.

We must now concentrate on this history, this typical, prophetical history of the people of Israel. Examining this history we discover that it divides in a number of parts or epochs or dispensations of grace. We discover further that each part is completed by itself and that it constitutes in contradistinction to each of the other parts or epochs a complete type of the salvation held forth by the protevangel. We discover finally that in each succeeding picture or type of the series, the features of this salvation stand out in always bolder relief. Herein each succeeding type differs from the one immediately preceding.

3. Let us now shed the necessary light on these statements.

The first picture is that epoch of sacred history that begins with the fall of man into sin and that ends with Noah and his family leaving the ark after the deluge and his being blessed by the Lord God.

Let us now examine this picture. The first thing that must be said of it is that it is a prophetic type of Christ and the salvation that He was to work. Second, that as such a type it sheds in conjunction with God's communications to Noah, the first great light on the promise of the protevangel, on the salvation held forth by this promise.

Let us get the events of this epoch or dispensation before us,

The first man Adam left the hands of God his Maker a sinless man, for in His own image God created him. But Adam subjected himself to sin. He thereby corrupted his whole nature and thus became wicked and perverse in all his ways potentially in himself and actually in his reprobated generations.

Immediately after the fall the Lord brought in His Gospel. Said the Lord to our elect first parents and thus to the church of the elect of all ages. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall bruise (better, crush) thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." This is the promise as first proclaimed by the Lord God Himself, and being what it is — the promise as first proclaimed, also called the protevangel, it is infinitely rich in meaning. For it is the seed-thought of the Gospel; it thus contains in itself all the promises thereafter spoken, the entire divine thought-structure bearing on our salvation. Like any seed it therefore had to be developed, unfolded, be-

made to flower, if the church was to see the divine thought-structure contained, concealed in it. As was stated, the Lord God did make this seed-truth to unfold also through Israel's typical symbolical history, and typical-symbolical personages, as well as through Israel's ceremonial laws, through Israel's typical-symbolical history, that is, as has already been explained, through a series of prophetic types or pictures or typical epochs of this history.

G.M.O.

Report of the Eastern Ladies' League

On the evening of April 26, 1956, the Spring meeting of the League of Ladies' Societies of the Prot. Ref. Churches was held. We were privileged to meet in the auditorium of the First Prot. Ref. Church of Grand Rapids.

Our meeting was opened by singing Psalter No. 386:1-5, and Psalm 105:5. Our president, Mrs. F. Harbin read from Heb. 11:1-16, led us in prayer, and welcomed all the ladies present. Our next number was a vocal duet, beautifully rendered by our Grand Haven ladies, and well received by the audience. Rev. G. Vos, our scheduled speaker, notified our president the day before our meeting that he would not be able to speak for us because of his physical condition.

Rev. G. Ophoff, our alternate speaker, kindly consented to help us out, and read to us from one of his articles, "The promise of God is only to the elect, historically the believers." This follows from: 1. The content of the promise. — Essentially there is but one promise, which was first revealed in Paradise, immediately after the fall of man, and is known as the Protevangel. Gen. 3:15. The promise is the seed, which is Christ. All the subsequent promises are the unfolding of the promise. God spoke through patriarchs and prophets, through symbols and types, until Christ, who was the fulfillment of the promise.

2. The character of the promise. The promise is unconditional, since it is God's promise and not man's. Man being a creature, is limited on every hand, in countless ways. God's power is unlimited. He does all His good pleasure. He has mercy on whom He will, and whom He wills He hardens. To say that God's promise is conditional is to draw God down to the level of His creature.

3. What the people of God are. They are the elect of God. All that they are and ever will be by reason of their election, they are by reason of the promise, so that to say they are children of the promise, is to say they are the children of election. They are the justified ones, not on the ground of their own works, for they have none, but on the ground of the satisfaction and righteousness of Christ as imputed unto them. All their sin, the mountain of debt has been blotted out, covered by the blood of Christ, and they are pronounced guiltless and righteous in Him. The righteousness of Christ is the meritorious basis of their justification, and they and they alone have the right to all the blessings of salvation, and therefore they have the right to the promise.

(Continued on page 374)

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of I Corinthians 1-4

15.

In this rather profound section of I Corinthians 2, Paul is still dealing with the questions of schism and party-strife in the church of God.

This schism is very sinful, contrary to all the newness of life in Christ Jesus and must, therefore, be eradicated root and branch. Not one bit of the old leaven of sin may remain in their lives. Theirs is to be a life of truthfulness and of sincerity. And to this Paul calls them by exhortation and instruction.

To see the rock-bottom reason for this walk of uprightness, Paul calls attention to what we have become by means of the Holy Spirit. He does this especially in view of the fact that they are speaking and boasting as if they had received the spirit of man's wisdom, boasting in mental acuteness, rather than in the fact that all that we know is ours simply because Christ, or God in Christ, has revealed it unto us by His Spirit.

And surely the Holy Spirit of God is fully capable of leading into all the truth; He can fully reveal all the secrets of God to us; He searches all things, yea, the deep things of God!

And now Paul drives the point home once and for all!

He has established the matter *objectively* of the "point of contact" with the congregation. We *are* enlightened. Hence, we should also walk as such.

Furthermore, *we* have once and for all *received* the Spirit, as the church of God. We are the temple of the Holy Ghost. And, therefore, a peculiar walk should also be ours.

Paul draws a rather remarkable contrast here in the verses 12-16. It is once more the contrast between the church and the world. This time these two groups are designated with the terms "Us" and "We" in distinction from "the natural man." This fact indicates the following:

1. That Paul is here not speaking simply in the abstract about the "spiritual man" and the "natural man," but rather very concretely *to the church!* Paul does not here speak of the "natural man" and his behavior except as this relates to clarify the singular position of the Church, who have *received* the Spirit. These believers must understand themselves and the behavior that is, therefore, comely to them as saints.

2. That in this passage Paul teaches most emphatically that the believers have "received the Spirit of God" and, therefore, they also "receive" all of *the things* of the Spirit of God. (More of this presently).

3. That the natural man is not able to judge, his will and heart are perverse and blind, while the spiritual man,

one illuminated by the Holy Spirit, understands all things, since he has the *mind* of Christ!

Let us attempt to understand each of these propositions a bit better.

In verse 12 Paul literally writes: "*Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is out of God, in order that we might know the things which are freely graced to us of God.*"

It is of the greatest importance not only to know the things of God by faith, but also to know whence we have *received* them. Only when we know the latter shall we truly and really be able to give the Lord proper recognition of His "gifts," and also walk humbly and thankfully because of them. That they come to us from the Holy Spirit is a wonderfully comforting knowledge. However, that even our knowledge, and reception of them too, is solely of the Holy Spirit is also tremendously sobering. It genders the consciousness: what have I that I have not received!

When Paul here speaks in the text of our having "received" the Holy Spirit he evidently has in mind that fact that Christ has shed His Spirit abroad in the church upon the day of Pentecost, so that He would never depart from us, but would constantly take all out of Christ and give it unto us, the elect church. The verb here is not the same in the Greek as that employed by Paul in verse 14 where he writes: "Now the natural man does not *receive* the things of the Spirit of God." In the latter passage the verb in the Greek is *dechomai* (to accept), not reject. Here the term, in the light of the entire context, means: conscious and ready and happy acceptance. In the case of verse 12, now under consideration, the verb in Greek is *lambanein*, to receive what is given, by the very fact that it is *given*.

This is not simply a distinction upon which theologians like to speculate, nor is it simply a dogmatical "hair-splitting" distinction, but it is rather a distinction which spells the very salvation of the church and thus the glory of God in the saints. Hence, this is a distinction constituting the very warp and woof of salvation, and one which no Arminian has ever rightly seen, for the very evident reason, that he cannot properly put spiritual ideas and distinctions with spiritual realities.

But we *have received* the Spirit of God.

The Holy Spirit came into our hearts and minds. He did not *come in* because we welcomed him, gave him a reception. We received Him because He came into our hearts as the wind blowing where He listeth. He regenerated us, He called us, He justified us and sanctified us and, principally, glorified us. He came working irresistibly in our hearts.

And He is not the Spirit of this world. The spirit of *this world* is that of delusion, of the lie and of the Devil. Such a spirit cannot possibly search the depths of God, and therefore cannot possibly enlighten our minds. Beelzebub cannot drive out himself. Hence, such a spirit cannot enlighten. But, thanks be to God, such is not the Spirit whom we have "received." He is the Spirit whose *origin* is in

God. He is *out* of God. And since we have such a Spirit dwelling in our hearts, we surely should only attribute all knowledge to him, and walk as such who have this unique understanding amongst all the sons of men. For the Spirit always shows us the things that are "freely graced upon us." All is of grace. The Holy Spirit never teaches us anything else. We know that forgiveness of sins, righteousness in Christ, the holiness of walk and conduct in Christ, that they are ours as mere gift, sovereign free gift.

For that very purpose He was given unto us, did He once and for all come to dwell in our hearts, that we might *know* these things. Apart from this reception of the Spirit no one knows and none understand. Hence, we do not have the ludicrous circle-reasoning of the Arminian preacher, when he tries to convince his audience that salvation is for every one. They say the Holy Spirit is given and received only by those who ask for Him. Fact is, that superficial reading of the Heidelberg Catechism has also caused many thus to read the Catechism. I refer, of course, to Question and answer 116, which reads: "Why is prayer necessary for Christians? Because it is the chief part of thankfulness which God requires of us; and because *God will give His grace and Spirit only to those who earnestly and without ceasing ask them of Him, and render thanks unto Him for them.*"

However, this question and answer, as is also our text under consideration, is a far cry from that of the Arminian circle-reasoning. Their position is such that no one has the Spirit except those who ask for it. It is conceded by them that without the help of the Spirit one cannot ask for it. And yet we must do initially what one cannot do.

Such is not our text. Nor is such the Heidelberg Catechism teaching.

In both our text and in the Heidelberg Catechism we are dealing with the *renewed* Christian. And the renewed Christian receives the gifts of the Spirit consciously by means of faith, which expresses its longing in prayer.

This latter the "natural man" cannot possibly do. Writes Paul in verse 14: "Now the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to them, and he is *not able* to know, for they are foolishness unto him, because they are spiritually discerned."

The blind cannot see colors and the deaf cannot hear sounds. And a moron cannot understand advanced arithmetic. He cannot put together what belongs together. So also the natural man *cannot* put together spiritual words with *spiritual realities*. Love, mercy, joy, peace, wisdom, understanding as these are prepared for us in the suffering and death of Christ are so much folly to them. Why? Because it is not *revealed* to them. God did not give them the Holy Spirit; He does not dwell in their hearts. His love is not shed abroad in their hearts. They cannot discern.

Hence, the natural man will never be able to receive the good Word of God under the preaching. Hearing he hears and does not understand, and seeing he emphatically sees

and, yet, does not perceive. His hearing is never mingled with faith. He is like Israel according to the flesh, the greater part of whom are not well-pleasing to God.

Such realities concerning the "natural man" should cause us to take notice. We should note that only the grace of God distinguishes us. And it is this grace of God, which also gives us the power to distinguish. Why all the boasting in man? Who is Peter, Paul, Apollos, or any mortal for that matter, but ministers of God. All is of the Holy Spirit, who is *out* of God.

And so it remains supremely true: "The spiritual man discerns all things, yet, he himself is discerned of none."

The natural man does not understand himself nor does he understand the believer. Yet, the believer, the spiritual man understands himself and also the plight of the natural man. If such be the case, and it is, then surely we ought to walk as a wise and a discerning people in the earth. For wisdom is always justified of her children.

The deep thoughts of God for our peace and glory we understand, we know them. We have the mind of Christ.

Well, then, let it be evident in our walk of life. Let us not walk as fools but as wise, redeeming the time. **G. L.**

REPORT OF THE EASTERN LADIES' LEAGUE

(Continued from page 372)

4. Objections that are raised against this doctrine. The gospel can not be preached if the promise is only for the elect since we do not know who the elect are. This objection is not valid, since we do know who the elect are. They are the poor in spirit, they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, the pure in heart, etc. They are not hidden, but are conspicuous. Although the human proclinator does not know infallibly who the elect are, Christ who is the true preacher, does know, since they were given Him by the Father, and for them He laid down His life. The *gospel* must be preached to all, the *promise* is limited to the elect, historically the believers. The Liberated object, and say that the promise is for all on condition of faith. If this view is maintained, questions arise and multiply and one must necessarily end in Arminianism.

After hearing this paper read we were reminded anew of our wonderful heritage, and of the gratitude we should constantly render to God for raising up men to lead us in the way of the truth which we as churches confess to be the true and perfect doctrine of salvation. May God give us grace never to depart from this truth, which, though not desired by the natural man, is indeed a source of comfort and peace to His child.

A collection was taken for *The Standard Bearer*, for our Hope and Adams St. Prot. Ref. Schools. Minutes of the previous league and delegate board meetings were read, and the treasurer's report was given, after which we might again listen to the singing of our Grand Haven duet. A Psalter number was sung, and Mrs. H. Hoeksema closed with prayer. Refreshments were served in the basement.

Mrs. D. Jonker, Reporter.

IN HIS FEAR

This Godless "Lucky Number" Craze

(2)

"In God we trust."

This beautiful motto or slogan was stamped on every penny in circulation in these United States of America.

If only all those who handle these pennies actually behaved according to that motto what a different world this would be wherein we pass our earthly sojourn.

For one thing, you would never see this Godless "lucky" number craze practiced as it is so widely carried on today.

It makes sport of putting trust in Him and of walking in His fear!

It trusts in "luck" and bows before it in an idolatry no less evil than the evil of Jeroboam who made Israel to sin by advocating a worship of Jehovah through golden calves!

It seeks possession not in the humble and Godfearing way of prayer and of committing one's way and all things to Him, Who has all things in His absolute power but seeks them in the way of competing with others in a project that trusts in "luck" for success in the venture.

The world makes no attempt even to cover up this fact and boldly advertises it as a "lucky number" venture or contest.

"You may be the 'lucky' winner of this . . ."

"Watch our window for the 'lucky number' next week."

"The drawing will be held Saturday evening at 9 o'clock to determine who it is that holds the 'lucky number' and is the winner of this grand prize."

These are only a few examples of how the world advertises these "lucky number" projects and calls them by their real name. The world boldly and unashamedly acknowledges that it is Godless (less God) and that it all centers around that idolatrous thing called "luck."

The world would laugh in your face if you would state that you drop your ticket in the container because you trust that God will guide the hand that picks the "lucky" one so that you may obtain that coveted object.

Of course He guides that hand!

From eternity He has also decreed all these things. Nothing takes place except according to His providence; and He knows what number shall be picked and who shall be holding that particular number before the man who sponsors this "lucky number" evil is even born!

That does not change the evil in it and make it a Godly project.

According to Luke 22:22 "The Son of man indeed goeth as has been determined." God had from eternity singled out Judas to betray the Christ and that He would go the way of the cross exactly in the way in which it all took place. But does that make it a godly work so that Judas can point to

it and say that He did it in His fear? Read the whole verse and you will have your answer. "The Son of man indeed goeth as has been determined: but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed!"

Indeed God will guide the hand that picks the ticket with the number held by him who is called the "winner"; but that does not make it a godly deed on his part or on the part of the sponsor.

Such things do not proceed from true faith and are not done to the glory of God and according to His law.

The world admits that, makes no attempt to claim that it is for the glory of God and that one can thereby exercise his faith in the Living God. Can children of God, then, participate in it in such a way that they give it a spiritual content that makes it in His fear? Can believers by their participation in so godless a thing remove the godless element?

There are activities that in themselves have no spiritual content and receive spiritual content when practiced by the believers. The child of God can plant his corn, till his ground, reap his harvest in trust and thankfulness to God and make it a work well pleasing in God's sight. He participates in the same activities that his godless, reprobate neighbors on either side of him practice. His work has spiritual content and is sanctified by the Spirit of Christ in Him and is therefore pleasing in God's sight. But an act that trusts in "luck" instead of in God cannot become or be made good because it is practiced by those who claim to be the children of God.

You can pour out of a glass tumbler the poison with which it is filled, wash and rinse it thoroughly and then fill it with milk and do yourself good by drinking that milk. A five dollar bill that was used a few days ago to place a bet on some race of this kind or of another may show up in your pay check and be dropped by you in the collection place on Sunday. You have expressed your thankfulness and gratitude to God for the salvation He has given you, you have shown your appreciation of the things spiritual and your own spirituality just as much by the use of that five dollar bill as you would have had you used a crisp, brand new five dollar bill that came direct to you through the bank where you cashed your check.

But you cannot put your trust in "luck" and at the same time and thru this venture also put your trust in God.

You cannot call Jehovah "Luck" and have Him approve of it!

Therefore leaving off the word "luck" and speaking simply of winning a prize at the drawing to be held at such and such a time; seeking to be the possessor of an object in this way of receiving numbered tickets and waiting for a drawing out of the pile to see who will receive this "prize" still is a godless activity.

It is not an act that says: "In God we trust"!

It is not and cannot be done in His fear!

We only deceive ourselves when we participate in those things which the world boldly calls by its right name and

we practice the same thing under a name that seems to take out the evil sting of godlessness.

You cannot change the name of a sin in order to sanction it and do so in His fear. When you do that you simply look the other way and try to soothe your conscience while practicing a thing against which your conscience has already spoken adversely. Paul says, as instructed by the Living God, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin," Romans 14:23. It is a terrible thing and an extremely dangerous thing to try to stifle the testimony of your conscience by continuing in the thing your conscience condemns because you have changed the name of that sin. What a fool a man is whose mind tells him that the liquid in the bottle he has in his hand is a deadly poison, who then removes the label to fix upon it the label: "grape juice" and then drinks it because it has such a pretty color! How much bigger a fool is that man who deceives himself by stifling his conscience which tells him that a certain project acknowledges the element of "luck" in the place of God, gives it a name less obnoxious to that conscience and then goes ahead and practices it!

Your conscience no longer condemns this "lucky number" idolatry?

Let us look more closely at it then.

Indeed, it has been made so simple and harmless looking by eliminating the requirement of buying the ticket itself. It is not in the strictest sense a raffle at which you buy chances. Usually, though, you do have to buy something in the store. The tickets are given you when you pay for some purchase you have made. Very often this element is left entirely out of the advertisement. Sometimes it is in the sense of a "door prize" which is conducted in the way of giving each one who enters the store a ticket at the door; and after walking around without buying a single thing you *can* walk out again after having deposited your ticket on which you base your hope for being favored by "luck." Then the whole idea of a raffle: the buying of "chances" on that "prize," is removed.

Yet it cannot be denied that each one who deposits a ticket in the container takes a "chance," or, if it sounds better to you, accepts and seeks a "chance." Each one who participates in this venture drops his or her ticket with the idea that by it he or she has a "chance" to win. And he takes a chance without parting with any of his cold cash. He washes his hands of the whole idea of gambling with his possessions. No, he tells himself, I have not gambled with what God entrusted to me as a steward of His goods and as a priest over His creation who is called to dedicate and consecrate all unto God.

Yet he took a "chance" sought or accepted a "chance."

He simply would not have dropped that ticket through the slot if it did not mean that he had put himself in a position to have a "chance" at that prize.

Yet the believer says with the Heidelberg Catechism ". . . all things come not by chance, but by His fatherly hand." Can they, then, with lips say that nothing comes by chance and then enter a practice wherein they drop their

tickets into a box to take a chance with countless numbers of others? Are they following the testimony of the same Heidelberg Catechism when it explains what God enjoins in the First commandment?: "That I . . . expect all good things from Him only . . . so that I renounce and forsake all creatures, rather than commit even the least thing contrary to His will." Is it in the spirit of what that Heidelberg Catechism says about the fourth petition on the Lord's Prayer?: ". . . be pleased to provide us with all things necessary for the body, that we may thereby acknowledge thee to be the only fountain of all good, and that neither our care nor industry, nor even thy gifts can profit us without thy blessing; and therefore that we may withdraw our trust from all creatures, and place it alone in thee."

It is a godless thing, this "lucky number" craze.

Who would dare, after receiving an object in this way, fall on his knees before God? to thank Him as "the only fountain of all good." When one waits for an object which might possibly come his way by the "chance" picking of a ticket bearing the same number as the one he holds, that one does not wait upon God.

Nor is it ever in the spirit of the prayer: "Give us this day our daily bread." What man can in His fear come before the living God and pray that he may be singled out of all those who with him covet that object displayed as the "prize?" And if a man would dare to utter so selfish a prayer when many poorer residents in his town have far greater need of it than he, is that in the spirit of the words of Jesus, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." That is positive! Jesus does not simply tell us not to do unto others what we would not have them do unto us.

The whole "lucky number" craze, likewise, depends upon the covetousness, the greed and selfishness of man. Because there is so much of it in the world, this craze can thrive. But because it thrives on these it cannot be in His fear and is definitely a godless thing which God's people will hate and avoid.

J. A. H.

"Paul often presents the idea that the plan of redemption was formed from eternity, and is such that no eye could discover, and no heart could conceive, I Cor. 2:7-9, Col. 1:26."

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

"However much the church may be distracted and troubled, error and its advocates cannot finally prevail. Satan is a conquered enemy with a lengthened chain; God will ultimately bruise him under the feet of his people."

— Charles Hodge, Comm. on Romans, p. 715

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

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

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Introductory Remarks.

As far as the early views on the sacrament of the Lord's Supper are concerned, during the first three centuries of the New Dispensation, we may remark that the chief question concerning this sacrament was not as clearly defined then as it is today. The chief question concerning the Lord's Supper today is that which is concerned with the proper interpretation of the words of the Saviour spoken by Him at the institution of this sacrament: "This is My body." The question concerns the relation between the sign and the things that are signified. Four different views have developed and are held at the present time. The Roman Catholic Church believes in the doctrine of Transubstantiation. According to this view the sign and the thing signified are identified. The bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of the Lord. The Lutheran view is known as Consubstantiation. According to this conception the sign and the thing signified are not identified, but they are objectively connected. The body and blood of the Lord are really present in, with, and under the bread and the wine. A third view is known as the sacramental or Calvinistic view. This conception views the relation between the thing signified and the sign as purely spiritual. And the fourth view of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is known as the Zwinglian view. This conception of the sacrament is merely symbolical. It regards the sacrament of the Lord's Supper merely as a feast of commemoration.

As might be expected, none of these four views had been distinctly and fully developed in the earliest period of the Church. It is readily understandable that the Church, first of all, simply accepted the sacraments and observed them without entering into the deeper significance of them. This, I say, is easily understandable. Standing upon the threshold of the New Dispensation and but recently having made the transition from the Old to the New Dispensation, the Church of God did not enjoy the clear understanding of the Scriptures which characterizes the Church of the living God today. This also applied to its understanding of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. It did not give itself immediately a clear and distinct account of the meaning of this sacrament. It may be observed, however, that also to this sacrament as well as to the sacrament of Baptism, a profound significance was attached, although it had no clear idea or conception of its significance. And, thirdly, we may also remark that by various writers of this early period the seeds were sown for

the development of all the various views of the Lord's Supper that were to be developed in a later period.

More specifically we may observe, in the first place, that the present Roman Catholic doctrine of Transubstantiation was entirely unknown in the early period of the Church. We are informed that Pope Gelasius I (492-496) also taught that "the substance or nature of the bread and wine does not cease to exist." Yet, since the Church generally held that somehow the flesh and blood of Christ were received at the Lord's Supper and the question as to how these were present is not always clearly answered, it may be said that tendencies can be found that would point in the direction of the Roman Catholic doctrine. The views of Ignatius, Justin and Irenaeus remind us of the present Lutheran doctrine. They emphasize the real presence of the body and blood of the Lord. It must be remembered, however, that also these fathers did not clearly define the manner in which the body and blood of Christ were present. The North African Church, however, revealed rather clear tendencies toward what is called the Reformed view. Origin inclined toward the Zwinglian conception, but Clement, Tertullian and Cyprian inclined toward the Calvinistic or sacramental idea.

Continuing with our brief resume of the early views on the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, we would observe that the sacrifice constitutes an essential element today in the Roman Catholic view of the mass. The Romish Church distinguishes between the Mass and the Eucharist. The Mass precedes the Eucharist and is, of course, necessary for it. There can be no Eucharist, no partaking of the body and blood of Christ and thanksgiving unto God without the Mass. The Mass is the sacrifice. Then the bread and wine are actually changed into the body and blood of the Lord. It is and should be most interesting to ascertain whether this Roman Catholic conception of the sacrifice was also present in the early Church. We know that the term "sacrifice" was used in connection with the celebration of the sacrament. But we also know that the term was used by the early Church in an altogether different sense than it is presently used in the Roman Catholic Church. According to this early view of the Church, not Christ was offered, but the Church offered itself, its prayers and thanksgiving, etc. Cyprian, however, because of his hierarchical tendencies (it was his basic teaching that the bishop is in the Church, and the Church is in the bishop, and that salvation without the Church and the bishop is impossible) already expresses the idea that not the Church but that the priest offers an imitation of the sacrifice of the Lord.

We would conclude these introductory remarks by referring our readers to the term, "sacrament." The word, sacrament, is not found in Holy Writ. However, this is not the only word which we use dogmatically and is not found in the Scriptures. Terms such as: providence, trinity, are also foreign to the Word of God. The word, sacrament, is derived from the Latin "sacramentum," which originally denoted a sum of money deposited by parties in litigation, inasmuch as

the winner's money was returned while the loser's sum was forfeited. This seems to have been called a "sacramentum" because it was intended to be a sort of sacrifice to the gods and therefore sacred. The transition of this term to its Christian use may be sought in two things. First, the word appears to have been used as a military term, in which it denoted the oath by which a soldier solemnly pledged obedience to his command. A reference to this idea of an oath and obedience to our Commander may be discerned in Article 34 of our Confession of Faith, where we read that "by which we are received into the Church of God and separated from all other people and strange religions, that we may wholly belong to him, whose *ensign* and *banner* we bear (we underscore—H. V.). Secondly, we would refer to the specifically religious sense which the term acquired when the Vulgate (the Latin translation of the Bible) employed it as a rendering of the Greek "musterion." It is possible that this Greek term was applied to the sacraments because they bear a faint resemblance to some of the mysteries of the Greek religion. In the early Church the word "sacrament" was first used to denote all kinds of doctrine and ordinances.

Two words were therefore employed in the early period of the Church to denote the idea of the sacraments: the Latin "sacramentum" (sacrament) and the Greek "musterion" (mystery). It must be remembered, however, that these words were not exclusively used for our sacraments, but that they also had a wider use: the sacrament or mystery of religion, of the Trinity, of the Lord's Prayer, etc.

The doctrine of Transubstantiation not the accepted doctrine of the Church in this period.

The union of Christ and the signs in the Supper were often compared to the union of the two natures in Christ. Corresponding to the mysterious union between the two natures of Christ in one and the same person, was the idea of a mystical connection subsisting between the body of Christ and the bread in the Lord's Supper, and between His blood and the wine. The deeply mysterious and often fantastic rhetoric of the fathers, the mysterious language in which they expressed themselves, makes it often uncommonly difficult to decide what dogmatic notions are to be attached to their expressions. By their changing imagery we are sometimes led to think of an ideal, sometimes of a substantial change; now of a subjective change on the part of the participant, and again of an objective change in what is received; sometimes it is a wonderful conjunction of the head and the body of Christ (consubstantiality); sometimes a total change of the elements of the Lord's Supper into this body (transubstantiation, real transformation). Their writings are not characterized by clarity.

We may, however, remark that the doctrine of transubstantiation was surely not at this time as yet a part of the accepted doctrine of the Church. Eusebius of Caesarea (he

was the bishop of Caesarea in Palestine, the father of church history, was born about 275 or 280, died perhaps at Caesarea most probably May 30, 339) is reportedly to have been partial to expressions such as the following: "Christians are admonished to celebrate the remembrance of Christ by the symbols of his body and blood." Notice that this writer, in this quotation, speaks of the *symbols* of Jesus, body and blood. And in his interpretation of John 6 (in this chapter the Lord feeds five thousand men, not counting the women and the children, with five loaves and two fishes and then becomes involved in a heated dispute with the carnal Galileans which leads to their forsaking of Him because they are carnal and the Lord and His Kingdom are spiritual), he says that we are not to believe that Christ spake of His present body, or enjoined the drinking of His corporeal and sensuous blood; but the words which He spake are spirit and life, so that His words themselves are His flesh and blood. In this expression reputedly attributed to Eusebius, we should notice that he is reportedly to have said that Jesus' *words* themselves are His flesh and blood. This is certainly a "far cry" from the Roman Catholic doctrine of Transubstantiation which advances the theory that the body and blood of the Lord are actually imparted to the believing participant, inasmuch as the bread and wine are actually changed into the body and blood of the Lord. Eusebius speaks of the symbols of Jesus' body and blood, and he also declares that the words of the Lord themselves are His flesh and blood.

Gregory Nazianzen called the bread and wine of the sacrament symbols and antitypes of the body and blood of Christ. Nilus, a disciple of Chrysostom (John Chrysostom, called "John the Golden-mouthed," was patriarch of Constantinople. He was born at Antioch, probably about 345 or 347, and died in Pontus, Sept. 14, 407), made a clear distinction between the symbols and the thing represented by them. And the distinction made by Theodoret between the sign and the thing signified was intimately connected with the similar distinction which he drew between the human and the divine natures of Christ.

The Lord willing, we will continue with this in our following article and quote from Reinhold Seeberg who has written on Augustine's view of the Lord's Supper in his "The History of Doctrine."

H. V.

"Inward holiness and eternal glory are the crown with which God adorns and dignifies His elect. But they are not the cause of election. A king is not made a king, by the royal robe he wears, and by the crown that encircles his brow; but he therefore wears his robe, and puts on his crown, because he IS the king . . ."

—Toplady

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

Article II. Who teach: That it was not the purpose of the death of Christ that he should confirm the covenant of grace through his blood, but only that he should acquire for the Father the mere right to establish with man such a covenant as he might please, whether of grace or of works. For this is repugnant to Scripture, which teaches that Christ has become the Surety and Mediator of a better, that is, the new covenant, and that a testament is of force where death as occurred. Heb. 7:22; 9:15, 17.

Before we enter into the teaching of this article as such, we must comment briefly on a matter connected with the language of the fathers here. There are those who use the reference to the "new covenant" to support the contention that also the fathers of Dordt believed the error of the so-called "covenant of works," and that they teach this error by implication in the above article. They reason as follows. The term "new covenant" necessarily implies that there was an *old* covenant. With this we must surely agree: the new covenant presupposes the existence of an old covenant. However, they add that since the new covenant, according to this article, is a covenant of grace, confirmed through Christ's blood, the old covenant must have been a covenant of works, established with Adam and broken by Adam. And with this we cannot agree. First of all, the article itself says no such thing; and it is only by reading our own notion into the article that we can find that notion back and claim to have support for the idea of a covenant of works in the *Canons*. In the second place, it is simply a fact that this very article puts the idea of a covenant of works in the mouth of the Arminians. The Remonstrants taught that because of the death of Christ God was free to establish a covenant of works or of grace with man. And finally, careful study of the idea of the new and old covenants will reveal that the old covenant was not a covenant of works established with Adam whatsoever, but that this old covenant, spoken of by implication in the term "new covenant," was the covenant of the old dispensation, established at Sinai, characterized by the fact that the law was imposed upon the promise, that it was the covenant of the age of shadows and types, but principally nevertheless the same covenant of grace which God always establishes with His people in Christ Jesus.

And now let us turn to the content of the article itself.

In order to understand the error that is here exposed by the fathers, let us, first of all, remind ourselves of the truth which our Reformed fathers maintained. They taught that Christ died as the head of the covenant and of His covenant people, namely, the elect. From this it followed inevitably that Christ through His perfect obedience has actually merited for all the elect, and for them only, all the benefits of salvation, all the blessings of that covenant. And from thence it follows that these blessings must be and are actually imparted and applied to all the elect, and to them only. This is the plain teaching especially of Article 8 of *Canons* II.

Notice, in this connection, that the issue at stake here is that of the *purpose* of the death of Christ. We must not overlook this. This is always again the issue. What is the *purpose* of the death of Christ? What is the *purpose* of God in the death of His only begotten Son in the flesh? What did God want to accomplish? What did He intend? Why did He ordain Christ? And this is a question which is inseparably connected: *for whom* did God ordain the most precious death of His Son? Was it for all men? Then it was God's purpose that Christ should do something for all men. Was it perhaps, for some unknown persons and some unknown quantity of persons that God ordained His Son? Then Christ went to His death ignorantly and purposelessly, not knowing whom He would save, or, in fact, whether He would save any at all. Or did God have a sovereign and most gracious will and purpose in the most precious death of His Son that concerned all the elect and them only? This last is Reformed, and is the plain teaching of our *Canons*.

But remember that also the Arminians must deal with this issue of the *purpose* of the death of Christ. And not only so, but they do so admittedly. They admit in their first article that there is an eternal and unchangeable purpose of God. What that purpose is, is not now the question: I merely want to emphasize that they admittedly deal with the issue of God's purpose. Hence, in their second article, they state that "agreeably thereto, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, died for all men and for every man." Agreeably to what? Agreeably "thereto," that is, agreeably to the purpose of God. And now observe this, for it tells what kind of purpose God had: it was agreeable to the purpose of God that Christ died for all men and for every man.

What then? Are all men saved? The Arminian would and could not accept this contrary-to-fact-consequence. He knew that all men were not saved. Besides, he wanted to create a doctrine that was pleasing to sinful flesh, a doctrine that left things to man instead of to God. How could the Remonstrant achieve this end and still continue to speak of the purpose of God and of the death of Christ agreeable to that eternal and unchangeable purpose? He had to set the entire doctrine of atonement and reconciliation and redemption, as the Dutch has it, "op losse schroeven." He had to make it all uncertain, and leave it at loose ends. It

stands to reason that because also the Arminian himself admitted that the purpose of God and the death of Christ are connected, that therefore he had to begin by setting that purpose of God "op losse schroeven." He had to make the purpose (though, mark you well, he still spoke of an "eternal and unchangeable purpose of God!"),—he had to make that purpose very vague and indefinite. That is the key to their entire lie! And this the fathers exposed in the preceding article. The Synod rejects the error of those 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." There you have the first step of this diabolical plot of Arminianism against the truth of the gospel. And that is why it is so unendingly imperative that regardless of the reproach and contempt that may be heaped upon us for it we maintain the heart of the gospel, the "*cor ecclesiae*": predestination, — free, sovereign, eternal, unchangeable, certain, definite, personal, unconditional predestination!

And the next step follows.

Without that certain and definite decree of election, the Arminian cannot maintain a certain and definite atonement. He must teach that Christ died for all men and every man. But then he cannot possibly teach that Christ actually paid the debt of guilt for all men and for every man. Then he would have to accept once more the consequence of universalism. And so his next step is to play "hocus-pocus" with the meaning of Christ's death.

How does he do this?

This second article of the Rejection of Errors exposes one of the Arminian maneuvers on this score. The Arminian must reduce salvation from an absolute certainty to a mere possibility. Hence, he cannot and will not teach that the purpose of Christ's death was to confirm, establish, the new covenant of grace. That would mean certainty; and the Arminian wants no certainty but that which depends on a changeable and uncertain condition. Cf. *Canons* I, B, 7. Hence, Christ did not acquire any right for us, but He acquired a certain right for the Father by His death. And what right did Christ acquire for the Father? Was there anything certain even in that? No, not at all. He acquired the mere right to establish "such a covenant as he might please," that is, whatever kind of covenant God might want to establish, "whether of grace or of works." God might, according to the Arminian,—because now God and man are reconciled, and God can again deal with man,—He might establish a covenant of works. This covenant,—and note here the corruption and reduction of "covenant" into "contract,"—would require then that man would fulfill perfectly all the righteousness of the law in order to obtain eternal life. It could be that God would establish such a

covenant of "work-righteousness." But God might also establish a so-called covenant of grace. Ah, but here you have another piece of Arminian confusion. Covenant of grace? The grace would then be this, that God would agree to be satisfied with and would demand only so much as a man could do, partial obedience, if man was willing, and that God would be gracious and fill up the lack, or, in effect, forget about the rest. Again, the covenant is reduced to a despicable agreement. And grace is reduced to works. Man must do something, and God will do the rest.

But such is Arminianism! The fathers exposed it; the Synod rejects its error; and the Reformed Christian today opposes it!

Why must we oppose it? Because the Word of God opposes it. And the Word of God is binding.

Here the fathers refer to two passages of Hebrews. In Hebrews 7:22 we read: "By so much (This "so much" refers to the oath of God by which Christ was made Priest. Cf. vs. 21) was Jesus made a surety of a better testament." And in Hebrews 9:15, 17 we read: "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth."

Hence, Christ is the Mediator and Surety of the better, the new covenant. And that covenant is a testament, a will. The contents of that testament or will, is the sworn promise of the eternal inheritance for them that are called, for the heirs of the promise, the elect. And so before the will can be executed, the testator must die. Christ, the Surety of that new testament dies, and immediately all the provisions of that testament are of force, are executed, and go into effect. All the blessings of the covenant through that death of Christ have been obtained for all the elect, according to the Word of God's oath, and they must certainly and inevitably be bestowed upon the heirs, those named in that testament, namely, the elect.

Such is the new and better testament.

H. C. H.

"Whoever hath Christ, cannot be poor; whoever wants Him, cannot be rich."

— Dyer

IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies' Aid Society of the Protestant Reformed Church of Edgerton Minnesota, herewith extends its sympathy to one of its members, Mrs. Steve Broekhuis in the death of her Father,

MR. JOHN FEIKEMA

May our Heavenly Father comfort the bereaved and may we at all times put our trust in Him.

Rev. H. Veldman, President
Mrs. Joe Brummel, Secretary

DECENCY and ORDER

The Office of the Deacon

C. *The Deacon's Qualifications*

There are especially two passages of Holy Writ that speaks of the qualifications of the office of deacons.

In Acts 6:3 we read: "Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business."

I Timothy 3:8-13 contains a more detailed description and reads as follows: Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus."

From these passages it may easily be ascertained that deacons are to be men of strong spiritual stature since the requirements of their office are fully as rigid as those of the elder. In fact, a careful comparison of these passages with those that speak of the office of elders will reveal a very striking similarity. That there are also some differences is due to the fact that the two offices are distinct and the labors required of the elders are not the same as those required of the deacons. Essentially, however, the spiritual requisites for both offices are the same. There are not two separate standards by which men are to be measured for two separate offices but rather there is one standard for the one office that is reflected in a three-fold way: Prophetically, Priestly and Kingly. And since we have previously discussed these requirements for the office in detail, we will refrain from entering into an elaborate discussion of the above passages now but will confine ourselves to the following sundry remarks:

With regard to the passage of Acts 6 it is to be noted: (1) Some attach a great deal of significance to the fact that *seven* deacons were appointed. As to why there were *seven*, various answers have been given among which we find the following: (a) to correspond to the seven gifts of the Spirit, Isaiah 11:2, or the seven Spirits of Revelation 1:4; (b) to give representation to the various elements of the church at that time. Hence, three Hebrews, three Hellenists, and one Proselyte were appointed. (c) this number was regulated by the fact that Jerusalem at that time may have been divided into seven districts; (d) this number was suggested by the sacred Hebrew number — seven!

We personally regard these opinions as highly speculative to say the least. Neither do we consider this matter very important but consider it only natural that an appropriate number of men were appointed commensurate with the particular circumstances and needs of that time. In this instance it happened to be seven. Every congregation is not by this token required to have seven deacons. That does not follow. Some may need more. Others may need less. Each congregation should appoint an appropriate number of office-bearers in proportion to the size of the congregation and the amount of work that is to be done.

(2) In this passage three essential qualifications are mentioned. A deacon must be: "Of honest report," i.e., men held in repute both within and outside of the church. They occupy a position of highest responsibility. They must be men of integrity, trustworthy, and reliable and those whose character is dubious should not be appointed. "Full of the Holy Spirit," i.e., men who not only give evidence of the possession of the Spirit in the life of regeneration but those who are vested with the gifts of the Holy Spirit which qualify them for the work of this office. The more we analyze all of the qualifications of office-bearers in the church, the more we become convinced of the truth that there are none who are in themselves capable of these things. Always our sufficiency is of God. His Spirit alone qualifies. Without that Spirit we can do nothing. No less is this so of the deacons whose task as we before wrote is to dispense the mercies of Christ. To do that necessitates a fulness of the Spirit. "Full of wisdom," i.e., men who have the ability to apply their spiritual gifts to the practical affairs of life. Wisdom is the practical application of spiritual knowledge. It is in itself a gift of the Holy Spirit. Man's wisdom is foolishness. That is alone wisdom which cometh down from above and is pure, peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. (James 3:17)

Deacons are to be men who give evidence of such things, men of understanding, impartial and of sound discretion.

With regard to the passage of I Timothy 3, we may note that this description is in many ways similar to that of the qualifications for elders contained in verses 1-7 of the same chapter. This similarity is also indicated by the word "likewise" which introduces the section that speaks of the deacons. Likewise, i.e., as was the case with the elders, so also it is with the deacons.

Secondly, verse 11, which speaks of the "wives of the deacons" is disputed by many interpreters. Ellicott, Robertson, Alford, The Expositor's Greek New Testament and others claim that this verse speaks of the office of deaconesses in the church. Calvin explains this verse as referring to the wives of both the elders and the deacons. Meyer holds that it refers merely to the deacon's wives. With this we agree since verses 8-13 inclusive form an entity in which the apostle discusses the deacon's qualifications with respect to his own person, his marriage and his family.

In the following verse the apostle states that the deacons must be the husbands of one wife. This does not mean, as some contend, that a deacon must be married or a man with a family. Marriage is not a requisite for the office. Rather it denotes that those married to more than one woman (as was common in those days in the heathen world) may not be admitted to the office. Only those, as Calvin states, — “satisfied with having but one wife — shall set an example of a chaste and honourable father of a family, and shall keep his children and his whole house under holy discipline,” — are to be considered as qualified for the office.

Thus we may conclude that office bearers in Christ's church must be chosen from among those who lead exemplary and irreproachable lives. The dignity of the offices requires it. The importance of the work they are called to perform in the office necessitates it. Further, it is incumbent upon those chosen to the offices always to conduct themselves in all things that they may prove themselves worthy of such great honor. That the name of Christ be never dishonored, let us go continuously to the throne of grace that we may obtain help according to our need.

D. Deaconesses!

In the Reformed Churches the office of deaconesses has never been instituted and correctly so. They have held to the position that women should not occupy an office in the church. For this there is abundant Scriptural support. The matter of deaconesses had, however, been considered already in 1568 when the Wezelian Convention judged that it might be well to appoint worthy women to this office. This did not mean that they should be ordained as deaconesses but it was understood that it might be advantageous to have them appointed to assist the deacons. In some instances of aiding the poor and helping the sick, a woman's hand can be of great benefit. However in 1581 the Synod of Middelburg, in response to the request of the Classis of Wezel, ruled that “it would not be advisable to re-institute the office of deaconesses because of various inconveniences that might follow.” With this decision we can agree except that we would like to offer more substantial grounds for it. It is our claim that there is no Scriptural basis for the institution of a non-existent office and, therefore, irregardless of conveniences or inconveniences which *might* follow, it may not be done.

It cannot be proven from Scripture that so-called deaconesses were actually called and ordained to office as the deacons were. Some attempt to show this by appealing to Romans 16:1 where Phebe is called “a servant (diakonos, masculine) of the church which is at Cenchrea.” The Scottish Presbyterian, John Brown, writes:

“But Phebe was not only a christian, she was an official christian; she was not only a member, she was an office-bearer in the christian church. She was ‘a servant’ or deaconess, ‘of the church at Cenchrea.’” This is also the view of Origen and Chrysostom, two of the early church fathers.

However, it may be said that “the word (diakonos) does not necessarily prove this; for it is often used to designate generally one who does service and contributes to the help and assistance of others.” (Calvin's Comm.) If we concede that the word itself denotes an office, it can also be argued that Phebe was a Minister (V.D.M.) since, as we showed last time, the word “diakonos” is often used in Scripture with reference to that office. The most that Romans 16:1 proves is that Phebe was undoubtedly a faithful assistant in the church but this does not say that her work in any way bore an official character. Even so today there is certainly room and need for much labor by faithful women in the church. Also the wives of the deacons should remember that they can be very helpful to the latter in their work but this does not give to them an office in the church. That is something else, unknown and even forbidden in Holy Writ. In American circles this forbidden practice is becoming more and more prominent but Reformed Churches have always been opposed to it.

There has always been a place for un-official labor and assistance by the women of the church. Certainly for the woman was created to be an help. In the Apostolic Constitutions (not composed by the Apostles) we come upon the following statement describing the functions of those women who assisted the deacons:

“A deaconess is to be ordained for the ministrations toward women. She is called the assistant or minister of the deacon. She was to be sent to do certain services for which it was distinctly ordered that the deacon should not be sent. At baptism she assisted the presbyter ‘for the sake of decency.’ The bishop was instructed to anoint only the head of a woman and the anointing of the other parts was left to the deaconess . . . Another duty of the deaconesses was to stand at the entrance to the church through which the women passed to their own place in the auditorium to greet those that entered, to show them seats, and to preserve order.”

With those customs we are no longer acquainted. In our day women serve unofficially in ecclesiastical circles such as their Societies, Aid Circles, etc., and in non-ecclesiastical circles such as hospitals and christian schools. Such activity and labor is legitimate and essential.

G.V.D.B.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 28, 1956, our dear parents and grandparents,

MR. and MRS. JOHN H. VANDER VENNEN

will celebrate their 30th Wedding Anniversary. We are thankful to God for having spared them for each other and us in the years gone by. Our prayer is that God may continue to sustain and bless them in the way that lies ahead.

Mr. and Mrs. Walter Decker
Mr. and Mrs. Henry Vander Vennen
and two Grandchildren

ALL AROUND US

The Court and Church Property.

Such is the title of an article appearing in the *Reformed Guardian* of April 10, 1956, from the pen of the Rev. J. Howerzyl. From the conclusion of his article it appears that he has a little "conscience" trouble. He believes that it is wrong to go into the courts to settle our church troubles. He would rather lose all the church properties and have a good conscience. He therefore suggests that a compromise be made between the group he represents and us, and that a settlement be made out of court with respect to the properties.

I am going to take the time and space, if necessary of two issues of the *Standard Bearer*, to quote piece-meal his entire article and offer my comments as we so treat it. I certainly believe that Rev. Howerzyl should have a good conscience, and I am going to try to show him how to have it. And what I have to say applies of course to all the group he represents as well as to those of our own people who might be affected by what Rev. Howerzyl wrote. Rev. Howerzyl begins his article with the following paragraph:

"By this time, undoubtedly, all of you have heard that, as expected the Supreme Court of the State of Michigan has rendered its decision upholding Judge Taylor in his decision awarding the property and the name of the First Protestant Reformed Church to the minority which followed Rev. H. Hoeksema in the recent split. As you know this minority was upheld by the Classis East as it was then constituted, which also resulted in the refusal to seat the Revs. Kok, Knott, and Blankespoor, cut off their possibility of appeal, because they could not conscientiously go along with this action of Classis East."

I have just one or two remarks which I make at this juncture in view of the "good conscience" of which the Rev. Howerzyl speaks later. First of all, Rev. Howerzyl, a good conscience would demand that you write, not, "As you know this minority was upheld by the Classis East as it was then constituted, etc.," but "As you know this minority was upheld by the Classis East as it now is and always was constituted, etc." "Good conscience" would dictate that you write that the Classis East of the Prot. Ref. Churches which made decision in October 1953 in the *De Wolf vs First Church* case was never re-constituted, and that that same Classis is in existence today as it was then when the decision by a great majority vote was taken.

Secondly, a good conscience would dictate that you write, not, "which also resulted in the refusal to seat the Revs. Kok, Knott, and Blankespoor, cut off their possibility of appeal, etc.," but "which also resulted in the refusal to seat the Revs. Kok, Knott, and Blankespoor who refused to abide by the decision of Classis and by so doing lost all right of appeal." Not Classis East but the three ministers

involved made it impossible not only to appeal but to continue to be Prot. Reformed ministers in good standing. Good conscience requires that you speak the truth. Howerzyl continues as follows:

"Many things could be said about this legal opinion of the Supreme Court of the State of Michigan which, as Judge Taylor's opinion, is based upon the legal position that we are under a Presbyterian system of church government, using as authority the Christian Reformed Church which has the same Church Order. We shall refrain from making any comments on this even though the decision is not even factually accurate when it speaks of Synod in connection with this case . . . but we shall avoid comment. Except to say that we cannot understand how it is possible for any court of law, let alone a church group to ignore the plain intention as expressed in articles of incorporation as was the case in the Fuller Avenue matter. When once this grief is all behind us and we go on our normal way it will probably be necessary for some kind of a decision, locally, Classically and Synodically to indicate that we do not interpret the Church Order with regard to property as does the Christian Reformed Church and as does the Rev. H. Hoeksema's group (we do not use this terminology disparagingly but for matters of identification). Under such a decision it will also be proper to bring all our Articles of Incorporation up to date and into line, a thing which has been hopelessly confused in the past."

It is well that Rev. Howerzyl makes no comment about the church-political aspect of the decision of the courts. He knows full well that the church polity they defended in the trials cannot stand the light of day in Reformed circles, except perhaps among the Liberated who have given evidence of being a law unto themselves. So, by this time, Rev. Howerzyl should have learned his lesson and we hope he learned it well.

More particularly I am interested in what he writes about the court and a church group ignoring "the plain intention as expressed in the Articles of Incorporation as was the case in the Fuller Avenue matter." Let me assure the reverend that the Articles of Incorporation were ignored neither by the courts nor by the church group. Rev. Howerzyl was undoubtedly present when the matter of incorporation papers was thoroughly entered into before Judge Taylor's court. His group called in many witnesses to sustain the interpretation which the De Wolf faction maintained correctly explained these articles, especially Article 7. And, by the way, it is simply a fact that Rev. H. Hoeksema never denied what the opposition claims to have been the intention of Article 7, as Rev. Howerzyl evidently insists and many others with him. But the fact of the matter is simply this, that both the Superior Court of Grand Rapids and the State Supreme Court righteously read each article in its context. And I can still clearly see and hear Judge Kelly, one of the judges in the Michigan Supreme Court ask attorney Tubbs to explain Article 7. The answer of Mr. Tubbs was apparently

very satisfactory to the court when he replied that Article 7 must be read and understood in the light of Article 4. And Article 4 reads as follows: "The members of said church or society shall worship and labor together according to the discipline, rules and usages of the Protestant Reformed Churches in the United States of America as from time to time authorized and declared by the Classis of said churches? That determined the case of First Church and so it will be with all our other churches who are forced into litigation.

When Howerzyl writes that when things are back to normal for his group they will have to re-interpret the Church Order as they see it and not as the Chr. Ref. Church and the Hoeksema group sees it, indicates plainly that they are not Prot. Reformed and never intended to be. They tried to bluff the courts into believing that Kok's church polity was Prot. Reformed, but the courts were wise enough to see through their bluff.

And when Howerzyl writes that his group will have to bring their Articles of Incorporation up to date, he merely sustains what we said above. But I have a question for him at this point. If you intend to change and bring up to date your Articles of Incorporation, how do you for conscience sake dare to go to the courts to seek relief on the basis of the present articles? A good conscience, it seems to me, would demand that when you build your defence upon the basis of the present articles, you speak the truth only when you believe in them. But Rev. Howerzyl has much more to say and that too about the Articles of Incorporation in other cases. He continues as follows:

"What the end of this legal maneuvering will be we do not know. In fact, what the entire end of the matter will be cannot be said at this time. We know, for example, that the Rev. Blankespoor and his consistory have been served with an ultimatum, the last step before a lawsuit, and we assume that this will also happen in the case of Holland and Kalamazoo, although we do not know the particulars in these cases. Once again the matter of intent as expressed in the Articles of Incorporation of Second Church; which arose out of difficulties some years back and which gave the consistory the right to dissolve the congregation and distribute the proceeds on a pro-rata basis, and which, incidently, (he means "incidentally", no doubt—M.S.) were signed by the Rev. M. Schippers, (should be "Schipper"—M.S.) now present pastor of the group attempting to obtain the property, this will probably all be ignored in view of the decision of the Supreme Court. There remains, then, as a legal defense, if one is offered, in view of the position of the Michigan courts, only the fact that our Synod recognized them as the legal continuation of Classis East after having given the group of Rev. Hoeksema time and opportunity to present themselves and appealing to them to return in the way of brothers. Whether this defense or any defense will be offered we do not know.

"Also in the case of Edgerton, where the property was assigned to Rev. De Boer and his consistory, further action has been taken. We understand that Rev. Veldman and his group have appealed the decision of Judge Flynn against them to the Supreme Court of the State of Minnesota.

"In connection with the above title is also a tricky move made recently against the Rev. A. Cammenga who is living in the Missionary home. He was informed by the attorney that he must vacate within a very short time and must pay a large sum of back rent, and all this in the name of the Mission Committee of the *First* Protestant Ref. Churches (*italics mine*). While the decision of the Supreme Court in this case reaches no farther than the local First Protestant Reformed Church we imagine this is an attempt to broaden it out to include the entire denomination which could never be done without further lawsuits. We understand Mr. La Grange our treasurer received a similarly signed letter demanding all moneys.

"Also in Redlands, California and in Hull, Iowa the matter will probably be in court in the near future.

"This is the status of the legal maneuvering as far as we are acquainted with it at the present time."

Since our space for this time is about filled, we will have to reserve the rest of the quotation of Rev. Howerzyl's article for next time as well as our comments on what Rev. Howerzyl has written in the above quotation. We shall have much to say about that.

In closing, however, let me make just one or two remarks. Rev. Howerzyl has been informed correctly about the prospective litigation re Second Church. And he did not have to tell us that the Blankespoor group is going to base their defense on the Articles of Incorporation. We knew *this long* before Rev. Howerzyl was aware of it. It would be foolish of me to divulge to Rev. Howerzyl or anybody else what we intend to do about it when the case is aired in court. But this I can say and will say, that it becomes increasingly evident how foolish the Blankespoor group, and all the other schismatic groups for that matter, continue to be when they, like Howerzyl, know before hand what the outcome is going to be when all the litigation is finished. They know that they haven't a leg to stand on, and yet they foolishly go on forcing us to regain our properties, ruthlessly confiscated by them, through the judgment of the worldly courts. A good conscience, it seems to me, would dictate that they stop forcing us to fight for every atom of property that rightfully belongs to us when they are fully aware that it is ours and we will get it eventually.

And more important still is the matter of the name, *which* out of one corner of their mouth they slanderously ridicule and out of the other they insist is theirs. A good conscience would dictate that they admit that they are not Protestant Reformed and do not intend to be.

M.S.