

THE STANDARD

Bearers

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MEDITATION

A WORD FOR THE CHANGING OF THE SEASONS

"Behold, Thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and my age is as nothing before Thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah. And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in Thee."

Psalm 39:5 and 7

David determined with himself to take heed to his ways: he was not going to sin with his tongue, which is a lofty motive.

But there was one thing wrong with that: he also was silent with respect to the good. And that ran counter to God's injunction. We are supposed to be very voluble regarding the good. Especially regarding the good of God!

He kept his mouth shut because of the wicked around him. But his sorrow was troubled, it increased.

And so he spake with his tongue. And that was better.

We will do likewise. And seek to learn from David's speech.

In the two verses which you read above this meditation we find really two thoughts. First, the frailty of our days; and, second, the strong hope of the Christian in this frail life. So the main thought is: A strong hope in the midst of the frailty of our lives.

Our life is frail.

Our days are short.

A day is likened to a handbreadth, four fingers, the shortest measure among the orientals.

So that our day is likened to the small, the little, the insignificant.

When you read this, three hundred sixty-five days have been swallowed up. Three hundred sixty-five handbreadths are gone. They simply came and flew away.

And God made them so. This is so plain to the saint that he says: "Behold!"

A fool doth not understand this.

But you will say: but how about my whole life time? My age!

Here is the answer: It is as nothing before the face of the Almighty.

And that is true, even as all God's words are truth and verity.

That seems not so. When we stand at the beginning of life it seems as though there is no end to it. And it is no wonder that the natural man says: My house shall stand for aye! The end of our days seems so far away!

And yet, our age, our life-time is very short. And we know it when we become old. When we look back our age is very insignificant. It seems but yesterday that we played as a little boy among the children. Our age is as a mist that dissolves, disappears, and is not.

And why?

The text gives us a hint: our age is as nothing before THEE!

That is the key to the understanding of our age.

You see: God is the eternal One. And our age, compared to this terrible eternity is as nothing.

Our fathers used a figure.

Imagine a 5 mile high mountain of granite in the midst of an ocean.

And suppose further that a little bird would come every thousand years to sharpen its beak on that mountain of granite. Now the scientists tell us that some little atoms of that granite would wear away every time that little bird would come to sharpen its beak. Well then, how long would it take for that mountain of granite to wear away under the sharpening process of that little bird's beak? Yet, no matter how many billions of years it would take, at the disappearing of that mountain eternity would have scarcely begun.

Oh, but eternity is so long!

What then is seventy or eighty years of our life's span? Surely, before God my age is as nothing.

And that is true of every man, even those of whom it is said that they are settled, firm, established and mighty. "Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity."

Astounding truth of the Word of the eternal God!

Man at his best estate. Listen to the fools and their plans. They are blind and foolish. They say: I am the captain of my life and the master of my soul. And they plan and live their lives in the same mood.

But God looks upon them and listens to them and laughs: He has them in derision.

Beloved reader: look upon your life and say: Lord, I am nothing, and at my best state I am vanity, a nothing.

The word for vanity is ABEL, that is, a breath. No more.

Let us say it at once: only God's elect, regenerated, and called people echo such sentiments. They have received wisdom from God and evaluate their lives aright.

The wicked does not know. They do not understand.

And they will continue to live their vain life of sin and corruption until they die and fall into the hands of the living God.

But the Church of God in Christ will echo God's thoughts of truth and verity even on New Year's eve, when they make up the accounts before the face of Him who seeth our thoughts afar off.

And they will confess with David that their life, their days, their age is as nothing before God, and a great vanity.

God's own confess sin. And hate their vain lives in the world.

When the last evening of the year appears they bow deeply before the Majesty on high. And they sigh: Selah! They will rest a little.

* * * *

But that is not all.

There is a positive side to their confession.

They have prayed and confessed and went to sleep that last evening of 1956.

And in the morning they will continue David's speech of wisdom.

And here it is: "And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in Thee!"

The saint looks at himself, his days, his age, and upon man, even in his best state, and has come to the conclusion that there is nothing that is sure, firm, settled and strong on which he might rely. But, he must go on. He must live before his God. He realizes that he is created unto God's

glory and praises. He needs a sure foundation for the business of living.

And since there is nothing at all on which he can build, he goes to the Rock which is the Lord.

And now, Lord, what wait I for? What is my expectation?

And he supplies the answer too: "My hope is in Thee!"

An excellent confession for the morning of the new year.

My hope is in Thee. Let us look at it closely.

Hope is properly the love of God, even as also faith. The former is stated in Romans 5:5, where we read that hope maketh not ashamed for that the love of God is spread abroad in our hearts through the Holy Ghost that is given unto us. And the latter we find in Galatians, that faith worketh by love. Ch. 5:5b.

Hope is the love of God as it stretches itself to the inheritance. The objective hope, or the object of our hope is the inheritance which is laid away for us, kept for us by the power of God in heaven.

And it includes many and wonderful things.

First, the object of our hope is the heavenly, glorious, spiritual and eternal state of things. It comprises a heavenly heaven and a heavenly earth. It also includes heavenly, perfect creatures in the midst of which I shall live unto all eternity. You will be able to trust everyone there. They all speak the truth: for they all partake of the Rock, and the Rock is Christ. Here on earth you live among the liars both in word and practice. People on earth, ourselves included, have a short memory, conveniently short. And as a consequence, we corrupt ourselves, speak with a double tongue, act like the adder, and are thoroughly miserable. But the object of our hope sings of perfection, of the perfect state where happiness shall reign.

But it also includes, and this is the most important, the company of God and His Christ and His angels. And that, beloved reader, stills the hungry heart. We realize that we are adapted unto God so that we cannot rest except we rest in Him. And all those bounties of our hope are earned, merited for us by Jesus. And He has told us in His Word that they are waiting for us, safely kept for us by God.

Second, this hope is also subjective, and then it is the activity of hope, our hoping.

And that includes three elements.

First, it is expectant living.

You see, part and parcel of the objective hope is granted to us in our regeneration. And under the constant operation of God's Word and Holy Spirit, that life of God in Christ which was our portion in our new birth, comes to our consciousness, giving us a foretaste of the heavenly state.

And if you have once tasted that the Lord is good, you will never be satisfied with anything less than the eternal communion with God, which is called eternal life.

And so you live in continuous expectation of the full harvest of that spiritual life with God in Christ.

Second, it is assured living.

Hope, in the mouth of the contemporaries, means a shrug of the shoulder, the very opposite of assurance. "Yes, I surely hope that I can go home for the holidays, but I am not sure of it." That's the way we use the word *hope*.

But that has nothing to do with the meaning of the word in the Bible. That is already plain from the text which I quoted above: Hope maketh not ashamed. To be ashamed in this connection means, first, that when you get there, the object of your hope is not there; second, that it does not come up to your expectations; and, third, that it is not for you.

But not so with our hope in God!

Hope is assured living. We know in Whom we have believed, and that His promises are sure. We know that when our earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, that we shall have a house of God, not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens. The man that hopes in God is sure of his salvation.

Third, it is the yearning of the love of God in the heart and soul and spirit of the child of God. This is really the most wonderful element of the Christian's hope.

Often, even also at the end of the weary years, we grow despondent, sad, weary, so weary that no man can utter it. And the reasons are a thousandfold.

At such times the God of our salvation quickens our hope, and we yearn for Him and His perfections and wonders.

We stretch out our hands and say: As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, o God!

When earthly friends grow false, He draws us unto a contemplation of His Truth and Faithfulness, and our hungry and thirsty hearts may eat and drink of the hidden manna and the water that flows from the Rock!

With firm steps we enter the New Year!

For heaven's God beckons us! Amen.

G.V.

Announcement

Delegates to Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches are hereby notified that by a decision of the Classical Committee the next meeting of Classis will be held in the Fourth Protestant Reformed Church on Wednesday, January 9, 1957, at 9:00 A. M. The meeting will not be held in our Creston Church as previously decided by the Classis.

M. Schipper, Stated Clerk.

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EDITORIALS

Unbiblical Divorce and Remarriage

We were still going to call your attention to the texts concerning divorce and remarriage in Matt. 19:9 and Luke 16:18.

Notice, first of all, that in these verses taken together, there is mention of three different parties that commit adultery.

First of all, there is the man that, without the cause of adultery on the part of his wife, forsakes her and marries another woman. He commits adultery by marrying another woman, before God, he is still considered to be the legal husband of his first wife. Hence, by living in the marriage relation with the other woman he lives in continual adultery.

Secondly, there is the other man that marries the woman that is forsaken by her first husband. He, too, commits adultery and lives in continual adultery after he has married the forsaken and innocent woman because, in the eyes of God, she still belongs to the man that has forsaken her.

Thirdly, there is the originally innocent woman that is forsaken by her husband and now marries the other man. By concluding this second marriage she, too, commits adultery and, by living with that second man, lives in continual adultery because, before the law of God, she is still the wife of her first husband that has forsaken her and married another woman.

We are well aware of the fact that the last synod of the Christian Reformed Church denies this. Even though the first two propositions adopted by that synod are entirely negative and, therefore, unworthy of a synod; and even though these propositions occur in the Acts of Synod without a single item of proof (how can one offer positive Scriptural proof for mere negative propositions?) which again make them unworthy of a synod; nevertheless, if we give a positive form to these negative propositions, they express:

1. That parties may remarry after they are divorced on the ground of their own adultery or on unbiblical grounds.

2. That parties thus remarried may continue their membership in the Christian Reformed Church without first severing their relationship in that illegal marriage.

But, although the synod of the Christian Reformed Church offered no proof for their position in the matter, we must, nevertheless, prove from the Word of God that our position in the matter is right. This we have already done in preceding numbers of our magazine. But now we will still show that the passages from Luke 16:18 and from Matthew 19:9 indeed do teach what, in the first part of this article, we claim they teach on the question of divorce and remarriage.

First of all, then, Matthew 19:9.

I do not have to quote the text again since I have done

so more than once. Besides, you can easily look it up in your own Bible.

Let me take my starting-point in the last part of this verse. There we read the well-known words: "and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." Let us have clearly before our mind what is the import, not only of these last words of the text, but of the whole passage in the light of this last sentence. What is the situation?

1. A man puts away his wife, forsakes her. In the light of the rest of the text, it is clear that he does not merely leave her but that, somehow, he obtains a legal divorce, something that can easily be done, especially in our own country, as we all know. But this could also be done among the Jews of Jesus' time.

2. The woman that is thus forsaken by her husband gave him no legal ground for a divorce by committing adultery before her husband forsook her. She is the innocent party.

3. Nevertheless, the man that put away his wife marries another woman, according to the text. We may well assume that this was his purpose in the first place: by putting away his wife he wanted to open the way for marrying another woman.

4. By marrying the other woman he, according to the text, commits adultery. And, of course, the woman he marries also commits adultery. Hence, as we mentioned above, the man and that second wife live in continued adultery. What is the clear implication? It is, evidently, that even after his marriage with the other woman, his first wife, whom he put away, is still his only legal wife before God and His law.

5. But now notice the last part of the text: "and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." What does this mean?

- a. The woman that is put away did not commit adultery. If she had committed adultery, the man would have had grounds before God and His law to put her away. For the Lord adds "except it be for fornication."

- b. Many conclude from this that, if a man puts away his wife for the cause of fornication, he may marry another woman. This used to be my position several years back. Of course, this is still a far cry from the position of the last Christian Reformed Synod. Nevertheless, I have abandoned this position, partly on grounds I mentioned before, but also partly on the basis of the last part of Matthew 19:9.

- c. Is the innocent woman that did not commit adultery, that is put away from her husband and whose husband married another woman, now entitled before God to marry another man? Not according to the Word of God in the text we are now examining. For the Lord says: "and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." Why is this the case? There can be only one answer to this: the innocent woman that did not commit fornication but that was put away by her husband, is still considered

to be the legal wife before God and His law of her first husband even though he has already married another woman.

I must still comment on this in our next issue, D. V.

H.H.

Election and Reprobation

We are discussing the general question whether or not, in his book on The Election of God, Berkouwer assigns a proper, that is, a Scriptural and confessional place to the truth of reprobation. And in this connection we were discussing the particular question of the hardening of man's heart. Is, in the hardening of his heart, God first or is man the primary author and does God merely follow as a righteous judgment upon the sin of man's hardening his own heart? And does the hardening of man's heart stand at all in the causal connection with the decree of reprobation?

This Berkouwer denies. This, however, we maintain on the basis of Scripture and the Reformed Confessions.

We were discussing some of the passages which Berkouwer quotes or to which he refers, but which he does not exegete. Thus far we explained the passages from Isa. 6 and Matt. 13. We now wish to call your attention to Mark 4:10-12.

Before we do so, however we wish to refer to the passages of the Reformed Confessions that definitely speak of reprobation.

In Canons I, 15 we read:

"What peculiarly tends to illustrate and recommend to us the eternal and unmerited grace of election, is the express testimony of sacred Scripture, that not all, but some only are elected, while others are passed by in the eternal decree; whom God, out of his sovereign, most just, irreprehensible and unchangeable good pleasure, hath decreed to leave in the common misery into which they have willfully plunged themselves, and not to bestow upon them saving faith and the grace of conversion; but permitting them in his just judgment to follow their own ways, at last, for the declaration of his justice, to condemn and perish them forever, not only on account of their unbelief, but also for all their other sins. And this is the decree of reprobation which by no means makes God the author of sin (the very thought of which is blasphemy) but declares him to be an awful, irreprehensible, and righteous judge and avenger thereof."

And in the rejection of errors in the same chapter of the Canons, art. 8, we read:

"The Synod rejects the errors of those:

"Who teach: That God, simply by virtue of his righteous will, did not decide either to leave anyone in the fall of Adam and in the common state of sin and condemnation, or to pass anyone by in the communication of grace which is necessary for faith and conversion. For this is firmly decreed: 'He hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he

hardeneth,' Rom. 9:18. And also this: 'Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given,' Matt. 13:11. Likewise: 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes; yea, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight,' Matt. 11:25, 26."

This is, evidently, the infra-lapsarian conception of election and reprobation. But note:

1. That, according to God's eternal decree, He passed them, i.e. the reprobate, by so that they were not chosen unto eternal life, but were left in their sin and condemnation.

2. That God decreed in his unchangeable good pleasure not to bestow on the reprobate faith and the grace of conversion but to leave them to walk in their own sinful way unto eternal condemnation.

3. That, according to the negative part of the Canons which we quoted above, it is firmly decreed in God's eternal counsel of reprobation that God hardens whom He will, that He will not reveal unto them the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, that He hid them from the wise and prudent.

I would like to know how Berkouwer explains these passages of the Canons and maintains that the hardening of man's heart does not stand in causal connection with the decree of reprobation, something which, as I understand it, is literally taught in Canons I. B. 8.

But now let us return to Scripture.

In Mark 4:10-12 we read:

"And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked him of the parable. And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them."

We must ask and try to answer several questions:

1. Who are they that are without? Without what and why?

2. Why, according to this passage, and for what purpose, are "all these things done in parables?"

3. What is the import of the expression "seeing they see, and do not perceive" and "hearing they hear, and do not understand?"

4. What is the significance of the conjunction "lest" in the clause "lest" they be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them?"

The answer to these questions, however, must wait till next time.

H. H.

OUR DOCTRINE

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

CHAPTER VII

The Church with a Mystic Tendency

Revelation 2:18-29

The church of Thyatira shall see the works of the Lord, and at the same time become a warning example to the churches round about, in as far as they also were endangered by the heresy of the Nicolaitans. And not only is the church of Thyatira a warning example to the churches of that time, but to those of all ages as well. The devil even in the present day goeth about like a roaring lion. And his object is always again to sever the church from the basis of the Word of God, and thus to set her adrift on the seductive current of human imagination. The church of Thyatira, therefore, may also be our warning example. For the Lord searches the reins and the hearts, and He will finish a just work upon the earth.

However, also the message to the church of Thyatira does not conclude with threats of judgment, but closes with most glorious promises to them that are faithful and overcome in the battle. In the first place the Lord tenderly comforts them, and at the same time warns them against the danger of falling into an opposite extreme, when He says: "But to you I say, to the rest that are in Thyatira, as many as have not this teaching, who know not the deep things of Satan, as they are wont to say; I cast upon you none other burden." These last words are referred by some to a burden of judgment. The meaning then would be that the Lord would indeed visit the congregation with His judgments by afflicting and punishing the evil-doers, but that outside of the culprits He would not afflict any other in the church. But this view appears less probable. More natural it would seem, to refer these words to a burden of law and precepts. As the undefiled would witness the judgments upon the wicked Jezebel and her following because of their fornication, they might be inclined to the opposite extreme, and imagine that the complete fulfillment of the law was still incumbent upon them and necessary for their salvation. From antinomism they might swing to phariseism and nomism. And against this the Lord warns them by saying that He casts upon them none other burden. The more probable this interpretation would seem because there is an unmistakable reference in these words to the passage of Acts 15:28, 29. And we remember that the question of circumcision and of the entire Mosaic law had been a burning one in the early churches, and that it had been discussed and settled by the Synod of Jerusalem, in approximately 50 A. D. And the well-known decision for that important gathering had been: "For it seemed good unto us and to the Holy

Ghost, to lay upon you none other burden except these necessary things, that you abstain from meat offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication, from which if ye keep yourselves ye shall do well. Fare ye well." This, then, was the burden that had been cast upon them heretofore. And if they only had adhered to these precepts, they would undoubtedly have kept themselves undefiled from the vile sins of Jezebel and her wicked brood. But now the danger was more than imaginary that the faithful at the sight of the judgments inflicted upon the wicked woman in their midst would turn to the other extreme, and not intimately acquainted with the doctrine of the church, would timidly subject themselves once more to the bondage of fear. This must be prevented. And therefore the Lord comes with the definite message: "I cast upon you none other burden. Just keep what you have till I come."

To these faithful, then, to those that keep what they have, and are pure from the defilement of Jezebel's teaching, the Lord comes with a most beautiful promise. Says He: "And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of a potter are broken to shivers; as also I have received of my Father." To see in these words anything but a promise of final victory in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ is to do violence to the plain words of Scripture. Plainly Jesus promises in this passage that He will give to the faithful the same power He has received from His Father. In the day of His coming they shall share in His power and glory of victory. Evidently the reference is to Psalm 2. There we are presented, first of all, with a picture of the powers and the might of the world raging and striving to obtain the world dominion that properly belongs to the kingdom of God's anointed. This dominion the Father gave to His Son. He has been anointed King over God's holy hill, over Zion. And when that Son declares the decree of Jehovah, He says: "The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." Evidently the dominant thought is that the powers of the world strive to break the dominion of Christ, and rebel against the Most High, but that the Son shall have the ultimate victory in the day of His coming and execute vengeance upon all His enemies. This is the power He has received from His Father. And in this power the faithful of the church of Thyatira shall share, according to this glorious promise. In a later connection we shall have occasion to explain this promise more definitely. Now it must suffice that we state as our conviction that the promise is to be literally fulfilled. Literally the enemies rage against the kingdom and dominion of the Son. Literally the Christ shall come to break the power of His enemies. But these enemies that rise against the kingdom of God also oppose the sub-

jects of that kingdom while they still are on earth. They reproach and slander them. They persecute them, and cause them to suffer for the sake of Christ. But even as they share in His reproach, so shall they also participate in the glory of His victory in the day when He shall have the final victory over all His enemies. They shall come with Him. With Him they shall judge the nations. And with Him they shall enter into His dominion when the nations are broken to shivers like a potter's vessel and all the power of opposition shall have an end.

In the second place, the Lord gives to the faithful the beautiful and suggestive promise of the morning star. Mention of the fact that the righteous shall shine with radiant glory, as the bodies in the firmament, is not foreign to Scripture. In Daniel 12:4 we read: "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." And in Matthew 13:43 the Lord says: "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." And therefore, all the righteous shall shine. That is the glory of their perfected new being in Christ. Cleansed and purified in the blood of the Lamb, they shall forevermore reveal themselves in eternal luster and resplendent glory. To that eternal glory also the symbol of our text refers. But evidently there is this difference, that the morning star shines with greater splendor, is more obvious in brightness, than the other stars in the firmament. It is a star of special luster and glory. Thus also they that keep themselves pure in the midst of great temptation, that remain faithful in times of special stress and danger, shall shine forth with distinguished glory in the eternal kingdom of God. Even as the morning star shines with special glory in the firmament of heaven, so shall they that have kept themselves pure from the defilement of Jezebel, and in the midst of great temptations have been faithful unto the end, reveal themselves in the eternal kingdom with distinct glory and splendor.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. What doth the Spirit say? Do not drift away on subjective experience, ignoring the objective principle of the Word of God. Cling to the Word. For only that Word is our safe guide and firm basis in the midst of strong currents of human theories. And if false prophets arise, that would lead you astray with their own imaginations, test the spirits, and reject them without hesitation. This false doctrine may sometimes appear under a very beautiful mask. In Thyatira it was a mask of super-piety. In our day it is the mask of service to humanity. Surely, service is good if it is service not merely of man, but above all, service of God. Service is good, if it is based not on the vain theories of human philosophy, but on the eternal principle of the Word of God. Cling, then, to that Word. Keep yourselves pure from the wicked Jezebel. For the faithful to the end shall receive the same power as Christ has received of His Father. And they shall shine as the morning star in the kingdom of heaven.

THE CHURCH ABOUT TO DIE

Revelation 3:1-6

On the whole, the picture of the church of Christ in the world which we have been studying this far in connection with the seven letters addressed by the Lord to the seven churches in Asia Minor, is not a very bright one. There is, indeed, some light, there is a bright side to the picture; but there is also a good deal of darkness, in fact, we receive the impression that there is more darkness than light. Ephesus was, indeed, a beautiful church from every outward aspect: she was strong in the knowledge of the truth, faithful in discipline, abounding in works. Yet, there was at the same time some very fundamental defect in the congregation, a defect that was bound to bring her to destruction as a church of Jesus Christ: she lost her first love. Smyrna, indeed, presented us with a picture of the church as perfect as we may ever expect to meet here in this world: she receives no rebuke from the Lord but was spiritually rich. Her dark side consisted in this that she was the church in tribulation: she was poor and held in disrepute by the world about her. Pergamos, evidently, had been a very faithful church in the past, but now she was weakening and became lax in discipline as was evident from the fact that she allowed the evil Nicolaitans to exist in her midst. Thyatira, so we found, was a beautiful little church, warm in spiritual life, ardent in respect to the works of faith. But her weakness was that she was strongly characterized by a tendency to false mysticism so that she even permitted wicked Jezebel to teach in the church and to seduce its members from the truth as it is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Hence, we may say, indeed, that there is a good deal of light in the picture of the church as we have studied her thus far, but also much darkness. And one who expects the church to be perfect in the world may well learn a lesson from the sevenfold picture of the church we find in the book of Revelation.

We still have to call attention to three more of the churches in Asia Minor to whom the Lord addressed these letters. Nor does the picture of the church in the world become much brighter by these three letters. If we would, perhaps, expect that the Lord so arranged the order of these letters to the seven churches that the picture gradually becomes brighter, we will certainly meet with disappointment. The most miserable two of the representations of the church in the world are still to be considered. First comes the church in Sardis, a most wretched representation and manifestation of the church in the world. For a moment we may find some comfort and joy in the letter of the Lord to the church in Philadelphia, a church small and of little strength from the viewpoint of the world, but true and faithful and abounding in spiritual strength. But then the series closes with the most miserable picture of the church in Laodicea, a church that was rich in her own estimation, but devoid of every manifestation of spiritual riches.

Also in this order and arrangement of the seven letters

which is, of course, intentional, we see the purpose of the Lord to warn His church in the world not to expect great things of the church in the world as the end of this present age approaches. It is true, as we have remarked before, that in these seven letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor we do not and may not discern seven successive periods in the history of the church in the world, as some would have it. Nevertheless, there is, of course, reason for this arrangement according to which the series closes with the most miserable of the church in the world. Nor can this reason be found only in the geographical situation of the seven churches. On the contrary, although it is true that the order of the seven letters follows the geographical location of the seven churches, yet the order of the seven letters is intentionally such that, with two exceptions, the trend of development of the church in the world is downward: it steadily points to the false church as represented by the church in Laodicea.

Sardis was a city located in a rich plain, mostly south of Thyatira and east from Ephesus. The city was noted for its wealth. This may have had something to do with the condition of the church there. The general description of the church is contained in the words: "Thou hast a name that thou livest but thou art dead." And we receive the impression that these words as well as the entire letter are, indeed, addressed to the entire church in Sardis, but that they refer, first of all, to its minister or angel.

To the pastor of this flock, therefore, must be applied that he had a name that he lived, and was dead. Commentators have surmised that this angel of the church in Sardis had a proper name that signified life or living. But there is no need of such an ingenious invention. Rather do we understand the Saviour's words as meaning that he had a reputation that he was living, but that he did not live up to this reputation. Nor do we have to read these words as if they suggested that this particular minister was especially famous as a preacher and as an active pastor, for the facts would seem to contradict this. It is quite sufficient to remember that this man not only had the name that he was a Christian, but also that of a minister of the Word of God. As such he, naturally, had a name that he was living, full of the new life in Christ, manifested in ardent zeal and devotion to his Lord, diligent in his calling, abounding in good works. If anyone is expected to be living and to reveal his life in diligent service, in constantly seeking the kingdom of God, in walking in holiness, and in thus being an example unto the flock, it is the minister. And there is nothing more disgusting than the sight of a dead minister. O, indeed, we may well remind ourselves that also the pastor is but a sinful man, and that it cannot be expected of him any more than of the members of his church that his walk and conversation are perfect and without sin. Fact is, nevertheless, that he is a minister of the Word of God, that as such he has an holy calling, the most exalted there is in this world, and that therefore he has a name that he lives.

A living minister is zealous in his work, devotes himself wholeheartedly and with all his power to the study of the Scriptures, the preaching of the Word, the instruction of young and old in the truth, to his pastoral work, to meditation and prayer. And he is doubly careful to be an example unto the flock, and to adorn his work of the ministry by a walk in all good works.

But in all these respects the minister of the church in Sardis was dead. The meaning is not that he was, personally, devoid of the life of the new birth, but that his life and walk as a minister of the Word of God was characterized by lack of consecration. He was a dead preacher. He did not give himself to the study of the Scriptures and to prayer. His word was not a living testimony. He was unfaithful as a pastor. He failed to watch over the flock, to bring consolation to them that mourned, to admonish the wayward, to comfort the sick and afflicted, to instruct the young in the fear of the Lord. Where there should have been fervor, there was apathy; instead of zeal in the work of the Lord, there was a manifestation of cold indifferentism; instead of diligence there was indolence. His work was a burden to him. And you may depend on it: he loved the things of the flesh, leisure, worldly comfort and pleasure, the luxuries for which the city of Sardis was noted.

But enough of this dead preacher. The Church was just like him. For, although the angel of the church is addressed in the first place, the church is rebuked at the same time. Also the church has a name that she lives. Is she not the body of Christ? Does not Christ her Head live in her? And her life becomes manifest in her confession and walk, as a life of faith and hope, of confidence and love, of holiness and righteousness. She fights the battle of faith, and keeps her garments clean in the midst of an ungodly world. She lets her light shine, that men may see her good works, and glorify her Father which is in heaven. But the church in Sardis was dead. It is true that there were a few that had not defiled their garments. But of the majority this could not be said. The flesh dominated in the church of Sardis. The Lord accuses her that her works were not perfect before God. This does not mean that all her works were defiled with sin, for this is always the case, even with the very best of our good works. But the church as such, and believers individually, failed to walk in those works that were required of them. There was no interest in Sardis for the things of the kingdom of God, no searching of the Scriptures, no daily prayer, no confession of the name of Christ, no testimony for the truth, no zeal in proclaiming the gospel, no instruction of the youth, no battle of faith, no patience and suffering for Christ's sake, no manifestation of sorrow after God, of true repentance, of the love of God and of the brethren. Instead, there was a seeking of the things of this world, friendship with the world, a striving after the treasures and pleasures of Sardis. The church, exactly because she was church, had a name that she lived, but she was dead!

H.H.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Covenant with Noah

There are still other scriptures to which an appeal can be made in support of the view that the covenant with Noah was a covenant of special grace and not a covenant of common grace. I Peter 3:19-21, "By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometimes were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by the water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." The teaching here is that the flood and Christian baptism are related to each other as type and antitype. The idea is that as Noah was cleansed by the waters of the flood from his godless contemporaries and their corruption, so are the believers cleansed from their sins by the water of baptism, that is, by the blood of Christ. Saved are they from their sins, from their sinful flesh and from the world doomed to destruction. Now if the Lord sent the flood to cleanse, separate believing Noah from the wicked and reprobated world of his day and age, can it be true that, after the flood, the Lord established with Noah a covenant of common grace including that very world?

Our conclusion is then that the covenant with Noah was a covenant of special grace and not of common grace. It is only in the light of this conception that what is reported to us in Genesis chapters 6, 7, 8 can be rightly explained. All serves this covenant of special grace (Another covenant there is not). This covenant must be perfected. The elect must be saved. For this there must be opportunity.

All are not agreed that the covenant with Noah was a covenant of special grace. According to the late Dr. A. Kuyper, the covenant that the Lord established with Noah was a covenant of common grace, thus a covenant including also the reprobated humanity. The promises of this covenant are said to be the very promises that the Lord made to Noah with whom He is supposed to have transacted as the representative of the reprobated. This covenant God makes real in the lives of reprobated men by a doing of His according to which He so operates by His Spirit in the hearts of these men that sin in them is checked and they, themselves, as a result, perform works that have moral value in the sight of God. The purpose of this covenant is the creation of a common sphere in which elect and reprobate can cooperate for the betterment of this world through the development of the earth and its resources in obedience to the original ordinance of creation, "And the Lord God took the man, and put him in the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it" (Gen. 2:15). Such is the view.

Let us examine the proof that Kuyper imagines to have found in the Genesis narrative in support of his view—the view that the covenant with Noah was a covenant of common grace.

a) First, he directs attention to the personal pronoun *you* in the text at chapter 9:8, 9, "And God spake unto Noah and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish my covenant with *you*, and with your seed after *you*." In the Hebrew the pronoun *you* is plural; for its antecedents are *Noah and his sons* and not Noah only. This must serve as proof that the covenant with Noah was common: it was established with Noah and the three progenitors of the human race to be, thus with both Noah's spiritual and carnal seed, with both the elect and reprobated in his loins. Had it been a covenant of special grace, it would have been established with Noah in the line of Shem, thus with Noah's spiritual seed alone. Such is the view. Writes Kuyper, "It is God speaking here, so that we deal with the very words of God, and God spake not to Noah alone but to Noah and his three sons, hence not to Shem alone but to Shem and to Japheth and to Ham as well as including their whole offspring, 'And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you and with your seed after you.' Had it been a covenant established with Noah alone, one might explain the words, 'and with your seed after you,' as having reference exclusively to Noah's spiritual (that is, elect) posterity. But such an interpretation is now impossible; for it is evident that the Lord addresses not His words to Noah alone, but to four persons, to wit, Noah, Shem, Ham and Japheth. Thus the Lord emphatically declares that He establishes this covenant not with believers alone, nor with the posterity of Shem alone but with Ham and Japheth and their posterity as well." De Gemeene Gratie, Vol. I, page 17.

The point to this reasoning is, that the covenant, established, as it was, with Noah and his three sons and not merely with Noah in the line of Shem, includes the whole human race as to everyone of its members, thus includes reprobate and elect alike and was, on this account, a covenant of common grace.

But this reasoning certainly does not hold. That the Lord established His covenant with Noah's three sons and not alone with Shem was owing to the fact that He had His elect in the generations of each of these sons. If so, how can His establishing His covenant with all three sons prove that His covenant with them included also their reprobated offspring and was, therefore, a covenant of common grace? It cannot, of course.

Later it was revealed unto Noah that the Lord will enlarge Japheth and that he will dwell in the tents of Shem. Now Shem is Christ. The tents of Shem is the house of God over which Christ has been set a great priest. In this house Japheth as redeemed from all his sins by the blood of Christ shall have a place. Surely, the covenant with Noah and his sons was a covenant of special grace.

Second, Kuyper has still other proof. It is this, namely, that the covenant with Noah included also the brute creation. Kuyper writes, "As though foreseeing that this would be misunderstood, God becomes more explicit and literal in His statement of the matter thus, 'And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you, from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth.' This is repeated in verse 12 in these words, 'The covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations.' And as if it were His purpose to state this with greater concreteness and to bring out with greater clarity that this covenant assuredly does concern human existence on earth, it is said in verse 13, 'a covenant between me and the earth.' Thus as much as six times it asserts that here we have to do with a covenant not of particular but of common grace. And it is hard to understand how some, in utter disregard of this sixfold assertion, have reasoned away and to all practical extent denied the general character of this covenant." Idem, Vol. I, page 17, 18.

The point to this reasoning is that, including, as it does the brute creation, all life on earth, the covenant with Noah must be common. Now this argument has weight only if the matter it concerns cannot be explained on the ground that the covenant with Noah is particular. But the matter can well be explained on this ground. Fact is that the particular covenant includes the brute creation. We need but quote Paul here, "Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21). Here it is taught that the brute creature will be delivered and that its deliverance is bound up with the salvation of God's people and that, therefore, this creature is also included in the particular covenant.

Third, Kuyper directs attention to the use of the divine names *God* and *Jehovah*. Now it is true that in the narrative of the Lord's transactions with Noah, the name of God appears throughout. This must serve as another ground for the view that the covenant with Noah was common. For, so the reasoning goes, if the covenant were particular, the sacred writer would have employed the name *Jehovah*, the particular covenant name of the Lord. Writes Kuyper, "Even the use of the name with which the Most High who concludes the covenant is here called forbids any other conception of the matter (forbids the view that the covenant with Noah is particular, Kuyper means). Where the saving covenant of particular grace is referred to in Genesis 3 the name *Jehovah* is employed. And also in the passage that speaks of the blessing of the Messiah upon Shem, we find in Genesis 9:26 the name *Jehovah*. But here in connection with the covenant of Noah as well as in verse 27 where mention is made of the blessing upon Japheth, the covenant name *Jehovah* is uniformly eliminated and we find everywhere the name *God* only. It is here not *Jehovah* but the

God of all flesh and who in that covenant seals with an oath a promise that indeed pertains to all flesh equally and to all that breathes." Idem, I. 18.

Kuyper imagines to have made the discovery that the name used with the particular covenant is always the name *Jehovah* and never the name *God*. However, passages occur in which the matter concerned is plainly the particular covenant (there is, of course, no such thing as a common covenant) and in which the name used is *God* and not *Jehovah*. Gen. 17 is a report of the Lord's transaction with Abraham regarding the particular covenant of grace and the name used throughout is the name *God* and not *Jehovah*. And so the conclusion that, because in the report of the Lord's transaction with Noah regarding the covenant the name *God* is used, this covenant with Noah is, therefore, a common covenant and not the particular covenant, is wholly unwarranted.

This is the extent of Kuyper's proof from the Scriptures. He has no more. And so it shall have to be admitted that his attempt to prove with the Scriptures that the covenant with Noah was a common covenant and not the particular covenant ended in failure. It only goes to show how that the view under consideration is a sheer invention. The covenant with Noah was the particular covenant. Nothing could be plainer from the chapters in Genesis that deal with this covenant. (See my previous article on this subject in the Standard Bearer for September 15.)

But, one will say, how are we to explain the following statements occurring in these chapters: "And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh," and "that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth" (Gen. 9: 15, 16). Here the Lord twice states that His covenant with Noah was between Him, the Lord and Noah and *every living creature of all flesh*. Does not this expression in italics — the expression, *every living creature* denote also *every* human being and thus indicate also the reprobated? And if so, have we not to do here with a statement plainly teaching that the covenant with Noah was indeed a covenant between God and the reprobated also? No, not at all. It was not even the contention of Kuyper that the expression *every living creature* denotes also every human being. According to his view, the expression indicates only the brute creation, plants and animals. Reading the verse with some thought and in its context, we will see that this view is correct. The statement indicative of human beings, that is, of the rational creation, the human race to be, is the following, "And God spake unto Noah and to his sons with him saying, And I, behold, I will establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you." The pronoun "you" denotes Noah and his three sons. The term "your seed" signifies their entire offspring, the human race to be. If we now allow also the expression "every living creature of all flesh" to indicate human beings, the humanity to be, then

verse 15 must be made to read as follows, "I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you, that is, between me and you and your seed, the human race to be, and every living creature of all flesh, that is, plants and animals and the human race to be." It is plain that the expression "*every living creature*" indicates the brute creation only and not also every human being. This verse, therefore, cannot be quoted in support of the view that the covenant with Noah was between God and reprobated humans. Certainly, the covenant with Noah was between God and the brute creation and the *whole human race*. But the question is whether this covenant with Noah is between the Lord and the human race head for head or between this race according to the election of grace. According to Kuyper the former is the case. He, therefore, taught two covenants, the covenant with Noah, the common covenant and including both reprobate and elect, and the covenant with Abraham, the particular covenant and including only the spiritual seed.

But the two covenants are the one particular covenant of grace. The seed of Noah and the seed of Abraham are the same seed and this seed is Christ. And the promises are essentially the same. And God the Father is the God and Father of the one covenant as well as of the other.

But this is not saying that in every respect the two covenants are one and the same covenant. The covenant with Noah in distinction from the covenant with Abraham, is *definitely* a covenant between the Lord and the whole earth and its fulness. To call it a covenant of nature is, therefore, not incorrect. It being a covenant of this character, there were definite promises and articles associated with it not *directly* associated with the covenant with Abraham.

1. The fear of man — Noah and His sons and their seed — will be upon every beast of the earth, upon every fowl of the air and upon all that moveth on the earth, and upon the fishes of the sea. All is delivered into man's hand. For the ferocious beast may not approach man to destroy him. For how otherwise could the elect be saved and God's covenant perfected?

2. Every moving thing that lives is given to man for meat but with this restriction that the flesh of the animal with the soul thereof shall not be eaten. The meaning of this prohibition is known from Lev. 17:10-14, "And whatever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people. For the soul of the flesh (of the animal) is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul . . . And whatsoever man there be of the children of Israel . . . which hunteth and eateth any beast or fowl that may be eaten; he shall even pour out the blood thereof and cover it with the dust." According to this Scripture, flesh

with the blood was the flesh of an animal that had been killed but whose carcass had not been drained of blood. To eat such flesh was a great sin, the reason being that, according to the above-cited Scripture, the blood was sacred in that it was the blood "that maketh atonement for the soul." So holy was the blood that it had to be covered with dust after being poured out.

3. The ordinance that whoso shedeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." So did the Lord also place in the hand of Noah and his seed the sword to curb the bloodthirstiness of the wicked in order that human life might be protected. For God had much people in the humanity to be, and therefore it must be perpetuated on this earth until all the elect are saved out of it.

4. The mandate to Noah and his three sons and their seed that they be fruitful and multiply and bring forth abundantly in the earth. It is only because this mandate will continually be realized in man by God that man will be fruitful. Through man as His organ God will replenish the earth, His purpose again being the perfection of His covenant between Himself as the triune Jehovah and Christ and His people.

5. The waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh, but while the earth remaineth seedtime etc. shall not cease and this for the same purpose as that just mentioned under 4. All serves the salvation of the church to His glory.

The reprobated humanity will also profit from these ordinances of the covenant with Noah. But this can be no ground for saying that this covenant was between God and the reprobated also. For this profit will be unto them not a blessing but a curse and will also be meant as a curse. God will send rain and sunshine also upon their farms but only in His wrath. And at the second appearing of Christ, when the elements will melt and all the works of men will burn, the earth will be permanently cleansed of them.

A terrible theology you say? The God of the Scriptures, the God and Father of Christ, is a terrible God, who does terrible things in righteousness. This is what He says of Himself in His word. A terrible theology? It is the theology of the Scriptures. And no one thus far has been able to show that it is not the theology of the Scriptures. Yes, a terrible theology but as glorious as it is terrible.

G.M.O.

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"Everything is within the reach of free grace; but nothing is within the reach of free-will."

— Ambrose

"Prove your conversion and you need not doubt your election."

— Allein

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Matthew 11:25-30

II.

(Matthew 11:27)

The section of Matthew 11:25-27 to which we call attention in this essay is verse 27, which reads as follows: "*All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.*"

It is of the utmost importance for the proper understanding of this passage, contained in verse 27, to take good notice of the context. In this passage Jesus does not begin a new subject, but considers the subject of "hiding these things from the wise and prudent" and the "revealing of these things unto babes" from the viewpoint once more of the sovereign good-pleasure of God and the *manner* in which He executes it.

It should be observed also, that, while the Lord in the foregoing verses (25, 26) speaks not only explicitly about the "revealing," but also about the "hiding," in verse 27 he speaks only about the *positive side*, to wit, the *revealing*. That it is "hid" from the wise and prudent remains true. From the fact, that Jesus here does not elaborate further upon this "hiding from the wise and prudent," it does not follow that Jesus simply does "*not reveal*" the mysteries of the kingdom to them, but rather it is evident that Jesus means to comfort the godly, the "babes" in showing them the manner in which these things *are revealed* to them.

Hence, this matter in our text is not simply source material for the Locus De Deo, under the subject heading "The Knowableness of God," but rather it is meant as instruction for the simple, the weary and heavy laden; it is meant to instruct us concerning the Wonder of Grace in Christ, by which we know God, that is, know him with a saving knowledge, spelling everlasting life for us.

The Bible is very practical, that is, it is profitable for instruction, reproof, for correction in righteousness, that the man of God be thoroughly furnished unto every good work. At the same time it gives instruction which the believing church takes into her consciousness by faith, and expresses it in systematic theology, and in her Confessions.

But always it is meant as a lamp unto our feet and a light upon our pathway.

In this particular instance we are made aware more and more by the Lord that our knowing God is simply the *evidence* of His efficacious revelation in our heart and mind of God's mysteries of salvation, that is, of God as the God of our salvation.

Bearing the foregoing in mind, we notice the following particulars in the text:

In the first place, we should carefully take note of the relationship of the Son to the Father in the text, and then we ask: in what capacity does the "Son" here speak? Is he speaking here merely as the eternal Son, as he is in the bosom of the Father, or is He speaking here as the Word which became flesh, that is, as the eternal Son, who is at the same time very God and real and righteous man? Is it the man Jesus, who here speaks, a friend of publicans and sinners?

We are convinced that the text clearly indicates that Jesus speaks in His capacity of being the eternal Son in the flesh, and, then, more particularly, as the office-bearer of God, as he is anointed of Him to be the "Chief Prophet." Him God has appointed and qualified to reveal the Father unto whomsoever He wills.

In the first place, because Jesus here speaks as the one to whom "*All things are delivered* of my Father."

Secondly, because the very idea of "being delivered" does not mean to bestow as a "gift," but rather refers to the work which the Son has received from God, to make God known, as part of His "outgoing works" (*opera exeunta*). And this work is not given to the Son, as simply being in the Ontological Trinity, but is given Him to perform as the Son in the flesh, the Servant of Jehovah.

Further, we should notice, too, that Jesus informs us of His unique place in this world in relationship to the Father.

First of all the pre-eminence of the Son, the Lion of Judah's tribe, the root of David, is such, that "all things have been delivered to Me by my Father." Notice that Jesus says "all things." It stands here absolutely and without any modification. And it must be left so. Compare Matthew 28:18; John 3:35; John 17:2, and Phil. 2:9. For "all power in heaven and earth is given unto me." Thus spoke Jesus to the disciples in Galilee. And, again, Jesus spoke unto the disciples saying "the Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things unto Him," and in the High-Priestly prayer in John 17:2, Jesus stands before the Father and says, "And hath given him all authority over all flesh."

And, as we have noticed above in passing, "all things" have been "*delivered* Me from the Father." All things in heaven and upon the earth, good things as well as evil, future and present things, height and depth, heaven and hell, the world and the church; yea, the entire book of the roll of the counsel of God and its fulfillment was given into His hand, because He is worthy as the Son, yea, as the Son in the flesh. For God never said unto any of the angels "Thou art my Son," but when He bringeth the First-Begotten into the world He saith "let all the angels of God worship Him." Heb. 1:6; Psalm 97:7.

This one, Whom angels very really worshipped in Bethlehem-Ephratha, here stands explaining the Mystery of His great calling; the Mystery of what He is doing, *while* the

blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised to life, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them. Here we learn the profundity of the warning note of Jesus when he says "And blessed is He who is not offended in Me" (Matt. 11:5, 6).

For what is actually happening under the preaching is that the Son is "revealing the Father to whomsoever He wills." The Pelagian-Arminian is offended in such a Christ. He must have nothing of Him. He does not really love the Christ of the Scriptures. He does not love a Christ into whose hands "all things" have been delivered, yea, even the *will* and *understanding* of every man, be he elect or non-elect. He does not want a Christ, who reveals God unto whom *He counsels* to do so (hooi ean bouleetai). Only if the Son wills to reveal God, as the Chief Prophet, will one come to "know God." What a far cry this is from Christ being preached as willing to save all, if only they believe. Here we have the gospel indeed proclaimed to all, but the promise is only to "those believing," and the believing is again the fruit of the Holy Spirit through the preaching, in which fruit we may see the evidence of the "will of the Son to reveal the Father unto us."

For notice the strong and absolute "*no one* knows the Son except the Father." Jesus employs the greek "oudeis" here and not simply "meedeis." What is here negated is not simply the thought concerning a thing, a wrong conception concerning the work of God in Christ, but the very thing itself. Categorically it is stated that there is not one among all the hundreds of millions of humanity, who *know* the Son. Only the Father knows the Mystery of Godliness in Him, from the cradle to the grave, as He stands before Him in all of His pre-eminence. And the Father "knows" (epi-ginooskei) this Son, that is, He has an intimate and very exact knowledge of Him, his person, calling, place in history, in the church, both here on earth and presently in heaven. He knows Him in infinite love, and, therefore, all His good-pleasure is in Him.

If such be the case absolutely with God, it means that God knows the Son without it being "revealed" to the Father. He has no need of the Son being revealed to Him. All others need this "revelation," that is, they all need the inward illumination of the Spirit, working faith and spiritual insight. While Jesus stands in the midst of humanity no one knows Him. He is "hid" from our eyes; there is a covering over Him, indeed; the eyes of man cannot see Him.

No one knows the Son except the Father.

However, the point raised in the text is not that the Son is revealed to us by the Father, but that the *Father* is *revealed to us by the Son!*

It is well to take special notice of this in this Scripture passage. The reason for this emphasis in the text is evidently to be found in the fact that the "these things" which are "revealed unto babes" at bottom consist primarily in "knowing God," that is, knowing God in His saving love and power, in the life-giving Spirit of the Son.

The Son can reveal the Father only because He alone knows the Father. He knows the Father in that intimate knowledge, wherein He experiences the love of the Father, as the eternal Son, and that, too, while in the flesh. And since the Son has received "all things," since these have all been "delivered unto Me," He alone has it in *His ability* to reveal the Father.

However, let it be clearly seen that Jesus, in making the Father known, does not simply confront man with a "condition" to accept Him, but that it is wholly in the "authority" of Christ, in His "will" whether He will reveal the Father to someone or not.

In so doing the Son does not act arbitrarily, contrary to the good-pleasure of the Father, as all Arminians and Pelagian themselves do, while accusing the Reformed of this, but is wholly in agreement with the Decree of God, standing on a par with the Decreeing God, and Himself "decreeing," (hooi ean bouleetai) in the one will with the Father. Were this not the case, then the Son would act in the highest arbitrariness. But now it is all anchored in eternal and sovereignly free good-pleasure of the Lord, rather than in the imaginary freedom-of-the-will of the Pelagian, and the rationalistic counterpart of the Pelagian, who will not bow before the Scriptures. Here, too, the Pelagian-Arminian is guilty of the very sin he tries to ascribe to the Reformed believers. Mirabile dictu!

It is true, that Christ does here not further illucidate upon the Sovereign "hiding of these things from the wise and prudent." This is evidently because He is here laying the foundation, or rather, pointing out the foundation of the great calling which goes out to all the weary and heavy laden in the next verses.

We can be very certain that coming unto Him, in whose hand all things have been delivered, he will surely do what he promised. For He is exceedingly willing to do this to the weary and heavy laden ones, the "babes," since to these he "wills" to reveal the Father in His eternal and unchangeable love. And He is able since he alone knows the Father, and can and will and does impart such childlike knowledge to "whomsoever He wills."

G. L.

"The most high Seraph, who stands before the Throne and the tiniest worm which crawls in the dust, both have the same ultimate fountain of existence; thus they must, in different ways, serve the same exalted design of God. Whosoever would deny this, or would suppose that the perfect Being would not follow the most worthy design in His work, such a one despises the Lord of lords, and does despite to the Majesty of God."

Der Throne Der Gnade, Dr. Fr. Whl. Kummacher

IN HIS FEAR

Giving In His Fear

(6)

The budget has now been established.

When we began this series on "Giving In His Fear" these budgets were in the process of being drawn up or else were nothing more than proposals to be presented to the congregations for adoption.

Now, it surely is safe to assume, the various congregational meetings have been held. The various items listed on the budgets were discussed. Perhaps here and there an alteration was made. The congregation did not see eye to eye with the consistory on this or that item. There was discussion about some of the items. The budget was adopted, then, by majority vote.

It may be a higher budget than the consistory presented.

The congregation, on the other hand, may have refused to approve some expensive alterations to the buildings and decided upon a budget considerably lower than the one presented by the consistory.

The point is that by majority vote the budget has been adopted.

And now our obligation is to give in His fear.

You may have voted against that budget that was approved.

It may have carried by only one vote.

These are things that usually or at least very frequently happen when a matter is discussed by a group. And while it is being discussed we may argue against the matter which does not seem right to us with all the power at our command. If we think that those alterations on the buildings are wholly unnecessary and too expensive an undertaking at this time, we may speak against it and strive to cause others to see it as we do.

However, when once that budget is adopted by majority vote we are obliged together with those who voted for the matter of the budget to give in His fear the amount that was specified we should contribute by the majority.

Giving in His fear is assuming the financial obligations that have been placed upon us in a legal way.

If our heavenly Father, the giver of every good and perfect gift, has given us sufficiently of this earth's goods so that we are able to meet that budget — be it higher than we expected or be it contrary to our negative vote — without denying ourselves the *necessities* of life, we must meet our part of that budget in order to give in His fear.

And, in connection with what we said last time, when we have received above the average of that which our heavenly Father has given to the other contributors to the budget in our congregation and we look not simply on our own things but on the things of others, we will in His fear

give more than the amount that is specified as our percentage of that budget.

Very easy it is for those whose income is more than the average member of the congregation's annual income to vote for a higher budget because to them it requires such a smaller percentage of their annual income. A man whose income is, let us say, five thousand dollars a year, whose children are married and moved out of the house or else are self supporting, though they remain in the home, can easily vote for a budget that one whose income is thirty five hundred dollars a year, who has children in christian grade and high school, has great difficulty paying in full. A man whose business contacts and position are such that he has the advantage of buying well nigh everything wholesale or at a discount and thus is able to do more with his income than his fellow-members in his congregation must look on the things of these others also when he favors a higher budget that will work hardships upon those who must pay at the regular retail price for everything they need. He, then, as he gives in His fear will be willing to give more than the budget-per-family-per-week amount for which he voted at the congregational meeting.

Always it must be giving in His fear.

And lest the idea be formed that giving a stated sum, previously set at a congregational meeting is not giving, we have a few things more to say. It is an obligation. And yet at the same time it is giving. It is giving in order to fill an obligation.

Consider that in the Old Testament dispensation Israel was commanded to give unto the Lord. Thus as one example we read in Numbers 15:18-21, "Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land, whither I bring you, Then it shall be, that, when ye eat of the bread of the land, ye shall offer up an heave offering unto the Lord. Ye shall offer up a cake of the first of your dough for an heave offering: as ye do the heave offering of the threshing floor, so shall ye heave it. Of the first of your dough ye shall give unto the Lord an heave offering in your generations." In the text there is also a reference to another gift that is demanded.

To be noted in this passage is the fact that although God specified the thing must be given, it is at the same time, called by God Himself an offering. It is an obligation. It is that which they must do; and yet it is also a gift, for, it is an offering.

In the New Testament times the Apostle Paul writes to the Church of Corinth, "Upon the first day of the week let everyone of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come," I Corinthians 16:2. Here again we have the presentation of an obligation. This is not some fatherly advice that Paul gives to the church. It is not a suggestion that he makes. He speaks authoritatively and gives command to the church. For, note that in verse 1 he states, "Now concerning the collections for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia,

even so do ye." It is an order from the apostle. "So do ye," he writes. And that it is for the needy in other churches; that it is a gift which they must bring is evident from the words, "the collection for the saints."

Here, too, Paul gives the order that we must give "as God hath prospered" us. Although this phrase speaks of an indefinite amount rather than a fixed amount, the point remains that it is a *command* to give as one has been prospered by God. The amount is left for the individual to determine in His fear; but the fact of giving is not left to man's will. Man is told that he must give. In His fear he must determine the amount according to the measure of prosperity that God has given him. Doing this in His fear means that after we have counted our contributions at the end of the year, we are able before God's face to say that they have been in harmony with what He gave us. It means that when it is very obvious to men that we have prospered above others who must pay the same budget with us that we have also contributed above them, that is, above the amount stipulated as our mathematical share of the cost of maintaining the gospel and the schools. By the mathematical share we mean the sum of money that is the result of dividing the total amount of the budget by the number of families in the congregation. In His fear we do not measure out to the last penny to be sure that we do not pay a penny over the mathematical share. Surely we do not try to get away with paying less than that mathematical share when we have the God-given means. In His fear we give as we have been prospered by the Lord.

This truth ought to be taught also to our children early in their childhood days. For that reason we have never looked with wholehearted approval upon the numbered envelope system of collecting the contributions of the families to this budget. (We still prefer to call it a contribution, though it is that which we pledged to give — when by majority vote the congregation set the sum of the budget — exactly because of that order of Paul that we give as we have been prospered). It may be argued that the consistory has the calling to supervise the spiritual life of the congregation and that giving in His fear belongs to this spiritual life of the members of the congregation. The point may then be made that the consistory cannot possibly admonish, rebuke and instruct those members who do not meet their obligation if it has no way of checking on the contributions that have been made. And that certainly is true. The consistory is helpless to keep the members walking properly in regard to this matter of giving, which is as much a calling of God's child as it is to attend the services of divine worship. Let us remind you that in that explanation of the meaning of the fourth commandment the Heidelberg Catechism says just exactly that and even mentions it before it states that we must frequent the house of God to hear His word preached on the Sabbath. A consistory that has no way of knowing whether the members give in His fear or not is a consistory that must of necessity let some of its members walk in a

disorderly way and rob God of tithes and offerings. See Malachi 3:8. With God this is a serious matter. We do not simply deal unfairly with the other members of the congregation who must pay a higher budget next year because we failed to do our part last year. We rob God. That is the inescapable meaning of Malachi 3:8-10.

Yet, as we said, we cannot whole-heartedly approve of that numbered envelope system of giving our share to the budget. And the reason is that thereby we fail to teach our children early in life these facts of giving in His fear.

The weekly sum of our share of the budget is in the envelope and our children either give nothing or else are given a nickle to place in the collection plate when it is passed around. Or maybe a dime. And our children soon form the opinion that the Church of Christ is a "five and dime" affair. Not only does a little child not know what goes in the envelope but the same amount he gets to go out and buy himself a candy bar or an ice cream cone is what he is taught is a worthy sum to be given for the maintenance of the holy things. The music teacher gets one or two dollars; the church gets a nickle or dime! Is that why our young men and women who earn fifty to a hundred dollars a week — often more than a married man with a family to support and with christian school tuition to pay — give almost nothing in the collection plate? They, too, must give as they have been prospered. And not having the expenses of a married man with a family of children he or she ought to give as much if not more than the head of such a family. Youth likewise must give in His fear. And then it is plain what they ought to give. (Likewise must they spend in His fear so that there is that which they may contribute to the maintenance of the gospel and of the schools. All too quickly is it squandered in foolish pleasure and things of the flesh. These things ought not so to be!)

The older our children get in those days when they do not yet go out and earn for themselves, they ought to be given a larger and larger part of the mathematical share of the family's budget for the week to place in the collection plate that it may be impressed upon them that this is also their calling. And when they begin to earn money themselves, when they get their first "job" and become like us in that respect that they have an income, they should be taught and told that they must be like us also in giving in His fear for the maintenance of the gospel and the schools.

If we appreciate the salvation that God has freely given us in the blood of His Son, we will cheerfully assume our share of the cost of maintaining the gospel in our congregation that we and our children may learn more and more of that glorious salvation. And we will consider it money well spent!

We will *want* to contribute to the maintenance of that glorious gospel.

That is giving in His fear.

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

GREGORY THE GREAT (590-604)

Lau (we concluded our last article by quoting from a few men who state their opinion of Gregory the Great, and we wish to quote from a few more — H. V.) says (in his excellent monograph): "The spiritual qualities of Gregory's character are strikingly apparent in his actions. With a clear, practical understanding, he combined a kind and mild heart; but he was never weak. Fearful to the obstinate transgressor of the laws, on account of his inflexible justice, he was lenient to the repentent and a warm friend to his friends, though, holding, as he did, righteousness and the weal of the church higher than friendship, he was severe upon any neglect of theirs. With a great prudence in managing the most different circumstances, and a great sagacity in treating the most different characters, he combined a moral firmness which never yielded an inch of what he had recognized as right; but he never became stubborn. The rights of the church and the privileges of the apostolical see he fought for with the greatest pertinacity; but for himself personally, he wanted no honors. As much as he thought of the church and the Roman chair, so modestly he esteemed himself. More than once his acts gave witness to the humility of his heart: humility was, indeed, to him the most important and the most sublime virtue. His activity was prodigious, encompassing great objects and small ones with equal zeal. Nothing ever became too great for his energy or too small for his attention. He was a warm patriot, and cared incessantly for the material as well as for the spiritual welfare of his countrymen. More than once he saved Rome from the Lombards, and relieved her from famine . . . He was a great character with grand plans, in the realization of which he showed as much insight as firmness, as much prudent calculation of circumstances as sagacious judgment of men. The influence he has exercised is immense, and when this influence is not in every respect for the good, his time is to blame, not he. His goal was always that which he acknowledged as the best. Among all the popes of the sixth and following centuries he shines as a star of the very first magnitude.

To this we add the judgment of James Barmby, the latest biographer of Gregory: "Of the loftiness of his aims, the earnestness of his purpose, the fervor of his devotion, his unwearied activity, and his personal purity, there can be no doubt. These qualities are conspicuous through his whole career. If his religion was of the strongly ascetic type, and

disfigured by superstitious credulity, it bore in these respects the complexion of his age, inseparable then from aspiration after the highest holiness. Nor did either superstition or asceticism supersede in him the principles of a true inward religion—justice, mercy, and truth. We find him, when occasion required, exalting mercy above sacrifice; he was singularly kindly and benevolent, as well as just, and even his zeal for the full rigor of monastic discipline was tempered with much gentleness and allowance for infirmity. If, again, with singleness of main purpose was combined at times the astuteness of the diplomatist, and a certain degree of politic insincerity in addressing potentates, his aims were never personal or selfish. And if he could stoop, for the attainment of his ends, to the then prevalent adulation of the great, he could also speak his mind fearlessly to the greatest, when he felt great principles to be at stake."

Gregory and the Universal Episcopate

The activity of Gregory tended powerfully to establish the authority of the papal chair. He combined a triple dignity, episcopal, metropolitan, and patriarchal. He was bishop of the city of Rome, metropolitan over the seven suffragan (afterwards called cardinal) bishops of the Roman territory, and patriarch of Italy, in fact of the whole West, or of all the LATIN churches. This claim was scarcely disputed except as to the degree of his power in particular cases. A certain primacy of honor among all the patriarchs was also conceded, even by the East. But a UNIVERSAL episcopate, including an authority of jurisdiction over the EASTERN or GREEK church, was not acknowledged, and, what is more remarkable, was not even claimed by him, but emphatically declined and denounced. He stood between the patriarchal and the strictly papal system. He regarded the four patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem, to whom he announced his election with a customary confession of his faith, as co-ordinate leaders of the church under Christ, the supreme head, corresponding as it were to the four ecumenical councils and the four gospels, as their common foundation, yet after all with a firm belief in a papal primacy. His correspondence with the East on this subject is exceedingly important. The controversy began in 595, and lasted several years, but was not settled.

John IV, the Faster, patriarch of Constantinople, repeatedly used in his letters the title "ecumenical" or "universal bishop." This was an honorary title, which had been given to patriarchs by the emperors Leo and Justinian, and confirmed to John and his successors by a Constantinopolitan synod in 588. It had also been used in the Council of Chalcedon of pope Leo I. But Gregory I was provoked and irritated beyond measure by the assumption of his Eastern rival, and strained every nerve to procure a revocation of that title. He characterized it as a foolish, proud, profane, wicked, pestiferous, blasphemous, and diabolical usurpation, and compared him who used it to Lucifer. He wrote first to

Sabinianus, his apocrisarius or ambassador in Constantinople, then repeatedly to the patriarch, to the emperor Mauricius, and even to the empress; for with all his monkish contempt for women, he availed himself on every occasion of the female influence in high quarters. He threatened to break off communion with the patriarch. He called upon the emperor to punish such presumption, and reminded him of the contamination of the see of Constantinople by such arch-heretics as Nestorius.

Failing in his efforts to change the mind of his rival in New Rome, he addressed himself to the patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch, and played upon their jealousy; but they regarded the title simply as a form of honor, and one of them addressed him as ecumenical pope, a compliment which Gregory could not consistently accept.

After the death of John the Faster in 596, Gregory instructed his ambassador at Constantinople to demand from the new patriarch, Cyriacus, as a condition of intercommunion, the renunciation of the wicked title, and in a letter to Maurice he went so far as to declare, that "whosoever calls himself universal priest, or desires to be called so, was the forerunner of Antichrist."

In opposition to these high-sounding epithets, Gregory called himself, in proud humility, "the servant of the servants of God." This became one of the standing titles of the popes, although it sounds like irony in conjunction with their astounding claims.

But his remonstrance was of no avail. Neither the patriarch nor the emperor obeyed his wishes. Hence, he hailed a change of government which occurred in 602 by a violent revolution.

When Phocas, an ignorant, red-haired, beardless, vulgar, cruel and deformed upstart, after the most atrocious murder of Maurice and his whole family (a wife, six sons and three daughters), ascended the throne, Gregory hastened to congratulate him and his wife Leontia (who was not much better) in most enthusiastic terms, calling on heaven and earth to rejoice at their accession, and vilifying the memory of the dead emperor as a tyrant, from whose yoke the church was now fortunately freed. This is a dark spot, but the only really dark and inexcusable spot in the life of this pontiff. He seemed to have acted in this case on the infamous maxim that the end justifies the means (and how true this has been true in the history of the Roman Catholic Church! — H.V.) His motive was no doubt to secure the protection and aggrandizement of the Roman see. He did not forget to remind the empress of the papal proof-text: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church," and to add: "I do not doubt that you will take care to oblige and bind him to you, by whom you desire to be loosed from your sins."

The murderer and usurper repaid the favor by taking side with the pope against his patriarch (Cyriacus), who had shown sympathy with the unfortunate emperor. He acknowl-

edged the Roman church to be "the head of all churches." But if he ever made such a decree at the instance of Boniface III, who at that time was papal nuntius at Constantinople, he must have meant merely such a primacy of *honor* as had been before conceded to Rome by the Council of Chalcedon and the emperor Justinian. At all events the disputed title continued to be used by the patriarchs and emperors of Constantinople. Phocas, after a disgraceful reign (602-610), was stripped of the diadem and purple, loaded with chains, insulted, tortured, beheaded and cast into the flames. He was succeeded by Heraclius.

In this whole controversy the pope's jealousy of the patriarch is very manifest, and suggests the suspicion that it inspired the protest.

Gregory displays in his correspondence with his rival a singular combination of pride and humility. He was too proud to concede to him the title of a universal bishop, and yet too humble or too inconsistent to claim it for himself. His arguments imply that he would have the best right to the title, if it were not wrong in itself. His real opinion is perhaps best expressed in a letter to Eulogius of Alexandria. He accepts all the compliments which Eulogius paid to him as the successor of Peter, whose very name signifies firmness and solidity; but he ranks Antioch and Alexandria likewise as sees of Peter, which are nearly, if not quite, on a par with that of Rome, so that the three, as it were, constitute but one see (this is surely a "far cry" from the present conception of the Roman Catholic Church which maintains that the pope at Rome is the sole successor of the apostle, Peter — H.V.). He ignores Jerusalem. "The see of the Prince of the Apostles alone," he says, "has acquired a principality of authority, which is the see of one only, though in three places. For he himself has exalted the see in which he deigned to rest and to end his present life (Rome). He himself adorned the see (Alexandria) to which he sent his disciple (Mark) as evangelist. He himself established the see in which he sat for seven years (Antioch). Since, then, the see is one, and of one, over which by divine authority three bishops now preside, whatever good I hear of you I impute to myself. If you believe anything good of me, impute this to your own merits; because we are one in Him who said: 'That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that all may be one in us' (John 17:21)." — end of quote from Philip Schaff in this article.

In our next article we shall see that Gregory nevertheless claimed and exercised, as far as he had the opportunity and power, the authority and oversight over the whole church of Christ, even in the East.

H.V.

"It is better to have the praise of evil men's hatred than the scandal of their love and approbation."

— Manton

THE FOUR KINDS OF SOIL

The title of this article refers, of course, to the parable of the sower. This parable, which is the first recorded parable of our Lord, is related by Matthew, Mark and Luke. And you can find it, together with the Lord's own interpretation, in Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23; Mark 4:1-9, 14-20; and Luke 8:4-8, 11-15. The records in each of the gospels are essentially the same although there are slight differences in wording.

When Christ taught in parables, He pointed to events in this creation, and to various parts of the creation to show that there was reflected in all these things the kingdom of heaven. That was possible, for God created this world as a picture or mirrored image of the kingdom which He would recreate in the realization of His purpose and work. And therefore all the parables reflect some facet of the glory of that kingdom wherein Christ Himself is King.

And so it is with this parable. But the kingdom of heaven which God shall realize at the end of time is consummated nevertheless through the events which transpire in this world in which we live. For the King of that kingdom comes into our flesh to suffer and die. And by His suffering and death, and the shedding of His blood is the foundation for that kingdom laid. And the citizens which shall inherit that kingdom are called to be citizens by God in this present world. For they are, by an act of their own, citizens of the kingdom of darkness and sin which kingdom is based upon enmity against God and which ends in eternal death. The kingdom of heaven is therefore, principally realized in time by the preaching of the gospel and the establishment of the church when the spiritual blessings of that transcendent kingdom of peace and righteousness are given to the elect.

To that kingdom does this parable refer. Only when that kingdom comes to realization in time, in this dispensation, it is very broad and includes all that goes under the name of Christendom, all that bears the name church, no matter how inaptly the word may sometimes apply. For the church on earth is very imperfect as yet, and the development of the church on earth forms the basis for the realization of the kingdom in all perfection in the day of the coming of the Lord.

In that kingdom the Sower goes forth to sow. The seed which is sown falls on many types of ground. And in accordance with the type of ground on which it falls, does it also either sprout or die.

There are some general remarks which should first be made.

In the first place, according to the interpretation of Christ Himself, the seed is the Word. But then we must understand that that seed is the Word of God as it is preached, for the seed is broadcast by the Sower. The Sower is therefore, Jesus Christ. This follows from the fact that the kingdom is His. He is the Lord of that kingdom, its absolute Sovereign,

and therefore the sole Ruler of all that takes place within it. In the sphere of that kingdom, He preaches His Word. Never may it be said that anyone but Christ drops the seed into the soil of the human heart. His ministers are servants and instruments, but all is nevertheless of Christ. He calls the minister; He establishes the church in which the gospel is proclaimed; He speaks His own Word even though through human men; He applies His Word by the operation of the Spirit within the hearts of His people.

In the second place, there are in fact, only two kinds of soil. There is only soil prepared for the seed, and soil which is not prepared for the seed. There are no intermediate kinds at all. Either the soil is sufficiently prepared to receive the seed, or it is not prepared at all. And so also, there are only two kinds of hearts — hearts that are prepared to receive the preaching of the gospel, or hearts that are not prepared. There is no such thing as a prepared heart which ultimately is not of sufficient strength to allow the seed to grow, as some would like to maintain. There are therefore, in the kingdom of heaven as it comes to manifestation on this earth, only two kinds of people. There are those who are prepared to receive the Word, and those who are not. These two groups are divided into three classes each: the class that is not prepared consists of hard soil hearers, rocky soil hearers, thorny soil hearers; the class that is prepared consists of hearers with strength to produce fruit by nourishing the seed either thirty-fold, sixty-fold or one hundred fold.

In the third place, the preparation of the soil precedes the sowing of the seed. And in like manner, the preparation of the heart precedes the preaching of the Word. And this preparation of the heart is the work of the King of the kingdom in that by His Spirit He regenerates the heart and makes it pliable and living. He makes it soft, capable of receiving the seed and nourishing it, and frees it from the thorns and thistles that kill the tender plants. And this must also all serve the realization of the kingdom in perfection and glory. For by the preaching of the Word, the King of His church, Jesus Christ, establishes His kingdom and works toward the end when it shall be consummated. And therefore, in like manner, it should not escape our attention, that also the hearts that are not rendered capable of receiving the preaching of the Word and nourishing the plants are under the sovereign rule of Jesus Christ, and must also serve the realization of His kingdom. For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a sower that went forth to sow. And it is the prerogative of the sower to prepare the soil which he desires to prepare. Only the divine Sower also has the sole prerogative to drop each kernel of seed where He chooses.

The three kinds of soil therefore, that are described in this parable as being incapable of receiving seed and supporting its life, are hearts of those who are born in the historical dispensation of the kingdom of heaven, but who have never been prepared by the Spirit of Jesus Christ. They are the apostate seed, the reprobate in the covenant. And the three types of

soil which define them, define more particularly their reactions to the preaching of the Word. And in these three reactions, they are all principally one in that they reject the seed of the Word. But they are three because they define every possible manifestation of that one reaction. And it is probably true that this is a complete catalogue of all the possible revelations of the one fundamental reaction of rejection.

The fourth kind of soil defines the hearts that are regenerated by Christ — the hearts therefore of the elect of God who are effectually called in this life and who are prepared by the preaching of the Word for their final and perfect participation in the kingdom of heaven. For they are the citizens of that kingdom, the heirs of its riches, the objects of its blessedness, the ones chosen from before the foundations of the world to occupy their place in the full and complete revelation of God.

Let us look at these kinds of soil a little more in detail. And it would not be superfluous to compare each type of unprepared soil with the prepared soil as they stand in contrast to one another.

The first type of soil is described as being soil of the wayside, which evidently refers to the hard and beaten down soil of a path upon which men walk. It is explained by Christ as a picture of the heart that heareth the Word but understandeth it not, and from which Satan takes away the seed almost as soon as it is sown even as the birds pick up the seed which falls on the hard earth.

The people who possess hearts of this type are undoubtedly people upon whom the Word as it is preached makes little or no conscious impression. They hear, for it is preached to them and enters into their mind. And they will have to answer in the day of judgment also for that Word. But it makes no impression upon their consciousness. They are almost totally indifferent to the Word of God. They may be found to be sleeping in church, or allowing their thought to wander into many devious channels; they may be coldly indifferent to the life of the church in societies and other activities. They have no concern for the Word whatsoever. They gradually loosen their ties with the church into which they were born until finally they are altogether with the false and modern church which has become apostate, or perhaps with the world.

This is altogether different than the result of the preaching of the Word as it falls into the heart that is prepared as a soil for seed. For the good soil, in distinction from this hard packed soil, defines a heart that is filled with an earnest longing to hear the Word of God and to increase in the knowledge of its riches. Such a heart can hardly wait until it is Sunday again and time to go to the house of the Lord. Such a person spends his time as much as possible with a study of the Word of God in society or the home. And therefore the preaching falls into his heart and enters into

his understanding and fruit is produced in the knowledge of God Whom to know is life eternal.

The second soil is described as being stony or rocky ground without much earth. The picture is evidently of a solid layer of rock covered with just a little layer of dirt. The seed is described as falling into this thin layer of soil and immediately springing up, but dying and withering in the heat of the sun for lack of depth of root. And this is explained by Christ as referring to a heart which hears the Word and with joy receives it. But when the fierce heat of persecution comes or the burning rays of tribulation, he is scandalized and offended and falls away. This is also a very common reaction to the preaching of the Word. Certain there always are in the church who are members because it is fashionable, or because the preaching of the Word has wrought upon their emotions to arouse them to happiness or tears. This is especially true of the emotional and sentimental harangues of modern revival preaching. He hears the Word for a time with joy, but is incapable of persisting in the life of the church. For where the Word of God is preached, there persecution comes. That is always the case. And when persecution comes, then such a one is immediately offended and cannot tolerate the disgrace of being a member of a persecuted minority. And his superficial and external joy fades away, and he makes haste to sever his relations with the church, and pointedly ceases to be identified with it.

But such is never the case with those whose heart has been prepared well for the seed of the Word. Their roots are deep. They have depth of soil which the shallow dirt does not have. That means that the first reaction to the preaching of the Word from such a heart is not joy but intense sorrow. They see their sin as they never saw it before in the light of the holiness of God. And grief fills them. And that increases the depths of their roots, for they run to Christ. And then the burning heat of persecution cannot possibly cause them to wither and dry up, but it rather is the means of pushing their roots farther into the soil so that they become more firmly anchored. And even as the plant is rooted in the soil, so are the believers rooted in Christ by faith. And when they are buffeted by the fierce storms of tribulation, the result is that their roots are more deeply sunk into Christ their life, and they are purified and cleansed. For in them the Word has taken root.

And so finally there is the soil that is thorny. It is described as being full of thorns, and is a picture of soil that is on the periphery of the field which is not purified by the constant cultivation of the sower. Among these thorns also seed falls. And the thorns grow up and choke the seed so that it dies. Christ explains that this soil refers to a heart which is full of the thorns of the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches and the pleasures of this life. The cares of this world are evidently the anxieties that surround every man — the concern to make a name for oneself, the yearning to achieve fame with its subsequent frustration, the

eagerness to become successful and all the cares that accompany such eagerness, and ultimately the perpetual horror of indubitable death. The deceitfulness of riches goes hand in hand, for riches or lack of them only increase and intensify anxiety. The poor has nothing and wants something; the rich has much but is never satisfied. The pleasures of this life are the concomitant satisfaction and gratification of all the lusts of the flesh and of the eyes. There are people in the historical dispensation of the kingdom of heaven of this type. And they hear the Word preached to them. They may even stop to think for a moment and consider what it says. But the Word never has a chance. There are too many thorns and thistles. And almost immediately, the thorns of all that this world contains choke the Word so that it is killed. The weedy underbrush of this life is too thick.

On the other hand, and antithetical to this, the soil that is well prepared is the heart that eagerly receives the Word of life. It seeks not the pleasures of this world, or the riches that are necessary to enjoy its pleasure. It is unchoked with the cares of this present time, for it has learned to cast all its cares upon its heavenly Father. It is the heart of the man that firmly believes that what he has is given him of God, and what he has not the Lord has kept from him. But it is all according to the good pleasure of his Father which is in heaven, for he seeks a city which hath foundations, and he is willing to bypass for a time the things of this earth in order that he may arrive in good time at the gates of that city.

And so is therefore the good soil descriptive of the heart that bears fruit. If the soil is well prepared by the Sower before He sows, then when the seed is cast upon it, it will inevitably bring forth fruit also. That lies in the nature of the seed. The seed is the lively preaching of the Word. And when it falls upon well prepared soil, it cannot help but bring forth fruit.

The fruit is the spiritual fruit of salvation. It is not the doing of tremendously powerful things in this world, but is the fruit of the tears of repentance, sorrow for sin, and an anxious hastening to the cross of Jesus Christ to find forgiveness in the blood that flows from Calvary. That fruit is an earnest desire to walk according to the commandments of God, to keep one's feet upon the narrow way of God's will and to flee all the world with its lusts and enticements.

For it should not escape our attention that although these types of soil are never descriptive of soil well prepared by the Spirit, it is nevertheless true that at certain times and to varying degrees these descriptions fit the heart of each of the people of God. They will bring forth fruit, but they also must always be on their guard. They must watch always that the Word is not plucked from their heart by the Evil One, nor that it is withered by the scorching heat of persecution, nor that it is choked by the thorns of cares, riches or pleasures of this life. But they must always hear the

Word and understand it to perfection and bear fruit whether that be thirty, sixty or one hundred fold.

For "he that hath ears, let him hear"; and, "Take heed how ye hear."

H. Hanko

THE FRAILITY OF LIFE

With firm resolve I held my peace
And spake not either bad or good,
Lest I should utter sinful thoughts
While wicked men before me stood.

While I was dumb my grief was stirred,
My heart grew hot with thought suppressed;
The while I mused the fire increased,
Then to the Lord I made request.

Make me, O Lord, to know my end,
Teach me the measure of my days,
That I may know how frail I am
And turn from pride and sinful ways.

My time is nothing in Thy sight,
Behold, my days are but a span;
Yea, truly at his best estate,
A breath, a fleeting breath, is man.

Man's life is passed in vain desire
If troubled years be spent for gain;
He knows not whose his wealth shall be,
And all his toil is but in vain.

And now, O Lord, what wait I for?
I have no hope except in Thee;
Let not ungodly men reproach,
From all transgression set me free.

Because Thou didst it I was dumb,
I spoke no word of rash complaint;
Remove Thy stroke away from me,
Beneath Thy chastisement I faint.

When Thou for his iniquity
Rebuked and correctest man,
His beauty is consumed away,
How weak his strength, how vain his plan.

Lord, hear my prayer, regard my cry,
I weep, be Thou my comforter;
I am a stranger here below,
A pilgrim as my fathers were.

O spare me, Lord, avert Thy wrath,
Deal gently with me, I implore,
That I may yet recover strength
E'er I go hence and be no more.

Psalms 39

DECENCY and ORDER

The Church and the State

(Continued)

The editor of *The Contender* is opposed to the teaching of the separation of church and state because, as he claims, it implies a denial of the fundamental truths of the Sovereignty of God and that of Absolute Predestination. The validity of this argument we hope to consider presently.

The author has more to say. He objects because this teaching has a Baptist and Deistic hue and the Rev. Mac Kay has especially a strong aversion toward the teachings of the Baptists. He points out that in regard to the question of the relation of church and state there are two opposite views which come into open conflicts. The first of these is that of the Roman Catholic whose position he describes in the following quotation:

"The Roman Catholic doctrine that there is one and only one true Church—the Roman—and *that the State should be in subjection to the Church*. Or, in other words, the Vatican claim that the Pope should be the head of both the spiritual power (church) and temporal power (state). This doctrine is as old as the Roman Catholic system of doctrine and church government itself, but it is only recently, on account of the rising power of Rome on this continent, that an open attempt is being made by Catholic authorities to assert the Pope's claim to the supreme power over the state."

The alternative view is that of the Baptists. Concerning this view the editor writes:

"The Baptist doctrine of the complete separation of Church and State, which is widespread and popular among practically all categories of non-Roman Catholics,—even Presbyterian and Reformed peoples. According to this theory, the State carefully minds its own state business, and the Church likewise looks after its own church business. Thus both Church and State are considered to be totally independent and free."

This view, largely under the influence of Roger William, the Baptist founder of the State of Rhode Island, and Thomas Jefferson, a Deist, has been principally written into the Constitution or Bill of Rights in the United States. The First Amendment to the Constitution reads:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . ."

This tolerant view respecting so-called "religious freedom" can only mean—which is also the evident practical result—that any and all religions—denomination, inter-denomination, non-denominational and sectarian—are all equal before the law of the land. The State assumes a "hands-off" policy toward all religions. It approves of none and condemns none. Each individual is left free to join himself

or herself to the church of their choice or, if they see fit, to join no church at all. The atheist and the Christian are before the law equal. The State takes no cognizance of God or of the mandate upon its citizens to worship the true and living God revealed in the Scriptures but says in effect that if citizens wish to do so, they may or may not as it may please them. It is evident that according to the State *man* is held in higher esteem and regarded as having higher dignity and authority than God! This position the State assumes to appease Man whom it serves. It regards itself as a servant of man, not of GOD! Thus, the church is completely separated from the state which is clearly not as the Roman Catholics would have it. From this Mac Kay concludes, "that the present trouble in North America over the Church and State may be seen as arising out of a conflict between the Roman Catholic and Baptist doctrines."

Whether then the Editor of *The Contender* favors the Roman Catholic position or not isn't clear but I'm very strongly inclined to think that he would favor that position provided that the words, "Reformed Faith," could be substituted for the words, "Roman Catholic Church." This will be evident presently. However, what isn't clear is his conception as to just how the "Reformed Church" is to be related to the State. Is she to have jurisdiction and power of authority over the affairs of the state as Rome would have it? Or is the state to serve as a protectorate of the Reformed Churches? It is evident that he does not want *separation*—at least not *complete* separation—as the Baptists and Deists maintain. Perhaps he favors a limited separation but this is not clear. From the following quotation, it is evident that, on the one hand, he is afraid of the Roman Catholic position while, on the other hand, he is very condemnatory in his evaluation of the "status-quo." He writes:

"With the historic Reformed faith almost buried out of sight beneath the chaotic mass of false religions throughout every province and state of our broad continent, it can readily be seen that the task of making this same Reformed faith the established religion of Canada and the U.S.A. is utterly impossible, now. And only by the grace and mercy of God, along with the greatest spiritual struggle in the history of mankind and, doubtless, infinite bloodshed of Christian martyrs, will our continent ever reach the place where it can be said of us, as of England in 1701, that this Reformed faith is 'by law established.'"

"Inconceivable though the difficulties in the way of the establishment of the Reformed faith may be, yet this is neither a warrant nor an excuse for throwing up our hands in despair and saying, 'We'll be over our heads if we go into that!' If we were to answer according to this kind of 'reasoning' we would reply, 'We'll most assuredly be over our heads if we do *not* go into the subject of Church and State,—in earnest,—for the surging power of Rome all over North America is warning enough that the easy-going,

(and we believe, unscriptural, anti-Christian and blasphemous) popular, smug, non-Romanist idea of 'tolerance' will ruin us yet!' This North American doctrine which puts all religions, false as well as the true, on an equal footing before the law and, in reality, says that false religions have a God-given 'right' to be false is abominable. Where, we ask, can anyone find in the Holy Scriptures the idea that God of truth and righteousness gives any mortal man the 'right' to believe and 'enjoy' a lie? And yet, this is, basically, what the popular and widely-accepted North American doctrine of 'freedom of religion' involves. We believe that we need, rather, to adopt the old, original, British conception of the Reformed faith in its relationship to the State. Certainly the Westminster Assembly of divines who gave to the British Isles this conception of Church and State were devout Christian men whose only motive was the glory of God and the welfare of the British peoples. They loved true Christian liberty and they suffered greatly for the sake of Christ."

Mackay's second objection, therefore, to the doctrine of separation between church and state is that its basic premise—the so-called "freedom of religion" philosophy—is false. He apparently holds the view that within the sovereign, Divinely-instituted state no false religion has the right to either existence or protection by that state. Therefore, he pleads for a concerted effort on the part of those who love the truth to strive after the virtual impossibility of acquiring for the Reformed Faith recognition by and establishment under the law of the land. He deplores the fact that this was not done from the very inception of the nation and instead a free hand has been given, under the law, to the development and growth of liberalism and modernism which are as bad as Catholicism which he seeks to combat by establishing the Reformed Faith as the national religion. Thus he writes:

"This (establish the Calvinistic Reformed faith by law) should have been done from the foundation of the national life of the Dominion of Canada, and of the United States of America. But instead, our two nations have followed, for nearly two hundred years, the nationalistic atheism of the Baptists and the freethinking, secularizing spirit of Thomas Jefferson, and, as a result North America has completely betrayed the crown rights of Jesus Christ over the nations, as so wonderfully upheld by the Scottish Covenanters, and as given to the Presbyterians in careful doctrinal form by the Westminster Assembly of divines. No wonder the Reformed faith has almost completely perished from Atlantic to Pacific, and from North West Territories to the Rio Grande! And no wonder North America is a perfect paradise—or hotbed—for every conceivable, and inconceivable, brand of false religion! The wickedest brands of religion flourish all over this continent because our founding fathers refused to give God the glory due His name in the realm of the State, and, instead, put their seal of approval on false religions by putting them on the same constitu-

tional level as the true, and by giving them the liberty to 'enjoy' their false doctrines. And the great body of American Presbyterians were early ensnared in this same terrible error, and have followed the delusion of equality of all religions before the law, and of granting false religions the right and liberty to 'enjoy' their false doctrines."

This false doctrine of "religious equality" which lies at the basis of the teaching of separation between church and state, MacKay asserts, works against the Biblical truth of Predestination. He reasons this way. The most common objection that men raise against the truth of Predestination is that it makes God unequal or partial in His dealings with men. This notion they derive from the popular idea that before the law all men are equal, all religions are equal, all must be treated equally and given equal opportunity. Writes the editor: "Because they (men) have been told countless times from childhood that all men ought to have 'equal opportunity,' and that if people are not treated alike they are being treated unjustly, they naturally reject predestination which positively does not grant all men 'equal opportunity' and treat all men alike." And the fault of this Rev. MacKay lays at the door of the church when he writes: "How can you expect anyone on this continent to take the doctrine of predestination seriously, and believe it, when for two hundred years the leaders in Church and State—including Presbyterian ministers—have been drilling the idea into people's minds that 'all religions must be equal before the law' and that all men must have 'equal opportunity'? In the face of this long continued equality propaganda, anyone who says that there is such a thing as unequal and exclusive predestination must seem to the multitude as a voice crying in the haunting solitudes of Keewatin."

(to be continued)

G. Vanden Berg.

A CALL TO PRAISE

All ye that fear Jehovah's Name,
His glory tell, His praise proclaim;
Ye children of His chosen race,
Stand ye in awe before His face,
Stand ye in awe before His face.

The suffering one He has not spurned
Who unto Him for succor turned;
From him He has not hid His face,
But answered his request in grace.

O Lord, Thy goodness make me raise,
Amid Thy people songs of praise;
Before all them that fear Thee, now
I worship Thee and pay my vow.

Psalm 22:1-3

ALL AROUND US

Correspondence with a Baptist Minister.

The readers of *The Standard Bearer* will recall that in the November 1, 1956 issue we called attention to a little pamphlet produced by C. Breed of the Strict Baptist Church. This article was read by another Baptist minister in Hamilton, Ohio, who directed a letter to the editor-in-chief of *The Standard Bearer* asking for information relative to the pamphlet. His letter, which also contained the Articles of Faith of his particular church, was directed to me for an answer.

We immediately sent the brother the answer to his letter at which time also we asked of him permission to publish and comment on his Articles of Faith. Since then, we received another letter from him in which he writes among other things of great interest to me, "Yes, you have my permission to make any such editorial comment on our Articles of Faith as you desire—and feel free of any restraint in so doing. I would expect you to be true to your personal convictions and belief." We are very grateful to brother Eldon A. Huchison for his gracious consent because it presents to us opportunity to show to our readers, especially those who are Protestant Reformed, that there are others besides ourselves who believe in eternal, sovereign, divine, unconditional election and salvation.

There are thirteen articles in their Confession of Faith. And, as I wrote to the brother, there is only one with which I could take any serious exception. And our differences on this article, I told him, were no doubt due first of all to our differences in back-grounds, but mostly, in the second place, to our apparent different views on the doctrine of the Covenant. I offered to discuss these differences with our brother through correspondence but he informs me that due to illness his activities have been seriously curtailed, among these the matter of correspondence. I wish to assure the brother that he has our sincerest sympathy, and our prayer to God for him is that He will give grace sufficient to endure this affliction and, if it be His will, that our brother may again soon be restored.

And now to the Articles of Faith. I am going to quote them in their entirety and then make a few comments respecting them.

"1. We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God and the only rule of Faith and Practice.

2. We believe there is one only divine and true God, and that there are three Persons in the Godhead, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, which three are one, of the same substance, equal in power and glory.

3. We believe that God created our first parents upright,

yet they did not long abide in that honor, but did wilfully transgress the laws of creation in eating of the forbidden fruit; and by their sinful rebellion they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and all we in them became dead in sin and wholly defiled in all our faculties, both mental and bodily, our first parents being the root, and by God's appointment, standing in the place of all mankind; their corrupt nature was conveyed to all their posterity, so that we are all by nature children of wrath, servants of sin, subjects of death and misery, temporal and eternal. By this original corruption we are wholly indisposed to good and prone to evil.

4. We believe that before the foundation of the world God did elect a certain number of the human race to everlasting life and salvation, and in pursuance of this gracious design did make a covenant of grace and peace with His Son, Jesus Christ, on behalf of those persons who were committed to His care with all spiritual blessing.

5. We believe that Jesus Christ being from everlasting the Mediator of the new covenant, did engage to be the surety of His people and in the fulness of time really assumed human nature, in which nature He really suffered and died as their substitute in their room and stead, whereby He made all that satisfaction for their sins which the law and justice of God required, as well as procured those blessings which are needful both for time and eternity.

6. We believe that the eternal redemption Christ obtained by the shedding of His blood is special and particular, that is to say it was only intended for the elect of God or sheep of Christ, as they only enjoy the special and peculiar benefits of it.

7. We believe that the justification of God's elect is only by the righteousness of Christ imputed to them, without the consideration of any works done by them, and that the full and free pardon of all their sins, past, present and to come, is only through the blood of Christ according to the riches of His grace.

8. We believe that faith, conversion, regeneration and sanctification are not acts of man's free will and power but of the efficacious grace of God.

9. We believe that a full assurance of faith is attainable in this life and that it is a duty highly incumbent to labor after it with all diligence, though we by no means look upon assurance to be of the essence of faith but one of the consequences and delightful effects of it.

10. We believe that all those who are chosen by the Father, redeemed by the Son and sanctified by the Holy Ghost, shall certainly and finally persevere to the end, so that none of them shall perish but have eternal life.

11. We believe that baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of Christ, to be continued till His second coming,

and that the former is requisite to the latter, viz: that only those who are to be admitted into the communion of the church who upon profession of faith have been baptized by immersion in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

12. We believe the Lord's Day is to be set apart for holy purposes; that it is our duty to assemble together on that day for the public worship of God by prayer, giving of thanks, preaching, hearing the Word of God and singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.

13. We believe there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust, and that Christ will come a second time to judge both quick and dead, to receive the righteous to everlasting happiness, and sentence the wicked to punishment of the same duration."

Respecting these articles we make the following comments:

1. In comparison with our own Netherlands or Belgic Confession which is contained in Thirty-seven articles, the articles above referred to are noticeably brief. One could wish, for example, that Article 1 would also contain a statement of faith respecting the infallible inspiration of the Word of God. This especially in the light of the modern attempt to declare that the Bible is not the Word of God, but that it contains the Word of God. This brevity is also noticeably present in Article 4. One could wish that this article also contained a statement of faith respecting eternal reprobation. We were pleased to learn from brother Huchison upon inquiry that he believes also very strongly in eternal and sovereign reprobation. When we asked him concerning his belief in this doctrine, he replied: "Yes! I have neither time nor space, at present, to enlarge upon this answer, but shall mention as a single reference Romans 9:22-23 To this, I add, that no person has to apologize for what God in His sovereign wisdom and purpose chooses to do." Our experience has been that there are many who say they believe in election, but they will have nothing of reprobation. In our judgment to deny the latter is also to deny the former. In the light of this, a brief statement concerning reprobation could very easily be added to Article 4. What we have said about Articles 1 and 4 may also be said in respect to others of these articles.

2. Respecting Article 8 which declares: "We believe that faith, conversion, regeneration and sanctification are not acts of man's free will and power but of the efficacious grace of God," it especially struck our attention respecting the order. Faith and conversion precede regeneration. This is of minor importance, perhaps, but where a series of this nature is used, it would seem that regeneration should be first. Because it is not first, here, the question naturally arises: in what sense is regeneration considered? One gets the impression that this article has in mind what is called *mediate* regeneration. And if this is the case, we wonder whether the church above referred to believes also in *immediate* regeneration.

3. Respecting Article 9 it is not quite clear to the undersigned just what is meant by the last part where we read: "though we by no means look upon assurance to be of the essence of faith, but one of the consequences and delightful effects of it." When we compare Article 9 above with Question 21 of our Heidelberg Catechism, there appears to be a considerable difference. Question 21 asks: "What is true faith?" and it answers: "True faith is not only a certain knowledge, whereby I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in his word, but also an *assured confidence*, which the Holy Ghost works by the gospel, in my heart; that not only to others, but to me also, remission of sin, everlasting righteousness and salvation, are freely given by God, merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits." Here it is plain that not only is assurance of the essence of faith, but it is also a most significant part of it. But brother Huchison may explain this article a little more fully when he is able.

4. My main criticism, as I also told our brother, has to do with Article 11, of course. When I signified my objection to this Article and offered the explanation for our differences as residing in our different back-grounds, and more particularly in our different views concerning the Covenant, the brother replied: "Yes, I too, would explain our differences on Article 11 to be on the basis of our different back-grounds. To me this article is of far less importance than our common adherence to 'The Five Points of Calvinism.'" In a sense I am happy with his explanation, but in another sense I am not. I am aware of the fact that brother Huchison did not send us his Articles of Faith out of an argumentative motive and that his intention was only to be informative and show that we have much in common. And in a sense I am glad that he does not wish to make Baptism, *etc.*, an issue. Yet, this is a very definite point of difference between us. It is here that one's entire covenant conception comes into view. And with us, who are Protestant Reformed, this covenant conception is of fundamental importance. Our view of the covenant necessitates the baptism of infants who are born in the generations of believers, as circumcision was necessary for children of believers in the Old Covenant according to the command of God.

But I will not press this point farther except to offer brother Huchison once more to carry on further correspondence on the all important subject, and offer him a little pamphlet written by the Rev. H. Hoeksema on the subject of Baptism of Infants which most clearly sets forth our views on this subject.

5. Finally, I wish to state that on the whole I am very pleased with this statement of faith which is of the Mount Pleasant Baptist Church of Hamilton, Ohio. It, to my mind, clearly, though briefly, states the cardinal doctrines of Scripture which also are dear to our hearts. Yes, indeed, brother Huchison, we have much in common. In this we rejoice before God Who has hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto babes.

M.S.