

THE STANDARD

Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

VOLUME XXXIII

APRIL 15, 1957 — GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

NUMBER 14

MEDITATION

REVILING THE DYING CHRIST

"And they that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the Temple, and buildest it in three days, save Thyself. If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." — Matt. 27:39, 40.

How characteristic of fallen humanity are those passers-by!

It was none of their business, but they must needs stop a while, and as they stop, revile the dying Christ.

No, they are not the only miserable creatures who mock Jesus. They all did. But here they are mentioned especially.

Yes, all mock Jesus.

Chief of them all were the elders, the chief priests, the lawyers, the Scribes and the Pharisees. All that was called the cream of the crop surrounded the Cross of Golgotha, and derided the Son of God.

Neither were they alone in their godless work. Also the mob was guilty of this heinous crime. The mob, which consisted of Jews mostly, but also some Greeks, and Romans. Indeed, we may assume that representatives of many nations were present around that cross. Was it not the greatest of all holy days of the church which brought these representatives from all the surrounded nations to the feast of the Passover? Do you remember the many nations that are mentioned a few weeks hence, at the feast of Pentecost?

It must have been a motley throng around that cross.

And that is as it should be. The *world* must be there. This moment is a very special moment.

This moment is the most important in all the history of the world. Never shall there be a more pregnant hour on the clock of the Universe.

I may even say that this moment is that which is most important in all eternity.

Remember the little Lamb standing as if slain in the midst of the throne of God? And if in the midst of the throne it must needs be in the *very heart of God!* For God is on that throne.

And that is correct.

Jesus hanging on the Cross is the sweetest and the most beautiful Thing God has ever revealed, both in creation and in recreation.

Jesus hanging on the cross, derided and reviled by the world and the church, and nevertheless dying for His own, is the most wondrous spectacle we will ever see.

All things in heaven and earth, in hell and anywhere are, became, and shall be because of this Holy Thing of which the angels sang.

It shows all the virtues of God. It pinpoints all that is glorious in our Father above.

It shall make you sing forever before the throne. God will never let you forget His loving heart that would die in Christ: the Death of the Son of God!

As though you would!

You and I and all the host of the elect shall sing unto all eternity: Thou hast bought us unto God by Thy blood!

And all the while we will be pointing to that bleeding little Lamb in the midst of the throne of God!

But the passers-by revile this most beautiful Holy Thing!

Horror of horrors!

* * * *

Why did not God come and destroy the whole world?

He did not, and for the same reason why Jesus saw, heard, suffered, and . . . remained nailed to the cruel cross!

But of that later.

First those passers-by.

Yes, they have their hour.

All classes of people have their hour: they also must be represented.

The passers-by are a special class. And yet, when we study them, they are not so special after all.

No, we do not know for certain who they were.

Some say that they were Galileans.

Others identify them as of the dispersion.

They are neither the one nor the other.

They were simply, as is stated, passers-by.

They are the world in their coldness, indifference, cold bloodedness, and utmost contempt for the things that are important, great, majestic.

I think that a man like Simon of Cyrene was a fitting representative of this sort of people.

The rest of Jerusalem was at least interested in this bleeding Stranger of Galilee. They congregated on this Thursday and Friday and ran in great multitudes from the place where the Sanhedrin congregated to Pilate's hall of judgment, to Herod's palace, and back again, ever growing and ever more clamorous.

But not these passers-by.

They just *happen* to find themselves at this spot, this Calvary.

Don't you ever believe it! They were here by God's appointment. The passers-by have a date with God. God will have cursed humanity before this Spectacle in all their rotten nuances. The whole world must be there.

We have heard of them before.

When a poor man cast a shadow of the Cross before, we see them also. I have in mind the passers-by in the days of Jeremiah's lamentations. The Book in the Bible that gave utterance before of the dying Christ's roaring.

"Is it nothing to you, all that *pass by*? behold, and see if their be any sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto Me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted Me in the day of His fierce anger." Lamentations 1:12.

Dear reader, in that text you have the suffering of Christ as He suffered in His elect before His coming.

Oh yes, we know these passers-by. They are the godless world from a special point of view.

And would you know it? they are a class that are more numerous now than at any other time in God's history.

Today the world stands in the sign of these passers-by.

More and more we begin to see their faces, and more and more we see the world such as it will be when Jesus returns. Then the whole world will be as those indifferent specimen

around the cross. They will then sow, reap, buy and sell, marry and give in marriage, etc. And that shall be their sin. They shall act as the dumb brute which is insensible to all spiritual data.

Oh, the horror of those passers-by!

* * * *

But here they reviled the dying Christ.

And how perverted is their judgment!

They tell a lie in a double sense.

The Lord never said: "I will destroy the temple!"

He had announced Himself as the Rebuilder of the Temple. When we destroyed it. We always destroy the temple of God: in Paradise, in Moses' day and also in Christ's day. The temple is the House of God: man plus God.

The Lord said: You destroy, but I build it.

And, second, the Lord had not spoken of the edifice on Zion's mount, but He spake of His body. He was the Temple of the living God. In Him God and man are united. And Him they broke. And even now, while they are reviling Him, He is rebuilding it.

They were liars in a double sense.

The cross of Jesus is the very foundation of the rebuilt temple of God, and more than that, it is the foundation of the glorified, exalted Temple of God, that cannot even be likened to the edifice on Mount Zion.

That cross is the God of our salvation, reconciling the world unto Himself.

Presently He will send the Holy Spirit which He will receive from His Father and then He shall draw all the elect unto Himself, so that the Temple may be full to overflowing.

And that rebuilt, glorified, and exalted Temple shall be beautiful indeed. To see a preview you must read the wonderful Revelation of John. (I mean, of course, of Jesus Christ).

But the passer-by is simply a passer-by. What could he know of the glories that are crystalizing before his very eye?

He is blind to God, to Christ, to spiritual values.

Poor, miserable passer-by.

* * * *

"If thou be the Son of God, come down from that Cross!"

That means: Thou art not the Son of God, and therefore, Thou canst not come down.

It seems that they have inquired round about that cross.

That was already plain when we examined their double lie. They must have said: why is this man on the cross? What has he done? And there are always willing informers. They must have told them about the accusations before Pilate. Hence, this cry.

And so we have the blindness of sin in this reviling cry.

Change the viewpoint: we destroyed the temple; the temple must be built on perfect righteousness, and loving obedience to God; we cannot do it; only God is able; hence, He is the Son of God rebuilding the Temple of God.

Why cannot Jesus come down from the cross?

Oh, He could, if you would only take into account His exalted Godhead and power. Did He not say at one point: I can pray My Father and He will send me 12 legions of angels?

But again: why could not Jesus come down from the cross?

The answer is a beautiful story, my friends.

The theological reason is the unfathomable love of God. God will have His love known. And I do not mean first of all His love for us.

I have in mind this idea: the only reason why we have creation and recreation is the fact that God wanted to display, manifest, reveal how inexpressably lovely and beautiful He is. And His wisdom devised the way of sin and grace. And Jesus our Saviour serves that glorious purpose. And Jesus knew it. And so He will not come down. Halleluja!

The Christological reason is the salvation of the church. How could we be saved if Jesus came down?

Moreover, there is that wondrous text in Heb. 12. Jesus endured the Cross and despised the shame because of the reward of glory that was set before Him.

This same bleeding Christ shall receive a name that is above every name.

No, do not pass by.

Stand before that cross and sing!

It is the splendid spectacle of surpassing beauty of God!

G.V.

Teachers Meeting

The Sunday School teachers mass meeting will be held Friday, April 26, in the Hope Church at 8 p. m.

THE STANDARD BEARER

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

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

Editor — REV. HERMAN HOEKSEMA

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

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

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

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

Subscription price: \$4.00 per year

Entered as Second Class matter at Grand Rapids, Michigan

CONTENTS

MEDITATION —

- Reviling the Dying Christ.....313
Rev. G. Vos

EDITORIALS —

- The Free Offer.....316
Rev. H. Hoeksema

OUR DOCTRINE —

- The Book of Revelation.....318
Rev. H. Hoeksema

FEATURE ARTICLE —

- The Lion in the Old Testament.....320
Rev. G. Lanting

FROM HOLY WRIT —

- Exposition of I Corinthians 12:12-27.....322
Rev. G. Lubbers

IN HIS FEAR —

- Keep It A Thing of Beauty.....324
Rev. J. A. Heys

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH —

- The Church and the Sacraments.....326
Rev. H. Veldman

THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS —

- The Exposition of the Canons of Dordrecht.....328
Rev. H. C. Hoeksema

DECENCY AND ORDER —

- Ecclesiastical Assemblies.....331
Rev. G. Vanden Berg

ALL AROUND US —

- The Rising Strength of Christianity.....333
What of the Godless?.....333
Current Thoughts on Church and State.....334
Rev. M. Schipper

CONTRIBUTIONS —

- Missionary Notes335
Rev. G. Lubbers
The Centennial of the Christian Reformed Church.....336
S. D. V.

EDITORIALS

The Free Offer

It is rather striking that, in the pamphlet "The Free Offer," the same Scriptural passages, in part, are offered as proof as the Christian Reformed Synod of 1924 adduced as proof for the "Three Points" of "common grace." To me, this is a rather clear indication that so-called common grace and the Arminian presentation of the gospel are closely related.

The first text the authors of "The Free Offer" quote and attempt to exegete is Matt. 5:44-48. They admit that this passage does not deal with "the free offer of the gospel" but, according to them, "it tells us something regarding God's benevolence that has bearing upon all manifestations of divine grace." When God makes His sun to shine and sends rain on the good and on the evil, it is, according to them, evident that both, elect and reprobate, are the objects of God's grace and lovingkindness. Let me quote them a little more fully:

"The disciples are to love their enemies in order that they may be the sons of their Father; they must imitate their Father. Clearly implied is the thought that God, the Father, loves his enemies and that it is because he loves his enemies that he makes his sun rise upon them and sends them rain. This is just saying that the kindness bestowed in sunshine and rain is the expression of divine love, that back of the bestowal there is an attitude on the part of God, called love, which constrains him to bestow these tokens of his lovingkindness. This informs us that the gifts bestowed by God are not simply gifts which have the effect of good and blessing to those who are the recipients but that they are also a manifestation or expression of lovingkindness and goodness in the heart or will of God with reference to those who are the recipients. The enjoyment on the part of the recipients has its ground as well as its source in this lovingkindness of which the gifts enjoyed are the expression. In other words, these are gifts and are enjoyed because there is in a true and high sense benevolence in the heart of God."

The authors also refer to and quote the similar passage in Luke 6:35, 36, for the same purpose and with the same explanation, viz. that God loves all His enemies.

The first question we must ask in this connection is: is it the current teaching of Scripture that God loves all His enemies, that He loves not only the elect but also the reprobate, that He loves not only the wicked that repent, but also the wicked that do not repent as the authors of "The Free Offer" literally state? Cf. p. 7. Is it the current teaching of Holy Writ that God not only bestows good gifts upon the

ungodly that never repent, but also that it is manifestation of the love of God to them that He bestows these gifts?

This, to my mind, is essential.

We do not believe that Scripture contradicts itself. We do not believe that any particular passage of Holy Writ can be in conflict with the current teaching of the Word of God. It has always been the Reformed method of exegesis to explain a certain passage in the light of the whole of Scripture.

It is easy to ignore this sound rule, explain a particular text without paying attention to the rest of Scripture, and then give one's own rather philosophical interpretation of the text, and arrive at all kinds of heretical conclusions; but this is thoroughly unsound.

This is exactly what the authors of "The Free Offer" do in regard to the text in Matt. 5:44-48 and Luke 6:35, 36.

According to them, these texts teach:

1. That God loves the wicked that never comes to repentance.
2. That it is in this love to the wicked that do not repent that God bestows the things of this present life on them.

Both these propositions are thoroughly false when judged in the light of the current teaching of Scripture. And I wish to prove the very opposite on these propositions in the light of all of Holy Writ, namely:

1. That God does not love but hate the wicked that never come to repentance.
2. That God bestows all the things of this present life upon the wicked that do not repent, not in His love or favor, but in His wrath and for the purpose of destroying them forever.

This is the current teaching of Scripture.

Note, as to 1:

"The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity," Ps. 5:5. "God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day." Ps. 7:11. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." Ps. 9:17. "The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men. The Lord trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup." Ps. 11:4-6. "Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies: thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee. Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: the Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them. Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men. For they intended evil against thee: they imagined a mischievous device, which they are not able to perform." Ps. 21:8-11. "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. The face of the Lord is against them

that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth." Ps. 34:15, 16.

Thus I could continue and quote from virtually all the psalms.

But let us turn to other books of Scripture.

"Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways. For the froward is abomination to the Lord; but his secret is with the righteous. The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, but he blesseth the habitation of the just." Prov. 3:31-33.

I can hardly refrain from making some comments on this passage of Holy Writ in connection with the teaching of the authors of "The Free Offer." But I better refrain because it is my purpose just to let Scripture speak its own sufficiently clear language. But I would like to ask them: is the oppressor or the froward the object of God's favor at the same time that he is an abomination to the Lord? Does He bless the house of the wicked at the same time that His curse is there?

The same antithetical note is heard in the entire book of Proverbs, as is well known. Always the fools, the unrighteous, the wicked are presented as an abomination of the Lord and always they are the objects of His curse, never of His love and favor. Just let me quote a few more passages.

"The Lord will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish: but he casteth away the substance of the wicked . . . Blessings are upon the head of the just: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked . . . The way of the Lord is strength to the upright: but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity." Prov. 10:3, 6, 29. "A good man obtaineth favor of the Lord: but a man of wicked devices will he condemn . . . Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord: but they that deal truly are his delight." Prov. 12:2, 22. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: but the prayer of the upright is his delight. The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness . . . The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord: but the words of the pure are pleasant words." Prov. 15:8, 9, 26.

But why quote more from this book of Scripture. All know that it must have nothing of a love or favor of God to the wicked.

Is it necessary to quote from the prophets? Their fundamental note is ever the same: "Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him." Isa. 3:10, 11. Or again: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: Which justify the wicked

for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him! Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the Law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. Therefore is the anger of the Lord kindled against his people, and he hath stretched forth his hand against them, and hath smitten them: and the hills did tremble, and their carcasses were torn in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still." Isa. 5:20-25.

This, indeed, is the fundamental note of all the prophets of the Old Testament. God's favor is upon the righteous; He hates all the workers of iniquity.

There is no common grace for the righteous and the wicked alike.

Is it, perhaps, different in the New Testament?

God forbid! Scripture does not contradict itself. Always it speaks the same language.

It is only the righteous: the poor in spirit, they that mourn, the meek, they that hunger and thirst after the righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, that are blessed and enjoy the favor of God, Matt. 5:3-9. The rest are cursed and are under the wrath of God. For: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs from thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the oven. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name have done many wonderful works? And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me ye that work iniquity." Matt. 7:15-23.

These are the words of the Lord Himself. Are they any different from the passages we quoted from the Old Testament? All emphasize the same truth: that God's favor and love is on the righteous and that He hates all the workers of iniquity.

More of this next time, the Lord willing.

H.H.

Men's League

The Eastern Men's League will be held in our Hope Protestant Reformed Church on Thursday April 18, at 8 p. m.
John Dykstra, Sec.

OUR DOCTRINE

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

CHAPTER X

THE CHURCH NAUSEATING TO THE LORD

Revelation 3:14-22

Now the purpose is that in these words Jesus might reveal Himself in His divine fulness. That He is the beginning of the creation of God points Him out to us as the eternal and all-sufficient One, Who possesses and controls all things in heaven and on earth, and at the same time as the One by Whom and for Whom all things are created in heaven and on earth. He therefore alone, and that too, as the Christ, is the beginning of all riches. He alone is the fount of all good for the church. But also in the counsel Jesus gives to the church of Laodicea He introduces Himself as having in His possession exactly those things the church so sorely needed. She was wretched and miserable, and her misery consisted in this, that she was poor and blind and naked. But the Lord possesses gold tried by fire, spiritual riches and glory, that make the possessor truly rich. The Lord has eyesalve, that will open the eyes of the blind: spiritual eyesalve, that will cause him that applies it to see the true light in Christ. The Lord has garments, spiritual garments of righteousness and sanctification, that will truly cover them that buy them of Him before God Almighty. He, therefore, is the fulness of the church. The church must rid herself of the notion that she is rich in self, and she must confess that Jesus Christ alone is her riches and fulness.

Thirdly, we notice that Jesus approaches them with the advice, the earnest appeal, to come to Him and buy these precious articles of gold and eyesalve and garments. Of course, we cannot and do not interpret these words as if the blessings of grace could be bought with a price we have in our possession. That would be an absolutely false and unscriptural interpretation and conclusion. It is true, gold and eyesalve and garments here represent the riches of grace, as they are all in Christ Jesus our Lord. They represent those riches which the church of Laodicea so sorely needed and lacked. And they are blessings of grace in the most absolute sense of the word. The sinner has nothing wherewith he would be able to buy them. How could anyone that is poor buy gold and garments and eyesalve? Hence, when Jesus speaks here of buying, He simply employs the figure of the merchant consistently. There is in the very contradiction that is implied in these words a certain irony. Laodicea thought that she was rich. Well, then, let her buy what she needs mostly. Who that is rich and increased with goods walks about without garments? What wealthy man is without gold? Who that is blind, and has the opportunity to buy

eyesalve, would be without it? But above all, Jesus expresses here also in this counsel that they are in need of all these things, that they do not possess them although they so sorely need them, that they ought to realize their need first of all. He that imagines he possesses all a merchant offers does not buy. As long as Laodicea imagines that she is rich, she will not buy gold. As long as she imagines that she is clothed, she will not buy garments. As long as she lives in the delusion that she can see, she will not buy eyesalve to anoint her eyes. Hence, in this admonition the Lord presses the thought upon them that she is wanting in all these things, that she must come to the realization of this want, and that in the consciousness of it she must come to Him Who possesses what can fulfill her needs, in order that she might receive all from Him.

Truly, this counsel may well be presented to the church of today. As we have said, the church in general is growing more and more selfsufficient, and feels that she has need of nothing. All she feels is that the world is in need of many things; and she is bent upon increasing the whole world with goods, but herself is satisfied. She does not feel the need of gold and eyesalve and garments; yet she is poor and blind and naked. Well may her attention be called to this fact emphatically. The testimony must be heard again and again, that only in Christ is all grace and fulness of blessing, and that outside of Him we lie in the midst of death. The testimony of the rich Christ and the poor sinner must go forth loudly and emphatically, in order that the church may buy gold and eyesalve and garments to cover her nakedness. If she does not hear this counsel, the church will turn to destruction, and be swallowed up by the world.

But will the church of Laodicea listen, and heed this counsel of her Lord? We do not receive the impression that she will. Of course, she would return only the power of the grace of her Lord, that is writing this letter unto her. But there seems to be very little hope. Time and again in the history of the church, we find that there is a return from apostacy and a quickening by the power of the grace of Christ. But naturally, the time will come that she will repent no more, and only judgment can be expected. Throughout the letter we get the impression that such is the condition of the church in Laodicea. Notice, in the first place, that the announcement of judgment upon the church—as a whole is unconditional and absolute. In other letters the threat of judgment was always contingent upon impenitence. If they would not repent, the Lord would visit them with His punishment. But here the judgment and punishment seem inevitable. The Lord simply says: "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." He will utterly reject, cast out, this miserable church. There seems no hope for her. The impression therefore is that the church will not repent.

In the second place, we may notice that the admonition to repent and the promise in case of repentance and faithful-

ness is addressed to individuals in the church, rather than to the church as a whole. Of course, there will always be a faithful remnant in the Church of Christ. Even to the end of the world there will be the elect of God, even though the church outwardly may apostatize and become unfaithful and miserable. And it is to these that the Lord addresses Himself evidently. In the first place, this is plain from the expression, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." The thought evidently is that even in the most miserable church of Laodicea there are still of Christ's true people. They have perhaps fallen asleep, overcome by the deadening atmosphere that is prevailing in the church of Laodicea. And the Lord comes to them with His admonition to wake up to new zeal and to repent. They must manifest themselves as His people. They must wake up to the situation. And being zealous for their Lord, they must witness against the unfaithfulness of the church. They must not remain asleep with the rest of the church. And therefore the Lord rebukes and chastens them, that they may come to repentance. This is even more evident when the Lord adds: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." There certainly is no need to change the manner and object of the address here, as if Jesus were now standing at the door of the heart of the sinner. We are undoubtedly well aware as to how this interpretation is quite popular. Jesus is presented here as standing at the door of the sinner's heart, begging that the sinner may open the door, to let Jesus in. But this representation of the matter finds no support in the text. Evidently Jesus is standing not at the door of the heart, but at the door of the church in Laodicea. That church had become unfaithful. That church had cast Him out. He was now standing outside. Within there are, however, those whom He loves and whom He would rebuke and chasten, that they may come to repentance and wake up to a new zeal. Therefore He addresses them from without. He admonishes them to wake up. And He promises them who would hear His voice and let Him in, that He will sup with them. Once more, the church as a whole seems hopelessly lost. It is miserable beyond redemption. He will spue her out of His mouth. But His own beloved, the elect of God, must not perish with the rest. Hence, He calls them. And He promises them that they shall have communion with Him, the communion of the covenant. That communion they now miss. For in their present condition they cannot exercise conscious communion with their Lord. But if they repent and wake up to a new zeal, they shall again be receptive for all the blessings of His grace. And wake up the remnant according to the election of grace surely will, when the Lord applies by His powerful grace His Word of admonition unto their hearts. The supper is symbol of friendly communion. When therefore the Lord promises that He will sup with His people, He assures them of that most intimate com-

munion of friendship which is the central, the most essential idea of the covenant. He will sup with them. In Him they will sup with the Father and the Son through the Spirit. They shall be restored to that intimate communion with the Triune God which is life. From all this, however, it is quite apparent that the church as a whole is lost, and that only the individual faithful, the individual people of God, within the church shall be saved.

Lastly, the Lord concludes also this letter with a promise for him that overcometh and is faithful unto the end: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne." If in the former promise the Lord assured His people of the communion of the covenant, symbolized in supping with Him, in this passage He promises the faithful that they shall enter into the kingdom eternal and reign with Him forever. Closely are these two truths related. Man was created a covenant being, destined as the image-bearer of God to have most intimate communion with Him. In that relation of friendship of man to God, however, he was at the same time to have dominion over all things. In communion with God, standing in relation to Him as a friend to his Friend, man was to reign over the works of God. But through his sin and fall in Adam as the head of the race, man fell out of that relation to God, became God's enemy, and at the same time was destined to slavery, the slavery of sin. In Christ Jesus, however, the relation of the covenant is restored and elevated to the highest possible level. He comes to suffer and bear our condemnation. He overcomes as the suffering Servant, and is faithful unto death. He restores our human nature to that height of glory and perfection where the perfect communion of the covenant is again possible, and realized in the highest possible sense of the word. At the same time, in Christ the dominion over all things is again restored to man. He overcame and was exalted. So shall all that overcome with Him be exalted. And all that overcome shall participate in that glory at the moment they pass from the church militant into the church triumphant. True, the final glory still abides until the day of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, it remains true that even as Christ now reigns in glory, so principally the believers in Christ also reign with Him through faith, even in the present world. And it is also true that even immediately after death they shall be given part with that glory of our Lord and reign with Him as kings. And that glory and that reign and that dominion shall be perfected in the new creation, after Christ has come to judge the quick and the dead. What a tremendous difference! Here the people of God belong to the despised, to the poor, to those that are persecuted, to those that are without glory. There they shall share in Christ's own glory, there they shall reign as kings, there they shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of the Father, and all creation shall be subject unto them through Christ Jesus their Lord.

H.H.

THE LION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

One of the more impressive of the beasts of the field known to, and most often mentioned by the authors of the Old Testament Scriptures, is the proverbial *King of Beasts*, the lion. Though inhabiting the wilder regions of Biblical lands, it was frequently driven from its lair by either flood or its ravenous hunger to roam the more domesticated regions in search of prey. Besides its usual prey of deer, antelope, and the like, it was also known to attack the shepherds' flocks upon mountainside and in the valleys, the beast of burden at pasture and upon the highways, and even men. Relentlessly and noiselessly stalking its prey until the opportune moment, with a heart-rending and fear-inspiring roar it would attack its unsuspecting victim, and would, almost without exception bring it to the ground, only then to rend and tear the carcass, with powerful jaws and dagger-like teeth, until wholly devoured. And with none like it in power and fierceness among the brute beasts to compare to, or challenge its terrible and bestial excellence, the imposing and indomitable figure of the lion has left a deep and abiding impression upon all acquainted with it; and in turn, has drawn from the authors of Holy Writ its proverbial share of mention in the Old Testament.

Although the actual appearance of the lion in the historical narratives does not occur until a much later date, Scriptural mention of the lion is made as early as some three hundred years after the flood. Already then, Job and Eliphaz his friend, generally considered as contemporaries of Abraham, refer to this noblest of beasts. Eliphaz, the first to allude to the lion, gives notice to its "roaring" and "fierce voice" as well as to the exceptionally long and sharp "teeth" (Job 4:10). Job, on the other hand, indicating the fierceness and relentlessness with which his afflictions came and prevailed upon him, accuses God of hunting him "as a fierce lion" (Job 10:16). Both of these references to the lion point to the fact that, already at this early date subsequent to the flood, the repute of the lion was well established. And from this we rather easily conclude its impressive history to have its beginning as early, at least, as the release of the animals from the ark.

The frequent allusions to lions by the sacred writers, and the familiar acquaintance with their habits evinced by them, as well as the variety of names by which the various circumstances of the lion's growth are distinguished, shows how common this noble beast was in former times in Palestine. In the Old Testament alone the lion is mentioned approximately one hundred and fifty times; is outnumbered only by the meek and timid lamb, which receives mention about one hundred and eighty times. Predominating in all other respects, it is spoken of in twenty-seven of the thirty-nine Old Testament books; the lamb in only sixteen. It receives mention in many and various contexts, is alluded to as it is in connection with the righteous and the wicked, heathen nations

as well as God's people, the prophets, the judges, the psalmists, and is noted even in comparison with the Lord Himself. It is further referred to in connection with suffering and destruction, victory and defeat; it is seen in visions and dreams, is represented by images and as well appears in actual historical narratives. And worthy of mention in this connection is the fact that, in the New Testament, both Christ and the devil are, though from different aspects, compared with the lion. But even in the Old Testament alone, the lion predominates also over the lamb, mentioned as the lamb is almost always literally, and then too, almost always in connection with the ceremonial life of Israel.

The presence of the lion in the land of Palestine is shown in the historical narratives in which the lion actually appears, most of which are well-known to all of us. Such familiar incidents include Samson's empty-handed slaying of the lion in the vineyards of Timnath (Judges 14:5, 6); David's combat with a lion in defense of his flock (I Sam. 17:23); the slaughter of a lion in a pit in winter by one of David's notable companions in hiding (II Sam. 23:20); and the tribe of lions which, sent by the Lord, descended upon godless Samaria and killed some of them (II Kings 17:25), as well as the destruction of the disobedient prophet by a lion, mentioned in I Kings 13, and Daniel's experience in the lion's den (Dan. 6).

Not too far removed from the above literal mention of the lion are the passages that refer to the lion as represented by images upon the stairs ascending to the throne of Solomon, (I Kings 10:19, 20); its likeness as seen in the visions of Ezekiel (1:10; 10:14), and of Daniel (7:4). Further, in this connection, we call attention to the passages depicting the radical change that shall have come about with the renewal of the creation, and in which God Himself declares that in the new heavens and earth "The lion shall eat straw like the ox" (Is. 11:7), and "the lion and the calf and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them" (Is. 11:6). And again "no lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast . . ." (Is. 35:9a), "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock" (Is. 65:25).

These passages to which we have referred above are only some of the approximately fifty in which the lion is mentioned, loosely speaking, literally. And from these passages we learn comparatively little about the true nature of this fierce and indomitable *King of Beasts*. It is only when we view it in the light of the other remaining passages of the Old Testament Scriptures that we learn to know this imposing figure, that we begin to comprehend the tremendous impress the lion left upon the Old Testament saints, and also, that we begin to understand the purpose of God in giving to this creature such a prominent place in the lives of the sacred writers, not to mention His people in general. And these remaining passages are about one hundred, in

number; in them the lion is made mention of by way of comparison; from them we learn much about its notable characteristics.

That the lion was known to possess a strength superior to that of any other beast of the field is clearly stated in Prov. 30:30, "A lion which is strongest among beasts . . ."; is clearly indicated in Judges 14:18 where, in answer to the riddle of Samson, the Philistines state "What is stronger than a lion?", positively implying that there is no beast stronger. Again this superiority is alluded to by David, when, unable to find a more suitable comparison with which to express his own high esteem for the prowess of Saul and Jonathan, declares "they were stronger than lions" (II Sam. 1:23).

The cunning and relentlessness with which the lion stalked its prey is depicted to us when in the Psalms we read of the wicked that "He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den" (10:9), that "like as a lion that is greedy of his prey, and as a young lion (only recently come to full strength) lurking in secret places" (17:12). Job evidently alludes to these same characteristics of the lion when, of God, he says "Thou huntest me as a fierce lion" (Job 19:16).

The fearlessness with which this brute beast was endowed is implied in such passage as Prov. 30:30 where it is said that the lion "turneth not away from any"; as Isaiah 31:4, where of the lion it is noted that "when a multitude of shepherds is called against him, he will not be afraid of their voice, nor abase himself for the noise of them;" and again, as II Samuel 17:10, where reference is made to valient men "whose heart is as the heart of a lion."

Another of the notable characteristics in which the lion excels is the thunderous roar it utters at the moment it attacks its intended victim, supplanting strength with weakness and boldness with fear. And well-known this awful, bestial thunder must have been to the authors of the Scriptures for they compare with it the speaking of God, "The lion hath roared, who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken, who can but prophesy?" (Amos 3:8); they allude to it when remarking that "The king's wrath is as the roaring of the lion" (Prov. 19:12), and "The fear of a king is as the roaring of the lion; whoso provoketh him to anger forfeiteth his life" (Prov. 20:2).

Furthermore, the incomparable fierceness with which the lion" (vs. 13), causing him to cry to the Lord, "save me claws, crushing its limbs with vise-like jaws, and bearing it down torn and bleeding — as well as the ravenous greed with which it rends and devours its victim until wholly consumed — all this was only too real to David when, in the Messianic 22nd Psalm, he depicts the wicked as gaping "upon me with their mouths" as a ravening and a roaring lion" (vs. 13), causing him to cry to the Lord, "save me from the lion's mouth," "lest he tear my soul like a lion, rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver" (Ps. 22:21 and 7:2 respectively). And no less real and vivid is

this fierceness of the lion to the mind of the weeping prophet Jeremiah when lamentingly he expresses that the Lord was to me as a roaring lion in secret places. He hath turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces" (Lamentations 3:10, 11). Equally as able as Jeremiah, and despairing of a son to follow him upon the throne of his father David, Hezekiah could say, "I reckoned till the morning that, as a lion, so will he break all my bones: from day to night wilt thou make an end of me" (Is. 38:13). Moreover, when the Lord declares to Israel "I will be to them as a lion," and, "I will destroy them as a lion" (Hosea 13:7, 8), we cannot but conclude that Israel was well aware of the fierce and awful ways of the lion, and consequently, fully understood the terrible implications of this Word of the Lord. For, the lion, unexcelled in fierceness, will "not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain" (Num. 23:24b).

Combining these various predominant characteristics of this most awesome of beasts, we have before us a clear picture of the lion as it lived before the minds of those instrumental in setting forth the Word of God. Relentless in pursuit, fearless in attack; fierce and awful in battle, terrible in victory. Driven on by an insatiable hunger, armed with invincible strength, bold and undaunted before man or beast, it roamed both forest and field, both hill and plain. Vanquished never, but conqueror ever, this majestic beast ruled supreme, the *King of Beasts*.

Such is the lion in the Old Testament!

And with this portrayal of the lion in the Old Testament before us we can begin to grasp the meaning of the Word of God as it comes to us in the prophecy of Micah, "The remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles, in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep. who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none shall deliver" (5:8, 9); and as the same Word comes to us in Rev. 5:5, where it is said of the victorious Christ, "Behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah . . ." But this is also true with respect to all the passages of Scripture in which the Word of God comes to us by way of comparison with the lion.

G. Lanting

Eastern Ladies' League

The Eastern Ladies' League will hold its spring meeting, April 25, at 8 P. M. in our Fourth Protestant Reformed Church. Rev. G. Lanting will speak on the topic, "Covenant Mothers and the Teen Ager's Problem."

Reserve this date and enjoy an evening of Christian fellowship.

Mrs. H. Velthouse, Vice Secretary

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of I Corinthians 12-14

IV.

(I Corinthians 12:12-27)

In the former article we noticed that in the one church of God there are spiritual gifts. (Charismata). These gifts are all in the church by the operation of the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of the risen Lord. There is not one gift, which does not come from the risen Lord through the Holy Spirit, and, therefore, does not stand in his service or must not be for the benefit of the entire body of Christ!

It is all, in the body of Christ, as the Holy Spirit determines to give to each member.

Nothing in the church has its origin, and, therefore, its purpose in man and his selfish purposes. All is out of, through and unto God. To Him be the power and the glory forever, Amen!

That all must, indeed, be just so with these gifts in the church follows from the very *nature* of the church itself.

That is Paul's instruction here in I Cor. 12:12-27, which reads as follows: "For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ . . ." (Since the passage is quite lengthy I suggest that the reader look this up in his own Bible).

Even a hasty reading of this passage indicates that Paul is here drawing a comparison between our physical-psychical body and Christ. This metaphor of the human body is a very choice one with the apostle. He employs the same figure of speech in Romans 12:4, where he seeks to establish the same practical teaching concerning the proper use of and attitude toward the spiritual gifts in the church. In both instances the *unity* of the body precedes the *exercises* of the gifts in the body. Were the church in its oneness and in its manifoldness not a manifestation of Christ in his *offices* in the church, all admonition for the proper use of the charismata would be void of solid foundation. God's work would then simply be the highest arbitrariness, and right might just as well be wrong, and justice injustice.

But now all is different!

Now the point of comparison is bedded in the solid rock of God's wisdom in the Church; it is all a matter of seeing what God hath wrought in the Church as the Architect and Builder, from whom all fatherhood in heaven and on earth is named!

Let us now take notice of the following particulars in the text.

In the first place, we should notice just what the *point of comparison* is in the text. Strictly speaking, Paul does not simply draw a formal comparison between the Church

as body and our bodies, but he pin-points the comparison down to *what* our body is and what *Christ is*. Thus we read in verse 12, "Thus *also Christ*!" Not simply the church has many members as one body, but *Christ* is one body and has many members.

Then, too, we ought to observe that in this passage not all kinds of points of comparison are made. Only one point is stressed in this comparison as being relevant. It is the point of Christ being *one body*, and yet many *members*. And we can see this reality concerning *Christ* in our very body in which we must tarry this three-score years and ten.

Just how are we to understand that Christ is one and the many members?

The answer to this question certainly must be, that, first of all, Christ is the Head of the church. The Church is gathered, defended and preserved by Him out of the entire human race, a church elected unto everlasting life. And each member is brought to be ingrafted into Christ by a true and living faith. Thus we read in verse 27, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof." Of this church we are members severally, not because we are ingrafted into *one another*, but because we are ingrafted into the body. The body is there first, and then the members. This is the very opposite of Arminianism, and all Pelagianism! With the latter the body grows out of the members. But with the Scriptural and Reformed position the members are ingrafted into the body, of which Christ is the Head. The entire body grows out of Christ. Ephesians 4:15, 16 reads, "Even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love." Such is the Scriptural notion of the body of Christ.

However, it should also be observed that Paul has a very practical purpose in mind in writing these Chapters to the Corinthians.

They must be thoroughly furnished as living members in Christ, as man of God, to every good work!

This means that as members of Christ they must walk in the office of all believers, as *prophets, priests and kings* of God. The living members of Christ's body have a calling toward one another. They must know themselves duty bound "readily and cheerfully to employ his gifts for the advantage and salvation of other members." Heidelberg Catechism, Question 55.

It is for this reason, in our judgment, that Paul here speaks particularly of *Christ*. For Christ is Head, but *as such* he is also the office-bearer, the Anointed of God. He is the *appointed* Head of the Church. He reveals the secret counsel of God concerning our redemption to the church. He emphatically does such in the spiritual gifts, the Charismata of prophesying, speaking with tongues, etc. He is the

only High Priest who gave His life for us, and who also ever lives to intercede for us before the throne of God in heaven. And he is eternal King, who rules us by his word and Spirit!

And *Christ* is not divided. His office is fundamentally one, although there is a diversity in the office, namely, prophet, priest and king! However, the prophet in Christ does not say to the priest, I do not need you. Nor does the King in him say to the prophet: "since I am not the prophet, I am not part of the Anointing of the office." Christ is not divided in all his office. And he also maintained and still maintains it out of heaven in its undivided, yet diverse unity!

This point ought to be clearly seen and appreciated for what it is worth. We should see the relevancy of this point in relationship to the fact that, in the body ecclesiastica there is also no division, schism in the function of Christ through the members! Where such division reigns it is not Christ reigning, who is all in all through the energizing work of the Spirit.

For when the Son of God gathers his church out of the entire human race, he makes of her a new creature. Fundamentally she is cut off from the old Adamic race, lying under sin's curse and damnation, and ingrafted *into* Christ! Through one and the self-same Spirit this occurs in all. And thus through the one prophet, priest and king. Hence, we are simply as God wills us to be, and, therefore, has constituted us in the Lord.

Here, too, we are as Christ determines what we should be in our walk with respect to one another. Only the thoroughly Reformed man, who believes sovereign election, limited atonement, total depravity, efficacious calling and certain preservation of the saints, can have a solid basis and a strong motive for a godly walk in the church.

Against this background the several observations of Paul concerning the "body" and its "members" will come to stand in bold relief.

By virtue of being members of Christ, and partakers of his anointing by faith, it is true that each member needs the other member in his office of all believers, as well as in the special offices and gifts. Thus God has, indeed, tempered the body! The term for "temper" in the Greek is "sugkeranumi," to mingle together, to mix together, so that one part qualifies the other.

This truth is such that the less honorable members share in the honor of those more honorable and more gifted. This is of a very practical nature. Suppose that I am a christian with one talent, and my brother or sister in Christ has received more than one talent. Then I also receive that other talent from the Lord in my brother and sister. Thus the body is mingled.

Now this should be a remedy to end all strife concerning who is or will be the greatest. He that is least is the greatest, and lives at that vantage-point where he can see all

things in their proper perspective and relationship to Christ and to God.

This was portrayed by Christ when he washed the feet of his disciples in the night in which he was betrayed.

Blessed is he, who knowing this, also doeth it.

Wherefore let it be clearly understood, says Paul, that not what we "say" concerning reality determines truth, but what God in Christ has constituted. That is the truth! Hence, it is very well possible for the foolish "foot" to say: Since I am not the hand, another member, having another place in the body, I am not of the body. But such an assertion can very well be gainsaid with a simple question: Is it, therefore, not of the body? How absurd such foot would be. Just so foolish is all envy for the place of the other member in the church. And there is a great amount of such folly under the sun in God's church. Who of us does not need to crucify also this sinful member, the workings of sin in his flesh?!

The same is true of the more noble member the ear. It does not have the same function as the eye. But the fact that it is not "eye" but "ear" does that make it *true* that it is not of the body? To ask this question is to answer it.

For did not God so constitute the body that it could not be "body" without having several members? Had God determined to save only one soul, then there would be no body. But now he hath determined to save many, many people. And each must have his Divinely determined place in the body. And in the mind of God this is the manifestation of Christ, in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily.

Let us then stand on higher ground when we see the diversity in the unity in the body of Christ. Philosophers may ponder and spin their theories about the one and the many; it is natural light in them, glimmerings of the same, let it be well understood! But christians, who have an eye of faith, for the mystery of godliness that is great in the church, they do not speak of this as a mere logical abstraction, but *in concreto*, see this one and many of the Trinity and of the offices of Christ in the very fabric of their spiritual existence!

Then there is no schism in the body. Each has a care for the other. Such is *Christ* in our life. That is what it means to say: and what I now live I live by the faith of the Son of God.

Then when one member suffers all suffer. And when one rejoices, all the members rejoice *together* (sunchairei).

Here we see something new under the sun. Yes, we see only a small beginning of the new obedience! *Yet so* (let it be noticed) that we do not only live according to *some* but according to *all* of God's commandments.

Yes, spiritual gifts in the church.

For the profit of all. Then there will be no schism!

G.L.

IN HIS FEAR

Keep it a Thing of Beauty!

What do we mean?

What do we have in mind?

The thing whose beauty we ought to preserve is a thing whose beauty is frequently mentioned in Scripture.

We have in mind the beauty of the marriage ceremony and celebration.

And today we see so much creeping into these wedding ceremonies and receptions that is anything but activity performed in His fear. Often the weddings of young people in the congregations resemble so closely the weddings of the world that its beauty is gone and we return home disgusted and sick at heart at what we have experienced.

Scripture, surely, does not condemn either a public ceremony nor a reception to celebrate and commemorate the wedding.

The marriage bond is one of the most beautiful figures used in Scripture to express and present the relationship between Christ and His Church. And this fact ought to be evident in every wedding of those who profess to belong to His Church.

We read of the marriage bond already in Paradise when God made Eve from the rib of Adam to be an help meet for him. All the animals were created male and female. All had companions. But Adam stood all alone. Then God caused a deep sleep to come over him and from his rib created Eve.

Eve was made to be an help that was meet or fit for Adam. O, she was an help mate. She was a mate who would help him in many different ways. But the meaning of the words of Moses in the narrative of this creative work of God is that Eve was made to be suitable, fit — and in that sense meet — to be his help. You may find that Webster gives this meaning also to the word meet. Without giving it much thought and through careless reading we soon form the opinion that it means nothing more than an help mate. But in order truly to be Adam's helper, Eve must be so created that she is meet, suitable, fit for the work.

And God created man and woman thus that it might be a picture of the relationship wherein His Church and Christ would stand. He did not find this relationship and see the possibility of using it to teach us of the union between Christ and His Church. God finds nothing. He creates things and designs all things in infinite wisdom.

This thought is further carried on in Holy Writ and we see in the Song of Solomon the love of Christ for His bride

pictured in most beautiful language. We see how beautiful Christ's bride is in His eyes; how greatly He loves her and longs for the day when they shall everlastingly be united in the new creation.

Jesus Himself spoke of this union and used more than once in His parables the wedding scene to instruct His Church in the things of His kingdom. He told the parable of the ten virgins who purposed to go to the wedding reception and to rejoice with the bride and bridegroom. He spoke of the wedding feast of the king's son.

His own presence at the wedding celebration at Cana of Galilee places the stamp of approval upon our custom of gathering after the ceremony to rejoice and celebrate with the bridegroom and his bride.

And in Revelation 21 the fulfilment of all God's covenant promises is pictured by means of the figure of the bride and bridegroom in their love for each other. John declares that in his vision he was carried away to see the bride, the Lamb's wife. What is then shown unto Him is the great city, the holy Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God. It is the Church which is Christ's bride. In chapter 22 the bride is reported as praying to Christ, the bridegroom, "Come."

In all this there is not simply approval upon making the event one to be remembered when two covenant youths are united in the bond of holy matrimony. There is also a certain beauty, spiritual beauty, a holiness, a wonder of God's grace that is breathed through all this testimony from God's word. The wedding ceremony and the celebration are beautiful things, events of great spiritual significance and may be conducted without fear that we are disobeying the ordinances of God.

But we must keep them such.

They must be conducted in His fear.

They must not militate against the truth which God expresses in the use of the figure in Holy Writ. For they are beautiful events and are kept beautiful only when they are conducted in His fear.

The wedding day is one that is looked for with eager anticipation by bride and "groom" and even by all the attendants. Much preparation and thought is given to the details of its ceremony and reception. Plans are carefully made and much time is given to strive to have all things work smoothly. Yet the spiritual touch is very often ignored.

A wedding ceremony must have a soloist with songs for the occasion.

These songs all too often fit better with the wedding of the unbelievers than with the holy bonds of matrimony wherein covenant young people are united. Many of these "wedding songs" are so superficial and lacking in any real meaning that it certainly is the melody of the song that must

have given it its appeal. We can understand that in the unspiritual world which has nothing of true value such songs will be chosen for wedding ceremonies. There nothing is done in His fear; and the beauty of the marriage bond as the picture of the union of Christ with His bride is not understood nor appreciated. We can expect to hear at such weddings the utterly superficial and sickly sentimental, "I Love You Truly." There is not a breath of God's fear in the whole song. And when it is sung at the wedding of a covenant young couple, one feels transported on the wings of the song into the world. How much more beautiful is it and what a reverent spirit prevails when the beautiful strains of the well known and often sung Lord's Prayer fill the church auditorium.

The same thing may be said of the wedding reception — although we intend to write more fully about that next time. How often are not the songs utterly silly and void of the beauty of the event as pictured in Holy Writ. How much more significant and full of the spirit of the Word of God when we are united in singing thus from the Psalms:

Blest the man that fears Jehovah
Walking ever in His ways;
By thy toil thou shalt be prospered
And be happy all thy days.

In thy wife thou shalt have gladness,
She shall fill thy home with good,
Happy in her loving service
And the joys of motherhood.

Joyful children, sons and daughters,
Shall about thy table meet,
Olive plants, in strength and beauty,
Full of hope and promise sweet.

Thou shalt see God's kingdom prosper
All thy days, till life shall cease,
Thou shalt see thy children's children;
On Thy people, Lord, be peace.

Then you see the beauty of a covenant marriage. Then you have not ruled God out of it; but you have celebrated and observed these things in His fear.

Such a wedding is beautiful.

Of course, the bride may adorn herself in the traditional white wedding gown, if she so desires.

Of course, we may make it a thing of external beauty as well as to emphasize the spiritual beauty of it.

It is certainly not to be maintained that a church wedding with beautiful clothing, with beautiful flowers and beautiful music cannot be in His fear. The Scriptures speak quite a

different language. Were this a sinful thing utterly devoid of the fear of the Lord, God Himself, surely, would not use this practice to illustrate the preparation of the Church for Christ's return. We read in Revelation 21:2, "And I John saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Or if you please, we read in Isaiah 49:18, "Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth." Or again from the same book of prophecy chapter 61:10, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels."

We may note that the bridegroom is also presented here as wearing special attire for this beautiful event. And we may add that for a bridal party to be dressed for the occasion — provided it is modest apparel and becoming a child of God — is not to be forbidden either. Jesus says to His disciples in Matthew 9:15, "Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them?" And the joy which is the children of the bridal processions may surely be displayed in modest, beautiful clothing.

Or, if you please, as we read in Jeremiah 2:32, "Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?" Surely the inference is that God does not demand it either of the bride that she leave her attire behind as a thing that as such is not in His fear.

Indeed, these things can be very wicked and always are when they are practiced by the unbeliever. For then he always ends in these things rather than in God. The true beauty of the wedding ceremony and reception is lost or rather deliberately kept out of them.

Beautiful attire, beautiful flowers and beautiful music have meaning only as we are married in the Lord. And that means that we do not for convenience sake or for brevity agree to have just any form read to suit our earthly fancies. It means that we want the word of God brought to our attention while we are gathered for this sacred and beautiful event of being united in the bonds of holy matrimony as covenant children of God.

The marriage form that is read must be one that keeps the beauty, the spiritual loveliness of the marriage.

Give careful attention to this matter.

It is a matter all too easily overlooked or decided on a utilitarian and carnal basis rather than in His fear.

Keep the wedding ceremony a thing of spiritual beauty.

J.A.H.

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

VIEWS DURING THE THIRD PERIOD (750-1517 A.D.)

THE SUPREMACY OF THE POPE

THE GREAT SCHISM OF 1054 (4).

THE COUNCIL AT FERRARA — FLORENCE. A.D. 1438-1439.

Another attempt at reunion was made by John VII. Palaeologus in the Council of Ferrara, which was convened by Pope Eugenius IV in opposition to the reformatory Council of Basle. It was attended by the emperor, the patriarch of Constantinople, and twenty-one Eastern prelates, among them the learned Bessarion of Nicaea, Mark of Ephesus, Dionysius of Sardis, Isidor of Kieff. The chief points of controversy were discussed: the procession of the Spirit, purgatory; the use of unleavened bread, and the supremacy of the pope. Bessarion became a convert to the Western doctrine, and was rewarded by a cardinal's hat. He was twice near being elected pope (died 1472). The decree of the council, published July 6, 1439, embodies his views, and was a complete surrender to the pope with scarcely a saving clause for the canonical rights and privileges of the Eastern patriarchs. The Greek formula on the procession, *ex Patre per Filium* (out of the Father through the Son — H.V.) was declared to be identical with the Latin *Filioque*; the pope was acknowledged not only as the successor of Peter and Vicar of Christ, but also as "the head of the whole church and father and teacher of all Christians," but with variations in the Greek texts. The document of reunion was signed by the pope, the emperor, many archbishops and bishops, the representatives of all the Eastern patriarchs except that of Constantinople, who had previously died at Florence, but had left as his last sentence a disputed submission to the catholic and apostolic church of old Rome. For the triumph of his cause the pope could easily promise material aid to his Eastern ally, to pay the expenses of the deputation, to support three hundred soldiers for the protection of Constantinople, and to send, if necessary, an army and navy for the defense of the emperor against his enemies.

But when the humiliating terms of the reunion were divulged, the East and Russia rose in rebellion against the Latinizers as traitors to the orthodox faith; the compliant patriarchs openly recanted, and the new patriarch of Constantinople, Metrophanes, now called in derision Metrophanus or Matricide, was forced to resign.

After the fall of Constantinople.

The capture of Constantinople by the Mohammedan Turks (1453) and the overthrow of the Byzantine empire

put an end to all political schemes of reunion, but opened the way for papal propagandism in the East. The division of the church facilitated that catastrophe which delivered the fairest lands to the blasting influence of Islam, and keeps it in power to this day, although it is slowly waning. The Turk has no objection to fights among the despised Christians, provided they only injure themselves and do not touch the Koran. He is tolerant from intolerance. The Greeks hate the pope and the *Filioque* as much as they hate the false prophet of Mecca; while the pope loves his own power more than the common cause of Christianity, and would rather see the Sultan rule in the city of Constantine than a rival patriarch or the Czar of schismatic Russia.

During the nineteenth century the schism has been intensified by the creation of two new dogmas, — the immaculate conception of Mary (1854) and the infallibility of the pope (1870). When Pius IX invited the Eastern patriarchs to attend the Vatican Council, they indignantly refused, and renewed their old protest against the antichristian usurpation of the papacy and the heretical *Filioque*. They could not submit to the Vatican decrees without stultifying their whole history and committing moral suicide. Papal absolutism and Eastern stagnation are insuperable barriers to the reunion of the divided churches, which can only be brought about by great events and by the wonder-working power of the Spirit of God.

Gregory VII and the Papacy

Before we proceed with the description of Gregory and the Papacy as set forth by Philip Schaff, the following quotation concerning Gregory VII from "The Church in History" by B. K. Kuiper may be of interest, and we quote the following:

"No one on seeing Hildebrand (Gregory VII — H.V.) would have gotten the idea that he was an unusual man. His figure was very small, his voice weak, and his whole appearance unimpressive. Yet he was one of the most remarkable characters of all the Middle Ages. He had a powerful mind, an inflexible will, dauntless courage, and a fiery soul.

Like Pope Nicholas I (ch. 12, sec. 4), and so many other aspiring men of mediaeval times, Hildebrand had come under the spell of St. Augustine's greatest book, *The City of God*. In the monastery in Rome he had become imbued with the Cluny reform ideas. Throughout his life the ideas and ideals derived from these sources were his inspiration. They aroused in him all the tremendous energies which lay hidden within his nature.

The highest ideal of his life was derived from Augustine's *City of God*. That ideal was the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. Hildebrand believed that the divinely prepared and appointed agency for the realization of this ideal is the Church. He furthermore believed that the head of the Church on earth is the pope as Christ's *vicar* (representative). In his view the pope is above all — above

princes, kings, and emperors. Everybody is subject to him. The pope himself is answerable only to God.

For the realization of these ideas Hildebrand had already been working for more than twenty years as the power behind the throne of six popes. Now that he himself had become pope he continued to use all his marvelous energies and powers in working for the realization of these ideas.

In doing this he was not moved by self-interest. Money had no attraction for him. He could not be bribed or bought, as could so many bishops and other church dignitaries of his day. Hildebrand was not moved by ambition or vain-glory. No doubt his motives were not always entirely pure. Whose are? Sometimes he was unscrupulous in the use of means; that is, he was determined to gain his end, even if he had to employ a wrong method in order to accomplish what he believed to be a good thing. It is also true that he loved to rule. It was in his blood (is it not true that a person who loves to rule is also moved by ambition or vain-glory? — H.V.) But fundamentally he was moved by a sincere and strong desire to serve God and the Church, and thus promote the cause of God's Kingdom in this world.

The popes have vast treasures at their disposal. Hildebrand could have lived a life of self-indulgence, luxury, and idleness — as some popes before and after him did too. Instead of that he was always immersed in hard and fatiguing labors. He lived very simply and was a real ascetic. He gave up eating onions because he liked the taste.

If Hildebrand had wished, he could have become pope before, but he had heretofore declined the honor. At last the people of Rome thrust the papal office upon him by surprise, but even then he took his seat upon the papal chair only reluctantly. And no wonder, for the times were difficult. He foresaw that his duty as pope, as he understood that duty, might involve him in severe struggles. As the story of his pontificate which follows will show, he saw correctly." — end of quote from *"The Church in History."*

Concerning Hildebrand and his training Philip Schaff writes the following: "The papacy had reached its lowest stage of weakness and degeneracy when at Sutri in 1046, under the influence of Henry III, two popes were deposed and a third was forced to abdicate. But the worthless popes, who prostituted their office and outraged the feelings of Christendom during the tenth and the first half of the eleventh century, could not overthrow the papacy any more than idolatrous kings could overthrow the Jewish monarchy, or wicked emperors the Roman Empire. In the public opinion of Europe, the papacy was still a necessary institution established by Christ in the primacy of Peter for the government and administration of the Church. There was nothing to take its place. It needed only radical reformation in its head, which would be followed by a reformation of the members. Good men all over Europe anxiously desired and hoped that Providence could intervene and rescue the chair of Peter from the hands of thieves and robbers, and turn it

once more into a blessing. The idea of abolishing the papacy did not occur to the mind of the Christians of that age as possible or desirable.

At last the providential man for effecting this necessary reformation appeared in the person of Hildebrand, who controlled five successive papal administrations for twenty-four years, 1049-1073, then occupied the papal chair himself for twelve years, 1073-1085, and was followed by like-minded successors. He is one of the greatest, if not the greatest, of popes, and one of the most remarkable men in history. He excited in his age the highest admiration and the bitterest hatred. Opinions about his principles and policy are still divided; but it is impossible to deny his ability, energy, earnestness, and achievements.

Hildebrand was of humble and obscure origin, but fore-ordained to be a prince of the Church. He was of small stature, and hence called "Hildebrandellus" by his enemies, but a giant in intellect and character. His figure was ungainly and his voice feeble; but his eyes were bright and piercing, bespeaking penetration, a fiery spirit, and restless activity. His early life is involved in obscurity. He only incidentally alludes to it in his later Epistles, and loved to connect it with the supernatural protection of St. Peter and is unknown. The veneration of friends and the malice of the Holy Virgin. With a monkish disregard of earthly relations, he never mentions his family. The year of his birth enemies surrounded his youth with legends and lies. He was the son of a peasant or goatherd, Bonizo, living near Soana, a village in the marshes of Tuscany, a few miles from Orbitello. The oft-repeated tradition that he was the son of a carpenter seems to have originated in the desire to draw a parallel between him and Jesus of Nazareth. Of his mother we know nothing. His name points to Lombard or German origin, and was explained by his contemporaries as hell-brand or firebrand. Odilo, the abbot of Cluny, saw sparks of fire issuing from his raiment, and predicted that, like John the Baptist, he would be "great in the sight of the Lord." He entered the Benedictine order in the convent of St. Mary on the Aventine at Rome, of which his maternal uncle was abbot. Here he had a magnificent view of the eternal city. Here he was educated with Romans of the higher families. The convent was under the influence of the reformatory spirit of Cluny, and the home of its abbots on their pilgrimages to Rome. He exercised himself in severe self-discipline, and in austerity and rigor he remained a monk all his life. He cherished an enthusiastic veneration for the Virgin Mary. The personal contemplation of the scandalous contentions of the three rival popes and the fearful im- his earnest soul a deep disgust. He associated himself with morality in the capital of Christendom must have raised in the party which prepared for a reformation of the hierarchy." — end of quote. In following articles we will continue to quote from Philip Schaff in his setting forth of Gregory VII and the Papacy.

H.V.

The Voice of Our Fathers

The Canons of Dordrecht

PART TWO

EXPOSITION OF THE CANONS

THIRD AND FOURTH HEADS OF DOCTRINE

OF THE CORRUPTION OF MAN, HIS CONVERSION TO GOD, AND THE MANNER THEREOF

Article 9. It is not the fault of the gospel, nor of Christ, offered therein, nor of God, who calls men by the gospel, and confers upon them various gifts, that those who are called by the ministry of the word, refuse to come, and be converted: the fault lies in themselves; some of whom when called, regardless of their danger, reject the word of life; others, though they receive it, suffer it not to make a lasting impression on their heart; therefore, their joy, arising only from a temporary faith, soon vanishes, and they fall away; while others choke the seed of the word by perplexing cares, and the pleasures of this world, and produce no fruit.— This our Savior teaches in the parable of the sower. Matt. 13.

The above translation, though in the main it conveys the thought of the original, is nevertheless inaccurate in several details. We can best make our corrections by offering the following translation of the entire article, which the reader may then compare with the accepted rendering:

That many who have been called through the ministry of the Gospel do not come and are not converted,—of this the fault is not in the Gospel, nor in the Christ offered through the Gospel, nor in God who calls through the Gospel, and even bestows on them various gifts, but in the called themselves, of whom some, being careless, do not attend to the word of life; others attend to it indeed, but do not allow it entrance into the heart, and therefore after the vanishing joy of a temporary faith they fall away; others choke the seed of the word with the thorns of the cares and pleasures of the world, and bring forth no fruits; which our Savior teaches by the parable of the seed, Matt. 13.

Probably the most important correction to note is that the article speaks of “many” that do not come and are not converted. This is the Latin, *multi*, and is, of course, according to Scripture, which frequently emphasizes the fact that the majority remain unconverted, while the “few” are saved. “Many are called, but few are chosen.” “Many” enter in at the wide gate and the broad way, while few there be that find the narrow gate and the strait way.

Of this fact, that many who are called through the Gospel do not come and are not converted, the present article gives an explanation from a very limited and specific viewpoint. And we should very carefully observe the limitations of the article, in order to understand its place in the *Canons* and

its harmony with the whole of the truth as it is maintained in the *Canons*.

Negatively, we must observe, first of all, that the article does not deal with the ultimate, the sovereign reason why there are many called through the Gospel who nevertheless do not come and are not converted. The article does not intend to deal with this subject. However, at the same time the article must not be read, in fact, cannot even be understood, as though it means to ignore that sovereign, ultimate reason for the failure of many to come and be converted when they are called by the ministry of the Gospel. If it were not for the fact that the Reformed truth exactly emphasizes that there is such a sovereign reason, the question that is broached in this article would not even be treated. That sovereign reason is plainly stated in the *Canons*, and, unless we would accuse our fathers of theological double-talk, we must understand whatever is stated in the present paragraph only in the light of and within the limitations of their plain declarations concerning the reason why many are unbelieving and go lost forever.

Let us remind ourselves of the position which the fathers have taken thus far:

1. In the First Head of Doctrine, Art. 6, the fathers maintain that the fact that “some do not receive the gift of faith” proceeds from God’s eternal decree.” Further, they maintain that according to this decree, God leaves the non-elect in His just judgment to their own wickedness and obduracy. Now these statements are negative, and, we may add, infralapsarian. Undoubtedly the supralapsarian would speak more positively of a divine act of hardening. But for our present purpose it makes no difference whether you assume the infra-or supralapsarian position. The facts still stand: a) That some do not receive the gift of faith proceeds from God’s eternal decree. b) According to His decree, God leaves the non-elect in their own wickedness and obduracy. The fathers therefore have carefully circumscribed, long before they reached the question of *Canons* III, IV, 9, the limits wherein it may be stated that the “fault” of not coming and not being converted is “in the called themselves.” One could quite properly paraphrase *Canons* I, 6 as follows: “That some do not receive the gift of coming and being converted proceeds from God’s eternal decree.”

2. In *Canons* I, 15 our fathers propound the following truths: a) That not all, but some only are elected, while others are passed by in the eternal decree. Notice that these are the same who in the article under consideration do not come and are not converted. b) These non-elect God *out of His sovereign, most just, irreprehensible and unchangeable good pleasure* hath decreed . . . *not to bestow upon them saving faith and the grace of conversion*. Once again, notice that complete harmony exists between the language of this article and that of the article we are at present discussing. Those upon whom God does not bestow the saving faith and the grace of conversion are the very same as those who do

not come and are not converted when they are called through the ministry of the gospel. And therefore, once again we emphasize: here the fathers strictly define the limits within which it must be said that the "fault" of not coming and not being converted lies in the called themselves. And we may also emphasize that these same limits apply to the negative statement of III, IV, 9, that the "fault" is not "in God who calls through the gospel, and who confers upon them various gifts."

3. In the Second Head of Doctrine, Article 8, the fathers have taught something concerning the Christ Who is offered in the gospel: a) That it 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 while the non-elect are not mentioned here, the article positively excludes them from the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of God's Son by using the limitation "alone." This again sharply defines the limits within which it must be said that the fault of not coming and believing is not in the Christ Who is offered in the gospel, but in the, called themselves. The Christ offered in the gospel is the Christ of *Canons* II, 8, the saving efficacy of Whose precious death was sovereignly destined to extend to the elect alone, and therefore not to those described in III, IV, 9 as "not coming and being converted." b) That it was the will of God that Christ by the blood of the cross . . . should effectually redeem . . . *all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation, and given to him by the Father*; that he should confer upon them faith, which together with all the other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, (the coming and conversion of III, IV, 9 included), he purchased for them by his death. Again the fathers clearly circumscribe the limits within which it may be said that the fault of this not coming and not being converted lies not in Christ, but in those who are called themselves.

Now in all honestly, do the fathers mean to teach by implication the very opposite of all this in the article under consideration? Do they actually mean now to teach that though in His decree God determined that not all should receive the gift of faith and conversion, and though Christ's death, according to God's decree, covered the elect only, that nevertheless God well-meaningly offers salvation in the call of the gospel to all who hear the preaching, that God is well-intentioned toward all those to whom the gospel is preached? Anyone who has a mind to read and understand the *Canons* must admit that this is utterly impossible. This would be a flat contradiction. The Arminian controversy would never have arisen and the *Canons* would never have been composed, had that been the doctrinal position of the fathers. And especially this article would not have been written. After all, if God in the preaching of the gospel is well-intentioned

toward all who hear it, elect and reprobate alike, offers them all salvation, upon the condition that they come and be converted, and if then many do not come and are not converted, no one has to add that it is their own fault that they are not saved. Any Arminian believes that. But, mark you well, you must also teach then that the sinner himself is the sole and sovereign reason for this failure to be converted and saved, as well as the sole fault; you must also teach that it does not proceed from God's eternal decree that some do not receive the gift of faith; you must also teach that Christ's death, as far as God and His Christ were concerned, was intended to be efficacious for all men, but that the efficacy thereof is limited by the sovereign determination of the sinner.

We call attention to this, because this is exactly the position that many take. And they claim to do so on the basis of *Canons* III, IV, 9. When the *Canons* speak of "fault," they take the bit in their mouth and run away with it, and read the article as though it says "sole reason" and "sovereign cause." When the *Canons* use the term "offered," they are not mindful that the original term simply means "to present, to set forth, to propose," nor are they mindful that the "Christ offered in the gospel" is the Christ Who is described in the Second Head of Doctrine as a Christ for the elect alone; but by some magical hocus-pocus this offer becomes a general, well-meant offer. Thus it is, for example, in the exposition of the *Canons* by Ds. T. Bos, page 156: "Het Evangelie moet gepredikt worden aan allen, en dat Evangelie is eene *welmeenende uitnoodiging van 's Heeren wege tot geloof en bekeering*." (italics mine, H.C.H.) Thus it is also when the Christian Reformed Churches cite this article in support of the First Point of 1924. O, I know, they will not accept the consequences outlined in the last part of the previous paragraph. They rather seek refuge in the alibi of "mystery." But those consequences are there. And with all reverence, I maintain that if such is truly the idea of the preaching of the gospel, the holy angels and God Himself could not escape those consequences any more than the believer can.

Make no mistake. The fathers did not, and did not intend, to throw out the baby with the bath. They had no intention whatsoever, when they adopted this article, to adopt the Arminian position. They had not forgotten their own strict circumscription of the calling God as the decreeing God, of the offered Christ as the Christ of limited atonement, when they came to consider the question of this negative reaction of many to the call of the gospel.

On the contrary,—and here we speak positively concerning the background and the viewpoint of this article,—the fathers deal in this paragraph solely with the question of the *fault*, or *guilt*, of not coming and not being converted in response to the call of the gospel. And they were forced to deal with this question by another one of the sordid and back-handed accusations of the Arminians. We must bear in

mind that "fault, *culpa*" is blameworthiness, guilt. And it was exactly because the fathers maintained that God is absolutely sovereign also in regard to the unbelief of those that regard not the call of the gospel that the Arminians came with the false accusation that in the Reformed view God is the author of the sin of unbelief, and that God's is the guilt when many do not come and are not converted in response to the call of the gospel, and that the unbelieving and unconverted sinner cannot at all be blamed. The idea is the same as that of the audaciously wicked question of the objector in Romans 9: "Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?" Notice, by the way, that this is an objection that is traditionally brought only against those that maintain that God is absolutely sovereign from beginning to end in the salvation of the elect and in the damnation of the reprobate.

Now how do the fathers react to this accusation? Are they quickly vanquished by the Arminian foe, and do they hasten to point out that the line of the truth is a double-track? Do they fall down dead before the Arminians blast, and concede that the call of the gospel is a well-meant offer of salvation to all? Do they concede defeat, and grant that God on His part is well-intentioned and gracious to all in the offer of the gospel?

By no means!

They quietly and firmly answer the argument. The objection was: "You deny the guilt of those who are called by the gospel, but who fail to come and be converted." The fathers' answer is: "We affirm that the blame of those who do not come and are not converted is in the called themselves." The objection was: "In your view the guilt must be laid either to the gospel, or to the Christ presented in the gospel, or to God who calls through the gospel." The fathers' answer is: "The guilt of the sin of failing to come and to be converted in response to the call of the gospel is to be charged neither to the gospel, nor to Christ, nor to God." Such is the substance of this paragraph. And there is nothing difficult to understand about it. Nor is there anything in it which contradicts the truth as the fathers have previously stated it.

That guilt of unbelief and non-conversion cannot be in the gospel, for, as stated in Article 8, that gospel is serious and true; it never deceives. And besides, the gospel is clear in its language, so that it is plainly understood by those to whom it comes. The guilt cannot be in the Christ offered, set forth, in the gospel, because there is nothing repulsive in that Christ. He is the plain revelation of the only way of salvation. In Him is set forth all the righteousness, justice, truth, goodness, grace, and mercy of the living God. If Christ repels anyone, it must be the fault of the one who is repelled. And the guilt cannot be laid to God's charge, for God is completely serious and absolutely truthful in the gospel call. He declares plainly that it is pleasing to Him that men repent and believe. And He promises with an unbreakable promise to all those who repent and believe eternal life and

rest of soul. God does still more. He bestows on men, also ungodly, reprobate men, all kinds of gifts. He bestows the gift of reason and understanding. He bestows the gift of discernment between right and wrong. According to Hebrews 6, those gifts are great and extensive. By them men are "enlightened," they "have tasted of the heavenly gift, were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come." They have in abundance all the natural gifts necessary to understand the call of the gospel. One might say that God puts them, — barring grace, — in the most advantageous position possible with respect to the gospel.

But still many fail to come and be converted. Why? The fault, the blame, lies in man's corrupt heart and mind and will. According to his own corrupt heart, — and remember, he only is to be blamed that his heart is corrupt, — man despises and rejects the call of the gospel. Because of his own corrupt heart, from which are the issues of his life, the sinner will not and cannot will to receive that which is for his own eternal good, and he refuses to repent and believe, regardless of how clearly the gospel-call is sounded, regardless of how beautiful is the Christ offered in the gospel, regardless of how seriously and truthfully the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ calls through the ministry of the gospel.

This sin of unbelief, as is plain from the parable of the seed in Matthew 13, is manifested in various ways. In some it is a cold and complete indifference, so that the gospel makes no effect upon them whatsoever. They are careless and secure in their sin, and they never even stop to consider the gospel call. Others reveal a temporary faith, paired with a superficial and vanishing joy, which becomes revealed as temporary and vanishing under the stress and strain of persecution. In these too there is no true faith, and the wicked and corrupt heart must needs reveal its corruption sooner or later. In still others that same corrupt heart becomes revealed in a preference for the things of the earth and the pleasures of the world. But never does the corrupt heart of the sinner want or receive the things of God and His Christ. And thus it is through the very call of the gospel that the sin of unbelief and the guilt thereof is brought to manifestation.

Yes, and it is not through the Arminian gospel of a Christ-for-all and a general, well-meant offer of salvation, but through the Reformed gospel, the gospel of the Scriptures, the gospel of a sure and unfailing promise of eternal life to all those repenting and coming to Christ, the gospel of a most serious call to faith and repentance, the gospel of a demand to repent and believe that may not be disobeyed because it is God's demand, — through such a gospel it is that the responsibility for the sin of unbelief and non-conversion is squarely laid at the door of the unrepentant sinner.

H.C.H.

DECENCY and ORDER

Ecclesiastical Assemblies

"Four kinds of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be maintained: the consistory, the classis, (the particular synod), and the general synod."

Article 29, D.K.O.

In this article the second of four major sections of the church order is introduced. This part, comprising Articles 29-52 inclusive, deals with the various ecclesiastical assemblies. This section may be further sub-divided as follows:

Articles 29-36 treat the general principles and regulations which concern our ecclesiastical assemblies;

Articles 37-40 treat matters that pertain particularly to the consistory, the first of these assemblies;

Articles 41-45 treat matters relating to the classes;

Articles 46-49 treat the particular synods; and,

Articles 50-52 treat the general synods.

The above outline already gives indication of the importance of the material treated in this section of the church order. In it are to be found some of the key articles of our church order and in these articles are embodied various basically fundamental principles of Reformed Church Polity. Differences of interpretation regarding some of these principles have occasioned more than a single difficulty in the past. If these differences concerned only the routine function and procedural operation of the assemblies of the church, they could perhaps be brushed aside and ignored since there would really be no material effect upon the spiritual life of the church. However, this is not at all the case. Matters of the "modus operandi" of the church intrinsically involve the basically deeper questions relating to the relation of ecclesiastical assemblies, their proper authority, the limits of their jurisdiction, their binding power and its extent, and several related matters that concern deep principles. In the light of these matters the question concerning the effect which the various decisions of ecclesiastical assemblies have upon the life of the church and its members cannot be easily repressed. We cannot avoid being confronted with many questions and problems of this nature as we treat this section of our church order. These we shall be called upon to weigh cautiously and carefully, seeking their solution on the basis of established principles derived from God's Word. Even so, we do not tread this hallowed ground without a deep sense of human frailty.

In writing on the content of the 29th article we can necessarily be rather brief. Firstly, since the article itself merely contains a statement of fact with respect to the

maintenance of the assemblies of the church and concerning this point there is, as far as we are aware, no particular dispute. Secondly, since the place to consider various questions relating to consistories, classes and synods, is not the present article but subsequent articles that deal with these assemblies more in detail. This, however, does not imply that Article 29 is of such insignificance that it could just as well be elided from the church order. Such is not the case. The Christian Reformed Committee for Church Order revision sees fit to retain it in the following form:

"Art. 26. The churches recognize and maintain the following assemblies: Consistories, Classes, Particular Synods, and General Synods."

Surely there is room under this article to raise more than a few questions.

The first of these questions concerns the number of ecclesiastical assemblies. Should the words, "shall be maintained" (*zullen onderhouden worden*) be emphasized in the present article so that we understand the thrust of it to be that churches of Reformed persuasion *must* hold meetings of these four assemblies or they are violating a vital principle? We think not! Were this the meaning our churches have never observed this article. In the beginning of our denominational existence we had no Synod. We met in combined classes as many of our older readers well remember. Fifteen years after our denominational birth our first Synod was convened and to date we do not hold (maintain) "particular Synods." This is no violation of the church order but rather circumstances determine to what extent the four assemblies shall be maintained.

Joh. Jansen in his "Korte Verklaring van de Kerkorde," states in respect to this question, "Maar de nadere *uitwerking en regeling* van het kerkverband is een *jus divinum permissivum*, d.i. een aan de kerken *toegestaan* Goddelijk recht. Daarvoor heeft Hij in de Schrift geen bepaalde voorschriften gegeven. Die heeft Hij aan de vrijheid der kerken overgelaten. Zij kan dan ook op verschillende manier geschieden. De kerken zijn vrij bijv. om te bepalen of er vier kerkelijke samenkomsten zullen zijn, n.l. kerkeraad, classis, part. synode en generale synode; of drie, n.l. kerkeraad, classis en synode (zo de Christelijk Geref. kerk in Amerika); of twee, n.l. kerkeraad en synode (zo de Geref. kerken in Zuid-Afrika); voorts of de synodes jaarlijks, of om de twee of drie jaar zullen gehouden worden; en, in verband daarmee, of de verkiezing der afgevaardigden rechtstreeks of trapsgewijze zal geschieden, enz."

Akin to this question is the matter of whether or not this Article intends to be exclusive in its stipulation of "four ecclesiastical assemblies?" Must we emphasize the number "four" here? Does that exclude the possibility of adding a fifth assembly? And, since no mention is made in the article of such gatherings as the "congregational meeting" or "ecumenic synods," must we conclude from this that these

are not ecclesiastical assemblies? If we do this, how must we conceive of these gatherings and, on the other hand, if we assert that they are ecclesiastical assemblies, do we not violate the rule respecting the "four"?

In answering this question, it may be well to point out firstly that the article does not speak of "four assemblies" but rather of "four kinds" (Vierderlei). This is not the same and certainly the number four in this connection then does not exclude gatherings such as the congregational meeting and ecumenic synods provided these gatherings can be properly included in one of these four "kinds" of assemblies. We believe that they can. If our point is taken, it will be granted that the "four kinds" excludes only the possibility of another *kind* of ecclesiastical assembly, differing in nature and essence from those mentioned, but it does not exclude the possibility of having different gatherings within the framework of each of these "four kinds" of assemblies. For example, it is possible to conceive of more than one kind of Synod or Classis or Consistory Meeting. Thus when we speak of the Ecumenic Synod, we do just that. We add to the genus an additional species. The same is true of the congregational meeting although we will have more to write about that later, D.V., in connection with Article 37. The congregational meeting is viewed as an open or public consistory meeting and thus can also be properly fitted within the framework of this article.

In connection with this yet we must also point out that to us the same difficulty arises here as we confronted in connection with Article 2 of our church order. That article speaks of the offices of the church as being four in number. At the time we wrote about that we reasoned at length to show why we felt the article should read "three" instead of "four" and that, of course, would involve the combining of the office of Professors and Ministers. This, we believe, is proper for as we showed then the office of the Professors of Theology is essentially a specialized aspect of the office of the Ministry of the Word. Now, in connection with the Ecclesiastical Assemblies we face the same difficulty. Should it be three or four? We fail to see an "essential difference" between a particular and general synod. That there is a difference in scope may be readily conceded but that there is a difference in "kind" or "essence" is not clear to us. Consequently, we feel it would be better to express: "Three *kinds* of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be maintained: the consistory, the classis, and synod." Under the latter then the particular, general and universal or "ecumenic" Synods could be included. But then again it is also difficult to see a real difference in "kind" between a Synodical and a Classical gathering. There, too, there is clearly a difference in scope. The one is a broader gathering than the other. In the one all of the denomination of churches is represented while in the other only a part of it is. Yet, this difference in scope does not make it different in "kind." Perhaps, therefore,

it would be still better to simply speak of "*two kinds* of ecclesiastical assemblies" and this would then be in harmony with the implication of Article 36 which distinguishes just two kinds of ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

As to the ecclesiastical assemblies themselves we may conclude the present article with a brief description of their names.

"The word 'Consistory' is derived from the Latin 'consistorium,' meaning, place of meeting. It indicates the body of men chosen to govern the affairs of a local church. The dutch speaks of 'Kerkeraad,' i.e. church council. The Presbyterians refer to the body of their pastors and ruling elders as the 'Session.' Many American churches today simply speak of the 'Church Board.'

"The word Classis is also Latin and indicates a division or class of people or of other objects."

"And the word Synod is derived from the Greek, 'synodos,' indicating 'a coming together, assembly, meeting.'"

Not a great deal, therefore, can be learned from these names concerning the character, function, mutual relation, etc. of these assemblies. Concerning this we will have to turn to Scripture and some of the other Articles of this section of our church order but this will have to wait, D.V., until next time.

G. Vanden Berg.

GOD OUR ADVOCATE AND JUDGE

Psalm 35:1, 2

Be Thou my helper in the strife,
O Lord, my strong defender be;
Thy mighty shield protect my life,
Thy spear confront the enemy.
Amid the conflict, O my Lord,
Thy precious promise let me hear,
The faithful, reassuring word:
I am thy Saviour, do not fear.

Ashamed, confounded let them be
Who seek my ruin and disgrace;
O let Thy angel fight for me,
And drive my foes before his face.
Without a cause my life they sought,
Without a cause their plots they laid;
Themselves within their snares be caught,
And be my crafty foes dismayed.

ALL AROUND US

The Rising Strength of Christianity.

In the Religion department of Newsweek of March 11, 1957, we came upon a Special Religious Report intended to show the dramatic rise in numerical strength of the so-called Christian Church and appearing under the above title.

The report in part reads as follows: "In the world today there are some 225 million Protestants, 200 million Orthodox, and 464 million Roman Catholics. These figures represent an increase of roughly 25 percent over membership of 1920. One of the most dramatic surges in the last two decades has been the growth of Christianity in the United States. For example, Southern Baptist membership has swelled from 5.1 million in 1940 to 8.7 million now; Methodists, from 7.4 million to 9.4 million; and Episcopalians, from 2.2 million to 3.1 million. The total Protestant population in the U. S. today is estimated at 100 million. Catholics have made a spectacular jump of their own. From 21.4 million to 37.6 million, a gain achieved during the vital reign of their beloved Pope, Pius XII."

The article gives no explanation or reason for this phenomenal growth. Other periodicals we have read, also noting the steady increase in church membership, offer various reasons. One commentator asserts that the American public is becoming more religious minded. Another attributes the growth in membership to fear brought on by the complexes of our atomic age.

Naturally we are in no position to dispute the figures. They are undoubtedly correct. We do contend, however, that bare numbers do not make the church, nor is she to be weighed by the pound. One wonders today how much true religion there is in the midst of this religious surge. In the light of history, one may truly fear when religion becomes popular as seems to be the case today.

One can hardly say that the Protestant Reformed Churches have been caught in the stream of numerical growth. It was in the year 1947 that a denominational census first appeared. At that time our churches constituted 1154 families and 5026 souls. The peak of church membership in our churches was reached at the time of the split in 1953. The 1952 census revealed 1302 families and 5449 souls. The census, which was taken after the split, revealed 563 families and 2353 souls. The report that will appear at the 1957 Synod will reveal that our denomination is presently constituted of 610 families and 2482 souls.

If we were to be measured by the pound, we would not be worth very much in comparison with other denominations whose membership runs into the millions. We are thankful to God, however, that He also has respect for the things that are weak, and that it is His goodpleasure to reveal to us the things of His truth.

What of the Godless?

The Religion department of Newsweek, March 18, 1957, raises this question as it reflects on the contention of a certain Dr. A. Powell Davies, a minister of an All Souls Unitarian Church.

We quote the article in its entirety which begins with a quotation of Dr. Davies.

"The right to disbelieve is inherent in the right to believe," said Dr. A. Powell Davies in Washington, D. C., last week. "This is a fundamental American principle, and it is going by the board."

"The minister of All Souls Unitarian Church, long a champion of intellectual freedom, was commenting on a sermon titled 'The Rights of Atheists,' published in the current issue of The Christian Register. His lively defense of doubt, which, he says, 'is still bringing more praise than brickbats,' was inspired by a reported announcement from George Washington University last November that atheists could not hold jobs on its faculty. The university later claimed the statement was reported out of its context, but the dispute gave the Unitarian minister a chance to air some of his favorite ideas.

"If a university is to bar doubters, Dr. Davies warns in The Register, 'no longer is a bright student to have a chance to argue with an accomplished atheist. In religion, he is not even to cross swords with a vigorous agnostic.

"What a pity! In my view, every institution of higher learning should, if possible, have one or two atheists on its faculty if only to keep the theists stepping lively . . . What could be more essential to a good university professor than to keep constantly reminded of how much he does not know?

"This applies particularly to the schools of religion. A theologian who is not intellectually an agnostic is of necessity a fool. For what is theology? Theology is the attempt to give an orderly account of the unknown . . ."

"The lesson in all this, Dr. Davies says, is that there is a need to return to America's traditional principles of intellectual freedom, and a recognition that God needs no protectors. 'For God lives in the open mind, in the power of its thought, the voice of its truth, the inner impulse of its honesty. He needs no protection . . . Just give him room.'"

We have only two or three brief comments to make respecting this article. First, Dr. Davies' definition of theology is quite different from that which we have learned. He tells us that "Theology is the attempt to give an orderly account of the unknown . . ." We have learned that "theology is the science that systematically treats of the knowledge of God as revealed in the Scriptures."

Secondly, we are tempted to call Dr. Davies exactly what he says the theologian is who is not intellectually an agnostic. Dr. Davies is Unitarian, and the latter deny the triune God as He is revealed in Jesus Christ. That comes awfully close to what the psalmist declares in Psalm 14:1, "The fool has said in his heart, There is no God."

Thirdly, that does not mean that some fools can sometimes not say things that are correct. Dr. Davies is one of them when he asserts that the right to disbelieve is inherent in the right to believe is a fundamental American principle. We have before contended that the religious liberty which is proposed and defended by our Constitution and granted to our citizenry is the right to believe in God, or not to believe in Him. We insist that our Constitution was made up by men like Jefferson and Franklin, men who were influenced by men like Paine and Rousseau, who in turn were humanists and libertines whose doctrine was man's inherent freedom to believe in God or not to believe in Him.

Those who insist that our country was originally a christian nation, founded on true Scriptural principles, from which we are fast departing, and who are attempting by means of radio and printed page to call America back to God, are thoroughly mistaken if they find the basis for their contention in our Constitution. No one will deny that there were early settlers who came to our shores seeking true religious freedom. But the freedom of which the Constitution speaks is the freedom Dr. Davies wants and insists is a fundamental American principle. That is the freedom which would allow the atheist as well as the theist to have a place in our institutions of learning. No State controlled institution of learning, therefore, under our Constitution, has the right to deny the atheist to teach in it.

We may be thankful to God that our Constitution also allows us to have institutions of learning which insist that all instruction shall be God-centered and thoroughly permeated with the truths of divine revelation.

Current Thoughts on Church and State.

In the April 1st issue of Christianity Today, in the department called Review of Current Religious Thought, we came upon the following interesting remarks in connection with the relation of Church and State:

"The Rev. Edward Rogers, a Methodist minister, writing in the January issue of *The London Quarterly and Holborn Review* on the subject of 'Christians and the Modern State,' speaks of industrialization, urbanization, centralization, and secularization as the four distinctive features of the modern State, and asserts that the Christian, 'simply because he is a Christian, confronts the State in two inseparably related ways,' as one who, 'whatever the social or political order, . . . must seek to live by faith and love. The political order,' he says, 'may be corrupt or cruel, the economic order unjust and the moral code of society debased. Nevertheless, he will be generous and just, truthful and honest, kind and forbearing.'

"We are reminded that political liberty is 'a rare and precious thing, hardly won and easily lost' and that it 'demands and depends upon men and women of integrity and

charity, ready to acknowledge that they are their brother's keepers.' It is, in fact, the believing Christian who is 'the preserver of sound values in a society that would otherwise decay.' Mr. Rogers points to loneliness and slackening of the social ties that strengthen life as resulting from living in the modern State. These deficiencies, it is true, are made good by church life, which offers 'fellowship and shared responsibilities.' Saying this, however, he makes the following very salutary comment on what has come to be known as the social gospel: 'What went wrong with the *social gospel* in the generation immediately past was that it put *social* first, and a diluted gospel second. Men and women of noble intention strove to implement the Sermon on the Mount while pushing into the background the Cross and the Resurrection — and found that their fine phrases and benevolent exhortations splashed ineffectively on the rocks of sin.'

"Who will not agree with his conclusion that the doctrine of the sovereignty of God is 'a doctrine desperately needed to check the blasphemous and destructive doctrine of the absolute sovereignty of the State'; for the State 'is the servant of God, not the master of men?'"

These are striking remarks, indeed, coming from a Methodist.

It is to be recognized that he emphasizes the Scriptural truth that the Christian is to be in submission to his government, even when it is corrupt and cruel.

It is also to be noticed that he looks disparagingly upon what is called the *social gospel*, and considers the heart of the gospel the Cross and Resurrection. This does not sound like the speech of a modern Methodist. Rather, it sounds more like the speech of a John or Charles Wesley, and contemporaneous with their day.

Consistently also he emphasizes the doctrine of the sovereignty of God, and seriously attempts to apply this doctrine to the modern attempt to establish the sovereign State.

I repeat, rather striking remarks, coming from a Methodist.

There are other views respecting the relation of Church and State expressed in the remainder of the article which are bold as they are interesting. Here are two views expressed by C. H. Glasson, lay member of the Church of England. "The dualistic doctrine that the care of the State extends only to the body and the care of the Church only to the soul is entirely unchristian."

According to Rev. Philip Hughes of England, who gives us this review, "Mr. Glasson warns — that the Roman Church is far from having abandoned its political objectives." A little later in the article he says, "The political aims and ambitions of the Roman Catholic Church are no less total and arrogant than are those of Communism."

M.S.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Missionary Notes

While writing these lines I am once more at my home address in Grand Rapids, Michigan. I was about to write that I am "visiting" a few days at home; however, that would hardly be in good taste. Nevertheless, such the life of a Home Missionary to all practical affects becomes.

When these lines come from the press and are being read by you, I expect to be back "home" in Loveland, Colorado in the very neat apartment which the Hope Reformed church of Loveland rents for the Home Missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches, laboring in their midst.

The labors in Loveland are being performed by the undersigned with continued joy and strength by the Holy Spirit. And through the self-same Spirit the labors are also fruitful in the hearts of the congregation. Theirs is a healthy spiritual joy. Often the brethren and sisters testify of the goodness of God in sending them a preacher, who preaches the doctrine of sovereignly free grace of God. Such grace is their solid comfort in life and in death.

Particularly is this true after and while we were studying the Canons of Dort together.

About this study of the Canons of Dort in Loveland I would like to relate just a bit.

First of all, let it be clearly understood, the study of the Canons of Dort was undertaken upon the suggestion and initiative of members of the Consistory. One of the elders in the congregation brought the suggestion before the Consistory that such a study should be undertaken. He opined that there was plenty of time for the Consistory to meet each Monday evening to study the Canons. This was to be done in the spirit of the Bearean brethren, who had the nobility to see whether these things were true. And the Consistory by formal motion decided unanimously to make a study of the Canons, and if they found the Canons sound to also have the congregation study the Canons with them.

The reader must understand that the brethren and sisters in Loveland officially have only the Heidelberg Catechism as a Standard of Doctrine. It is wholly understandable that in their minds there must be no conflict between the teaching of the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort and also the Belgic Confession. Contrary to the opinion of some it is not true that the Hope Reformed Church places the Catechism before the Bible. But they do believe that the Heidelberg Catechism is the only safe book of Catechetical instruction for the children as pertains to *Reformed* doctrine. That is their *official* doctrinal stand to this present moment. And since this is the case it was very heartening for the undersigned that these brethren and sisters were willing to study the Canons.

This study of the Canons has now been completed in the Loveland area of the congregation. There are five families in Denver, who also are members of the Loveland church, who are now studying the Canons with the undersigned, and we are studying Heads of Doctrine II.

It stands to reason that in the method of approach to the dogma a historical background of the Synod of Dort had to be studied. It was necessary to demonstrate that the fathers of Dort, were defending the "five points of Calvinism" over-against the Remonstrants, who hated the teaching of the Heidelberg Catechism and would have "abbreviated it," that is, corrupted it. And always and again we noticed the explicit teaching of the "Five Articles of the Arminians." The undersigned feels rather confident that many of the brethren in Loveland know the wording of these Articles verbatim by this time. Each time we thus showed that the Arminians were exactly enemies of the Reformed faith, and that the fathers ably defend the Reformed faith, as expressed in the Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic Confession, while appealing to the express testimony of the Holy Scriptures.

The interest in the study of the Canons was spontaneous. The brethren and sisters were like the "violent who take the kingdom by force." They knew that the Canons were the truth. They enjoyed the many facets of Reformed faith that could thus be discussed. And they testify that they were confirmed in the faith, in the solid comfort in life and in death.

One elder said "we have learned more about the Reformed faith, the Heidelberg Catechism during the past two years with our children, than what we did for the past twenty years." Now we have "Schrift-erklrung!" An other elder testified (and others corroborated this testimony with theirs) that he had never known the teaching of the Heidelberg Catechism until he had studied the Canons. "This is the best thing we have done yet," he said.

Plans are now to study the "Church Order of Dort." I feel confident that the brethren and sisters are going to show a real interest in this study of the Presbyterian form of church government. They will wish to know just the "why" and "wherefore" of certain "usages and customs" in our churches. Upon principle matters they will have few questions anymore. This field has been quite well covered. At least to the extent that they are persuaded in their hearts that the Protestant Reformed Churches are hewing to the Reformed line; that they are, from that view-point, in safe company with our churches!

And I am persuaded in my heart that the brethren and sisters in Loveland are good company to be in. They are not a foreign segment to be added to our churches in a mechanical manner. They grew organically-spiritually with us in the Vine, Christ Jesus. They are one with us in faith, hope and doctrine.

It will require a little enlightenment in Church Order, it seems to me, for them to know how things are done in

"decency and order" in our churches. That will require a bit more time and patience.

Meanwhile we look into the future. We just received word from the attorney that the date of the Court Trial in Loveland concerning the church and parsonage has been again reset. This time to an earlier date. It will now be May 7th, 1957.

Whether the Lord returns the buildings to the faithful continuation of the Reformed Hope Church of Loveland or not, the brethren and sisters understand that he that hath put his hand to the plow, and looketh back, is not worthy of the kingdom.

One brother said: "Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you."

May that ever be our guiding star!

G. L.

The Centennial of the Christian Reformed Church

Dear Editor:

In the March 1 Banner Mr. T. Stob, who is a member of the Christian Reformed Church (the Second Church of Englewood, Chicago) writes a few lines in connection with the Centennial of his Church; and he is not so very enthusiastic about it. He wonders whether instead of rejoicing he should not put up a doleful lamentation, when he considers the trend toward which his Church is moving. Says he: For the first time in 100 years many of our churches have cancelled services which have been prescribed in our Church Order, referring to the Old Year's services. And his churches are getting bolder as the years pass by.

The writer laments that his Church compromised on the divorce and remarriage question. It can hardly be refuted that never before in the history of our Church have evidences of spiritual decline been so apparent as in recent years, so he writes. Satan is freely admitted into our homes, and on the Lord's Day we satisfy our desire for entertainment by means of television; in some meetings Hollywood movies are replacing the study of God's Word; the line of demarcation between the Christian and the world is fast disappearing. The spirit of jazz is taking hold, and materialism is gaining rapidly, so the writer laments.

However, around this dark picture he sees a bright lining.

The writer is grateful that in his Church there are leaders who have the conviction to warn and oppose such conditions which made inroads in his Church, and he is grateful to his God for the showers of blessings which He poured down upon them during the past 100 years.

But you must remember, Mr. Stob, that blessings are not merely in things, but only if we receive them in God's favor, and this also holds for the celebration of the Centennial of your Church.

Do you remember 1924? I cannot forget, and am convinced in my mind that then and there your Church went wrong; that she put up three points of doctrine which are not found in your Confessions, neither in Scripture. There lies all your trouble, and if your Church does not confess its sin before God and men, then it is a hopeless case, and the blessings of our covenant God cannot rest upon your Church.

Do you remember what your Church has done in the Kalamazoo Synod of '24? She threw out ministers which were truly Reformed (according to your own records), because she did not want the truth anymore; but who am I that I should warn you? Men of more knowledge and ability have warned your Church time and again, but to no avail.

In the same Banner, on page 4, the Rev. Vander Ploeg writes in "Editorials" on "Enthusiastically Reformed," and he comments by saying: Our Centennial will surely be a farce unless we as individuals and as a denomination are enthusiastically Reformed.

Now, then, I can inform you that it surely will be a farce, for your denomination is not Reformed, and so there is not any reason to be enthusiastic.

Today the Christian Reformed Church believes in the free offer of grace; in the free will of man; that God is gracious to all in the preaching of the Word; that God checks sin; and that the ungodly can perform good deeds in the sight of God. Now this is not Calvinism but Arminianism and Pelagianism.

Now, Rev. Vander Ploeg, your Church lost its distinctiveness and turned apostate, and the "Ecclesia reformatā est reformanda" cannot be applied to your churches anymore.

It looks out of place that the pictures of Rev. A. Brummelkamp and Rev. H. De Cock are printed in your "Editorials," who became professors at Kampen shortly after the Secession in 1834 from the Established Church in the Netherlands. The meaning is of course that your Church is just as pure as the Churches of the Secession were in 1834.

I would have pictured there the heads of Prof. Berkhof, the father of the three fatherless children, and Rev. Eldersveld, the radio preacher from coast to coast; and, remember, Rev. Eldersveld, your responsibility is great.

Would to God that even now, while you celebrate the Centennial of your Church, you would follow in the footsteps of De Cock and Brummelkamp, who never preached a "Christ pro omnibus," but a Christ for His elect people.

S.D.V.

REPORT OF CLASSIS EAST

April 3, 4, 1957 — at Hudsonville

The Chairman of the January session, Rev. R. Veldman, led in the opening devotions. After Classis was declared constituted, he was succeeded by the Rev. G. Vos who very ably presided. It was good to see the Rev. Vos back with us after having missed two Classical meetings because of physical disability. It was also gratifying to observe that all the Churches residing in Classis East were represented by two delegates throughout all the sessions. In spite of the disheartening material which has kept Classis busy for an entire year and which has a tendency to wear down one's spirit, a wonderful spirit prevailed throughout all the discussions. In some respects it was like old times considering that our esteemed professors Hoeksema and Ophof could attend most of the meetings and serve us with sage advice. Also Rev. Lubbers was able to attend some of the meetings.

As to the material treated at this Classis, which this time met only a day and a half, we can be very brief.

The appointment of committees to discharge the routine business of finance and Classical appointments, and the reports of the clerk and the Classical committee were handled with dispatch.

Appointments to Kalamazoo were adopted as follows: May 12—R. Veldman, May 19—H. Hanko, May 26—B. Woudenberg, June 2—C. Hanko, June 9—G. Lanting, June 23—J. McCollam, June 30—M. Schipper, July 9—G. Vos. The dates of June 16 and July 14 were left blank.

Kalamazoo was also granted the right to come to Synod with their request for subsidy according to which they desire help only in case they receive a minister of their own. From this same church came a grievance because of a missive directed to them by the last Classis through the Stated Clerk.

Classis also received a request from Fourth Church to designate a date to observe Ascension Day, since this year it falls on Memorial Day. Classis decided to advise all our churches to hold Ascension services on the Sunday morning of June 9.

Voting for functionaries took place as follows: Rev. R. Veldman informed Classis that he will not be able to serve as secundus delegate to Synod, and Classis chose Rev. G. M. Ophoff in his place. The following elder delegates were chosen:

Primi

R. Newhouse
G. Pipe
P. Lubbers
K. Lanning

Secundi

A. Talsma
P. Decker
T. Engelsma
J. Kortering

Mr. A. Haan was re-elected to be Classical Treasurer for a term of three years. Church Visitors chosen were G. Vos and C. Hanko, with R. Veldman as alternate for both.

The Consistory of Holland requested Classis the right to ask for collections in our churches of the East to help them meet their assessments due to loss of membership. Holland also notifies Classis of their appeal to Synod relative to decisions made at previous Classis in the Holland Case. It is decided to send to Synod all our decisions relative to the pertinent cases.

The rest of the time Classis considered several protests from those who are still listed as members of Holland but who no longer attend there. Classis rendered its advice on these protests. Another brother from Holland who, due to illness, was unable to protest the action of the January Classis in his case, asks for permission to appear at the July Classis. This was granted.

Rev. H. Hanko was appointed to thank the ladies of our Hudsonville Church for their excellent catering services.

Questions of Article 41 of the Church Order were asked of each Consistory and answered satisfactorily.

Classis decided to meet next time, D.V., on July 10 at Hope Church.

After a few appropriate closing remarks, the Rev. G. Vos offered the closing prayer of thanksgiving.

M. Schipper, Stated Clerk.