

THE STANDARD

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

VOLUME XXXII

JULY 1, 1956 — GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

NUMBER 18

MEDITATION

THE LORD'S RESPECT

"And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering. But unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect."
Gen. 4b, 5a

God's respect is His favor.

The original Hebrew word for respect in my text means literally: to look upon with favor. So the thought is rather clear. God liked the one son and his offering, but He did not like Cain and his offering at all. He did not want to look on him or it.

And Cain knew it. At once, the text continues: "And Cain was wroth and his countenance fell."

And then followed the story of the first murder.

I like to talk awhile on God's respect regarding Cain and his offering; Abel and his offering; Christ and His offering; and us and our offering.

* * * *

When we read about Cain and his offering, we note that most commentators of Holy Scripture have a wrong conception of both the man and his offering. I have read several divines who say that the reason for God's accepting of Abel's offering and the rejecting of Cain's offering was not caused by the difference in offerings, but in the presence of faith in Abel and the absence of faith in Cain. Cain's offering was good in itself, even though it was different from Abel's. Their offerings were really alike: the one gave of the firstlings of his flock, and the other of the firstlings of the fruit of the ground. That there was a difference at all was simply because of their different occupations: the one was a keeper of sheep and the other a tiller of the ground. So it was natural that Abel came with a little lamb, and the other with some lettuce, carrots, endive and turnips. Yes, so they say: their offerings were alike.

The only difference was that Abel offered in faith, and Cain offered in unbelief.

But that is not true.

I submit that although Cain was without faith, and that Abel was a man of faith, the matter of their offerings is very important.

Let me put it this way: Cain showed exactly in the kind of offering that he lacked faith. While, on the other hand, Abel's faith was proved by the type of offering he brought to the Lord.

Attend to the account in Hebrews 11:4: "By faith Abel offered unto God a *more excellent sacrifice than Cain*, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh."

That verse sheds a wonderful light on Abel's gifts, and by implication, it also reveals what kind of man Cain was.

Most people think of Cain as an irreligious man. They picture him as a rough and careless man; a man that professedly cared not for God.

But that is a mistaken idea.

Cain did care for God. There are really very few people that professedly do not care for God. Most people would look askance at you when you would accuse them that they care not for the Almighty.

And also Cain would have disagreed violently with you if you would have accused him of being an atheist, or an irreligious man.

Note that he went and offered unto God. In fact, he did so first. And Abel was second.

Cain acknowledged God, and realized that He must be served.

And Cain could spare something for God too.

As such he is the representative of the religious world of our day.

Man is innately a religious being.

And they will do much for their religion. Attend to Micha: "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" 6:6, 7.

Oh yes, man will serve God alright. And he is not stingy either. Many are the poor souls, thinking that they were doing God a favor, have given their children in offerings and sacrifices. Attend to the worshippers of Moloch.

And such a worshipper was Cain. He was an intense worshipper of God. He meant what he said when he announced to his father and mother: I am going to bring an offering to the Lord!

But he was all wrong.

God had respect, neither to him nor to his offering. God rejected both. And the reason? He refused the bloody sacrifices. He saw not the spiritual world. He was proud of heart. And he was reprobated.

And I am sure that this idea of a bloody sacrifice was exactly the topic of conversation in the field prior of the murder of Abel. Abel must have said to him: No wonder that Jehovah does not accept your greens and vegetables. Did not father and mother tell us and instruct us to bring the bloody sacrifices? How that God had instructed them in this? Why do you not take one of my little lambs?

But Cain silenced his brother in death.

* * * *

And Abel and his offering?

Abel was a man of faith, and he proved it in his sacrifice.

He saw an entirely different world than Cain. He saw God, guilt of his sin, righteousness and judgment, but also everlasting mercy and love.

And so he was humble and meek, and wise unto salvation.

And he shows it in the offering: he brought of the firstlings of his flock. He brought a little lamb.

And he said in his offering: O God, be merciful to me, the sinner! O God, Thou art righteous, and therefore I bring this substitute according to Thine ordinances, as told to my father and mother.

And then we usually say: Abel did not fully see how and why. Although we must be careful here. Attend to this: Abel talked with God; Abraham saw Jesus' day; Moses saw the pattern of the everlasting idea of the Covenant when he was on the mount with God; David quotes Christ in Psalm 22; and Isaiah stands before the cross that would be erected so many years later.

I am persuaded that those saints of the Old Testament knew more of salvation than we give them credit for. That is, some of the Old Testament saints, and then we have in mind especially the prophets such as we enumerated above. They had special dispensations of the Holy Spirit and many of them talked with God. Abraham even looked for the renewed heavens and the earth.

Attend again to Hebrews. God gave Abel a testimony regarding his offering. What God said and how He com-

municated with him we do not know, but the statement is clear enough. God must have told him that this slain lamb satisfied the living God, and that he was an object of God's love, and that his salvation would be accomplished through Him who would fulfill that slain lamb. God gave a testimony of his gifts, says the writer of the Hebrews.

Moreover, the same writer tells us in connection with the gifts of Abel, that he was righteous. And so we have here also the doctrine of justification, for it is plain enough that Abel was not righteous because of his works. No, but God no doubt, testified to Abel that, since he had so clearly shown his faith in the obedience evidenced by the slain and offered lamb, he was righteous in the Christ who was typified in the slain lamb. Otherwise the whole history as recorded in Hebrews has no sense at all.

God looked with favor on that bleeding lamb of Abel, as well as on Abel himself. And that not because of Abel and his works, but because of the Christ who was typified. And Abel showed that he was touched by the hand of the Almighty because he hid himself in the shadow of the Lamb of God to come.

* * * *

And now Christ and His offering.

Christ, the Person of the Son of God, is the better Abel. He is God out of God, the Covenant Jehovah Himself.

But in human garb, united with the chosen race of man.

His most beautiful picture you may find in Philippians 2. There you find utmost humility and lowliness of mind. Especially, if you listen close, and hear about His unutterable prerogatives: He is God Himself.

There you have the part of the Gospel, if not the entire Gospel, which is so deep for me. I cannot grasp it, but I do worship whenever I think on it. Imagine: God out of God, Jehovah Himself will go to hell for me, and suffer untold agonies so that I may be happy for evermore! Try to see that.

He made Himself of no reputation so that my reputation might be spotless. He took my hell and gave me His heaven. And He loved me when I yet shook my fist in His blessed face. What do I say? Now, now, now, while I do know in part about such wonders, now I still hurt Him, who is the song of the angels. Is it wonder that Abel sobs out his sorrow, kneeling by that altar? And that I in deepest night feel sometimes a groaning which I cannot utter?

Christ and His offering indeed!

Abel, at least, had a flock of sheep. And he went and fetched a little lamb.

But Christ has no flock.

And so He gave Himself.

Do not wonder that I love, that I adore number 109 of the Psalter. Read it and worship.

But Christ and His offering! O wonder of wonder of God! Amen.

* * * *

And now we will finally regard us and our offerings.

Abel is gone to heaven, and Cain weeps and gnashes his teeth in hell.

And Christ is at the right hand of God.

How about our offerings?

Abel had the types and the shadows. Abel could go to his flock and select a lamb of the first year. He could prepare it while he pondered on salvation, and finally bring it to the altar to God.

But we have nothing.

Oh, God! I have nothing! Nothing but sin! Oh, have mercy on us in the New Testament. We have nothing to show for ourselves: no temple, no priests in beautiful apparel, so pomp and circumstance. We have nothing, o God!

And yet, we love Thee! And we would fain serve Thee. What shall we bring?

I know what I will answer God: I will take the little Lamb of God, I will take Jesus in my heart and in my mouth, and I will bring Him to Jehovah.

And doing that I will give expression of the blessed truth that Jesus is in me. "Since Jesus came into my heart . . ."

And I listen to a prophecy of such New Testament conduct which I find in the psalms of David, and what a psalm!

Amid his groanings and cryings I hear him sing:

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, o God, Thou wilt not despise!"

It is in moments like these that we can imitate Paul when he said: I am the least of all, because I am the chief of sinners!

For Jesus offerings' sake! Amen.

G.V.

Announcement

The Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches convened in South Holland, Illinois, on June 5th, 1956, has examined the brethren Gise J. Van Baren and Bernard Woudenberg.

The aforementioned Synod has declared these brethren Candidates for the Ministry of the Word and of the Sacraments in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

These Candidates for the ministry are eligible for a call not earlier than July 9th, 1956, or four (4) weeks from the time they were declared Candidates.

G. Lubbers

Stated Clerk of the Protestant Reformed Churches of America.

THE STANDARD BEARER

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

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

Editor — REV. HERMAN HOEKSEMA

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

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

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

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

Subscription price: \$4.00 per year

Entered as Second Class matter at Grand Rapids, Michigan

C O N T E N T S

MEDITATION —

The Lord's Respect.....409
Rev. G. Vos

EDITORIALS —

Election and Assurance.....412
As To Conscientious Objectorship.....413
Rev. H. Hoeksema

OUR DOCTRINE —

The Book of Revelation.....414
Rev. H. Hoeksema

FROM HOLY WRIT —

Exposition of I Corinthians 1-4 (16).....418
Rev. G. Lubbers

IN HIS FEAR —

Praying in His Fear (2).....420
Rev. J. A. Heys

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH —

The Church and the Sacraments (The Lord's Supper).....422
Rev. H. Veldman

THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS —

The Exposition of the Canons of Dordrecht.....424
Rev. H. C. Hoeksema

DECENCY AND ORDER —

The Labors of the Deacons (Continued).....426
Rev. G. VandenBerg

ALL AROUND US —

Another Court Case.....428
Rev. M. Schipper

CONTRIBUTIONS —

Christ washes the feet of His Disciples.....430
The Great Darkness.....431
Rev. G. M. Ophoff

EDITORIALS

Election and Assurance

The Canons of Dordrecht never treat the doctrine of election in a cold, philosophical and deterministic way as, in fact, Berkhouwer does in his book on God's election. In spite of the fact that he repeatedly condemns the deterministic and fatalistic view of election, this is exactly what he does. And, as I said before, the reason is that he does not understand that election is the work of the triune God, of the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit. That God sovereignly chooses unto salvation whom He will but also sovereignly applies election unto the hearts of those whom he chose, he does not develop in his book.

This is most beautifully expressed in Canon II, 8 which we quoted in our previous article.

Indeed, this article states emphatically that God redeems "out of every people, tribe, nation, and language, all those only, who were from eternity chosen unto salvation, and given him by the Father." Not all are redeemed by the blood of Christ but only the elect. This is, indeed, the doctrine of Scripture and of the Reformed Churches, and this must always be preached.

But this is, in the Canons, not presented as a cold and abstract doctrine, but as a living faith. It is not thus that the Canons merely state that the elect only are saved, but they also explain how, in what way, they receive salvation. And also this is not their own but God's work through the Holy Spirit. All this, mark you well, is implied in the eternal counsel of election which is, by God, worked out in time. For notice that, according to this article, "This was the sovereign counsel and most gracious will and purpose of God the Father, that the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of his Son should extend to all the elect, for bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith, thereby to bring them infallibly to salvation."

Notice that, according to this article, it is all of God. He not only chooses those that are to be saved but He also sovereignly executes His own counsel. He does so sovereignly and infallibly. There is no question at all that the elect shall surely be saved exactly because God applies the saving efficacy of the death of Christ to their hearts. He does so by bestowing upon them the gift of saving faith.

This is further explained and emphasized in the last part of this same article: "that he should confer upon them faith, which together with all the other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, he purchased for them by his death; should purge them from all sin, both original and actual, whether committed before or after believing; and having faithfully preserved them even to the end, should at last bring them free from every spot and blemish to the enjoyment of glory in his own presence forever."

This is beautifully expressed because it is thoroughly Scriptural. It is all of God, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit. God gives faith. God bestows all the gifts of grace upon the elect. God purges them from all sin. God preserves them unto the end. God finally brings them into the enjoyment of eternal glory.

This must be preached. Never must the preaching be a mixture of God and man, of the Reformed faith and Arminianism as is so often the case in Reformed churches. Not the true preaching of the doctrine of election creates doubt in the hearts of the elect but the preaching of the truth with a sort of Arminian application does. The relation between God's work and ours in the matter of salvation is never that of cooperation but it is always such that our work is the fruit of the work of God. It would have been more to the point of Berkhouwer, instead of applying an erroneous interpretation of Deut. 29:29, had appealed to Phil. 2:12, 13: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh within you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

Of the assurance of the elect in regard to their salvation the Canons of Dordrecht also speak in chapter V, the chapter that deals with the perseverance of the saints. We read in Art. 9: "Of this preservation of the elect unto salvation, and of their perseverance in the faith, true believers may and do obtain assurance according to the measure of their faith, whereby they arrive at the certain persuasion, that they ever will continue true and living members of the church; and that they experience forgiveness of sins and will at last inherit eternal life."

The question is, however, how is this assurance wrought in the hearts of the elect? The answer to this question is found in Art. 10 of the same chapter of the Canons: "This assurance, however, is not produced by any special revelation contrary to, or independent of the Word of God; but springs from faith in God's promises, which he has most abundantly revealed in his Word for our comfort, from the testimony of the Holy Spirit, witnessing with our spirit that we are children and heirs of God, Rom. 8:16; and, lastly, from a serious and holy desire to preserve a good conscience, and to perform good works. And if the elect of God were deprived of this solid comfort, that they shall finally obtain the victory, and of this infallible pledge or earnest of eternal glory, they would be of all men most miserable."

God, through His Word and in the Holy Spirit, therefore, works this certainty of their salvation in the hearts of the elect; and He does so in the way of walking in sanctification of life.

It is true, they sometimes have carnal doubts. They are not always sure of their final salvation. But these doubts do not arise from the preaching of the doctrine of election or even from an over emphasis on that doctrine, but from various causes such as neglect of the preaching of the Word and of the communion of saints, walking in sin and love of the things of the world, etc. But even then it is God that

causes them to return and again to experience the joy of the assurance of their salvation. Thus we read in Art. 11 of Canons V: "The Scripture moreover testifies, that believers in this life have to struggle with various carnal doubts, and that under grievous temptations they are not always sensible of this full assurance of faith and certainty of persevering. But God, who is the Father of all consolation, does not suffer them to be tempted above all that they are able, but will with the temptation also make the way to escape that they may be able to bear it, I Cor. 10:13, and by the Holy Spirit again inspires them with the comfortable assurance of persevering."

The conclusion, therefore, is that doubt in regard to our salvation is to be attributed to the doctrine of election or the preaching of that doctrine in the church; that, on the contrary, this doctrine is the source of true comfort and assurance for the people of God; that this doctrine, however, must be consistently preached as the very *cor ecclesia* and not half heartedly and with all sorts of reservations as Berkhouwer would have us do; and that God, through His Word and Spirit is the sole author, not only of our salvation, but also of the assurance of it in our hearts.

This is Reformed.

H. H.

As to Conscientious Objectorship

We still have to discuss the so-called charity card which the conscientious objector signs and by which he agrees to certain things.

The reader can find a copy of this card in the issue of our paper of May 15. I will, therefore, not copy it again.

But, in the first place, it is very evident, even from this card, that a conscientious objector is not and is not considered to be a member of the union.

He signs the statement: "I fully understand that this contribution does not entitle me to any union membership privileges."

Now, to be sure, membership privileges and membership obligations are inseparable. The former are based on the latter. If one has no membership privileges he has no membership obligations. In no sense of the word, therefore, is a conscientious objector considered to be a member of the union. He pays no initiation fee or membership dues, he does not swear or pledge allegiance to the union, he does not sign the constitution, he is not obligated to strike or to picket and the union will not call upon him to do so. For this reason, namely that he is not a member, he has no union privileges and he does not want them. He has not the right to vote and he cannot claim any financial support in case of a strike or in case of sickness. He voluntarily signs away all membership privileges as well as all membership obligations. He is not a member of the union.

So much is evident from the "charity card."

But there is still more.

Even the payment of a contribution to a certain charity equal in amount to union dues and initiation fee proves that the conscientious objector is not a member of the union. On the card the following statement is found:

"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."

The reason why this stipulation is made for the conscientious objector is evident. First of all, by agreeing to this stipulation he is in a position to show that, in refusing to become member of the union, he is not motivated by the desire to save the money of the union membership dues but that he is really an objector for conscience's sake. And, secondly, by this stipulation the union means to preserve equality among the men working in a certain shop or factory so that no special privileges are accorded (such as non-payment of membership dues) to those that are no members of the union.

At any rate, it is evident even from this stipulation that a conscientious objector is not a member of the union.

The question may be asked, in conclusion: granted that a conscientious objector is not a member of the union, is it not wrong for him to agree to this last stipulation? Can a worldly union, it is asked, contribute to a Christian charity?

My answer is: I do not believe that this is sinful.

First of all, even if the union should be the giver to charity in this case, there is nothing wrong in this as long as there are no strings tied to this for him that uses the union for this purpose.

Secondly, however, if you read the charity card again you will discover that it is not the union, but the conscientious objector that makes this contribution to charity. He authorizes the corporation to deduct a certain amount from his wages for charity purposes.

If an agent comes to my door to ask a gift for Bethesda or for Pine Rest or for the Red Cross, and I give him some money, it is not the agent, but I myself that make the contribution.

The same is true for the contribution made by a conscientious objector.

"Broken promises of our children cause us, yet sinners, great grief. What, then, of our broken pledges before the face of an Holy God? Recall how solemn the given pledge to instruct the seed of the covenant in God's way!"

HHK.

OUR DOCTRINE

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

CHAPTER I

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Angels often appear in Scripture as the media of revelation, not only directly, when they proclaim the Word of God, as at the incarnation and at the resurrection of the Lord, but also indirectly. We know that the law of Sinai was given by the disposition of angels, Acts 7:53, and that it was ordained by angels in the hand of Moses, Gal. 3:19. And that in some such capacity an angel also mediated in the communication of this revelation to John is reaffirmed in chapter 22:6. Somehow, therefore, an angel was employed as agent to bring the visions of this book before the eye of the seer.

This seer is simply called "his servant John." As was stated before, we believe that this was John, the apostle, although this is often disputed. We do not consider the question of importance for the interpretation of this book. Of many parts of Holy Scripture we do not know the human authors. But it seems to us, apart from all other considerations, that in the light of Scripture there can be no doubt that this "servant John" is the apostle of that name. Who else could thus designate himself without further qualifications and expect that his readers would know who was meant? Surely, one that is acquainted with Scripture can think of no other. That he is not called "the apostle of Jesus Christ" in this passage does not alter the matter. In his first epistle the apostle John does not introduce himself at all, while in his second and third letters he merely calls himself "the elder." Besides, even Paul does not always introduce himself in his epistles as "the apostle" (cf. I Thess. 1:1; II Thess. 1:1; Phil. 1:1), and also designates himself as a "servant of Jesus Christ" (Philipp. 1:1; Tit. 1:1). And on the isle of Patmos, as the recipient of this revelation of Jesus Christ, John is not so much an apostle (one that is sent) as simply the servant of Christ. Although, therefore, we consider the question one of minor importance, we hold that this "servant John" is none other than the apostle "whom Jesus loved," especially on the ground that there was no one that was so well known as the apostle, that he could afford to announce himself simply as "his servant John," or "John" (vs. 4), or "I John" (vs. 9).

Through John, therefore, this revelation of Jesus Christ is given to the Church, "the servants" of Christ. For he "bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw." These words if taken by themselves might refer to John's work and calling as an apostle in general. Always it was his calling to witness of the Word of God and of the testimony of Jesus. Yet, it

is more natural to interpret them as referring to his recording the specific Word of God and testimony of Jesus in this book. And this is certainly demanded by the last part of this second verse: "all things that he saw." "The testimony of Jesus Christ" may be understood either in the objective sense (the testimony concerning Jesus Christ), or in the subjective sense (the testimony by Jesus Christ). In the light of the context the former is to be considered as the correct interpretation. It was Jesus Christ Who received this revelation from God, and Who communicated it to John. He, therefore, is the prime Witness of it. He it is that bears testimony concerning this revelation, which the Word of God. And in vs. 5 He is called "the faithful witness." Of this Word of God and testimony of Jesus Christ John bare record. The original word for "bare record" does not in itself signify the act of recording the visions in a book. It merely means "testified." We know, however, that John was commissioned to write them in a book, vs. 19, and that, therefore, this is the form in which he communicated the things he saw to the churches.

Finally, the book of Revelation is commended to the recipients by the promise of a blessing: "Blessed is he that readeth, and are they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things that are written therein: for the time is at hand." The blessing here spoken of, no doubt, in the ultimate sense of the word is the inheritance of the glory of the eternal kingdom in the day of Jesus Christ, the "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away," that is reserved in heaven for the believers, "the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." I Pe. 1:4, 5. It is the blessedness of the New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, of the new creation, wherein righteousness shall dwell and where the tabernacle of God will be with men forever. To this ultimate state of blessedness the whole book of Revelation looks forward. Yet, this does not necessarily exclude a blessing for the present time. On the contrary, it rather includes such a present blessing for them that receive and keep the words of this prophecy. As long as we contemplate the things of this present time, the things that come to pass in this world, from a mere earthly, human, historic viewpoint, there is nothing but darkness and hopeless misery. For "vanity of vanities, all is vanity" is true of the whole of present existence. And we lie in the midst of death. There is no way out. In spite of the optimistic outlook and predictions of the prophets and leaders of this world, things grow more hopeless as time goes on. And serious men of the world begin to ask the question anxiously, whether our whole civilization will not totter into ruins. The world is not improving though it is developing in a cultural sense. It is plainly getting worse. In times like the present we are strongly reminded of this, not because we are witnesses the horrors of merely another war, but because every war is worse than the former, and this in the face of all mere humanitarian efforts to establish a lasting peace. Besides, the people of God also partake of the "sufferings of this present

time," and when they are faithful and keep the "word of Christ's patience" they will be called upon also to suffer with Him. But "blessed are they that hear and keep the words of this prophecy" even now, even in the midst of this present darkness and death and hopelessness. For, if we may look at these same things in the light of this "revelation of Jesus Christ," and live in the expectation of His coming, there is peace, and hope, and joy. Then we will be of good cheer, for we know that He has overcome the world!

This blessing is not for all, however. It is not general but particular, as are all the promises of God. God's blessing is upon His people. His mercy is upon them that fear Him. Hence, this blessing is for him "that readeth," and for them "that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things that are written therein." The words "he that readeth, and they that hear" probably refer to the public reader of this book in the church and the listening congregation. We may thus paraphrase them according to their true meaning: "all that receive and understand the words of this prophecy." But this is not sufficient. The mere hearing and natural understanding of this prophecy do not yield for us the promised blessing. We must also keep the things that are written therein. This surely signifies that we hear spiritually and receive the word of this prophecy in our heart. But it also signifies more. To keep the Word of God also means to obey it, to be doers of the Word. This is also applicable to this last book of Scripture in general, and to many of its special exhortations in particular. Always we are exhorted to keep the word of Christ's patience, to deny ourselves, to separate ourselves from Babylon, to be faithful unto death, to hold fast that which we have, that no one take our crown, to consider it grace in the cause of Christ, not only that we may believe on Him, but also that we may suffer with Him. These things we must keep! If we seek the things that are below and try to serve God and Mammon, if we receive the mark of the Beast on our right hand or forehead, we certainly are excluded from this blessing. He that is seeking to save his life shall surely lose it, but he that is willing to lose it for Christ's sake, shall save it unto life eternal! His is the promise and the blessing, now and forever!

The matter is urgent, and the promise is about to be realized!

For, "the time is at hand!"

CHAPTER II

Salutation and Blessing. Rev. 1:4-8.

Most of the epistles of the New Testament begin with a salutation of the writer to the readers, a salutation that always assumes the form of a benediction. Such blessings or salutations are not mere pious wishes, but they are the Word of God in Christ actually blessing the people of God that hear and believe them. The blessings they express and confer on them that so receive them by faith are always spiritual blessings of grace. They are merited by Christ and bestowed by Him, or rather by the triune God through Christ, by His

Spirit upon the Church. This is also true of the book of Revelation. The passage we hope to discuss in this chapter may be considered John's dedication of or introduction to the entire book. By it the book of Revelation is addressed to the "seven churches which are in Asia." About these we shall have something to say in a later connection. Further, our passage contains a most significant salutation or blessing in vss. 4 and 5a; an ascription of praise by the Church to Christ in vss. 5b and 6; and, finally, a solemn assurance of Christ's coming, corroborated by a direct Word of the Lord, designating Himself as the Alpha and Omega, the Almighty. These three elements will be the subject material of the present chapter.

The blessing is expressed in the following words: "Grace be unto you and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth." The contents of this blessing are "grace and peace." Grace, as we know, has a variety of connotations in Scripture. It may refer to a virtue of God: God is gracious. Or it may signify an attitude God assumes toward the creature, an attitude of favor; or more specifically it may denote that same attitude of favor with respect to the guilty sinner, so that for him it is favor that is forfeited. This last attitude of God is based upon the righteousness of Christ attained through His perfect obedience even unto the death of the cross. But the word grace also frequently denotes a power, an operation of the Spirit of Christ within the elect whereby they become partakers of all the benefits of salvation, and the fruits of this operation or blessings of salvation themselves. It is in this last sense that the word is used in this passage, so that we may paraphrase the meaning as follows: "may God through Christ by the Spirit operate with His grace in your hearts, so that the gifts of grace, the benefits of salvation may become yours." Of this grace the Church is continually in need. For, grace is not a blessing that is bestowed upon the believers once for all, so that having received it they possess it in themselves. On the contrary, they live only through a constant influx of grace, that blesses them as an ever refreshing stream out of God, through Christ, in the fellowship of the Spirit. And on their part, they receive this grace of God by faith and through prayer. One of the chief and first fruits of this grace is peace. Peace is peace with God. It always is. Apart from peace with God there is no peace. This is the fundamental reason why the quest of the ungodly world, outside of Christ, for peace on earth, is a vain dream that must ever end in a cruel awakening in the reality of a world of war and unrest. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Isa. 57:21. But "being justified out of faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. 5:1. This peace is, first of all the blessed tranquility of heart and mind that results from the consciousness that God is at peace with us, because our

sins are blotted out and we are justified. And secondly, it is also the experience that in principle there is peace in our heart toward God: we are no longer motivated by enmity against Him. And, therefore, they that have this peace are also at peace with one another; they are peacemakers. And, finally, having peace with God, they have peace with all things, for they know that if God is for them, nothing can be against them: "all things work together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to his purpose." Rom. 8:28. This peace, then, is not another blessing in addition to grace, but is the fruit of the latter. It is the peace of grace.

What a wonderful blessing is here pronounced upon the seven churches of Asia, and upon the entire church in the world! For, the church of all ages is represented by the seven churches in the book of Revelation. To realize the full significance of this benediction we must bear in mind that, according to the viewpoint of this book of Scripture, the church in the world is always in tribulation. With the church in tribulation we must take our stand. She is in the world. And that world is in darkness. The world in the book of Revelation is not a world improved and ennobled by "common grace," a tolerably good place for the church to live in; but it is the world under judgment, whose condemnation is an accomplished fact. John 12:31; Col. 2:15. It is the anti-christian world, that sets itself against God and His Christ, persecutes His people and always would force them to adopt the mark of the beast. It is the world of the wicked, that "are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Isa. 57:20; the world as it is full of malice and envy, strife and war and bloodshed, of terror and destruction, as we see it today, now the very foundations are shaken and the proud structure of modern civilization threatens to tumble about our heads into ruins! In that world this blessed word of God in Christ is heard and realized: "Grace be unto you, and peace!"

Is it possible that the church in the world may really possess this peace? Indeed, it is; and the elaborate and detailed description of the source whence this peace of grace is derived, is designed to assure us of the reality of it. The author might simply have written: "Grace unto you and peace, from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ." But he would assure us of the absolute certainty of this blessing. Hence, he writes: "from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth."

The words: "who is, and who was, and who is to come" refer to God, the Triune. The threefold description of the Author of the blessing of grace and peace must not be interpreted as if the first part ("which is, and which was, and which is to come") refers to the first Person of the holy Trinity, the last part ("and from Jesus Christ," etc.) to the

second Person, and the second part ("and from the seven Spirits," etc.) denotes the third Person. For, although it is, of course, true that Jesus Christ is the very Son of God according to His divine nature, yet here He does not appear as such, but as the Mediator; and although, as we shall see presently, "the seven Spirits, which are before his throne" certainly are the Holy Spirit of God, He does not appear here as the third Person of the holy Trinity, but as the Spirit of Christ. Hence, the first part, "which is, and which was, and which is to come" does not refer to the Father as the first Person, but to God, the Triune, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is revealed here as the One "which is." This has all the emphasis, as is especially evident from the form used in the original (*ho noon*). It denotes God, not as existing in the present, but as the absolute Being, the One Who eternally *Is*, the Self-existent, the Uncaused, the ground of Whose being is in Himself alone, in Whom there is no change nor shadow of turning. The reference is probably to His name Jehovah. But this eternal God, Whose being cannot be measured or limited by time, revealed Himself in time. To this revelation of Himself in time refer the other two expressions: "who was" and "who is to come" or "the coming one" (*ho erchomenos*). He was, He did come in the past. He came in creation, and, in the fulness of time, He came in Christ. He is the same God that made all things in the beginning and that revealed Himself in His Son. And when He created all things, He did so with a view to His coming in Christ. All His works are known to Him from the beginning. They all are and develop according to His determinate counsel. According to that counsel He is coming, always coming, coming ever since He first came in the beginning; and still He is the coming One, coming to us as the God of our salvation, and He will not cease to come until He is eternally present with us and His tabernacle shall be with men. This cannot fail. Whatever powers of darkness may rise against Him, the Eternal One is coming in Christ Jesus our Lord. And it is He that causes His Word of blessing to proceed to His Church: "Grace be unto you, and peace!" Surely, in spite of all hell this peace is ours!

But, you say, how can this peace from the eternal God be our possession even now? The answer is that it is instilled into our hearts by "the seven Spirits, which are before his throne." These seven spirits must not be degraded into created spirits or angels, as is done by some, nor abstractly generalized into "seven modes" of God's existence, as others would explain the words. Let it suffice to object against these and similar interpretations that these "seven spirits" are here presented to us as belonging to the Source of the blessings of grace and peace, and that, therefore, they are divine and denote a personal Agent. They certainly refer to the Holy Spirit, the third Person in the blessed Trinity. And yet, we must say more than this. The term does not denote the Holy Spirit as He is in God. Why should He be called "the seven spirits?" The Holy Spirit in the Trinity is one. And why should it be said of these seven spirits that they

are "before his throne?" The Holy Spirit as third Person of the holy Trinity is very God, co-equal with the Father and with the Son. He is not "before the throne" of God, but on the throne, the sovereign ruler of heaven and earth. The words, therefore, must be applied to the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of the exalted Christ and as He is poured out into the Church to make us partakers of the covenant blessings of grace and salvation. We must remember, that our Lord Jesus Christ, who was humiliated and obediently humbled Himself even to the death of the cross, and Who by His perfect obedience obtained for us eternal righteousness and life, was raised from the dead, and by the power of God was made exceedingly great and glorious, being exalted to the right hand of the majesty in heaven. That glorious Lord and Mediator also receives from the Father the power to apply all the blessings of salvation He merited to those whom the Father gave Him before the foundations of the world. This saving power He possesses through the Spirit that is given Him as Mediator and Head of the Church at His exaltation, and Whom He poured forth into the Church, that He may dwell in her forever. For, He, the Lord Jesus Christ, "being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." Acts 2:33. This Spirit is "the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you and shall be in you." John 14:17. He is the Comforter, through Whom the Lord Himself came again to His Church, and Who abides with us forever, John 14:16, 18. He is the "Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father," and the Spirit that "beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." Rom. 8:15, 16. He is the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, by Whom we are liberated from the law of sin and death. Rom. 8:2. He is the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead, and Who will also quicken our mortal bodies by that same Spirit. Rom. 8:11. He is called "the seven Spirits" for the number seven denotes the fulness of God's covenant grace, and the fulness of the Church in which He dwells is also indicated by the same number. For, there are seven churches in Asia, and there are seven candlesticks and seven stars. Rev. 1:11, 12, 16, 20. And the Lamb, Whose Spirit He is, has seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God. Rev. 5:6. He, the exalted Christ, is said to have the seven Spirits of God. Rev. 3:1. And these seven Spirits, or the Spirit of Christ as He dwells in the Church with His sevenfold fulness of life and grace, are "before the throne" as "seven lamps of fire burning" to the glory of God. Rev. 4:5. And before the throne is the Church, serving God day and night in His temple, and He that sitteth on the throne dwells among them. Rev. 7:15. There can be no question, therefore, that "the seven Spirits, which are before his throne" refers to the Holy Spirit as He is given to the exalted Christ and poured out into the Church. And it is that Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of life and of truth, the Spirit of adoption and of the fulness of His seven-

fold grace, the Spirit that is given us, dwells in us, never leaves us, Who is the divine Agent of this blessing of grace and peace. Can there be any doubt that this peace is and forever will remain ours?

Again, you may probably complain that you are wholly unworthy of this blessing, and that, therefore, you cannot apprehend this word of benediction as addressed to you personally. You lie in the midst of death, and sin cleaves to you and marks your every step on the way you walk. How, then, can this divine grace and peace be intended for you? But the text removes also this objection, when it fastens the eye of faith upon Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first begotten of the dead, prince of the kings of the earth. He is the faithful witness. Witness He is, for as the Servant of Jehovah, He is God's prophet, Who always bears testimony of the truth of God. He did so during His sojourn on earth, for as He spoke before Pilate: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." John 18:37. He still does so in the Church, for it is He that gave us the Scriptures, and that leads us into all the truth by His Spirit. And He is the Witness also in this book, Whose Word is quite sufficient for your faith to trust in, when He says: "Grace to you and peace." For, He is the *faithful* witness. For His doctrine is not His, but the Father's which sent Him. John 7:16; and He speaks that which He has seen with His Father. John 8:38. He always acts and speaks in harmony with His position as witness of God, for He does nothing of Himself, but as His Father hath taught Him, He speaks in the world. John 8:28. The Lord God hath opened His ear, and given Him the tongue of the learned, that He should know how to speak a word in season. Isa. 50:4, 5. And no matter what men may do unto Him, though they smite Him and pluck out His beard in their fury, and cover Him with shame and reproach, He never changes His testimony and does not compromise the truth. Isa. 50:5, 6. He was faithful unto death, even the death of the cross. In life and in death you may rely on His Word: "Grace and peace unto you."

And He is the first begotten of the dead! Let this especially be the object of your contemplation, the ground of your assurance: Jesus Christ is the first begotten of the dead! The resurrection, but then emphatically the resurrection of Jesus Christ, should be the ground of your hope, the object of that faith that fills you with joy and peace. Peace, if ever it is to be ours, cannot be of this world: it must come from the other side of death. Here we lie in the midst of death. How, then, can we have peace? But hark! this voice that speaks of grace and peace is not of this world. It does not sound from somewhere among the deep death-shadows in which here we grope and find no way out. It is the resurrection-voice! He that speaks stands at the other side of death and the grave as the Risen One! That means that He was dead and is alive again and lives forevermore. He is alive with a new life, a glorious, a victorious life.

H.H.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of I Corinthians 1-4

16.

(I Corinthians 3:1-3)

The passage from Holy Writ which we wish to discuss in this essay reads, in the King James Version, as follows: *"And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal and walk as men?"*

For the proper understanding of this passage it is necessary to bear in mind that in this section of I Corinthians 1-4 Paul is waging a mighty conflict against the pernicious evil of party-strife and schism in the church at Corinth!

And rightly so!

For this evil must be eradicated root and branch; it is contrary to all the wisdom of God revealed on the Cross of Calvary. It does not belong to the "three things" which a christian must know in order to live and die happily in the only comfort in life and in death. This "party-strife" belongs to the things of the "old man," it is "the flesh" in the believer which must be *wholly mortified*!

It cannot but be beneficial also for our own Protestant Reformed constituency to be profoundly conscious of the horror of all party-strife, and to remember that there will be those in hell, who "spoke the tongues of men and of angels" and who "had all knowledge," yea, even gave their bodies to be burned — playing the martyr, and yet did not have the love in their hearts by which saving faith is energized!

When folly goes parading and prating in the name of wisdom — that is a vanity under the sun, and it is a great vexation of spirit!

Thus it was also here in this Corinthian church.

Wherefore Paul speaks out with great boldness, calling this sin in Corinth by its proper name, and thus calling these "saints in Christ" to repentance; he tells them, that, while they prate as the wise and learned in the church, they really can only yet stand the teaching which must be given in the Kindergarten. They must still be fed with the first principles of christian conduct, the A-B-C of what it means that they now must "fight with a *free conscience* against sin and the devil in this life."

Babes they are "in Christ." They may be sixty or seventy years old as to their natural age. But, judging by their conduct, they are not at all men of christian stature, pillars in the church, but act like little children who must be fed with milk! They don't seem to have the least spiritual

consciousness of the grand and sublime purpose of salvation, of the wisdom of God in mystery. They prate of their own great understanding overagainst one another, but are silent about the fact that all that they are they are by God's grace, so that they walk in profound and blessed humility! They fight like dogs, who would devour each other, or like the two snakes, which (as the fable goes) grabbed each other by the tail and swallowed each other.

Yet, they are "babes in Christ"; they are not "natural men." They are, at bottom, spiritual men. And as such they are addressed by Paul. That is their concrete address-ability. They are elect in Christ, called into the fellowship of God's Son. They are of the "weak things" which God hath chosen, those of "ignoble birth" that God might put to shame the strong things and that which seems to be something! And the Holy Spirit has been given to them, and has revealed the mysteries of the kingdom to them. Such was not the case of those who "are without" in the city of Corinth. But to this church of God it has been given!

I repeat: it was given to this church of God!

And that is the pedagogical approach of Paul. Such is not only the pedagogical approach of Paul but such is all of Scripture. He, who does not reckon with this, will certainly have an Arminian-Pelagian approach and attempt to speak to all men what can only be addressed to the church.

Howbeit, this church at Corinth is surely off the beaten path of the saints, the "more excellent way" of which I Corinthians 13 speaks. They try to win "their case" and loose *the battle* of fighting against sin and the Devil with a free conscience. (Compare Question 32, Heid. Cat.) Oh, they reign like kings, but in so doing they become many masters. See I Corinthians 4:8 where Paul, employing irony, says, "Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you." And this latter is only possible when, walking in the unction of Christ, we fight against sin and Satan in this life, and afterwards reign with Him over all creatures.

It is sometimes said: a christian always has the victory!

What must we say of this? I believe we must be very careful that we are spiritual and not carnal when we say this! What! cannot I say that a believer can be "carnal?" Let us beware lest we criticize Paul, the Confessions on this point; a warning finger is here necessary and should be *heeded* lest we fool ourselves and fall into greater and more grievous mischief.

A christian *always* has the victory?!

Yes, the christian, who fights the battle, as does Paul in Romans 7, does have the victory, and, as the militant christian, cries out: I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord! And it this same Paul, this militant Paul, who fights against sin with a *free conscience* in the Lord, who also is assured of his certain victory, both now and in the future, who utters this grand assurance in Romans 8:39, ". . . nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us

from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord."

No, this battle against sin is not a "pre-requisite act of faith," yet it is the "way" in which we have the victory. Does not Paul speak of the "more excellent way?" See I Corinthians 12:31b. And is a way not something wherein we walk, the spiritual direction of our life, our conduct in the midst of the brethren, where one cannot possibly remain in sin that grace may abound?

A christian always has the "victory?"

I will ask a simple question? Did we not learn in Catechism that we should pray: "Lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from the Evil One?" Is there not a point in life where we feel that we have, according to the "flesh," succumbed to the threefold mortal foes: Satan, the world and our own flesh? And is such succumbing to the "assaults" not called "to be overcome in this spiritual warfare" in Question 127 as this deals with the "sixth petition?"

Or, again, what is the implication and teaching of the Canons of Dort, Heads of Doctrine V, Article 1, where we read "Whom God calls, according to his purpose, to the communion of his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and regenerates by the Holy Spirit, he delivers also from the dominion and slavery of sin in this life; though not altogether from the body of sin, and from the infirmities of the flesh, so long as they continue in this world."

He, that readeth, let him take note!

Or, once again, do we not read in Canons, V, 4, "... converts are not always so influenced and actuated by the Spirit of God, as not in some particular instances sinfully to deviate from the guidance of divine mercy, so as to be seduced by and comply with the lusts of the flesh; they must, therefore, be constant in watching and prayer, that they be not led into temptation . . ."

I claim, therefore, that in the sense here spoken of in the Heidelberg Catechism and in the Canons the proposition must be defended and preached from the house-tops: a christian often does not have the victory!

And in this latter sense the church of God at Corinth surely too did not have the victory!

Fact is, they were not even understanding the *first rudiments* of the warfare in Christ in this case at hand!

In their mad clamor for Paul and Apollos, appealing to one against the other, they betrayed an utter lack of spiritual maturity; Paul did not find in them men and women who could be taught the deep mysteries of God. They need milk.

Why?

Because they are not "spiritual" but they are "fleshen!"

Notice, that Paul does not say that these, who engaged in jealousy and party-strife, were "natural (psychical) men." Such was the contrast in the former chapter, as drawn by Paul between the *world* and the *church*. If these Corinthians had been natural men they would not have been babes in Christ, but they would *not have been in Christ at all!* However, now they are in Christ. They are babes. And that they are "babes" is tantamount to their being weak, immature.

They are, at bottom, not evil men! It is true they conduct themselves in an unchristian manner, but they are not men who delight in evil. Principly they love God. But they do not "know how to show gratitude to God" in this practical, reasonable service to God.

Such they are.

As such they are also treated by Paul. They are treated as children not because Paul would humiliate them, hurt them, heap abuse and sarcasm upon their heads! Not at all. Paul treats them as children because they give evidence in their conduct of "jealousy and party-strife" that they are "babes" in the wood! They are a prey of their evil passions and of the snares of the Temptor, and are not aware of it.

They were surely *fleshly* in their walk. Jealousy and party-strife they walk in. And they do not walk according to the law of God out of faith and unto God's glory, but they walk according to man. They are talking about human relations, human greatness in the church. And in the church God alone is great in His saving power and might.

Of this greatness of God Paul must teach the Corinthians yet in the first principles, and make it very clear to them with an illustration concerning his place and that of Apollos in the church! And when these Corinthians will see this they will say: how foolish we were! What babes in Christ.

It is refreshing to take notice of this polemic of Paul together with the christian motives he forwards for this rebuke to Corinthians, now these many centuries ago.

The evils here enumerated by Paul of these Corinthians are not "one day flies." It is a perennial evil under the sun, and—in the church. The threefold enemy: Satan, the world and our flesh do not cease to assault us. And often we are "overcome" in this spiritual battle! Then the "flesh" in us shows that there is no good in it at all.

Let us not be children, showing all lack of understanding. And let us by all means, while we are children, not act the part of matured men.

Let us be careful and solicitous to continue in the ways of the Lord!

G.L.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On Friday, June 29, our dear parents

MR. and MRS. JOHN VAN BAREN

celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary.

On this occasion of joy we also, with them, thank our covenant God for the riches of His mercy and blessings toward us. Our prayer is that God may continue to lead them in all their way that together, in all things, we may acknowledge Him.

Gise J.
Eileen
Alice
Richard
John
Ruth

Chicago Heights, Ill.

IN HIS FEAR

Praying in His Fear

(2)

"For Jesus' sake. Amen."

That, we saw last time, is one of the essentials of prayer in His fear.

We deserve nothing but everlasting punishment; and God, therefore, will give us nothing good for our sakes, that is, for the sake of our works of our worthiness.

He will bless us for Jesus' sake and for no other reason.

Besides, to try to come to Him apart from Christ, Whom He sent to be The Way because He is The Truth and The Life, is to hate His Son, is to hate Him Who sent Him and is to do that which makes our "prayers" an abomination in God's sight.

Therefore we must pray for Jesus' sake.

There is another side to this praying for Jesus' sake that we wish to consider with you at this time that you may pray in His fear.

That one thing is just as important as the fact that in ourselves we have no right to any help or any blessedness from the Thrice Holy God. That principle is this: Jesus did not die on Calvary's brow and was not raised and crowned with glory and honour with dominion over land and sea to give us the right to *everything* that might arise in the hearts and minds of men to request of Him. Jesus did not merit *all* things for His elect people! There are things we may not have even for Jesus' sake.

Let me make that plain first of all by relating the extremity to which some will go in what they still label "prayer to the Lord our God."

Even in the tender ages of our youth, although we could not at that time lay our finger on the reason, we shuddered inwardly when it was our experience to hear "prayers" uttered for victory in the basketball game for Jesus' sake. No, Christ did not die that one team might have the victory over another team in such a thing as a basketball game. He did not suffer hellish agonies and have His body committed to the grave even so that a team of those whose names are written in the lamb's book of life might be victorious over a team of infidels. "Thanks be to God Who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord" are the words of Paul. But he says this not about a basketball victory. He says this about the victory over sin, the grave and death. It is the gift of salvation that fills him with this thankfulness. No, *all* things are not ours for Jesus' sake.

What He did merit for you He may not have merited for me. What God will give you for Jesus' sake He may not give to me as not being good for me and as not being the

thing He decreed for me. It may be that I may not even have the same kind of things which He for Jesus' sake has given you.

The salvation of *all* your children may have been realized by Jesus and therefore these children, all your children, will be saved to the uttermost for Jesus' sake; meanwhile only some of your neighbour's children are elect, believing children of God for Jesus' sake. God has given no promise that He will save all of the children of all believing parents. And surely there is no salvation for one single reprobate for Jesus' sake. He did not die for them and they receive nothing good because that goodness is kept in store only for those for whom He did die.

We would like, therefore, to make two observations here before we go on. Many "prayers" are an abomination to God exactly because they deny reprobation and request that which God has sworn He will never do. In the second place, and in close connection therewith: "Jesus' sake" and God's promises are never in conflict with each other. Instead, all God's promises are based on "Jesus' sake." In other words, God promises only that which He is pleased to give for Jesus' sake. What Christ did on Calvary, in His Resurrection and Ascension is the basis, always the basis, for all that which God promises. Apart from that cross, resurrection and Ascension there is nothing promised to anyone.

That is why all conditional promises of God are just so much heresy. That is why, as we wrote a few years ago it is conditions or Christ. A conditional promise, even as the proponents of this heresy in recent years maintained, is not given in God's grace and does not imply His grace at all. Conditional promises then are promises apart from Jesus' sake and are based on the sake of the fulfillment of a condition by man. To be sure, they will hasten to add, man fulfills these conditions only by God's grace. But anyone who will honestly consider the matter will confess that the condition, then, is not what man does but just exactly that grace of God. That grace of God is indeed the indispensable pre-requisite of our salvation. But to maintain that there are conditions man must fulfill for salvation is — to put it mildly — to take the "for Jesus' sake" away. And such a stand must in the name of consistency contain in its prayers, not "for Jesus' sake" but "for the sake of the condition I fulfilled." A promise that God gives which contains no grace and is not given in grace is a promise that is not based on "Jesus' sake" and contains none of the blessings which are the Church's "for Jesus' sake." But the very fact that when confronted with the plain arminianism of this stand its defenders try to bring Christ back in by means of the addition that man fulfills these by God's grace is a clear indication that they know that conditional theology is heresy.

"For Jesus' sake" and conditional theology are opposed to each other. Then you get the nonsense that neither Scripture nor the Confessions ever teach that man is saved before he believes! So, then faith is not given us "for Jesus' sake?" And if we do not receive it "for Jesus' sake" on

what basis does God give it to us then? If we do not receive it from God because Jesus has saved us on Calvary then upon what basis does He give it? Make faith *man's* means unto salvation and you can defend conditional theology. But would the proponents of this heresy who claim they must maintain it in order to avoid making man careless and profane and in order to maintain "man's responsibility" care for this statement, "God promises everyone of you that since He will give you faith, which is the means unto salvation, you will be saved?"

We made an attempt to have our defense published against three false accusations that appeared in the Reformed Guardian concerning a bulletin announcement of ours by asking this question and other related questions. After forty days—and many eyes, no doubt, had seen and read our defense and realized the danger of having it read and considered by those whom they had deceived—we received it back with the information that it is contrary to the "journalistic ethics" of the magazine that claims to guard truth and justice to let the *Standard Bearer* editors defend themselves over against the evil accusations which that magazine with this false claim publishes. We are in a position to publish our letter and the answer that all may judge whether our letter was written in an offensive vein and contrary to the journalistic ethics of *any* religious magazine.

Indeed, all prayers for the blessings of salvation are not pleasing in God's sight. We may not pray for the world. We may not pray for the reprobate.

We may not pray, "God bless America."

No, not because it is sinful to be loyal to one's government and native land. That has nothing to do with it. Only the child of God can serve his country in true obedience. Daniel and his three friends gave flawless obedience to the godless king who took them captive into a strange land. They did not rebel. We would never advocate that one finger be lifted in rebellion against our government. But let us remember that Daniel and his three friends were very firm in their stand over against those demands of the king which would require of them disobedience to God. But even then, that has nothing to do with not being able to pray that God will bless America.

Is America the Kingdom of God?

Is America the Kingdom of God in distinction from the other nations who also consider themselves to be Christian nations and are called such even by America?

Did Christ die for America in distinction from England, Germany, Netherlands, France, Italy to mention only a few?

Besides, is that not a selfish prayer?

God bless America and let the rest go to hell?

God bless America and I do not care what happens to the rest?

God bless His Church in America. Yea, for Jesus' sake, Amen.

But then God bless His Church in Russia also, for Jesus' sake, Amen.

The Church of Christ is not confined to any one nation today as it was in Israel in the Old Testament dispensation. Then the believers could pray, "God bless Israel." Even then it was not and might not be meant for each and every soul in Israel as a nation. Nor may that be done today concerning any nation upon the face of this earth. God's Church is universal or catholic and for Jesus' sake we may pray, "God bless His Church."

Many, in fact, who sing so vigorously "God bless America" would object violently should it please Him to do so. To bless America is to save America by the blood and Spirit of Christ. Do you really think that many of those who pray and sing these words really want that?

Do you think that many who sing this prayer want all the filth of Hollywood and the immorality of countless numbers of places of amusement and entertainment put out of business? Do you think that they really want the Sabbath kept as God demands that it be kept so that the beaches are frequented by none and the houses of God are filled with eager, joyful worshippers two, three times a day on the Sabbath? Do you think that they want the golf links closed on the Sabbath, the resort districts closed, the baseball games called off for the day? Do you think that they want the schools, colleges and universities become christian so that they loudly condemn and fight against evolutionism, Darwinism and atheism? Do you think that they desire all radio and television stations to broadcast nothing on the Sabbath but religious programs?

By no means!

God bless America?

God bless His people in America.

That is another thing. And that He will do for Jesus' sake.

And He may do that in a way that brings suffering and misery for the flesh to His people in America.

He may bless them by bringing them into a fatal disease which will end in their being taken out of the vale of tears and woe into the glory of His kingdom.

Not many consider that to be a blessing. Not many consider it to be a work of God's love and grace to take His own unto Himself in glory. No, God bless America means to them God make America rich with material wealth and give America fun and pleasure and earthly sport.

And their prayer is not heard. Instead it is an abomination to the Lord. For Jesus Himself taught us in His prayer that we are to pray for daily bread.

Shall we then "for Jesus' sake" pray for those things which he Himself tells us we are not to request of the Almighty God?

Let us not abuse the "for Jesus' sake" but in reverence and fear before God appreciate the wonder of God's grace in it and pray in His fear.

J.A.H.

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

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

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Quotation from John of Damascus continued.

The body which is born of the Virgin is in truth body united with divinity, not that the body which was received up into the heavens descends, but that the bread itself and the wine are changed into God's body and blood. But if you enquire how this happens, it is enough for you to learn that it was through the Holy Spirit, just as the Lord took on Himself flesh that subsisted in Him and was born of the holy Mother of God through the Spirit. And we know nothing further save that the Word of God is true and energises and is omnipotent, but the manner of this cannot be searched out. But one can put it well thus, that just as in nature the bread by the eating and the wine and the water by the drinking are changed into the body and blood of the eater and drinker, and do not become a different body from the former one, so the bread of the table and the wine and the water are supernaturally changed by the invocation and presence of the Holy Spirit into the body and blood of Christ, and are not two but one and the same (this may appear to be subtle and clever reasoning on the part of John of Damascus. It is true, of course, that the process whereby our bodies are strengthened by the bread and water we eat and drink is something which far transcends our human understanding. But we should bear in mind the following. The bread and water we eat and drink are earthly substances and our bodies are earthly. Hence, we eat bread and drink water and wine and these substances are used by the Lord to strengthen our mortal bodies, then no radical change of the substances occurs. But when the bread and wine we eat and drink are changed into the body and blood of the living God (John of Damascus writes, does he not, that the bread itself and the wine are changed into God's body and blood) then a radical change does occur. And it makes no difference whether this is applied to Christ's human body or to His Divinity. If applied to His Divinity then it must be plain that a radical change occurs if and when the bread and wine are changed into His body and blood. But we must remember that Christ's glorified human body is no longer earthly but heavenly and spiritual—see I Cor. 15:42-45. And then it is also true that, when earthly bread and wine are changed into this heavenly and spiritual body of the Lord, a radical change occurs.—H. V.).

Wherefore to those who partake worthily with faith, it is for the remission of sins and for life everlasting and

for the safe-guarding of soul and body; but to those who partake unworthily without faith, it is for chastisement and punishment, just as also the death of the Lord became to those who believe life and incorruption for the enjoyment of eternal blessedness; while to those who do not believe and to the murderers of the Lord it is for everlasting chastisement and punishment.

The bread and the wine are not merely figures of the body and blood of Christ (God forbid!) but the deified body of the Lord itself: for the Lord has said, "This is My body," not, this is a figure of My body: and "My blood," not, a figure of My blood. And on a previous occasion He had said to the Jews, *Except ye eat of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. For My flesh is meat indeed and My blood is drink indeed.* And again, *He that eateth Me*, shall live. (We can well understand why the Roman Catholic Church should appeal to statements such as these. Here the writer declares very plainly and without reservation that the bread and wine are changed into the deified body of the Lord itself. And he appeals to the fact that the Lord speaks here of the flesh of the *Son of Man*, and also overlooking the fact that, should these words be explained literally, as they would maintain, then they would have to be interpreted as referring to the body of the Son of Man prior to His final suffering and death upon the cross. But we can surely understand how these words give support to the Roman Catholic theory of the present day.—H. V.).

Wherefore with all fear and a pure conscience and certain faith let us draw near and it will assuredly be to us as we believe, doubting nothing. Let us pay homage to it in all purity both of soul and body: for it is twofold. Let us draw near to it with an ardent desire, and with our hands held in the form of the cross let us receive the body of the Crucified One: and let us apply our eyes and lips and brows and partake of the divine coal, in order that the fire of the longing, that is in us, with the additional heat derived from the coal may utterly consume our sins and illumine our hearts, and that we may be inflamed and deified by the participation in the divine fire. Isaiah saw the coal. But coal is not plain wood but wood united with fire: in like manner also the bread of the communion is not plain bread but bread united with divinity. But a body which is united with divinity is not one nature, but has one nature belonging to the body and another belonging to the divinity that is united to it, so that the compound is not one nature but two.

With bread and wine Melchisedek, the priest of the most high God, received Abraham on his return from the slaughter of the Gentiles. That table pre-imaged this mystical table, just at that priest was a type and image of Christ, the true high-priest. *For thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedek.* Of this bread the show-bread was an image. This surely is that pure and bloodless sacrifice the Lord through the prophet said is offered to Him from the rising to the setting of the sun. (Notice that here we have an ex-

pression which the Roman Catholic Church of today has also incorporated into its teaching, namely: the pure and bloodless sacrifice of the Lord.—H. V.)

The body and blood of Christ are making for the support of our soul and body, without being consumed or suffering corruption, not making for the draught (God forbid!) but for our being and preservation, a protection against all kinds of injury, a purging from all uncleanness: should one receive base gold, they purify it by the critical burning lest in the future we be condemned with this world. They purify from diseases and all kinds of calamities; according to the words of the divine Apostle, *For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.* This too is what he says, *So that he that partaketh of the body and blood of Christ unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself.* Being purified by this, we are united to the body of Christ and to His Spirit and become the body of Christ.

This bread is the first-fruits of the future bread which is *epiousios*, i. e. necessary for existence. For the word *epiousion* signifies either the future, that is Him Who is for a future age, or else Him of Whom we partake for the preservation of our essence. Whether then it is in this sense or that, it is fitting to speak so of the Lord's body. For the Lord's flesh is life-giving spirit because it was conceived of the life-giving Spirit. For what is born of the Spirit is spirit. But I do not say this to take away the nature of the body, but I wish to make clear its life-giving and divine power.

But if some persons called the bread and the wine antitypes of the body and blood of the Lord, as did the divinely inspired Basil, they said so not after the consecration but before the consecration, so calling the offering itself. (This is another statement of John of Damascus which gives considerable support to the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. When Basil spoke of the bread and wine as antitypes of the body and blood of the Lord, this is evidently no support for the doctrine of transubstantiation, inasmuch as he distinguished sharply between the bread and wine and the body of the Lord. But John of Damascus declares that this statement of Basil refers to the bread and wine before the consecration and therefore before they are changed into the body and blood of Christ. Hence, after the consecration the bread and wine are no longer mere antitypes of Christ's body and blood.—H. V.)

Participation is spoken of; for through it we partake of the divinity of Jesus. Communion, too, is spoken of, and it is an actual communion, because through it we have communion with Christ and share in His flesh and His divinity: yea, we have communion and are united with one another through it. For since we partake of one bread, we all become one body of Christ and one blood, and members one of another, being of one body with Christ.

With all our strength, therefore, let us beware lest we

receive communion from or grant it to heretics; *Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, saith the Lord, neither cast ye your pearls before swine*, lest we become partakers in their dishonour and condemnation. For if union is in truth with Christ and with one another, we are assuredly voluntarily united also with all those who partake with us. For this union is effected voluntarily and not against our inclination. *For we are all one body because we partake of the one bread*, as the divine Apostle says.

Further, antitypes of future things are spoken of, not as though they were not in reality Christ's body and blood, but that now through them we partake of Christ's divinity, while then we shall partake mentally through the vision alone.—end of quotation.

In connection with this quotation of John of Damascus I would like to make a remark about that author's use of the word "antitype," as in the last paragraph. He speaks of "antitypes of future things," and he evidently refers to the bread and wine whereof we partake in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. I am not in a position to say whether this word, antitype, was used in former times in the sense in which it is used in this quotation. The word does not have that connotation today. We speak of types and antitypes. The dictionary defines this word as that which a type or symbol represents, the original of a type, and the dictionary continues by adding: specifically, a person or event in the New Testament prefigured by one in the Old Testament. This is the meaning which the word has today. Hence, the bread and wine are not antitypes but types or symbols. Christ is the antitype, that whereof the bread and wine are symbols, their original.

And another remark which we wish to make has already been made during this quotation of John of Damascus. We can easily understand how the view of transubstantiation came more and more into prominence and why the Roman Catholic Church could appeal to a quotation of this nature. John speaks of the bloodless sacrifice of the Lord. He also declares that the bread and the wine are not merely figures of the body and blood of Christ but the deified body of the Lord itself. And he interprets the well-known passage: "This is My body," in harmony with the view of transubstantiation. Later we will have opportunity to refer to the emphasis which Martin Luther, the German Reformer, placed upon this passage. In our following articles we will present the development of this doctrine concerning the Eucharist or Lord's Supper as it appears in the writings of Philip Schaff. H. V.

I LOVE THE LORD FOR MY REQUEST

I love the Lord, for my request
And humble plea He makes His care
In Him through life my faith shall rest,
For He both hears and answers prayer.

Psalm 116:1

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 IV. Who teach: That the new covenant of grace, which God the Father, through the mediation of the death of Christ, made with man, does not herein consist, that we by faith, in as much as it accepts the merits of Christ, are justified before God and saved, but in the fact that God having revoked the demand of perfect obedience of the law, regards faith itself and the obedience of faith, although imperfect, as the perfect obedience of the law, and does esteem it worthy of the reward of eternal life through grace. For these contradict the Scriptures: "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood," Rom. 3:24, 25. And these proclaim, as did the wicked Socinus, a new and strange justification of man before God, against the consensus of the whole church.

It is undoubtedly a misprint, and that too, a very serious one, when the 1947 edition of *The Psalter* reads in this article: ". . . but in the fact that God having revoked the demand of perfect obedience of faith . . ." This should be corrected in an eventual future edition to read: ". . . but in the fact that God having revoked the demand of perfect obedience of the law . . ." This error is very serious, for it spoils the sense of the article, and is not the correct presentation of the Arminian error rejected in this article. I do not have in possession the latest reprint of *The Psalter*, and thus cannot tell whether or not this has been corrected. But surely, this error should not be perpetuated.

In this article, which, as we have noted before, follows in logical order upon the previous three, we find exposed the true nature of the error of conditionalism which the Arminians taught in connection with the doctrine of Christ's death. You will recall that in the previous article the fathers pointed out how the Arminians erred in teaching that Christ by His death merited only the authority for the Father "to deal again with man, and to prescribe new conditions as he might desire, obedience to which, however, depended on the free will of man." There already the fathers pointed out that the Arminians adjudged too contemptuously of the death of Christ. And how true! For surely, such a view denies every idea of atonement, satisfaction, and redemption. But in the present article the truly horrible nature of that Arminian error becomes exposed in all its horror. For it is made

evident that the Arminian by his wicked doctrine, while he mouths the terms of the truth of Scripture, such as "faith" and "the obedience of faith" and "grace," nevertheless maintains to the full the comfortless error of salvation by works. For note that here we have the next link in the Arminian chain of error. In Article II we read of the Father's authority to prescribe new conditions, the fulfillment of which conditions is dependent upon the free will of man. In Article IV we find the new conditions which the Father prescribes. Those conditions are faith and the obedience of faith. But because they are *conditions*,—and this the fathers saw with penetrating insight,—this faith and obedience of faith have an entirely different meaning and significance than the Reformed churches attach to them.

Let us take a more detailed look at this difference.

For our Reformed fathers (and for the whole church, as the fathers also note when they speak in this article of "the consensus of the whole church") faith was a gift of God whereby He places us in living union with Christ, so that the merits and satisfaction of Christ remain the ground of our salvation. They spoke of justification by faith. And faith was in this connection not at all another work, a work of another kind, a work of less perfection and value than the works of the law, a sort of substitute work. This is plain, in the first place, from the fact that faith is a gift of God bestowed upon His elect. In the second place, this is plain from the fact that faith, together with all the other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, was purchased for the elect by the death of Christ. It is part of the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of God's Son. Cf. II, A, 8. And in the third place, this is plain from the description of faith given in this fourth article of the Rejection of Errors. According to the fathers, *faith was such that it accepts the merits of Christ*. This is noteworthy in this connection. About the fact that faith *accepts* (and is indeed very active in accepting) there is no quarrel. But notice: faith *accepts the merits of Christ!* That means that faith itself has no value, no merit. Faith is always such that it exactly acknowledges that it has absolutely no value. It is another work on account of which God somehow reckons us to be righteous. Not even the works that proceed out of faith play any part at all in the fact that God accounts us righteous. Those works or obedience of faith do not *precede* our justification, but *follow* it. All the merit, all the value, the sole righteousness on account of which we are justified before God, the absolutely unique ground of our justification, and therefore of our entire salvation, is in Christ alone! And faith *accepts* this. Faith itself has nothing to give, and never gives anything to God. It has nothing to claim in itself, and it precisely acknowledges that itself it is absolutely empty. Faith always *receives, accepts, lays hold on* the merits and righteousness of *Another!* Faith accepts and appropriates the righteousness of God in Christ. Faith is such that it clings to the God of our salvation in Christ!

We should understand this by all means, and we should

understand this true significance of the statement that faith "accepts the merits of Christ." I fear that we very easily become accustomed to this statement, and assume a matter-of-fact attitude over against it. And in the midst of the swelling tide of Arminianism, which so often loosely employs the same terminology, we are very much inclined to lose sight of the true significance of this tremendous truth. Faith *accepts the merits of Christ!*

And that this is indeed the meaning and significance of faith in the view of the Reformed fathers is plain from, and, in fact, is emphasized by the contrast with the Arminian view in the article we are presently considering. That view, which is rejected in the *Canons*, stands in direct contrast with the Reformed view, according to the language of this article. On the one hand, the Arminians taught that "the new covenant of grace . . . *does not herein consist*, that we by faith, in as much as it accepts the merits of Christ, are justified before God and saved." And on the other hand, they taught that it *does consist* "in the fact that God, having revoked the demand of perfect obedience of the law, regards faith itself and the obedience of faith, although imperfect, as the perfect obedience of the law, and does esteem it worthy of the reward of eternal life through grace."

Hence, the Arminian view contains the following elements:

1. In the old covenant, or testament, God prescribed perfect obedience of the law as the condition of eternal life.

2. In the new covenant, God prescribes faith and the obedience of faith as the condition of eternal life.

3. In the new covenant, the element of work-righteousness is still maintained, with this qualification, that God now regards faith itself and the obedience of faith as the perfect obedience of the law, and esteem it, that is, faith and the obedience of faith, worthy of eternal life. Notice, therefore, that the righteousness is not in Christ, and the merit is not in Christ, but in faith and the obedience of faith. They are, in God's estimation, equal to the perfect obedience of the law. And they, that is, faith itself and the obedience of faith (not the merits of Christ), are worthy of eternal life. Faith and the obedience of faith are therefore substitute works for the works of the law.

4. In the new covenant, the element of *grace* consists in this, that although faith and the obedience of faith are not perfect, that is, although faith and the obedience of faith are in reality not equal the perfect obedience of the law, God nevertheless regards them as equal to the perfect obedience of the law. The Arminian, of course, faced the plain fact that Scripture speaks of *grace*. And he was hard-pressed to find room for that idea of grace in his conception. That he too had to speak of grace the Arminian realized. And so he attempted to mix grace and works in this manner. Grace for the Arminian meant that God was willing to accept imperfect works as perfect works.

Again it is true, as the previous article already pointed out, that the Arminian judges too contemptuously of the

death of Christ. For what now is left of the merit of Christ in this view of the Remonstrants,—the same Remonstrants who charged the Reformed with teaching that the sacrifice of Christ was deficient? Besides, we may certainly point out that this view does violence to the truth of the righteousness and justice of God. How can God regard as perfect that which is imperfect? How can God regard as fact that which is not a fact? How can God esteem as worthy of eternal life that which is not worthy of eternal life? And: what kind of divine grace is it that stands directly over against the divine justice? Cf. *Heid. Catechism*, Qu. 11.

But the fathers first of all come with the Scripture in hand. The Arminian plainly contradicts the Scripture which says: "Being justified freely (that is: gift-wise (gratuitously, as a free gift, for nothing) by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." Rom. 3:24, 25. Justification is not a matter of works, but is absolutely free, by His grace. And it is not a denial of the righteousness of God, an esteeming of the imperfect as perfect; but it is through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. And He redeems because God has set Him forth to be a propitiation for sin. Against this plain truth of Scripture the Arminian view militates. In the second place, the fathers associated this view with the view of Socinus, the wicked Socinus. They undoubtedly refer here to Faustus Socinus, not to his uncle Laelius. It was the former, a contemporary of Arminius, who was responsible for promulgating "a new and strange justification of man before God." Among other things, Socinianism denies predestination and original sin. And it denied that Christ's death was a satisfaction for sin. Christ's obedience even unto death was an example of the obedience which every Christian should, if necessary manifest. And the consequence of such obedience is forgiveness of sins and eternal life. All this error stems basically from the Socinian denial of the Trinity and of the true Godhead either of the Son Christ Jesus or of the Holy Spirit. But as far as justification is concerned, the similarity between the Arminian and the Socinian view is unmistakeable. Now then, Socinus was recognized by the entire church to be wicked and impious. And the fathers here point out that then the Arminians must be likewise condemned.

And finally, the fathers point out that this view is "against the consensus of the whole church." This means the church in the past, to be sure. But I believe it refers especially of the church of that age, namely, the church of the Reformation. The various branches of the church of the Reformation may have disagreed on many things. But on this one truth, that of free justification, they were agreed. And though already at that time, and more still today, it may seem that the consensus of the church favored and favors Arminianism, such is not true. The church, led by the Spirit into all the truth, has always maintained the doctrine of justification by faith out of free grace in Christ Jesus.

H.C.H.

DECENCY and ORDER

The Labors of the Deacons

(Continued)

"For ye have the poor always with you; but Me ye have not always."

These are the words of Jesus which were spoken at the time of His anointing in Bethany by Mary, the sister of Lazarus. Judas, the betrayer, had severely criticized this act of love and complained that the money spent could have been used better if given to the poor. After the Lord condemned this unjust criticism of a perfectly legitimate deed of love, He turned to His disciples and in them to the church to whom He spoke the above quoted words.

Jesus is no longer present with us in the body. He is now ascended and in His glory He sits at the right hand of His Father in heaven. This does not mean, however, that we cannot and should not repeat this act of Mary. His poor we have always with us and they shall remain with us until the end of the ages. Certainly then there is abundant opportunity to emulate this deed of Mary for as the Lord Himself put it in Matthew 25:40, "In so much as ye do it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye do it unto Me."

Particularly and in a special way this is the task of the deacons. To them belongs the duty of distributing the alms and other gifts of charity unto the poor and distressed. Even as Mary in her alms-deed was criticized and despised because of her display of love, so may the faithful deacons expect that their labors of mercy shall also be denounced by some. This they also are!

The work of the distribution of alms is criticized from two sides. On the one hand there are those who object that too much is given and that the recipient of the gifts is not really a case of charity. This objection means that the deacons are wasteful and careless in the distribution. On the other hand, there are those who object in the very opposite manner and assert that the deaconate is too conservative and compel the poor to barely eke out an existence. And, of course, the objectors from both sides always seem to know much more about all the circumstances of the poor than those who have carefully investigated the whole matter.

It may readily be admitted that the deacons also are capable of making mistakes. No doubt they also do. It is human to err. The church does not have an infallible deaconate any more than she has an infallible ministry. Nevertheless, often when mistakes are made in these matters the fault cannot justly be wholly attributed to Christ's ministers of mercy. It should be remembered that the fact that they deal with a people in sin does not make their task any easier for the sins of those who need to be befriended are frequently the cause of injustices that follow. Pride, for example, as it still exists in the hearts of God's poor people, often restrains

them from disclosing the whole truth concerning their circumstances to those who are appointed to help them. When then they do not receive an adequate supply of goods to alleviate their distress the fault cannot be that of the deacons. Again, greed, a vice of the old sinful nature, may cause others to magnify their needs beyond reality and if then more is distributed to such than actually should be, the deacons cannot be wholly blamed. The human nature, subject as it is to the powers of evil and being what it is, postulates countless difficulties in the proper administration of this work of mercy. As long as the church is in this world, and just so long will christian charity be needed, this situation will prevail. Before we are then hasty to criticize and belittle the labors of faithful men, it is well to think on these things.

Nevertheless, these things do bring out the acute necessity of the rigid spiritual requirements for the office of deacons. To cope with and to combat these evils they must be men well versed in the Scriptures. These Scriptures they must use continuously to instruct as well as to comfort those in affliction. Sadly enough, in our day this is often neglected. Young men with business ability are often preferred for the deaconate. Now, certainly, there is no objection to one being "young" nor to his having "business ability" but the point is that these qualities are not enough. The spiritual requirements are fundamental and imperative for the proper functioning of this office because only as one is guided by the Word of God is he able to act prudently, exercise justice, manifest true mercy and use liberality in the different circumstances where the poor and indigent have need of assistance.

c. Visiting And Comforting The Distressed

Perhaps one of the principal reasons that the office of deacon has fallen in disuse as much as it has in our day is its own neglect of this important phase of duty. Too often the visiting of the sick and afflicted is left entirely to the minister and/or the elders. It is simply not regarded as belonging to the labors of the deacons also. Yet, this is not as it should be. Even where one suffers an affliction and it is positively known that such an individual has no need of material assistance, a visit in their affliction by the deacons is proper. They are first of all ministers of *mercy*! They are not called to relieve want and suffering simply with external gifts as any welfare society or county or state might do. They are not errand-boys who deliver the groceries, clothing, etc. But they are ordained to administer mercy "with comfortable words of Scripture." That is first and out of that proceeds the rest.

We will not repeat here what we wrote in the *Standard Bearer*, Vol. 31, pg. 165, concerning visiting the sick as a part of the task of the ministry but what was written then applies here also. The deaconate is part of that ministry and especially the part through which the mercy of our merciful High Priest is to be reflected. This important work ought not to be neglected or left exclusively to others for in the measure that it is performed by the deacons their office will

also be properly esteemed and elevated to the spiritual level on which it ought to always stand. Then will the erroneous notion be eradicated from the minds of many that the office of deacon is inferior to that of elder for then it will be understood that the one office involves as much spiritual labor as does the other. And many will no longer think that all that is required in a deacon is that he possess certain natural abilities.

Let it be remembered that true mercy is that power of deliverance from the awful oppression of sin and death to which we are all subject by nature. That power is shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ, our Saviour. (Titus 3:6) And the way to a more sure knowledge of that mercy is through the Word of God. If the deacons remain mindful of this when they approach those who are in a special way afflicted, their labor will be spiritually joyful as they carry them and their needs firstly to the throne of grace where we may obtain *mercy* and grace to help in time of need (Heb. 4:16) and, secondly, as they distribute such material things as may be needed to alleviate the suffering.

d. *Rendering An Account*

The church order states that the deaconate is to render an account of all these labors in the consistory, and also (if anyone desires to be present) to the congregation, at such a time as the consistory may see fit. This is appropriate and necessary because, in the first place, the deacons are not rulers over the affairs of God's church; not even in those labors with which they are directly occupied. The prerogative to rule resides only in the elders. They represent the kingly office of Christ and, consequently, the deacons must render to them a periodic accounting of their work in order that it may be approved. In most cases this is done monthly.

This does not mean that the deacons are not to hold separate meetings. With the exception of the smaller congregations, the deaconate always meets separate from the consistory. Even then, however, one or two of the elders are to be present at their meetings. Whatever is decided upon is to be recorded and then a record of these decisions submitted to the whole consistory.

In the second place, reports of the labors of the deacons are to be submitted to the congregation by the consistory. Usually this is done annually in the form of a detailed financial statement containing the record of all gifts and charities received by the deacons as well as an itemized report of all expenditures made. In some cases such reports are given to the congregation every three or six months. This is left to the discretion of the individual consistories.

It stands to reason that such reports, especially concerning the charities, are not personal but general. Names of persons and amounts received need not be submitted to the congregation. Neither should the congregation be concerned with that. Her concern is whether or not the work of mercy is being properly carried on so that the poor and widows and orphans are cared for and the sick and distressed visited.

The work of the deacons is after all not a personal work but an official labor in which the office bearer represents the whole congregation and in the congregation Christ Himself. The congregation then has every right to be informed and should there be questions or the desire for additional information concerning this work it is quite proper that such inquiry be brought to the consistory. Thus are all things done systematically, decently and in good order.

* * * *

There is one more article of the church order that speaks of the duty of the deaconate and charity. That is Article 26 which reads as follows:

"In places where others are devoting themselves to the care of the poor, the deacons shall seek a mutual understanding with them to the end that the alms may all the better be distributed among those who have the greatest need. Moreover, they shall make it possible for the poor to make use of institutions of mercy, and to that end they shall request the board of directors of such institutions to keep in close touch with them. It is also desirable that the deaconates assist and consult one another, especially in caring for the poor in such institutions."

But since our space is filled for this time, we will reserve our comments on this article until, D.V., the next issue.

G.V.D.B.

NOTICE!

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

Announcement

The Free Christian School Society at Edgerton, Minn., is in need of a Principal to teach the four upper grades, 5, 6, 7, and 8, for the next school term.

Please send applications to Board of Free Chr. School Society, Edgerton, Minn., c/o H. Miersma, Sec'y, R.R. 1, Box 116.

IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies' Society of the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sympathy to one of its members, Mrs. Wm. T. Terpstra, in the death of her sister

MRS. ELIZABETH LANGLAND

May our heavenly Father comfort the bereaved with the assurance that He doeth all things well.

Mrs. E. R. Bruinsma, Secretary

ALL AROUND US

Another Court Case.

Such is the title of an article appearing in the May 10th issue of the Reformed *Guardian* written by the Rev. J. Blankespoor. In the April 10th Reformed *Guardian* Rev. J. Howerzyl also reflected on this case of Second Church, and we promised to give answer to him and the Rev. Blankespoor now.

I am not only interested in what Rev. Blankespoor wrote relative to the history of the case, the events that led up to the pending court trial, but also in what he did not write and should have written.

In the introductory part of his article he writes as follows:

"Legal proceedings have been initiated for another trial regarding church properties here in Michigan. This time the Second Prot. Ref. Church is involved. As usual, there are many rumors afloat regarding what happened in our church, also prior to the last actions taken. In order that our people may know what actually transpired we will try to give a brief sketch of our correspondence with those who left us.

"First of all, let me state that we are incorporated differently from all of our other churches. Without entering into details, let it be sufficient to say that our articles very clearly state that the majority in a certain situation is entitled to its share of the buildings and in another situation to all of the buildings. At the time of the split about two-fifths of the congregation left us, leaving us a majority of three-fifths."

Just three or four brief remarks here. In the first place, Blankespoor says he wants his people to know what actually transpired between us. This would be commendable if he told his people what actually transpired. But, as the reader will learn presently, this he does not do. Our criticism is not so much as to what he says, although also that is not above criticism, but we are critical of what he does not say. Blankespoor writes deceptively. Of this we have accused him before in connection with other of his writings.

Secondly, I am rather curious to know why someone saw to it that not only the Blankespoor group is informed, but also why copies of the *Guardian* were sent to some (not all) of my people who otherwise never see this paper. Did the responsible party think perhaps that he could influence my people to swallow this deceptive article? or, perhaps did he think to bring dissension among my people? or, was he afraid perhaps, as Blankespoor suggests in his article, that my consistory with a high hand has been withholding the facts from my people? It would interest me much to know just why that particular copy of the Reformed *Guardian* bearing his article should be sent to some of my congregation.

Thirdly, as to the peculiar articles of incorporation of

Second Church, that they are different from all of our other churches, I neither admit nor deny. The reason being, I do not know the contents of the articles of incorporation of our other churches. Neither, I dare say, does Blankespoor. That they are different from those of First Church I know, the difference being substantially with respect to one article. But Blankespoor will learn when he gets in court that he had better not try to make anything of that one article.

Finally, when Blankespoor tells his people that a majority of three-fifths went with him in the split, I question this very much. I am not particularly interested in numbers, but when I read this I referred to the Year Book of 1952 (I do not have the spurious Acts of Synod of 1953 which contained the Year Book of that year) I find that Second Church is listed as having 84 families. At the time of the separation my congregation numbered no less than 41 or 42 families. Now how can 42 be two-fifths of 84? The facts will show that the congregation of Second Church split right down the middle.

Blankespoor continues: "In March of 1955 each consistory member of our church received by registered mail a letter from the consistory of the other side demanding that we hand over to them our church properties. This was shortly after Judge Taylor gave his opinion in the case of First Church.

"As consistory we surely felt the need of sending a reply. But the question was how to go about it. If we would approach them as a consistory they possibly would ignore our letter because they naturally do not recognize us as a consistory. Therefore we thought it best to have our clerk approach them with our permission. Through the clerk we then requested them to appoint a committee and that this committee meet with one from our consistory to see if a satisfactory settlement could be reached. They answered this missive by sending a reply to the entire consistory because they considered the entire body to be responsible for this letter. The substance of their answer was that it should have been evident to us that our letter contained no admission of guilt in the recent schism which we had made, and that it didn't in the least concede that they are the legal Second Prot. Ref. Church. Further that we are operating under false pretenses, that our minister is not a Protestant Reformed minister, etc., etc. Finally, it stated that the only way for us to escape our embarrassing situation is to come to them in repentance, acknowledging our guilt of schism and of unlawfully confiscating the properties of the Second Church, and at the same time subjecting ourselves to the 'discipline, rules and usages of the Protestant Reformed Churches.'"

It is true that on March 17th we sent each responsible member of the Blankespoor group a registered letter. And it is also true that we did not and do not now recognize these men to be the consistory of Second Church. Not only did Classis East declare them outside of the Protestant Reformed Churches, but Judge Taylor (and later the Michi-

gan Supreme Court) also virtually said the same thing. But Blankespoor and his group are a law unto themselves. They do not have to recognize what Classis East said. They do not care what Judge Taylor and the Supreme Court decreed. They are still the "Second Prot. Ref. Church." And Blankespoor is still a "Prot. Ref. minister." And his "consistory" is still the "consistory of the Second Prot. Ref. Church." You know, when you have to deal with people like that, the only language they will understand is the badge and pistol of the sheriff, and even that sometimes seems doubtful. My simple question to Blankespoor is: how can you recognize someone or something that does not exist? The fact of the matter is simply that they do not recognize us as consistory and we do not recognize them as such.

Yet their "clerk" sent a personal letter to our clerk to see if he could persuade our consistory to appoint a committee to confer with a committee from their group. Why? Because they are so tender-hearted and wanted to have us share fifty-fifty with them in the properties? Don't you ever believe it! The truth is that they saw the handwriting on the wall when Judge Taylor rendered his decision in the case of First Church. Blankespoor and his consistory did not see this, but the "clerk." Blankespoor tells us that he and the consistory wanted to answer our missive but didn't know how, so they asked the "clerk" to write to our clerk. The truth is that the "clerk" of the Blankespoor consistory went to his consistory with the request that he might write a personal letter to our clerk asking for arbitration. The Blankespoor consistory granted this request. The "clerk" was smart enough to see that the cause of the Blankespoor group was hopeless after Judge Taylor rendered his decision, unless perhaps they could fool my consistory with a proposition.

Now mind you, they came with a proposition to settle the property dispute on April 29, 1955, more than a year and a half after the split. And that, too, after they saw from Judge Taylor's decision how the wind was blowing. Of course the whole idea of arbitration was ridiculous at this late date. The people who follow Blankespoor should know how recklessly he and his consistory handled the affairs of the church for this year and a half after the split while they wholly ignored the Articles of Incorporation. The thing becomes still more ridiculous when you consider that we, not they, are the Second Prot. Ref. Church. It is as ridiculous as when a gang of robbers would sit in the bank and tell the personnel "we will get out only when you give us half of what is in the bank."

Of course we told them "that the only way for them to escape their embarrassing situation was to come to us in repentance, acknowledging their guilt of schism and of unlawfully confiscating the properties and to subject themselves to the 'discipline, rules and usages of the Protestant Reformed Churches as they agreed to do when they adopted the Articles of Incorporation.'" This, we felt was our Christian duty to do.

Blankespoor continues: "A few months later we received another letter with the same demands. Our consistory, however, took no action since we felt that we could do no more than what we had previously proposed."

It is true that this third letter, dated September 15, 1955, was addressed to the Blankespoor group reiterating our demands. In fact this third letter, after reminding them that we had not received an acknowledgment and satisfactory reply to our two former missives and once more reminding them of their sin of schism and unlawful seizure of the church properties, this time warned them that unless we received a satisfactory answer within a month's time we would proceed with litigation immediately after the case of First Church before the Supreme Court was settled.

But Blankespoor must not say that his consistory took no action because they felt that they could do no more than what they had previously proposed. He leaves the impression that he is in the driver's seat, while he isn't. He leaves the impression that they were in a position to make us an offer, while they were not. He fails to tell his readers that he was unseated at Classis East, and because he refused to go the church-political way, like De Wolf, he was put outside of the Protestant Reformed Churches. And when he, or any other for that matter, leaves the Protestant Reformed Churches at that very moment he ceases to have any rights or privileges in the church he leaves or is expelled from. Imagine for a moment that a member decides to ask for his papers to transfer to another church, or is dismissed to join another denomination and this is granted by the consistory. Since when does such a member or person have the right or claim to the church property in the church he leaves? Would not such a person be laughed out of court if he nevertheless insisted that some of the property belonged to him? I think so. The same applies to the Blankespoor group. Yet, there he sits in the center of the church property and claims that it is his. And when this is disputed and denied, then he has the nerve to offer a fifty-fifty proposition. How silly can the man get?

I see that my space is about used up and I have quoted only about half of what Blankespoor wrote. Because the *Standard Bearer* appears only once a month for the months of June, July and August, another article on this subject would have to appear after the court trial is finished. I see, therefore, no reason to continue quoting Blankespoor's article.

In closing I could say this that the rest of the article is written quite factually, though quite naturally I cannot agree with all that he says. For instance, I have quite a different understanding of I Cor. 6 than they do. And though once I felt inclined to the argument that whereas "both groups contributed financially towards the acquisition of the properties" and that therefore both should share them, I am no longer of the same disposition because of what has happened in the course of this case.

Moreover, I did not like the sting of the last part of the

next to the last paragraph of his article when he writes: "This shows that this action was taken without a voice of their congregation." What he accuses us of doing and implies that it is bad, is exactly what they themselves have done. Their committee which visited our consistory with their proposition even put it in writing that their offer was made "subject to the approval of our congregation." So the Blankespoor group did virtually the same thing they accuse us of.

M.S

CONTRIBUTIONS

CHRIST WASHES THE FEET OF HIS DISCIPLES

Now before the feast of the tabernacle, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hand, and that he was come from God and went to God; he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel and girded himself. After that he poured water into a basin, and began to wash his disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded." John 13:1-5.

So reads the report of a doing of Christ that perhaps as much as anything He had ever done set his disciples to wondering. They were at loss how to explain His deed. Their conscience must also have smitten them. For not so many hours before they had again been disputing among themselves who of their number was to be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

They had entered the room where they had been supping with soiled feet. For they had been on the way. Though they had basin, towel and water, their feet had gone unwashed. There being no servant on hand to do the washing, it could not be helped. So each of them must have reasoned with himself. Any one of their number could have performed that labor on the others. But it is safe to assume that this had occurred to none of them. For they did not want to serve. They were bent on rule. The ambition of each of them was to attain to the highest place in Christ's kingdom. The mother of two of their number had even approached Christ on the matter. Could her sons sit on His right and left hand when He would have come into His own. Little did they at this time understand that citizenship in the Kingdom spells service. This He would now teach them. So He washed their feet.

The meaning of His doing is clear. The labor to which He now stooped is symbolical. The poured water pointed to

His blood that He would shed for them and the dust that clave to their feet pointed to their sins, to the guilt and moral pollution in which they had been conceived and born. And as He poured water in the basin, so would He pour out His life for them and thereby provide Himself with the means for their cleansing. Thus would He as their Lord serve them.

How matchless His obedience! How firm His determination to offer Himself! How the zeal of God's house consumes Him! How true that, having loved His own in the world, He loves them to the end! For it is before the feast of the passover that foreshadows the redemption by His blood. He knows, is fully aware, that His hour has come that He shall depart out of this world unto the Father. And He knows, too, that the only way that leads out of this world unto the Father is the way of the cross, thus a way that leads into the abyss where all the billows of God's wrath shall pass over Him. And He knows and knowing He washes their feet, engages in an action that reveals His firm resolve to accept His cross that His people may be cleansed from all their sins. How evident that He truly offers Himself and that in suffering and dying on the cross He is not the unwilling victim of circumstance.

Out of this world He departs unto the Father. And the Father will receive Him. For He will do the Father's will. He will offer Himself and thereby prepare a place for His own in the Father's house. And as the glorified Christ He will return to them in the Spirit and receive them unto Himself that where He is they may also be. This He will do as knowing that for this purpose the Father has given into His hands all things: life, death, angels, principalities, things present, things to come, height, depth and any other creature. And so all His enemies are in His hands. Hence in His sufferings He reigns and His death is His victory.

And He knows that He came from God, that God called Him, and sent Him and upholds Him, and that the Spirit of God is upon Him, that He may bring judgment to the Gentiles; that the Lord has called Him in righteousness, holds His hand and keeps Him and gives Him for a covenant to the people, for a light to the gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.

And He knows that He goes unto God through suffering to be glorified with the Father's own Self with the glory which He had with Him before the world was. This He knows. Of this He is fully conscious. For He washes His disciples' feet now that His hour has come. The act is expressive of all that He knows, wills, purposes as the Christ of God.

He knows the Father's will, knows that the way unto the Father is the way of the cross, knows that, going by this way, He will be glorified of the Father. When Judas is gone out, He speaks to them of His glory, "Now is the Son of

man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify him."

But the disciples of the Lord do not understand. They grasp not the purpose that is back of His washing their feet. His doing provokes them, particularly Peter. But he keeps silence until the Lord has come to him. Then he speaks, "Lord dost thou wash my feet?" Should Peter realize what he is saying, he would be shocked and dismayed beyond measure. For he was forbidding Christ to cleanse him from his sin by His blood. For Christ replies, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." Not to have part with Christ is to be everlastingly lost. Christ has spoken the word that brings Peter to his senses. If the matter stands thus, let the Lord then wash him by all means. So he replies, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and head." For certainly he wants part with the Lord. But the disciples already have been washed. For they are reborn men. This explains Christ's reply to Peter, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean, every whit." So does the washing of their feet signify their daily sanctification.

Christ's doing, His washing their feet, is a lesson for them of which they had much need. Says He to them, "Ye call me master and Lord. And ye say well, for so I am. If I then your Lord and Master have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet."

This they can understand—understand that they must serve one another. Not that henceforth they must make a practice of washing each other's feet literally. It is a spiritual service to which Christ here admonishes. For the believers are the body of Christ and members in particular. All the members must have the same care one for another. The one overtaken by a fault must be restored by them that are spiritual. The unruly must be warned, the weak supported, the spiritually sick prayed for. All have need of being provoked unto love and good works.

The one shall wash the other's feet but not as lord but as servant. The proud man will wash your feet but as lord and not as servant. For in his own eyes he cannot be served. He imagines that like God he can only serve, thus imagines that he can only give but cannot also receive. His pride is explained by the fact that he has never been washed by Christ.

There is but one lord in the kingdom of Heaven and that Lord Christ. Christ's people are only servants, can only be servants. And the reason is plain. Their serving one another, their washing each other's feet, is the fruit of their being served of Christ, of their being washed by His blood. They can neither give nor receive except Christ gives and receives in and through them. For in themselves they are nothing.

G.M.O.

THE GREAT DARKNESS

"If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness." — Matt. 6:23b.

Christ has before him a man destitute of the life of regeneration. There is natural light in this man, for he sees rationally. He is, therefore, enlightened. The seed of the Word fell also in his heart. He may even have received the Word with joy. That which may be known of God in the face of Christ is manifest also in him. But the man can see nothing lovely about God. He despises God in his heart. To him God's wisdom is foolishness and His virtues faults. This is what it means that the natural man is spiritually blind. Being blind in this sense, the light that is in him—the pure light from Heaven—is darkness. For he changes the truth of God into a lie, holds it in unrighteousness. If then the light that is in the man is darkness, how great is that darkness. It is darkness that is absolute.

God's believing people are in principle children of the light and children of the day. They see spiritually. For the love of God is in their hearts. They do not sleep as do the others in whom the light is darkness, but they watch and are sober. They are spiritually alert. They are spiritually aware of the approach of the day of the Lord. For them, therefore, this day does not come as a thief in the night, for it is being expected.

But the spiritually blind are indifferent. Their hatred of Christ and of the heavenly stupifies them spiritually. Spiritually they are drunken. Spiritually, therefore, they are indifferent to the things heavenly. They mind earthly things and are increasingly hardened by the Gospel which to them is a savor of death unto death.

G.M.O.

HOW GREAT THE GOODNESS KEPT IN STORE

How great the goodness kept in store
For those who fear Thee and adore
In meek humility.

How great the deeds with mercy fraught
Which openly Thy hand has wrought
For those who trust in Thee.

Blest be the Lord, for He has showed,
While giving me a safe abode,
His love beyond compare;
Although His face He seemed to hide,
He ever heard me when I cried,
And made my wants His care.

Ye saints, Jehovah love and serve,
For He the faithful will preserve,
And shield from men of pride;
Be strong, and let your hearts be brave,
All ye that wait for Him to save,
In God the Lord confide.

Psalm 31:1, 3, 4

Report of the Western Ladies' League

The Spring meeting of the Ladies' League of the Prot. Ref. Churches was held on the afternoon of April 13. The meeting was opened by singing Psalter Nos. 298 and 356, after which our President, Mrs. H. Veldman, read I Peter 3 and led us in prayer. A word of welcome was extended to all the ladies gathered at our Doon church. The secretary then read the minutes and the treasures report was given. The president then introduced the speaker, Rev. J. A. Heys, who spoke on "The Humility of a Christian Woman."

The first thought that was developed was the *idea* of humility. The idea of the word itself is to be low, near the ground. We must be sincere and humble as Paul when he says, "I am the least." Our humility must be patterned after the humility of Christ. We must be humble for God's sake and desire to be pleasing in His sight. This is wrought by Christ's Spirit in our hearts. Then only can we be humble in the true sense of the word. Woman's humility is exercised in two spheres of life, in her life as a wife in the home, and in general over against man in general.

The second thought was the *manifestation* of humility. Submission is the necessary quality in the manifestation of humility. The first sin was pride; all sin is pride. A woman must submit in all things which are according to the law of God. This means a woman must be humble, submissive in her life as a wife over against her husband. Woman in general must be subject to man in general. A woman may not rule in church or otherwise.

The third thought, the *attainment* of humility, brought out the idea that this is possible only as it comes from Christ. He Who demands humility gives it to us in the way of a free *gift*. It is given in the way of regeneration. We know it is not of works for then we would boast. Through grace we are able to submit to the rule He has placed over us. All glory may then be unto God.

After this instructive speech we were favored with a duet from our Edgerton Society. Then the following questions were answered by Rev. H. Veldman.

1. Was Queen Esther a believer?
2. Can one "almost be persuaded?" Acts 26-28.
3. Why were the Israelites forbidden to burn honey in any offering made by fire? Lev. 2:11.
4. Explain Luke 23:31.
5. Explain I Sam. 15:35. Can the Lord repent of something he has done?
6. What kind of fellowship may we have with those (not Prot. Ref.) that profess to be Christians?
7. Explain the two covenants in Gal. 4:24.

A group of Doon ladies sang a Dutch song after which we sang Psalter No. 325, while collection was taken for our Edgerton School. Our meeting was closed with prayer by Rev. J. A. Heys. Refreshments were then served by our Hull Ladies Aid.

We thank God for an afternoon of Christian fellowship and pray that He may continue to bless us and grant us a rich measure of His grace.

Mrs. P. Buys, reporter

Announcement

Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet, D. V., at the Hudsonville Prot. Ref. Church on Wednesday, July 11, 1956, at 9 A. M. Delegates will please take notice.

M. Schipper, Stated Clerk.

HOW BLEST IS HE WHOSE TRESPASS

How blest is he whose trespass
Has freely been forgiven,
Whose sin is wholly covered
Before the sight of heaven.
Blest he to whom Jehovah
Will not impute his sin,
Who has a guileless spirit,
Whose heart is true within.

So let the godly seek Thee
In times when Thou art near;
No whelming floods shall reach them,
Nor cause their hearts to fear.
In Thee, O Lord, I hide me,
Thou savest me from ill,
And songs of Thy salvation
My heart with rapture thrill.

I graciously will teach thee
The way that thou shalt go,
And with My eye upon thee
My counsel make thee know.
But be ye not unruly,
Or slow to understand,
Be not perverse, but willing
To heed My wise command.

The sorrows of the wicked
In number shall abound,
But those that trust Jehovah,
His mercy shall surround.
Then in the Lord be joyful,
In song lift up your voice;
Be glad in God, ye righteous,
Rejoice, ye saints, rejoice.

Psalms 32:1, 3, 4, 5

REPORT OF CLASSIS EAST

April 4-6, 25-27, 30, 1956

At the Fourth and First Prot. Ref. Churches

Rev. H. Hanko led in the opening devotions, and after the Classis was declared constituted the Rev. G. Lanting presided.

The minutes of the January Classis were read and adopted.

The chair appointed the brethren Herman Kuiper and Kenneth Lanning to serve as Finance Committee for these sessions of Classis. The report of this committee was accepted at the concluding session of Classis.

Upon the request of the churches at Creston and Kalamazoo for classical appointments the chair appointed the brethren Rev. J. McCollam, J. Rust and P. Koole to arrange the schedule which later was adopted as follows:

CRESTON—April 15, R. Veldman; April 22, G. Vos; April 29, G. Lanting; May 13, C. Hanko; May 20, J. McCollam; May 27, R. Veldman; June 10, G. Lanting; June 17, H. Hanko; June 24, M. Schipper; July 8, J. McCollam.

KALAMAZOO—April 15, C. Hanko; May 6, M. Schipper; May 13, G. Vos; May 20, G. Lanting; May 27, H. Hanko; June 3, M. Schipper; June 10, C. Hanko; June 17, G. Vos; June 24, J. McCollam; July 1, R. Veldman; July 8, H. Hanko.

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

The committee for the revision of subsidy requests reported and with one amendment was adopted. Later the Classis decided to send the adopted revision on to Synod.

The belated request for subsidy from Holland was received and granted.

Two overtures re the change of the meeting place of Synod were received from Hudsonville and Second and decisions from various churches respecting this matter. Classis decided not to heed these overtures since Synod itself can decide to change its meeting place if this is necessary.

Classis elects two members to the Classical Committee: Revs. R. Veldman and C. Hanko.

Classis also elects Church Visitors: Revs. G. Vos and C. Hanko. Rev. M. Schipper is alternate for both.

Candidate M. Koerner requests that his candidacy be extended. This matter is sent on to Synod.

A communication from a brother re the Holland Case was declared to be out of order. Another communication re this same case from another brother was later received for information.

The rest of the time was spent in the treatment of the Holland Case. Various protests from members of that church were read and received for information, as well as the answers of the Consistory. The case had to do with the Consistory's declaring the election of a deacon-elect null and void and with the question of the Conscientious Objector to the godless union.

A committee was appointed to advise Classis re this case as follows: Revs. M. Schipper and C. Hanko, and the elders H. G. Kuiper and J. Miedema. The Revs. H. Hoeksema and G. M. Ophoff were appointed to serve as advisors. This committee reported on April 25th.

The report of the committee was treated seriatim and for the greater part was adopted by Classis. This report for the greater part sustained the protestants.

Because the Holland Case had caused strained relations between the protestants and the Congregation, Classis decided to appoint a committee to meet with the Consistory and the Congregation to assist in a settlement of their differences. The committee appointed consisted of the Revs. C. Hanko, H. Hoeksema, R. Veldman and G. Vos.

The chairman, who had led us patiently and efficiently through the long and tedious sessions, addressed the Classis with well chosen words directed especially to those involved in the serious matter of Holland admonishing and exhorting them to strive for harmony and the well-being of the church.

The Rev. G. Vos led in the closing prayer of thanksgiving.

Rev. M. Schipper, Stated Clerk.