

THE STANDARD

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

VOLUME XXXIII

DECEMBER 15, 1956 — GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

NUMBER 6

MEDITATION

THE WISE MEN OF THE EAST

"When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star which they saw in the east went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary His mother, and fell down, and worshipped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh." Matt. 2:9-11.

Wonderful night when Jesus was born!

All things send their representatives to Bethlehem.

And every year we also return to Bethlehem to see the thing which came to pass, which the Lord our God has shown unto us.

How Divinely beautiful is the plan of God. We said, that all things sent their representatives, and that is true. The heathen world did too. Jesus was to be a Saviour of the whole world, according to the promises, and so it is Divinely ordained and carried out that the world shall have their representatives when Jesus is born.

No, we do not know how many wise men came from the East. The Roman Catholic Church speaks of three, and that tradition has found its way into all countries of the so-called Christian world. And that tradition is so strong that we ourselves sometimes are inclined to use the number three when speaking of the wise men of the East.

But they did represent the heathen world; they came from the East, and the East was in darkness.

And: we are still in the Old Dispensation.

But we are very certain that these wise men were regenerated and converted children of God.

That is plain first from the fact that they are burning with eagerness to see the newborn King of the Jews.

Second, that is plain from their behaviour when they do find Him, for they fall down and worship Him. God does not allow reprobates to worship Him.

Third, from the fact that God reveals Himself to them, and that in a very friendly and saving way. He saves them from the wrath of the King.

And besides, it is plain that God's revelation to them after they had seen Jesus was not the first time they beheld the heavenly vision.

It is rather plain that these wise men had come in contact with the Jews and their Scriptures of the Eastern dispersion. The Jews carried the Holy Scriptures with them wherever they went. And these wise men must have searched these Scriptures with believing hearts.

Moreover, there was also the miracle in the skies: the star which they had seen in their own country. And it goes without saying that God had given them special revelation with regard to that star.

O yes, they were children of God!

And they are the representatives of the elect out of the whole heathen world.

And that was also according to the prophecies of old: would Jesus not be for a Light unto the Gentiles?

Moreover there had been already many representatives of the heathen world before this, and therefore, when the greatest of all events is to take place, it is entirely fitting that this world of the elect would be represented.

* * * *

What did these wise men receive from the Lord?

They received many things.

First, they received the revelation of Holy Writ. They received the Scriptures. First at their own home and country, as already alluded to. And secondly at Jerusalem, even through Herod the wicked king, and also from the wise men

of Judah who were blind, the scribes and the leaders of the people of Israel.

Here they come to the borders of the Holy Land. Their hearts are burning within them. They had seen the star; they had learned the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures concerning that star; they had consulted together with burning hearts of love for that promised King of the Jews; and they had set out together to go and see this great King.

They are approaching the Holy City, the City of the great King, of which they had heard so much.

Oh, how great shall be the rejoicing of that happy people of God who were the recipients of His special favor for those long centuries, while heathendom slept the long sleep of spiritual death and corruption. How glad shall the Jews be that their Savior is born.

Can you imagine, dear reader, how disappointed these wise men were when they enter the gates of the city of God? Instead of feasting and rejoicing they find the city going about its usual business. "Business as usual," is what they find.

But when God has touched your heart, you are not easily discouraged.

They persist in their quest.

Where is He that is born king of the Jews?

That question spread through the city like wildfire. It was not long before it came into the ears of the wicked king Herod.

We read that Herod, and Jerusalem with him, was greatly disturbed. And when you read Jerusalem, you must think most of all on the blind leaders of the blind.

But especially Herod was disturbed. All his life he had been afraid of possible usurpers of his throne, and he had killed a great many whom he thought were after his throne. And some of them were united to him by the dearest ties of blood.

In the king's disturbance he sends for the wise men of Judah: the chief priests and the scribes. He must have the truth about this threatened usurper.

Well, the place where He is to be born that shall be the King of the Jews is soon found. It was, also for them, a very classical portion of Scripture.

Bethlehem! Thou art not the least of the cities and villages of Judah!

Out of thee shall come forth who shall be the Ruler in Israel!

Then note the shrewdness of that wicked king: he called the wise men and inquired diligently of them at what time the star had appeared. He is all interest. He feigns a pious concern regarding this promised King of Israel.

And then he sent them to Bethlehem. As a child I often thought: why did he not at once dispatch his murderers to Bethlehem? Why did he intrust this mission to the wise men? But the answer is easy. He knew himself to be an enemy of this Divine King. And he knew that he consequently was out of touch with heaven's God, who had revealed Himself to these pious foreigners. And so, the wisest would be to let these pious men find Him who was to take his throne away.

It was devilish cunning at work.

But God is God.

He shows the star and there is wondrous joy in the hearts of these children of God. They rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

The star shines brightly in the clear Eastern sky.

The star: what does it mean?

The idea of the star, dear reader, is guidance in the night!

Guidance in the night of horrible sin and wrath.

Guidance to the heart of God!

Oh, they had read about that star. Attend to Numbers 24:17: "There shall come a star out of Jacob." Or attend to Isa. 60:3: "And the Gentiles shall come to Thy light and kings to the brightness of Thy rising."

Oh, it shall be fulfilled, and the later Scripture shall speak of this star. In fact, the Star Himself shall speak: "I am the Root and the Offspring of David and the bright and morning star!" And Peter the Apostle shall refer to this star and say: "And the day dawn and the day star arise in your hearts."

Oh yes, and if that star dawns in your heart, you have found the way to the heart of God.

* * * *

And so the star re-appeared unto them.

It indicated that God would guide them.

I can understand that these men rejoiced with exceeding great joy. When you have the assurance that God is your guide in the night of horror and darkness of sin, you will rejoice in a dungeon. There is nothing sweeter than to know that God is on your side.

We know that the re-appearance of this star is also the prophecy that the dawn for heathendom was at hand.

God had allowed them to walk in their wicked ways. But the day was soon to be there when He would also take the heathen by the hand and lead them to His Home in heaven.

That star was fixed above the house in which the young Child lay. They have no trouble at all in finding their destination. They soon see the house, and when the door

was opened they see the Child and Mary His mother, and they believe.

And they prove their faith.

They prove their faith by falling down before the Child in worship.

It is the first lesson of grace.

They fall down.

Well, that is proper. And, incidentally, that is the dividing line between the reprobate and the elect.

They fall down. It is the very opposite of the pride of Satan.

They fall down. It is the sweetest thing of all our works. Did you ever note how the inhabitants of heaven time and again fall on their faces before the great white throne? They have learned their lessons well.

And they worship. Well, that is also very proper when you bow before the Godhead.

To worship is to enumerate the glories and the perfections of God.

To worship means that you say unto God how wonderful He is in all His ways and works. And that is what these wise men do.

How is it possible that some say that these men are no Christians!

And, finally, they may have their portion: they may present their gifts to Jesus.

Gold: they bestow royal honor on Jesus.

Frankincense: they confess that Jesus is worthy of Divine worship.

Myrrh: they prophecy of His great humiliation.

The Saviour Divine!

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.

"A man may as truly say that the sea burns or the fire cools, as free grace and mercy can make a real believer do wickedly."

— Brooks

THE STANDARD BEARER

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

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

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

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

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

Subscription price: \$4.00 per year

Entered as Second Class matter at Grand Rapids, Michigan

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EDITORIALS

Election and Reprobation

The text in Matt. 13:13-17, as well as that in Mk. 4:10-12, is an application of the parable of the sower and, at the same time of Jesus' teaching in parables in general. And we do well to pay attention to this for a moment.

What is a parable?

According to Mark 4:11, the parable is a revelation of the mystery of the kingdom of God. The question, therefore, is: what is a parable and how is the mystery of the kingdom of God revealed in a parable in a special way, as it is not revealed in direct speech? This is connected with the further question: why and how is it that this form of teaching is to them that are without a greater condemnation than instruction in the kingdom of God in direct speech could ever be? The answer to this last question cannot be that the disciples understood the parables while those that are without do not, for fact is that the disciples did not understand them unless Jesus instructed them, while the unbelievers in some cases understood them, especially if a certain parable applied especially to them.

What then, is a parable and what is its special significance?

A parable is not a fable. A fable is a mere human story with a mere earthly significance. It is told for the purpose of impressing a certain moral upon the minds and hearts of those that hear. It represents human philosophy and worldly prudence. It certainly has nothing to do with the mystery of the kingdom of God. Nor is a parable the same as an allegory. An allegory is not real. It invents something in story form regardless of reality. This is never the case with a parable. The story of a parable is not fantastic but is always taken from real life. In fact, as we shall see presently, this is essential to the real nature and character of a parable. But a parable has to do with the relation between things natural and spiritual. Only because there is a God-ordained relation between things natural and spiritual the parable is possible. A parable presupposes the relation between things earthly and heavenly. Again, only because God so formed, from the beginning, all things earthy that they are a picture of the heavenly things, a parable is possible. Not inaptly, therefore, the parable has been briefly described as an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.

Jesus, therefore, did not fabricate the story of a parable as is the case with a fable. The stories were all there, in the reality of nature and of human life and that, too, for the simple reason that God so created and formed the things natural that they were a picture of things spiritual, the things earthy that they were a picture of things heavenly. God so constituted all things in the present world that it is an image of things to come. Jesus saw this, and in the parable He calls attention to these pictures in nature and

interprets their spiritual and heavenly significance. Thus the seed being cast into the ground, dying and living again, is the earthly picture of the resurrection, spiritual and physical. Thus there is a picture of spiritual and heavenly relations in the shepherd and his sheep, the vine and its branches, the master and his servants, the king and his subjects, the bridegroom and the bride, etc.

Now, both the righteous and the wicked, those that are within the kingdom and those that are without, the elect and the reprobate, heard the parabolic teaching of the Lord in a natural way, with their natural ear, and sometimes they understood it with their natural mind. But do not overlook the fact, according to Mark 4:11, *all these things are done in parables*. God gave an earthly picture of things heavenly, of the mystery of the kingdom of God. And Jesus, by His parables, simply called attention to them. But do not forget that, after Jesus had spoken the parables, the things still continued to be done in parables. The sower continued to sow his seed, the shepherd still went out with his sheep, the vine and its branches still grew. And thus they all, those that are without and those that are within, the righteous and the wicked, the elect and the reprobate, continued to see and hear the parables of the Lord.

Now, for what purpose are these parables as they actually are in nature, as they continue to take place, and as Jesus calls the attention of His hearers to them?

In the verses we quoted from the gospel according to Matthew this purpose as such is not definitely expressed. It rather presents the condition of the hearers, particularly of the wicked, as a reason why the Lord teaches them in parables. And at the same time it denotes their hardening as a result of Jesus' parabolic teaching. For there we read in 13:13: "Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive. For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."

Notice here:

1. That in these verses the teaching of the Lord in parables is presented as having its reason in the fact that some of them are wicked and must have nothing of Christ and the gospel.

2. That their heart is already hardened, for in them the prophecy of Isaiah is already fulfilled that their heart is waxed gross and their ears are dull of hearing.

3. That, therefore, they are not in a condition in which they can see the things of the kingdom of God, understand and be healed. Their condition is already revealed, even on earth and in this present time, to be hopeless. Mark you well, I say that their condition is already *revealed* to be hope-

less. The condition of the natural man is, apart from the grace of God, always hopeless. But it is not always revealed as such in this present life. In other words, they are like the people that are mentioned in Heb. 6 with respect to whom the Scriptures say that is impossible to renew them again unto repentance.

4. That, nevertheless, or rather, because of this the Lord teaches them in parables. Why? Is it perhaps, in order that the things of the kingdom of God may be cloaked for them in obscure language, so that their condemnation may not become heavier still? Such, indeed, is the interpretation of some. But this is quite contrary to the words of the text in Matthew 13 as well as to the idea and purpose of parabolic teaching. As to the latter, we have seen that in the parables the Lord calls attention to those things in nature and in human life that are pictures of heavenly things. The latter always take place in parables according to Mark 4:11. And as to the former, the Lord says in Matt. 13:13 that "seeing they see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand."

The meaning of this is evident.

They certainly and emphatically see with their natural eyes. They certainly hear with their natural ears and understand with their natural mind. And the purpose of the parable is to make them see and hear and understand in the natural sense of the word more clearly. But although they see and hear and understand naturally, they do not apprehend the things of the kingdom of God spiritually, so that they are sorry for their sin, long for the grace of the forgiveness of their sins, and for the deliverance from the power of sin.

Hence, when the Lord teaches these natural, wicked, reprobate men in parables, it certainly is in order to bring out more clearly and emphatically their carnal mind.

And thus the parabolic teaching of the Lord Jesus is to their greater condemnation.

This is more emphatically expressed in Mark 4:10-12.

About this, however, next time, the Lord willing.

H.H.

Unbiblical Divorce and Remarriage

The text in Mark 10:11, 12 does not bear directly on the subject we are now discussing. It reads: "And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery." I say that this passage is not directly related to the subject under discussion, because it does not refer to the woman that is forsaken by her husband and her remarriage, or, for that matter, to the husband that is forsaken by his wife and marries another woman. Yet, on the other hand, this can also be understood as a very strong passage in favor of the position that the divorced may never marry not even if the divorce was granted on the ground of adultery of the guilty party. In fact, it is most probable, in

the light of the context, as well as on the basis of the text itself, and in the light of other passages of Scripture that have reference to this question, that this is the meaning.

As to the context, it is as follows.

The Pharisees approached Jesus with the question whether it is lawful for a man to put away his wife. The Lord first responds by an appeal to Moses: "What did Moses command you?" They answer that Moses allowed a man to give his wife a bill of divorcement and to put her away. In reply to this the Lord answered: 1. That Moses gave them this precept because of the hardness of their hearts, not because it was the law of God. 2. Next the Lord answered by pointing to the ordinance of creation: "from the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave unto his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh: so that they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." This judgment of the Lord is without any restrictions. Man and wife are inseparably bound together by God Himself according to the fundamental creation ordinance. Either party may, indeed, violate this ordinance of God by committing adultery, and when this is repeated it may become impossible for a man to live with his wife or for a woman to live with her husband. This, indeed, is a very serious sin. Nevertheless, they are still one flesh. The tie of marriage can, according to Romans 7, be broken only by death.

Now, if in the light of this context we read vss. 11 and 12 of the same chapter, it seems to me that they rather emphatically condemn the remarriage of divorced parties. Notice that in these verses the Lord speaks: 1. Of a man putting away his wife, and of a wife putting away her husband. In itself this is no adultery. Such a separation of man and wife may very well be allowed and legal as, for instance, in the case of adultery on the part of either party. 2. But the Lord adds: "and shall marry another" and "be married to another." Then, indeed, they commit adultery. The supposition is, of course, that the man that has thus forsaken his wife, and the woman that has thus put away her husband, are still one flesh together and that the marriage tie can never be broken, even though it may be and often is violated by the sin of adultery. In this light, the text certainly teaches that the marriage tie can never be broken and that he or she that forsakes the other party in marriage commits adultery when he or she marries another.

But we proceeded from the supposition that this text implied that the husband put away his wife for the sake of fornication and likewise that the woman forsakes her husband for the same reason. This, however, although it is very possible, is not expressed in the text. We will, therefore, still have to refer to other passages of Holy Writ in which this is clearly expressed.

This, however, must wait till our next number of *The Standard Bearer*.

H.H.

OUR DOCTRINE

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

CHAPTER VI

THE CHURCH LAX IN DISCIPLINE

Revelation 2:12-17

An earthly judge can pronounce a verdict of guilty and announce the sentence of punishment. But his word has no power: it has not the power to inflict the penalty expressed by his sentence. He has need of the executive power to inflict that punishment and to enforce his sentence. Not so, however, with the Word of Jesus. If He, as the mighty King-Judge, expresses a sentence upon anyone, the very word of the sentence is the power that inflicts the punishment and realizes the judgment expressed. It is the sword that executes the sentence. In this light, then, as the King-Judge in the midst of the church, He announces Himself to the congregation of Pergamos. She has in her midst evil men, that aim at the destruction of the church by their evil doctrine and practice. And these men must be rooted out from her midst. And therefore, His appearance with the sharp two-edged sword proceeding from His mouth is in accord with the condition of the congregation.

Before, however, the Lord comes to exercise the power and authority of that sharp sword. He sends the message to the church: "Repent, therefore." These words are not primarily intended for the evil men that held the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes. It is not they, but the congregation that is addressed through its angel. It is the church as a whole that is guilty and worthy of rebuke because of her laxity in discipline. And therefore of this she must repent. She may not make light of the glory of her King, and be careless in regard to the well-being of the church by tolerating these Nicolaitanes to continue in her midst. The call to repentance in this case is equivalent to the call to exercise proper discipline over the Nicolaitanes in the bosom of the church. And if they do not repent and cut off these evil members, the Lord threatens that He will come Himself, and that too, quickly, to make war with them. Let us notice, in the first place, that the church is not threatened with the removal of the candlestick, as was the case with Ephesus. Her condition was not as precarious as that of the church that was losing its first love. The congregation is to be saved even though the Lord must come with His judgment. Exactly what would be implied in this coming of the Lord to the church in Pergamos, the text does not indicate. Most probably we may think in this case of temporal judgments with which the Lord will visit the church, in order to chastize them for their laxity in discipline and to cut out the evil men from their midst. An analogous case we may find in the

congregation of Corinth. She also was loath to banish evil men from the midst, and permitted the desecration of the Lord's Supper. And she too was visited by the Lord with many a temporal chastisement. Where the true church still exists, and is as strong as the congregation in Pergamos, her sole defect being a weakness in discipline, the Lord visits His church with temporal judgment, in order that she may repent and excommunicate the impenitent evil-doer.

But this is not the last word. On the contrary, many were the faithful in the church of Pergamos. And for them the Lord closes with a word of comfort and encouragement. To them that overcome the Lord has a two-fold promise. In the first place, He promises them that they shall be fed with the hidden manna. And secondly, He promises that they shall receive a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no man can read except he that receiveth it. The figure of the hidden manna is not difficult to understand. We all are acquainted with the history of God's people from which this symbol is derived. In the desert during their long journey to the promised land Jehovah fed His people miraculously with bread from heaven. Every day, except on the sabbath, He rained His manna from heaven. And in the Gospel of St. John we are told that this manna that rained from heaven in the wilderness was not the real manna, but that Christ is the true bread of life, of which the manna in the desert was only typical. But even as the people of God in the old dispensation were fed with the material manna, raining from heaven, so the people of God are spiritually nourished with the true manna, the bread of life, that nourishes them unto everlasting life. In Christ is their all: their justification, their sanctification, and their complete redemption. All the grace they need to be delivered from the power of sin and death, and finally to appear before the Father in everlasting glory, to serve Him in perfection, is only in Christ Jesus their Lord. He is the hidden manna. By the Spirit, through the medium of faith, Christ imparts Himself unto His people that have become one plant with Him. And therefore, to the faithful in Pergamos the Lord promises a full supply of the hidden manna, that will strengthen them in their battle against Satan and his throne and that will finally lead them on to perfection, when they shall have appropriated all the blessings of salvation completely. Because of their mystical union with Him that walketh in the midst of the golden candlesticks, they shall be fed with the hidden manna; and eternally their soul shall be satisfied.

As to the symbol of the white stone, we can perhaps interpret it most correctly by recalling the ancient custom of expressing a verdict upon him that was arraigned in court by means of two stones, a white and a black. Each one of the jury members would be given a white and a black stone. In case he deemed the accused guilty, he would cast the black stone in a vessel; if judged innocent, the defendant would have a white stone cast in his favor. The black stone was then a symbol of guilt and condemnation, the white stone of innocence and justification. By promising the faithful in

Pergamos a white stone, the Lord assures them of their final justification and purification in the day of the Lord. They need not be alarmed by the appearance of that two-edged sword, for they shall receive the white stone in proof of their perfect justification and glorification, and they shall be presented to the Father without blemish, without spot or wrinkle, shining forth in the perfection of their new being.

In close connection with this white stone is the new name that was written upon it and which they only shall be able to read that receive it. The name in Scripture is expressive of one's being and individual nature. That peculiar character of each person that causes him to differ from his fellow human being is his name. It is therefore but natural that in perfection the children of God shall receive a new name, in harmony with the perfect renewal of their being. In this dispensation their name so frequently spells imperfection and misery, imperfection physically and spiritually. In principle indeed, they already possess their new name in Christ. But the glory of that new name is so largely covered up by the darkness of their old name of sin that frequently it hardly becomes manifest. Sin controls them often. And besides, the world hates them and adds to their outward misery in this dispensation. But in the eternal kingdom this shall be different. If they persevere and overcome and are faithful unto death, they shall once enter into glory everlasting. And in that perfect state the glory of their new being shall shine forth in all its splendor uninterruptedly. Still more: not all the saints shall be alike, so that they should be an endless monotony of identically the same beings. The difference between one individual and another shall not be obliterated in perfection. On the contrary, there shall be an infinitely rich variety of individuals. Personality shall also be in heaven. Individual character shall even be emphasized to perfection. That is why the text has it that only he that receives the name shall know it. Even here, on the earth, it is true that after all a person knows himself only; and never shall we be able to penetrate into the hidden depths of another's individuality. The greater and deeper the person, the more difficult it becomes fully to explain him. The shallower and more insignificant a person, the more easily he is scrutinized. In perfection personality shall be emphasized and developed to its highest glory, so that each saint shall know his own name only. Thus God shall be glorified in the new humanity, in which the image of God shall shine forth in all its divine fulness and beauty, radiating, as it were, from the Lord Jesus Christ into all the members of His body, and reaching its full realization and manifestation not in each individual saint, but rather in the harmony of the whole. Each one only knows his own name. Each particular child of God shall then manifest his own peculiar shade of God's image. And together with the new creation, they shall all reveal in one grand and most beautiful harmony the wonders of God's image.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. What doth the Spirit say? Watch, and

do not remove the sentinel of discipline, allowing evil men in the midst of the church of Christ. Never allow them to obliterate the distinction between the church and the world, as Balaam tried to erase the line of demarcation between Israel and Moab. And for the rest, in the midst of the world, where Satan has his throne and dwelling place, the faithful must always uphold the honor of their King. For he that overcometh shall be given to eat of the hidden manna, so that he shall be satisfied with the blessings of salvation in eternal life. He that overcometh shall be given a white stone, the stone of his justification and purification in the blood of the Lamb. He shall be given a new name, expressive of his new and eternal being, a name which he alone shall be able to know, a name that determines exactly his personal place in that blessed throng that shall once gather around the throne of God and the Lamb and reveal in all its fulness and splendor the image of our God.

CHAPTER VII

The Church with a Mystic Tendency

Revelation 2:18-29

Thyatira was a city in Asia Minor southeast from Pergamos, on the road to Sardis. It was known for the art of dying. And as we know, Lydia, the seller of purple, was from that city. Acts 16:14. It was not a large city, like Pergamos. And it was not exactly a place where Satan would naturally establish his throne and where he dwelt. For that reason the church in Thyatira might enjoy a comparatively peaceful existence. And although the letter of the Lord to this church suggests that the believers there also had suffered for Christ's sake, yet it did not have to suffer tribulation and persecution as did the churches of Smyrna and Pergamos.

For the rest, at first glance the letter addressed to the church in Thyatira would leave the impression that her condition was almost identically the same as that of Pergamos. The resemblance is indeed striking. Also the church in Thyatira was faithful to the Lord, as the text plainly indicates. Her weakness, or defect, seems to be that she suffered evil men, — in this case, an evil woman with her following, — in her midst. And hence, we would be inclined to draw the conclusion that also in Thyatira we are presented with the picture of a church weak in discipline. Still more, even the nature of the heresies that were being propagated in the two churches appears to be the same. For also in Thyatira the Nicolaitanes had their influence.

However, there must have been a difference between the two churches. For if in the seven churches of Asia Minor we correctly discerned a picture of the church in its totality from seven different aspects, it is plain that the churches of Thyatira and Pergamos each presents a different aspect of the church as a whole; and each adds its own peculiar detail to the picture of the church in its totality. This distinctive

feature we try to express in the subject of this chapter, "The Church with a Mystic Tendency."

It is undoubtedly not superfluous, first of all, to ask and answer the question: what is meant by this phrase, "The Church with a Mystic Tendency?" By mysticism, in the sense in which the term is employed by us now, — sometimes designated as "false mysticism," — we denote a condition or tendency in the church of Christ characterized by ardent and abundant spiritual life, rather of the experiential or emotional type, but more or less severed from the objective criterion and test of the Word of God. Perhaps you will be able to gain some conception of this condition if we say that it represents the direct opposite of the condition of the church of Ephesus. The latter was strong in respect to whatever is purely objective, strong in doctrine and the knowledge of the truth, faithful too in works and strict in discipline. But she was weak in regard to the life of the Spirit, and had lost her first love. She was poor in warm, inward, devotional spiritual life. With a church of mystic inclination it is exactly the reverse. She is generally rich in spiritual devotion, abundant in that part of our spiritual life which cannot be explained and expressed in words, often claims a direct intercourse with the Spirit. But she most frequently manifests an accompanying tendency to separate herself from the objective standard of the Word. She is usually poor in knowledge, and, in general, in regard to things that can be grasped and analysed by the intellect. Or, to prevent any possible misunderstanding, it is perhaps expedient to call your attention to three possible conditions in the church of Christ on earth. First of all, we may mention the correct, the healthy and normal, the most perfect condition of the church on earth, namely, that condition which is characterized by a correct and constant equilibration of the subjective and objective. It is the condition of the church that is both strong in knowledge and maintenance of the truth, emphasizes the necessity of the Word properly, but at the same time not devoid of true, devotional, ardent spiritual life, and where the latter is continually guided and tested by the former. Of course, in any form of true Christian religion there is a mystic element, resulting from our spiritual communion with Christ our Head. And any true child of God will be able to speak of the fact that he experiences moments of sweet communion with the Savior that transcend all analization and expression in human language. To speak in terms often employed by children of God, there are moments when they have "good times" with the Lord, moments in which we experience the mystical feeling of the bride that is near the bridegroom. Such moments are perfectly normal, and they should constitute an element of our life with God. There is no danger in such mystical communion, if only it is continually subjected to the objective test of the Word of God. And if such a condition is peculiar of an entire church, that church enjoys what may be called a state of healthy mysticism. A second condition, however, also met with in the church of Christ on earth, is that which results when the value of pure doctrine and the function of

the intellect in religion is overrated and exclusively emphasized, while the inward life of the Spirit is forgotten. Then all the emphasis is placed exclusively on cold doctrine. The congregation never receives a taste of sweet mystical communion of the Spirit, and religion becomes cold and dead intellectualism, — a body without a soul. Such a condition is, of course, to be condemned, is indeed very dangerous. But there is still another form that reveals itself from time to time in the history of the church as the dominant form, — a form, in fact, that never vanishes out of sight entirely. And that is the condition of what we call false mysticism. If dead orthodoxy overrates the value of doctrine, false mysticism undervalues sound knowledge of the truth altogether. If the intellectual church is not sufficiently emphasizing the life of the Spirit and mystical communion, the church that is mystically inclined places all the emphasis on the subjective experience of the soul. The mystical element is there, exists, in fact, in an abundant measure. And many in the church can testify of the good times they experience with the Savior. But this mystic life is from the start not guided by the objective testimony of the Word. Such a congregation makes the experience of its members the test and guide of all spiritual life. She is in danger of running wild with devotion. And if it continues and develops, she will attach significance to all kinds of feelings and sentiments, perhaps even to visions and dreams. And finally, being cut loose from the Word of God, she becomes a fit object of Satan's seductive influence, exposed to any and every error of the kingdom of darkness. And I think a clear tendency towards this false and dangerous form of mysticism may be noticed in the church of Thyatira.

Let us notice, in the first place, that the Lord in His letter to the church of Thyatira first of all enumerates some of the most excellent qualities which a church may possibly possess. Writes He: "I know thy works, and thy love, and faith, and ministry, and patience, and that thy last works are more than the first." It is evident that the term *works* in the first part of this description must be taken in the general sense of the word, as referring not merely to external works of faith, but just as well to the internal spiritual condition of the church, while this all-comprehensive term is further analysed and specified in the words "thy love and faith and ministry and patience." The meaning therefore is: I know thy works, namely, thy love and faith and ministry and patience. The church, according to this description, was in an enviable condition. Notice, however, from the start, that love is mentioned first: not because love is first, for that is not the case. Love in the sense in which it evidently occurs in the text is not the root of our spiritual life, but faith is. It is by faith that we are grafted into Christ, by faith that we draw from Him the treasure of our salvation, by faith that we grow in the knowledge and grace of our Lord. Not love is the root of faith but faith is the root also of love. And the latter flourishes and blooms only on the root of faith. But in this letter love is mentioned first because it was the

most apparent, the most eminent, the most prominent quality of the church in Thyatira. It was a congregation overflowing with real, warm, spiritual love of the Lord—exactly the opposite of the church in Ephesus. In Ephesus love was wanting to a large extent; in Thyatira it is abundant. In Ephesus, I think, one could be found only with difficulty that would consciously speak of the love of Jesus; here in Thyatira almost every member would be able to give a testimony in a prayer meeting. There, in Ephesus, the hearts were cold; here in Thyatira they were glowing with ardent love. Surely, there was also faith. For how otherwise could love exist? But faith is mentioned in the second place. The congregation was characterized not so much by the firm strength of conscious faith as by the attractive warmth of true and ardent love. This also became manifest in their actual life. It was again love, revealing itself in works, that appeared in the foreground. For in the text their ministry is mentioned first of all. This term *ministry* may be taken in a general sense, as applied to all kinds of service in the kingdom. All the members in Thyatira exerted themselves to do something for the kingdom of God. I imagine that if anyone was taken sick in the church, the angel would have to be on the alert if he desired to be the first one that called on that sick person. If anyone was in suffering or want, the church was sure to know it, and all would help to alleviate the suffering, or provide in case of need. The ladies of the church perhaps often came together in the afternoon, not to gossip or expose the sins and weaknesses of the brethren and sisters, but to work for the relief of the poor,—if not in their own church, then for the benefit of the poor in other parts of the church. All this they performed from the motive of love, not in order to be seen by men and receive the praise of the world,—for also they were subject to reproach and malevolent slander. But with patience they bore and labored and ministered in the kingdom of God. Nor were they in a condition of gradual degeneration. On the contrary, the congregation was spiritually growing, increasing in their love and faith and ministry and patience. For the Lord testifies concerning them that their last works were more than the first. Indeed a beautiful picture this aspect of the congregation presents to our view. It is perhaps not a picture that necessarily impresses one by its strength of features or staunchness of expression, but one that is attractive because of its sweetness, and that appeals because of its beauty.

But there is another side to this picture, a side which is as horrible and repulsive as the former was attractive and beautiful. The Lord turns this side to our view when He continues in His letter: "But I have against thee that thou sufferest the woman Jezebel, who calleth herself a prophetess; and she teacheth and seduceth my servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed to idols." These words reveal the existence in the church of Thyatira of a most horrible heresy that had already obtained a foothold and was evidently gaining ground. There is no reason to conceive of this fornication and eating of things sacrificed to idols in any

other than the literal sense of the word, especially since it is a well-known fact that immoral practices, sometimes adultery of the worst sort, was intimately connected with idolatry in those times, especially in connection with the sacrificial feasts. And hence, in this congregation, so filled with love and so busy in the ministry of the kingdom, presenting such an attractive and sweet picture, we meet with one of the worst forms of degeneration conceivable in the church of Christ. The impression is, in fact, that at this time there were already a comparatively large number that lived in open adultery, and participated in the heathen sacrificial feasts. And what is far worse, this departure from the way of sanctification was evidently defended by an appeal to principle. Clearly, in the church of Thyatira we meet once more with the Nicolaitanes, people who boasted in wanton profanity that it mattered not at all how the Christian lived here upon earth, Christians who sinned that grace might abound the more. The old Adam was doomed to destruction anyway; and Christ had fulfilled the law. The argument that was adduced to defend such a life in sin was, as we shall see presently, that a descent into the very depths of Satan caused the child of God to appreciate the glory of Christ's gracious deliverance all the more. But in reality the protagonists of this view made of their so-called Christian liberty a pretext for the flesh. And therefore, there is no question about it: the church of Thyatira, viewed from this angle, offered as horrible an aspect as the first view was sweet and attractive.

You remark, perhaps, that this recalls to our mind exactly the condition of the church in Pergamos. There too these evil Nicolaitanes were found. And there, as here, they were allowed to exert their evil influence upon the church without being disciplined. And in so far you are correct. But there was nevertheless an important difference between the two congregations with respect to the reason why these dangerous heretics were allowed in the church, and tolerated. In Pergamos it is a case of mere laxity in discipline. We are simply told that the Nicolaitanes existed in that church, and that they had not been disturbed before the Lord addressed His letter to them. That they were allowed to teach and to seduce others we do not read. But this is entirely different in the church of Thyatira. Notice, in the first place, that in Thyatira the propagator who disseminated the seed of this horrible heresy was a woman, Jezebel. There is no reason to allegorize and make this woman a fictitious character, symbolizing something entirely different, though the name calls to our mind one of the most despicable female characters of the Old Testament. No, there was a real woman in the church of Thyatira. And we receive the impression that she was allowed to teach her contemptible doctrine regardless of the fact that the woman was not allowed to teach in the church, but was enjoined to be silent. Regardless of the further fact that this particular woman taught a most horrible doctrine, seduced many of the servants of God from the path of righteousness, this Jezebel was nevertheless allowed to teach. If we add to this fact that her teaching is character-

ized as a sort of mystic gnosticism by the words that evidently designate the slogan of her and of all that followed after her, "who know the deep things of Satan," I can suggest but one possible explanation of this toleration on the part of the Thyatiran church: she was mystically inclined, and was in danger of severing her beautiful spiritual life from the infallible Word of God.

If I may be allowed to cast a modern hue over the ancient church, and present to you in a concrete picture my conception of the congregation in Thyatira, I would offer the following. It is Wednesday evening. The church holds midweek prayer meeting. Let us attend one of these. The angel of the church opens with a fervent prayer, and offers a few words of introduction glowing with the love of his heart toward the Lord Jesus. He speaks of it, how in the past few days he realized his sinful condition, but also how clearly he had experienced the all-sufficiency of the grace of Jesus Christ. Speaking evidently with all his heart in it and with tears of gratitude glistening in his eyes, he praises the Lord for the abundance of His grace. After him an old man arises, who also testifies in the same manner. Of years ago he speaks, when first he became acquainted with the gospel of redemption. And he emphasizes that this gospel has been sweet unto his soul, a power of love ever since. A third, and a fourth, and a fifth give their testimonies. And all witness of the personal participation in the grace of Christ Jesus and of their love to Him. But finally a strange figure attracts our attention. It is a woman of a weird and repulsive appearance. Her large, protruding eyes, sensuous lips, and morbid complexion witness of a life of sin and dissipation. She too speaks. And with a voice that sounds as if it comes from the nether world, she tells the congregation of a vision she had in the by-gone night, and how the Lord appeared to her to reveal His truth in a dream. For she claims to be a prophetess. In her dream, so she continues, the Lord showed unto her the horrible depths of Satan, the abyss of sin and iniquity. And as they both stood on the brink of that dark and horrible abyss, the Lord said unto her: "If anyone would truly taste my grace and infinite mercy, he must actually descend into these depths, and learn to know them by experience. For the more he is able to realize the depths of Satan by actual experience, the more he will be in a condition to appreciate my salvation." She still continues to explain that she has personally obeyed, that she did descend into those depths of Satan. She committed fornication. She feasted with the heathen in their sacrificial meals. She subjected her body to the vilest service of sin. And she concludes by testifying that to her there was a great blessing in this descent into the abyss of sin. For the more clearly she realized the awful depths from which the grace of Christ redeemed and delivered her, the more fully could she gratefully appreciate the wonders of His mercy. Thus this instrument of the devil speaks in the midst of the congregation. But what now does the congregation do? Does she cast this vile woman out, admonishing her to repent of her horrible sin?

On the contrary, she listens. She is silent. She admits the possibility that this woman is actually a prophetess, though her speech directly contradicts the objective revelation of the Word of God. And many even follow her, and in harmony with her teaching descend into the depths of Satan. Many servants of the Lord are seduced by her teaching. How must this be explained? How is it possible that this ardent little congregation of Thyatira listens patiently to the dark testimony of this instrument of hell? In but one way: this sweet and lovable little church had gradually forgotten to apply the objective standard of God's revelation, and allowed personal experience to be the chief criterion of the truth. If they had at all made an attempt to apply the test of the Word of God to the speech and life of this woman Jezebel, they would have detected her heresy immediately, and cast her out if she would not repent. But they are inclined to false mysticism. And Satan, aware of this tendency in the congregation, employs a woman, who largely lives by intuition, is more easily inclined to drift away on subjective feeling and experience, and of a stronger and more ardent emotional nature than man, to appeal to the mystic tendency in the church of Thyatira, in order to seduce her from the truth. For the same reason Scripture calls this woman Jezebel, which may be considered a symbolic name, to remind the church of her real nature. For even as Jezebel seduced the people of God of the old dispensation to the service of Baal, so does this woman lead the people of Thyatira astray in paths of fornication and vilest sin.

In short, we discover in the congregation of Thyatira a church with a tendency to false mysticism, the church that is strong in warm devotional life, but that has enthroned personal experience as the criterion for the truth. Frequently this aspect of the church has become prominent in history. In the Middle Ages, when the death chill of scholasticism and Roman Catholicism began to cause a reaction, this mystic tendency became manifest before long. At the time of the Reformation there also was a mystic strain mingled with the otherwise healthy movement of Protestantism. After the dead orthodoxy of the eighteenth century had laid exclusive stress on cold and dead orthodoxy, the same inclination became manifest. And every time, when the church has passed through a period of intellectualism, the right of the more emotional and mystic element of our religion to assert itself is maintained, and by reaction the church swings to the opposite extreme of false mysticism. And just as often this mystic strain became the occasion for the flesh, and ended in sin and dissipation, simply because of its licentious separation from the objective testimony of the Word of God. And therefore the church should be on her guard against both extremes. She should watch against the danger of cold intellectualism, but at the same time refuse to enthrone subjective experience as supreme lord. Our personal experience must be subjected constantly to the test of the Word of God. And if anyone would experience anything not in harmony with that objective

revelation, he should draw the conclusion that it is of the evil one. And again, if on the basis of his experience any member would spread a doctrine not in harmony with the Scriptures, he should be corrected, and, if he will not repent, excommunicated without improper delay.

It is only if we bear in mind this peculiar condition of the church in Thyatira that we will also be able to discern the reason for the particular message that is sent unto her through John. Notice that the customary admonition to repent is lacking in this message. The Lord does not enjoin on the church to discipline the wicked Jezebel and her followers in order to excommunicate them if they do not repent. They would not be in a condition to obey this command. Discipline can only be exercised on the basis of the objective Word of God, and in regard to the knowledge and application of this Word the church of Thyatira was weak. They were not able to distinguish the true from the false. They lacked the power to discern and test the spirits. And for that reason the Lord Himself will mark the evil-doers in the congregation, and clearly point them out as the objects of His sore displeasure. In person He will exercise discipline Himself. He announced Himself in such terms as are suitable to reveal Himself as the One that is able to search the hearts. He is the Son of God. And especially in connection with what follows, it is plain that this appellation must serve to bring Him before the consciousness of the congregation as the omniscient one, before Whose eyes nothing is concealed. For He continues to announce Himself as the One that has eyes like a flame of fire, that possesses power to penetrate into the innermost parts of man, and scrutinize the deepest depths of a man's heart. This woman Jezebel and her followers might hide a horrible nature of sin behind a mask of piety and devotion. To Him that mask does not conceal a thing. He is able to expose to view all the darkness of sin that is hidden behind this mask of godliness. Still more: not only does He possess the power to penetrate and to know the hearts of Jezebel and her followers, but He is also able to execute terrible judgment. For His feet are like unto burnished brass. If His eyes detect iniquity, with those feet He is able to tread down the enemy and consume him. In short, the Lord announces Himself to the congregation as the omniscient and omnipotent Judge of the evil-doers in His church.

In harmony with this Self-manifestation of the Lord is the message He delivers to the congregation. He not only appears as Judge, but He will act as such in the midst of the church. And by His own judgments He intends to expose the evil-doers. "Behold," thus He speaks, "Behold, I will cast her into a bed." Behold! The Lord wants to draw the attention of the church. For it is primarily for her sake that He will come with His judgments upon the wicked. They themselves were not able to exercise proper discipline, and they allowed the wicked Jezebel to teach and to seduce the church. They were not in a condition to discern the

spirits, and lacked the courage to assert that Jezebel was not a prophetess of the Lord, but an instrument of Satan. Now the Lord will plainly expose her and reveal that she is nothing but an agent of the devil to seduce the congregation of Christ will strike the woman first of all. Her case is hopeless. Hence, "Behold, I will cast her into a bed." The judgment of Christ will strike the woman first of all. Her case is hopeless. She has descended into the depths of Satan voluntarily and consciously so often that she will come to repentance no more. And therefore, the measure of her iniquity is full, and the time for judgment is come. That the Lord will cast her into a bed must, of course, not be understood as if He would cause her to be an instrument of adultery still more. He will not cast her into the bed of prostitution. This she had been doing herself. But it is most natural to assume that the Lord would send unto her those horrible and repulsive diseases that are inevitably the result of a life of dissipation and prostitution. For this way the Lord would reveal by His judgment most plainly that all impurity is despised by Him, and that it is not His will that we descend into the depths of Satan that grace may abound. But also upon her children the sin of the mother would be visited. Perhaps she had many children. Perhaps they were all children of adultery. However this may be, the sin of their mother will become manifest also in them. Not as if the children were considered guilty of the sins of their mother; but, in the first place, to reveal the effects of her sin also in her children, and in the second place, to add to the severity of her own judgment. And for the children it may have been a blessing that they were killed with death. And finally, also those that have been seduced by her and that will follow in her steps, that commit adultery with her, are mentioned in this message. For them the time of repentance is not past. And therefore, their judgment is presented as conditional upon their attitude to this message. If they do not repent, the Lord will send unto them great affliction. If they continue to follow in Jezebel's steps even though they behold how the Lord despises her works, the Lord will also visit them. And no doubt also their affliction will stand in close connection with the nature of their sin. And the purpose of these judgments is that the churches may know that the Lord is He that searcheth the reins and the hearts, and that He will give to each one according to his works. Again, this avowed purpose is clearly in full harmony with the condition of the church in Thyatira. She could not test the spirits, and distinguish the true from the false, and exercise discipline wherever necessary. The Lord, Who searches the hearts, would do it for them. Again, the church of Thyatira allowed a doctrine of licentiousness to be taught in her midst, a doctrine that boldly advocated a life of sin, a descent into the dark depths of Satan, in order that grace might be more abundant. Jesus will appear as the rewarder of each one according to his works, and thus expose the devilish nature of such a heresy.

H.H.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Prophecy of Zechariah

Chapter VIII

For thus saith the Lord of hosts; as I purposed to do you evil, when your fathers provoked me to anger, saith the Lord of hosts, and I repented not; 15 so again have I purposed in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and the house of Judah. Fear ye not.

As I purposed to do you evil — The pronoun *you* signifies the same people that it indicates in the previous verse (13) to wit principally the house of Judah and the house of Israel according to the election of grace and not these houses head for head and soul for soul. For unto the people indicated are all the promises of this chapter. This people is Zion to which the Lord is returned, Jerusalem in the midst of which He will dwell, and that shall be called the city of truth, the holy mountain (3), the people that the Lord will save and bring forth from the four compasses of the earth and that will be unto Him for a people and to whom He will be for a God in truth and in righteousness (7, 8).

The Lord purposed to do this people, the house of Judah and the house of Israel, evil. *And I repented not* — What the Lord thought, purposed, He also performed. He led the house of Judah into the captivity of the exile and scattered the house of Israel among the nations. The Lord had done His people this evil when, that is, because, the fathers had provoked Him to anger. In the previous chapter our prophet has much to say about these fathers. The word of the Lord had come also to these fathers, commanding them to execute true judgment, show mercy and compassion to their brethren, oppress not the widow, the fatherless, the stranger and the poor, and not imagine in their heart the evil against their brethren. But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. And they made their hearts like an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law and the word which the Lord sent by His Spirit and His prophets. Thus they refused to execute true judgment, oppressed the defenseless and plotted the ruin of their brethren. It is plain that by these fathers must be understood the reprobated in the generations of the people of Israel. The law entered in at Sinai and sin abounded in the lives of these fathers. With these apostates our prophet places the people indicated by the pronoun *you*, the people that the Lord will save and that shall be a blessing, in juxtaposition. The latter, therefore, are principally the true people of God "that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets" (verse 9 of chapter 8), thus in the first instance the true church contemporary with Zechariah and then this church as representing principally

the true Israel of all ages. On account of the abominations of the reprobated Israel, the fathers, the Lord had done also the true people of God that evil — He had led also them into the captivity of the exile and scattered them among the nations. The exile had taken place some ninety years previous to the time of the appearance of Zechariah on the scene and it was almost two hundred years previous to this time that the ten tribes had been dispersed among the nations. What it means is that all the people of God, the true church, contemporary with our prophet, had been born in exile or in the dispersion and that the vast majority of them were still scattered among the nations. This evil the Lord had done also the people of God, when the apostates had filled up their measure of iniquity. But hereby the Lord did His true people no injustice. For, though in principle true children of God, they were sinful men, by nature no better than the others, and, therefore, they, too, in so far as they were sinful, had helped to fill up that measure. Yet there was a difference. They, certainly, did not revel in gross wickedness as did their apostate brethren, but in principle their delight was in the law of the Lord. Yet they were sinful men, contaminated with the abominations of the apostates in whose midst they had dwelt. And, therefore, to chastize them in His love the Lord laid that stroke also upon them. He scattered them, too, among the nations whom they knew not, and led them into the captivity of the Babylonian exile. And here He gave them grace to repent. If we want to know how this people reacted toward these chastisements of God, we must read the Lamentations. Identifying Himself with this people, Jeremiah voices all the thoughts of their heart.

The fathers provoked God to anger. This cannot mean that man determines God's mental states. God cannot be acted upon, influenced or coerced by the creature. He does all *His* goodpleasure. It was according to His counsel that the fathers apostatized from God. That they provoked Him to anger by their abominations can, therefore, only mean that as impelled by His own infinite goodness He willed that His anger kindled at the thought and sight of their wickedness determinedly willed by Him. Surely, being Holy, God could not will the contrary. With sin before His eye as set there by Himself, His whole being is ablaze with a fierce indignation, wherefore He is also a consuming fire unto all such not hidden in Christ.

And I repented not — this was not owing to the fact that for God repentance is impossible. He is known from the Scriptures to have repented more than once. It repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth and it grieved Him at His heart, Gen. 6:6. The Lord repented of the evil that He said (*not thought* as the versions have it) to do unto His people Israel, because of their having made them gods of gold, Ex. 32:14. The Lord repented that He had made Saul king of Israel, I Sam. 15:35. Yes, God repented. Not that like man he changed His mind with regard to a

past or intended action because it was a mistake or would be a mistake should the action be carried out. God makes no mistakes. He made no mistake when He made man on the earth. The counsel of His will according to which He works all things is the embodiment of perfect and infinite wisdom. And He does all His good pleasure. For there is no limit to His power. And the creature exists by His will. Hence nothing stands in His way, can prevent God. He, therefore, keeps Himself to His own counsels always. And there is every reason, certainly, why He should. What, then, is God's repentance? We learn from the Scriptures that its substance is divine grief. This is its sole element. It grieved God at His heart, so we read, that He had made man upon the earth, because, according to His own sovereign determination, the wickedness of man was great upon the earth. What grieved Him was man's wickedness. And that was His repentance, that grief and the action that it caused Him to take. He destroyed man from the face of the earth.

What God said He would do unto His people — He said to Moses to leave Him alone that He might destroy them — grieved Him at His heart, and with reason. He had chosen that people in Christ. It, therefore, had the love of His heart. And accordingly, the sole reason He said what He did was to prompt Moses to pray for them.

It grieved God that He had made Saul king of Israel, because, again according to His sovereign determination, Saul was self-willed and disobedient. What grieved Him is Saul's disobedience. And, therefore, He removed him to make way for David.

During the reign of David the Lord sent pestilence upon Israel and there died many people. And then we read, "And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord repented Him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed His people, It is enough" (II Sam. 24:16). The evil that the Lord was doing His people grieved Him. And, therefore, He took action. He bade the destroying angel to stay his hand.

If according to the Scriptures God repents, Holy Writ also teaches that He does not repent. So in the passage under consideration. The Lord purposed to do His people evil and He repented not. The Lord again purposed to do His people, the house of Judah and the house of Israel, well, and He repented not. So we read here. So then, II Sam. 24:16 states that the Lord repented Him of the evil, while here it is said that the Lord purposed to do His people evil and that He repented not. We will see that there is no conflict, if we only take notice of what this passage asserts, namely that the Lord thought, purposed, resolved to do His people evil and repented not. The Lord always repents of the evil that He does His people. Their sufferings always grieve Him. And, therefore, He shall also deliver them one day out of all their troubles. That He nevertheless does them evil is always for a wise and benevolent purpose,

namely to save them by His chastisements. Hence, His purpose to do them evil is an excellent resolution and His doing them evil an excellent work as are all His purposes and works. His purposes do not grieve Him. He does not repent of His counsel. How could He, if it is the implication of the infinite wisdom of God?

In the light of these observations we can lay hold on the message in the Scripture passage under consideration. As the Lord thought, purposed to do the house of Judah and the house of Israel evil, when the fathers provoked Him to anger, and He repented not, so He again purposed to do Jerusalem and the house of Judah well. The idea is this: If the Lord did not repent of His purpose to do His people evil, when the fathers provoked Him to anger, He will not, surely, repent of His purpose to do His people well, now that by His mercy they have repented and again run the way of His commands, and build His house. Surely He will do them well, enter their lives with His blessings and thereby provide them with the tokens that He has forgiven them for Christ's sake. So, let them not fear. This is here the message. For, though the law entered in, the saints of the first covenant did not live by the works of the law any more than do we of the new covenant. They, too, lived only by the mercies of Christ. They were new creatures in Christ. And so their faith and obedience and good will to repent were gifts worked in them by Christ and not conditions on which God would again do them well. How could such a view be harmonized with the Gospel of the surrounding verses, with the Gospel that the Lord will return to Zion and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and that the city shall be called a city of truth and the holy mountain (3), and with the Gospel that the Lord will save them, and that they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem (7)?

To lead His people to repentance the Lord was resolved to do them evil. This with Him was an abiding resolution of which He did not repent. And when by His mercy they repented, He was resolved to do them well. This, too, was an abiding resolution with Him of which He did not repent. For if He should repent of these thoughts or purposes, His people would not be saved but with the wicked would perish in their sins.

As He did evil unto the house of Judah and unto the house of Israel, so he will again do well unto Jerusalem and unto the house of Judah. But not also unto the house of Israel? Surely, yes. The house of Judah and the house of Israel, Jerusalem, Zion, the mountain of Jehovah are names and expressions indicating the same entity, namely the church of the elect. (See on 8:1, 2.)

16. *There are the things which ye shall do; speak truth, each to his neighbor; truth and judgment of peace judge ye in your gates.* 17. *And let none of you devise the evil against His neighbor in your hearts, and love not an oath of falsehood; for all these are what I hate, saith the Lord.*

Speak truth — Without truthfulness among its members

the community of God's people could not prosper. *Truth judge* is equivalent to give true and righteous judgment. *Judgment of peace* is an administration of judgment that promotes peace. *To devise evil against the neighbor in the heart* is to be planning his ruin. *And to love an oath of falsehood* is to be always disposed and ready to work his ruin. He who is guilty of these things, hates. For hate is the will to destroy. They shall not hate but love one another. Such has been the word of the Lord to all the generations of the past (see on 7:9, 10). It is the second of the two commandments on which hang all the law and the prophets; the other, the great one, being "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul and with all thy mind and with all thy strength. But how shall they love? The Lord shall save them (7). He shall put His laws in the mind of the house of Israel and the house of Judah and write them in their hearts (Heb. 8:10). And the fruit of this work of God in them is that they love peace and truth.

This good the Lord will do unto the house of Judah and the house of Israel, His chosen people. But there is also the carnal Israel in this post-exilic community, wicked men that walk in all the abominations of their reprobated fathers. They execute no true judgment. They show no mercy and compassion. They are cruel and ruthless men. They oppress the widow and the fatherless, the stranger and the poor. They imagine the evil against their brethren and love the oath of falseness. At the same time they want to appear righteous before men. And so, even while they plunder the houses of the widows, they fast and weep and bring sacrifices unto the Lord; they spread forth their hands and make many prayers, the hypocrites; they compass land and sea to make one proselyte, swear by the altar, pay tithes and mint and anise and cummin, build the tombs of the prophets, garnished the sepulchres of the righteous and say that if they had been in the days of their fathers, they would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. But "*all these things are things that I hate, saith the Lord*. And, therefore, their house—the house of this carnal, reprobated Israel—was left unto them desolate. Jerusalem that killed the prophets, and for which God was not jealous but against which His wrath burned with great fury, was destroyed, never to be rehabilitated, when the ascended Christ came in judgment over her.

8. *And the word of Jehovah came to me, saying, 19. Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the fast of the fourth (month), and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall become pleasure and joy to the house of Judah and cheerful feasts; but love ye truth and peace.*

The fast of the fourth month—The fast kept in commemoration of the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar on the ninth day of the fourth month (Jer. 39:2; 52:7). *Fifth, seventh*—see on 7:4. *Tenth*—A fast held to com-

memorate the beginning of the siege of the tenth day of the tenth month (Jer. 39:1; II Kings 25:1).

Must these fasts still be observed? Must we still weep? Such was the question of the deputies from Bethel that they had put to the priests and the prophets. What we have here is the Lord's answer. These fasts shall become festivities. Weeping shall be changed into rejoicing. For if the Lord was purposed to do the house of Israel and the house of Judah evil, He is again purposed to do Jerusalem and the house of Judah well. He is returned to Jerusalem and will dwell in the midst of her, and the city shall be called the city of truth. And He shall save His people from every quarter, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. And they shall be unto Him for a people, and He shall be unto them for a God. This is the promise. And until it is performed, until the church appears with Christ in glory, God's believing people shall and do weep. For in this life they have so much to weep about. The chief cause of grief is their painful awareness that they still sin continually, that what they would they do not, and that what they hate, that they do. But God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain. For the former things shall pass away (Rev. 21:3, 4). Alas, if a man does not now weep—weep for his sins! He shall be cast into outer darkness, where he shall weep everlastingly. But blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

But love ye truth and peace—Let not a man seek the evil of his neighbor. Let him not love the oath of falseness. For all these things the Lord hates.

G. M. O.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On November 23, 1956, our dear parents

MR. and MRS. MENKO FLIKKEMA

celebrated their 40th wedding day anniversary.

We as children and grandchildren extend our hearty congratulation and are grateful to God for what He has given us through them. May we ever follow their example and walk in the fear of the Lord. Trusting that His blessings will continue to rest upon them and supply them in all their daily need.

Their grateful children:

Mr. and Mrs. John Flikkema
Mr. and Mrs. George Flikkema
Mr. and Mrs. Pierre Hoekema
Mr. and Mrs. Albert Flikkema
Mr. and Mrs. Peter Kim
Mr. and Mrs. Garret Flikkema
Mr. and Mrs. Dave Hoekema
Mr. and Mrs. Phillip Flikkema
Mr. and Mrs. Jake Dyksterhouse
Twenty-two grandchildren.

IN HIS FEAR

Giving In His Fear

(5)

The Scriptures have a way of making us feel very uncomfortable at times.

That is to be expected!

For, the Scriptures are the truth; and we, by nature, live out of the principle of the lie.

The Scriptures, therefore, as the Word of God, always oppose us as we are by nature and as we behave out of that principle of the lie.

When we have made ourselves feel quite comfortable and satisfied with ourselves, and others round about us are singing our praises, the Scriptures have a way of robbing us of all that joy and comfort by exposing us for what we really are.

We go our own way as peace-loving individuals. We mind our own business. We live and let live. We pay our bills and even lend money to those that are in financial straits. We do not bother them—at least, not too much—when they cannot meet the full payment in a particular month or even for a few months in succession. Men praise us for being patient, generous, lenient with those who are financially hard pressed and kind.

Then the Word of God on the printed page leaps out at us: "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others," Philippians 2:4.

At first we find comfort in assuring ourselves that the text surely cannot mean that we should stick our noses into our neighbour's business. His business is his own business; and my business is my own business. I do not want others poking into my affairs: how much I make, what I am worth, whether I can make ends meet, how much I am in debt; and I am sure that my neighbour feels the same way about these things.

But Scripture has a way of not letting us go and of appearing and reappearing in our thoughts. We begin to ask ourselves whether we have stood squarely before the text when we have so quickly given our answer to its command. We have to admit that an uncomfortable feeling still remains.

With Cain even we are inclined—at least in our hearts—to say, "Am I my brother's keeper?" when the truth of the text will not let us go. We may not dare to use these words of reprobate, murderous, profane Cain. But we may put it in our own language. We may, for example, say, "Let someone else do it this time."

O, yes, we are our brother's keeper, even though we did help him last time. What is more we are our neighbour's keeper. We must mind his things as well as the brother's and our own things.

The idea is, of course, that we are concerned with his

well-being and consider it to be our duty to help him whenever and as much as we can. We are not to stick our noses in his business and personal affairs. But as God brings him across our path we are to look out for his good as well as for our own. We may note that these words of Paul are spoken after he had given commandment to the Philippians with these words, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves," Philippians 2:3. To look at or on the things of others, then, does not mean that we do so for our own benefit, for our own curiosity or for our own protection and preservation. On the contrary, the whole purpose must be the good of the neighbour. It must be done in love and with a willingness to serve him.

That is a thing we may bear in mind at this season when on every side we are being urged to give to this institution that cares for the mentally sick, to that organization that seeks to provide from our surplus the daily bread of those that face the peril of starvation through one cause or another, to this society that helps those who by no deed of their own find themselves in a "disaster" area and desperately in need of that which others can supply.

It is easy to dismiss the whole plea with the sentiment of Cain expressed in our own words: "I gave last year. Let someone else do it now."

When we give in His fear, we do not talk that way.

He who gives in His fear to his neighbor is a man who also in His fear heeds the Word of God and looks on the things of others.

What a different world this would be if men would practice that truth which Paul gave to the Philippians! What a different relationship there would be between capital and labor! And, by the way, this is the Scriptural approach to the problem. Let Capital look at the things of Labor and let Labor look at the things of Capital! That is a far cry from the modern union and its strike, boycott and violence. Those are not Scriptural. But because Capital has not been looking at the things of Labor, we have the mess wherein we find ourselves today with strikes followed by wage increases followed by price raises which induce more strikes and a vicious circle that gets us nowhere unless it be into a greater mess in the future. And because Labor will not look at the things of Capital this ceaseless trouble and unrest goes on and on. There is only one way out. That is the way pointed out in the Scriptures.

What a different world it would be if the employer whose profits have been soaring and who each year is able to "salt away" a bigger return for his money, would look at the things of his employees and share his profits with them rather than to sit back smugly in his office holding his breath lest the door open for one of his employees to enter and plead for a raise since he cannot make ends meet with the cost of living continually rising! Then, even, rather than to look at the things of his employee when he brings them to his attention, he will all too quickly look at his

Handwritten calculations in the top right corner:

$$\begin{array}{r} 16\frac{1}{2} \\ 22 \\ \hline 38 \\ 14 \\ \hline 52 \\ 15 \\ \hline 38 \\ 3 \\ \hline 41 \end{array}$$
$$\begin{array}{r} 74 \\ 28 \\ 38 \\ \hline 224 \\ 84 \\ \hline 308 \end{array}$$

own things and cry about his expenses and costs and the like; while actually he was able to invest in another industry besides his own, was able with his profits to buy another store or another farm to rent out and so insure even more income for himself. And the hard pressed employee is sent away with the added anxiety that for his request he may be the first to lose his job.

What a different situation it would be if men did not have to complain before they were heard by their employers! It is a sad commentary on our life if the only way we can get one to look at our things is that we first have to let out a long, mournful wail. The Word of God does not say, "Listen to the complaints of others"; it says, "Look on the things of others."

The same, of course, holds true for the employee. He must look at the things of his employer and do the best he can with his materials, machines and the like. He has no excuse for unfaithfulness. He should give of his time and talents to his employer in His fear. The employer must give wages in His fear; but the employee must give service in His fear.

And of the poor whom we always have with us, what we said a moment ago stands. We must give for their support in His fear. We must look to the things of these, esteeming them better than self and not despising them because of their lack of material things.

He who gives to the poor in His fear gives for the sake of giving. He gives in love. He gives not to receive but to be of service with what God has given him for service. He looks on the things of others in order to be helpful when and where he can, to serve God when and where he can with what God has given him for this very purpose.

He who gives in his fear does not do so in a haughty, proud attitude over against those whom he serves. No, he serves them; and though he has had much more of this world's goods bestowed upon him than the man whom he befriends he, in his deed of charity, functions as a servant to that poverty stricken neighbour whom he helps. He does not give through strife or vainglory; but with lowliness of mind esteeming others better than self. And he gives not to receive—not even to receive praise of men—but in order to serve God.

While we are so busy in the weeks that lie ahead planning and even lavishly spending for Christmas presents for our own family, let us not look only on our own things but also on the things of others. As by mail and personal contact the things of others are brought to our attention and we are requested to contribute, let us look to these things and give in His fear. In His fear we cannot be selfish, greedy and self-centered. That we are by nature. That man became when, through the lie of Satan, he took his eye off God, upon Whom it was centered by his very creation in God's image, to fix it upon himself by considering and yielding to the temptation to take God's place and to be like Him.

That is why, as we said a moment ago, we pride ourselves in being peaceloving individuals. That is the whole trouble: our individualism, which is only a fancy name for self-centeredness. We think no farther than ourselves—and our families because they touch us. To look upon the things of others that are not related to us; to see our calling in regard to those who have no legal or blood ties with us is not the natural thing for us. By nature we always ask with Eve, "what good will it do *me*?"

But Jesus tells us that all such behaviour brings down the everlasting wrath of God. He tells us that inasmuch as we have looked at the things of others and given them clothing when they were naked, food when they were hungry, visited them when they were in prison, we have done it unto Him. And inasmuch as we did not do it to those whom God brought across our path and whom we knew to be in such peril and straits, we refused to do it to Him.

Our first obligation is to maintain the gospel and the schools but a calling which we likewise may not shirk is that of giving in His fear to the poor and needy. That answer which we quoted before from the Heidelberg Catechism concerning the requirement of the fourth commandment makes that plain. We read, "First that the ministry of the gospel and the schools be maintained; and that I . . . contribute to the relief of the poor as becomes a christian." Such language leaves no doubt as to our calling. It becomes a christian to contribute to the relief of the poor.

The answer quoted above presents it as something that we do on the Sabbath in our own local congregation. But it by no means forbids or ignores the calling we have to contribute to other causes than those of the local deaconate for the relief of the poor in the congregation or denomination. This same idea of contributing to the relief of the poor is presented in the answer in regard to the meaning of the eighth commandment: ". . . that I faithfully labor, so that I may be able to relieve the needy." The labor is during the week and contributions during the week and apart from the deaconate are also our calling whenever and wherever we see the need.

The world is agitating in our land for a four-day work week—the same pay but fewer hours of work. Why? Because men are more and more manifesting the truth of Paul's words to Timothy that men will become lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. A pleasure mad world must make a living but have time for more satisfaction of the lusts and pleasure. Quite a radical idea in such a world that men work—as God said in the Ten Commandments, six days a week—that fifth or even part of those fifth and sixth days anyway and use the "overtime" pay for the maintenance of the gospel and the schools and to provide for the relief of the needy. When that four-day work-week is realized, few will even consider working a part of the fifth day for the maintenance of the gospel and for those who cannot work or have no work and are needy. But would you say that those who do are not living and giving in His fear? And what do you think God would say of such?

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)

"Whatever may be thought of the popes of earlier times," says a certain writer, "they always had great interests in view: the care of oppressed religion, the conflict with heathenism, the spread of Christianity among the northern nations, the founding of an independent hierarchy. It belongs to the dignity of human existence to aim at and to execute something great; this tendency the popes kept in upward motion."

This commendation of the earlier popes, though by no means applicable to all, is eminently true of the one who stands at the beginning of our period.

GREGORY THE FIRST, or THE GREAT, the last of the Latin fathers and the first of the popes, connects the ancient with the mediaeval church, the Graeco-Roman with the Roman-Germanic type of Christianity. He is one of the best representatives of mediaeval Catholicism: monastic, ascetic, devout and superstitious; hierachical, haughty, and ambitious, yet humble before God; indifferent, if not hostile, to classical and secular culture, but friendly to sacred and ecclesiastical learning; just, humane, and liberal to ostentation; full of missionary zeal in the interest of Christianity and the Roman see, which to his mind were inseparably connected. He combined great executive ability with untiring industry, and amid all his official cares he never forgot the claims of personal piety. In genius he was surpassed by Leo I, Gregory VII, Innocent III; but as a man and as a Christian he ranks with the purest and most useful of the popes. Goodness is the highest kind of greatness, and the church has done right in according the title of the Great to him rather than to other popes of superior intellectual power.

The times of his pontificate, (A.D. Sept. 3, 590 to March 12, 604) were full of trouble, and required just a man of his training and character. Italy, from a Gothic kingdom, had become a province of the Byzantine empire, but was exhausted by war and overrun by the savage Lombards, who were still heathen or Arian heretics, and burned churches, slew ecclesiastics, robbed monasteries, violated nuns, reduced cultivated fields into a wilderness. Rome was constantly exposed to plunder, and wasted by pestilence and famine. All Europe was in a chaotic state, and bordering on anarchy. Serious men, and Gregory himself, thought that the end of the world was near at hand. "What is it," says he in one of his sermons, "that can at this time delight us in this world? Everywhere we see tribulation, everywhere we hear lamentation. The cities are destroyed, the castles torn down, the

fields laid waste, the land made desolate. Villages are empty, few inhabitants remain in the cities, and even these poor remnants of humanity are daily cut down. The scourge of celestial justice does not cease, because no repentance takes place under the scourge. We see how some are carried into captivity, others mutilated, others slain. What is it, brethren, that can make us contented with this life? If we love such a world, we love not our joys, but our wounds. We see what has become of her who was once the mistress of the world. . . . Let us then heartily despise the present world and imitate the works of the pious as well as we can."

Gregory was born about A.D. 540, from an old and wealthy senatorial (the Anician) family of Rome, and educated for the service of the government. He became acquainted with Latin literature, studied Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, but was ignorant of Greek. His mother Sylvia, after the death of Gordianus, her husband, entered a convent, and so excelled in sanctity that she was canonized. The Greek emperor Justin appointed him to the highest civil office in Rome, that of imperial prefect (574). But soon afterwards he broke with the world, changed the palace of his father near Rome into a convent in honor of St. Andrew, and became himself a monk in it, afterwards abbot. He founded besides six convents in Sicily, and bestowed his remaining wealth on the poor. He lived in the strictest abstinence, and undermined his health by ascetic excesses. Nevertheless he looked back upon this time as the happiest of his life.

Pope Pelagius II made him one of the seven deacons of the Roman Church, and sent him as ambassador or nuntius to the court of Constantinople (579). His political training and executive ability fitted him eminently for this post. He returned in 585, and was appointed abbot of his convent, but employed also for important public business.

It was during his monastic period (either before or, more probably, after his return from Constantinople) that his missionary zeal was kindled, by an incident on the slave market, in behalf of the Anglo-Saxons. The result (as recorded in a previous chapter) was the conversion of England and the extension of the jurisdiction of the Roman see, during his pontificate. This is the greatest event of that age, and the brightest jewel in his crown. Like a Christian Caesar, he re-conquered that fair island by an army of thirty monks, marching under the sign of the cross.

In 590 Gregory was elected pope by the unanimous voice of the clergy, the senate, and the people, notwithstanding his strong remonstrance, and confirmed by his temporal sovereign, the Byzantine emperor Mauricius, Monasticism, for the first time, ascended the papal throne. Hereafter till his death he devoted all his energies to the interests of the holy see and the eternal city, in the firm consciousness of being the successor of St. Peter and the vicar of Christ. He continued the austere simplicity of monastic life, surrounded himself with monks, made them bishops and legated, confirmed the rule of St. Benedict at a council of Rome, guaranteed the liberty and property of convents, and by his example and

influence rendered signal services to the monastic order. He was unbounded in his charities to the poor. Three thousand virgins, impoverished nobles and matrons received without a blush alms from his hands. He sent food from his table to the hungry before he sat down for his frugal meal. He interposed continually in favor of injured widows and orphans. He redeemed slaves and captives, and sanctioned the sale of consecrated vessels for objects of charity.

Gregory began his administration with a public act of humiliation on account of the plague which had cost the life of his predecessor. Seven processions traversed the streets for three days with prayers and hymns; but the plague continued to ravage, and demanded eighty victims during the procession. The later legend made it the means of staying the calamity, in consequence of the appearance of the archangel Michael putting back the drawn sword into its sheath over the Mausoleum of Hadrian, since called the Castle of St. Angelo, and adorned by the statue of an angel.

His activity as pontiff was incessant, and is the more astonishing as he was in delicate health and often confined to bed. "For a long time," he wrote to a friend in 601, "I have been unable to rise from my bed. I am tormented by the pains of gout; a kind of fire seems to pervade my whole body: to live is pain; and I look forward to death as the only remedy." In another letter he says: "I am daily dying, but never die."

Nothing seemed too great, nothing too little for his personal care. He organized and completed the ritual of the church, gave it greater magnificence, improved the canon of the mass and the music by a new mode of chanting called after him. He preached often and effectively, deriving lessons of humility and piety from the calamities of the times, which appeared to him harbingers of the judgment-day. He protected the city of Rome against the savage and heretical Lombards. He administered the papal patrimony, which embraced large estates in the neighborhood of Rome, in Calabria, Sardinia, Corsica, Sicily, Dalmatia, and even in Gaul and Africa. He encouraged and advised missionaries. As patriarch of the West, he extended his paternal care over the churches in Italy, Gaul, Spain, and Britain, and sent the pallium to some metropolitans, yet without claiming any legal jurisdiction. He appointed, he also reprovved and deposed bishops for neglect of duty or crime. He resolutely opposed the prevalent practice of simony, and forbade the clergy to exact or accept fees for their services. He corresponded, in the interest of the church, with nobles, kings and queens in the West, with emperors and patriarchs in the East. He hailed the return of the Gothic kingdom of Spain under Reccared from the Arian heresy to the Catholic faith, which was publicly proclaimed by the Council of Toledo, May 8, 589. He wrote to the king a letter of congratulation, and exhorted him to humility, chastity, and mercy. The detested Lombards likewise cast off Arianism towards the close of his life, in consequence partly of his influence over Queen Theodelinda, a Bavarian princess, who had been reared in

the trinitarian faith. He endeavored to suppress the remnants of the Donatist schism in Africa. Uncompromising against Christian heretics and schismatics, he was a step in advance of his age in liberality towards the Jews. He censured the bishop of Terracina and the bishop of Cagliari for unjustly depriving them of their synagogues; he condemned the forcible baptism of Jews in Gaul, and declared conviction by preaching the only legitimate means of conversion; he did not scruple, however, to try the dishonest method of bribery, and he inconsistently denied the Jews the right of building new synagogues and possessing Christian slaves. He made efforts, though in vain, to check the slave-trade, which was chiefly in the hands of Jews.

After his death, the public distress, which he had labored to alleviate, culminated in a general famine, and the ungrateful populace of Rome was on the point of destroying his library, when the archdeacon Peter stayed their fury by asserting that he had seen the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove hovering above Gregory's head as he wrote his books. Hence he is represented with a dove. He was buried in St. Peter's under the altar of St. Andrew.

Bishop Bossuet thus tersely sums up the public life of Gregory: "This great pope . . . subdued the Lombards; saved Rome and Italy, though the emperors could give him no assistance; repressed the new-born pride of the patriarchs of Constantinople; enlightened the whole church by his doctrine; governed the East and the West with as much vigor as humility; and gave to the world a perfect model of ecclesiastical government."

To this Count Montalembert (likewise a Roman Catholic) adds: "It was the Benedictine order which gave to the church him whom no one would have hesitated to call the greatest of the popes, had not the same order, five centuries later, produced St. Gregory VIII. He is truly Gregory the Great, because he issued irreproachable from numberless and boundless difficulties; because he gave as a foundation to the increasing grandeur of the Holy See, the renown of his virtue, the candor of his innocence, the humble and inexhaustible tenderness of his heart."

"The pontificate of Gregory the Great," says Gibbon, "which lasted thirteen years, six months, and ten days, is one of the most edifying periods of the history of the church. His virtues, and even his faults, a singular mixture of simplicity and cunning, of pride and humility, or sense and superstition, were happily suited to his station and to the temper of the times."

H. V.

"There is no coming at the fair haven of eternal glory, without sailing through the narrow strait of repentance."

—Dyer

"No sin can be little; because there is no little God to sin against."

—Brookes

The Voice of Our Fathers

The Canons of Dordrecht

PART TWO

EXPOSITION OF THE CANONS

THIRD AND FOURTH HEADS OF DOCTRINE

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

Article 4. There remain, however, in man since the fall, the glimmerings of natural light, whereby he retains some knowledge of God, of natural things, and of the differences between good and evil, and discovers some regard for virtue, good order in society, and for maintaining an orderly external deportment. But so far is this light of nature from being sufficient to bring him to a saving knowledge of God, and to true conversion, that he is incapable of using it aright even in things natural and civil. Nay further, this light, such as it is, man in various ways renders wholly polluted, and holds it in unrighteousness, by doing which he becomes inexcusable before God.

Again we find fault with our English version of this article. For even though it may be granted that there is nothing in the translation that essentially changes the meaning of the fathers, yet there are certain fine distinctions which are lost in this translation, and which surely may be classed as inaccuracies without running the risk of being called hypercritical and technical. We can perhaps best call attention to these inaccuracies by presenting our own translation of the Latin and leaving it to the reader to make a comparison of the two. Our translation here follows:

There is indeed in man after the fall a residual light of nature, by benefit of which he retains a kind of knowledge (probably better: some ideas, concepts. The Latin here is the plural *quasdam notitias*, in distinction from the *cognitionem* used later in the article, both of which are translated "knowledge" in the English and "kennis" in the Dutch) concerning God, concerning things natural, and concerning the difference between things honorable and base, and shows a kind of regard (Latin: *studium*) for virtue and external order (Latin: *disciplina*). But so far is he from being able by this light of nature to arrive at a saving knowledge (*cognitionem*) of God and to convert himself to Him, that not even in things natural and civil does he use it aright, yea much rather, such as it is even, he in various ways contaminates it wholly, and holds it under in unrighteousness, which while he does, he is rendered inexcusable before the face of God.

It is from more than one point of view strange and surpassing reason that such an article as this should be cited in support of the theory of common grace. To borrow an expression from Calvin, a man "must be utterly beside himself" to find any support for that theory in this paragraph of our *Canons*. For in the first place, it is exactly against the Arminians' common grace theory, according to which they considered this light of nature as common grace and according

to which they made the right use of this light of nature (so-called common grace) a condition unto gaining a greater, viz., the evangelical or saving grace and salvation itself. Cf. III, IV, B, 5. But in the second place, common grace and a so-called civil good are not mentioned with so much as a breath in this article. And not only are they not mentioned, but the entire article militates against any such false conception. This can be made abundantly clear,—so clear that any honest study of the teaching of the fathers in this paragraph must needs lead either to a rejection of the theory of common grace or to a rejection of the fathers.

And yet it seems to be a rather common thing that the subject of common grace is broached in this connection, and that the attempt is made to find the common grace theory in this utterance of the Great Synod. It is well-known, of course, that the Synod of the Christian Reformed Churches in 1924 sought to support the Third Point of Common Grace by citing only the first sentence of this article, i.e., up to the 'But . . .' But there are others also, who, while they do not argue from this article to prove the theory of common grace, nevertheless look at the article through the spectacles of common grace, and who evidently feel while they do so the impossibility of the common grace theory in the light of this article. Thus, for example, Ds. J. G. Feenstra, in his "De Dordtse Leerregelen Toegelicht," begins his commentary on this article (p. 125) as follows: "We komen nu tot een *moeilijke kwestie*, waarover heel wat geschreven en gezegd is. Daarom willen wij ons strikt houden aan wat door de be-lijdenis, op grond van Gods Woord, wordt gezegd." Personally we cannot see anything so *moeilijk*, difficult, about this question. And if only the author had held himself to what is said by the confession upon the basis of God's Word, as is his announced intention, all difficulty would be avoided. But it is not long before he leaves that course, and makes a conclusion that is warranted neither by the confession nor by the Word of God, when, writing about this light of nature, he concludes: "Die overblijfselen zijn dus *resten* van Gods beeld. We hebben het beeld Gods verloren, maar overblijfselen behouden." We call this an unwarranted conclusion. For Ds. Feenstra speaks of remnants of the image of God, while neither Scripture nor the confession does this. Our fathers do not speak of the image of God in this connection whatsoever. They speak of the "light of nature." And the statement quoted above is based on the false premise that the light of nature is the same as the image of God. And while this author does not speak explicitly of common grace, he nevertheless, before he reaches the end of his comments about this article, speaks of these remnants of natural light as "*voorrechten, privileges*": "Dat licht der natuur, die overblijfselen, *resten* van het beeld Gods, zijn *voorrechten*, die God de mens gegeven heeft. Helaas maakt de natuurlijke mens daar schandelijk misbruik van." (idem, p. 127) Ds. T. Bos in his commentary on this article was also under the influence of the common grace theory, as is evident from his opening comments:

"In den laatsten tijd is het leerstuk der algemeene genade: 'Gemeene gratie' meer breedvoerig behandeld dan vroeger. Daarin is ook sprake van hetgeen in den mensch *na* den val nog overbleef van het beeld Gods, in ruimeren zin genomen. Bij de behandeling van dat onderwerp wordt door sommigen, in remonstrantschen zin, het wezenlijk onderscheid tusschen de 'algemeene' en 'bijzondere' genade weggeredeneerd, en de algemeene genade wordt verheven tot den grond en wortel der bijzondere genade, zoo dat de ontwikkeling van het eene tot het andere mogelijk wordt geacht.

"Neemt *onderschatting* van de 'gemeene gratie' het verband tusschen schepping en herschepping weg, *overschatting* miskent de noodzakelijkheid der wedergeboorte, om tot wezenlijke herstelling te komen."

Here evidently the theory of common grace is maintained, but a warning is sounded against using "common grace" in the Arminian sense, as though it can be the root and ground of "special grace."

A little farther on this, same author writes, still evidently with the theory of common grace in mind: "Toch is dat licht der natuur, in den mensch nog overgebleven, een weldaad Gods, en het maakt den mensch schuldig voor Hem, als hij het door ongerechtigheid te *onder* houdt, zoodat het zich niet in hart en wandel openbaart. Het is oorzaak dat de mensch onnatuurlijk wordt en zich tot het dierlijke verlaagt.

"Onschuldig voor God is geen mensch. Heel de wereld is verdoemelijk voor God. Wat op zichzelf een zegen was, wordt in een vloek gekeerd door moedwillig het licht dat in den mensch nog is, te verdonkeren of uit te blusschen, niet hoorende naar het geweten, dat in hem nog spreekt."

Here we find a bit of philosophy, — for philosophy it is, not Scripture, — to explain the fact that the object of common grace nevertheless falls under condemnation. The light of nature, even the residue of it, is a "weldaad Gods." It is "op zichzelf een zegen, by itself a blessing." But man changes this "blessing" into a curse by wilfully blotting out this light of nature and by not listening to his conscience, that still speaks within him. We learn then also that common grace is a kind of grace of God too that is resistible, for though God blesses, man can change that blessing into a curse.

Because of this common tendency to subvert this light of nature into a common grace of God, therefore, it is necessary that we consider this article thoroughly.

First of all, then, we face the question: what is this natural light?

The article, while it does not furnish us a formal definition of it, does give us a rather thorough description of its content. It tells us that by virtue of this natural light, or, better, light of nature, man retains some idea of and acquaintance with things concerning God, things natural, and with the difference between things honorable and things base, and shows a certain regard for virtue and external order. It tells us, in the second place, that man has but a residue of this light after the fall. This is worthy of note. The word "glimmerings," while scarcely a literal rendering of the Latin

residuum, is a rather apt expression in this connection. We are instructed not to think too highly of this natural light that is left in man after the fall, such as it is. The description of the article certainly does not leave the impression that man's natural light has only been marred a little, that it has been somewhat impeded, while he has retained by far the biggest part of it. The description of our *Canons*, on the contrary, leaves the impression that through the fall man has been stripped of even his light of nature for the most part, and has kept only a very small remnant of it, — a residue. If, then, we are inclined to think highly of those things that are accomplished by men by virtue of this little remnant of the light of nature after the fall, how tremendous must have been the light which man possessed in the state of rectitude! If we speak sometimes of "intellectual giants" who have after all only a residue of the light of nature, what a light of intellect must the first man have had in paradise! And what a flood of understanding shall enlighten us anew in the world that is to come!

As far as the idea and the contents of this light of nature are concerned, we may say, first of all, that it is by virtue of this remnant of natural light that man remains a rational, moral being even after the fall. He is a creature that can still think and will. He remains a man. His natural, human gifts, the light that he had by virtue of the fact that his nature as a creature was a human nature, — that light did not remain unaffected by the fall. But it was not lost either: he retained a residue of it. If he did not have that residue, he would not be able to act as a responsible, rational, moral creature in relation to God and man. He could not sin, for sin implies a creature that knows what he ought to do, a creature that is responsible, capable of a moral response. He could not be subject to punishment, for that is impossible in the case of a non-responsible creature. Hence, he has kept something of that light of nature. He has kept enough of it that he remains a human being, — a rational, moral, responsible creature. Although his nature was seriously afflicted through sin, it remained a *human* nature. Man did not become through the fall an irrational beast.

We must notice, however, already here that this is no question of grace or lack of grace. In fact, the truth of the matter is that those very glimmerings of natural light are a constant testimony of the wrath of God. For it was the wrath of God against sin that so consumed man that it even extended to his very nature and stripped him of a large part of his original natural gifts. And, as becomes evident in the last part of the article, the wrath of God left man with just sufficient natural light that he might be left inexcusable and might thus become the object of more divine wrath. Nay, from this point of view it might have been better if man had been totally stripped of his natural gifts. Then, at least, he would no longer have been a morally responsible creature. Then, at least, he could not become subject to a further visitation of wrath. But now he is indeed born a child of wrath. (to be continued) H.C.H.

DECENCY and ORDER

The Church and the State

The teaching of Presbyterianism regarding the Church and State is found in the original Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 23, entitled, "Of the Civil Magistrate." It reads as follows:

"I. God, the supreme Lord and King of all the world, hath ordained civil magistrates to be under him over the people, for His own glory, and the publick good; and, to this end, hath armed them with the power of the sword, for the defence and encouragement of them that are good, and for the punishment of evil doers.

II. It is lawful for Christians to accept and execute the office of a magistrate, when called thereunto; in managing whereof, as they ought especially to maintain piety, justice, and peace, according to the wholesome laws of each commonwealth; so, for that end, they may lawfully, now under the New Testament, wage war upon just and necessary occasions.

III. The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven; yet he hath authority, and it is his duty, to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire, that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed, and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed. For the better effecting whereof, he hath power to call synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God.

IV. It is the duty of people to pray for magistrates, to honour their persons, to pay them tribute and other dues, to obey their lawful commands, and to be subject to their authority for conscience's sake. Infidelity, or difference in religion, doth not make void the magistrate's just and legal authority, nor free the people from their due obedience to him: from which ecclesiastical persons are not exempted; much less hath the Pope any power or jurisdiction over them in their dominions or lives, if he shall judge them to be hereticks, or upon any other pretence whatsoever."

In connection with our present subject we are concerned mainly with the third paragraph of the above quoted chapter. It is interesting to note that it is this chapter that underwent revision by the American Presbyterian Church in 1788. The revised section which, I think, is still maintained today, reads as follows:

"III. Civil magistrates may not assume to themselves the administration of the Word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, or in the least inter-

fere in matters of faith. Yet as nursing fathers, it is the duty of civil magistrates to protect the Church of our common Lord, without giving the preference to any denomination of Christians above the rest; in such a manner that all ecclesiastical persons whatever shall enjoy the full, free, and unquestioned liberty of discharging every part of their sacred functions, without violence or danger. And, as Jesus Christ hath appointed a regular government and discipline in His Church, no law of any commonwealth should interfere with, let or hinder, the due exercise thereof, among the voluntary members of any denomination of Christians, according to their own profession and belief. It is the duty of civil magistrates to protect the person and good name of all their people, in such an effectual manner as that no persons be suffered, either upon pretence of religion or infidelity, to offer any indignity, violence, abuse, or injury to any other person whatsoever; and to take order, that all religious and ecclesiastical assemblies be held without molestation or disturbance."

Now, we especially want to direct attention to this because, in a certain respect, there is a striking similarity between this Presbyterian revision and the decision of the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church (which is also ours) in 1910 concerning the Thirty-sixth Article of the Belgic Confession, which we quoted last time. Both of the revisions adopt the principle of separation between church and state. Consequently, both eliminate such assertions as are found in the original articles as the following: "The office of the magistrate is to remove and prevent all idolatry and false worship . . . to suppress all blasphemies and heresies . . . to prevent or reform all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline . . . to call Synods, etc." Both repudiate the position of the Established Church and adopt the view that is today commonly held.

Objections to this view are frequently raised. Without at present expressing our evaluation of these criticisms, since we wish to do that later, we will present them for the reader's consideration as gleaned from four lengthy articles, written by Rev. Malcolm MacKay, a former Presbyterian minister in Nova Scotia, in "The Contender" in 1952. Rev. MacKay himself, not so long ago, maintained the view he now criticizes for he writes:

"And incidentally, we maintained this position a year ago in a letter to the New Glasgow Evening News . . . Like a great majority of non-Roman Catholic people in North America, we were brought up to believe that separation of Church and State was right, and that this was the only workable policy. We accepted this doctrine, which is taught here by every agency of communication, because we had never really considered the arguments against it. However, for a variety of reasons, serious doubts arose as to whether or not the doctrine of separation of Church and State, so widely held in North America, was Scriptural after all."

The author then proceeds to advance the claim that this

belief is in conflict with the Reformed truths of the Sovereignty of God and Absolute Predestination. We quote the following:

"We believe therefore that in order for the genuine Reformed faith to be re-established in the earth, the absolute sovereignty of God must be acknowledged by the State as well as by the Church. But, — the North American doctrine of the separation of Church and State refuses to give God the glory due to His name in the affairs of the State, as such, and thus would rob God of His absolute sovereignty over the nations. If the absolute sovereignty of God is not acknowledged in all aspects of human life, which include the very important realm of the State, then God is not acknowledged as the absolute Sovereign at all. So, in reality, anyone who holds to the doctrine of the separation of Church and State does not believe in the absolute sovereignty of God; but only in a limited sovereignty of God, — which is no sovereignty at all. This is a heavy blow directed at the heart of the Reformed faith. We have come to believe that this matter is as serious as that! Hence, in order for the Reformed faith to be re-established in the world, and in North America in particular, we believe that Reformed churchmen will have to re-examine their whole position in regard to Church and State."

In his second article, MacKay writes: "If Christ's crown rights over the nations are not acknowledged or are neutralized, as in the United States, or if His crown rights are openly rejected as in Soviet Russia, then the sublime Biblical truth of the absolute sovereignty of God over all men is overshadowed by the sinful unbelief and disobedience of men, or by their pride and unlawful ambitions to 'be as gods.' (Compare Satan in tempting Adam, Gen. 3:5). Thus by nations not officially acknowledging the living and true God to be the God of their nations, as is certainly taught and demanded in the Bible, men would rob God of the glory that is due His name in the affairs of state. Hence, the great basic truth of the Reformed faith, namely, the absolute sovereignty of God over all men, is denied before the eyes of men in the case of those nations who refuse officially (that is, by law) to acknowledge God to be the God of their nations. This is certainly the case with regard to the two greatest nations in the world today, the United States and Russia. Regardless of the different reasons, in each case, the fact remains that the governments of the United States and Russia agree in refusing to give God the glory due His name in the affairs of state by acknowledging the crown rights of Christ over their respective nations.

"To be more specific about North America, the Biblical and Reformed truth of the absolute sovereignty of God over all men is under a cloud because of the fact that neither the United States nor Canada by law recognize that the God of heaven and earth, the King of kings, who is the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ is the God of their respective nations. Let any person who knows the true Biblical and

Reformed doctrine of the absolute sovereignty of God deny this, if he can, on Scriptural grounds. Therefore, in order for this great central truth of the Bible to be truly established on this continent, the Church-State relationship must be corrected with a view to acknowledging by law that the true and living God is the sovereign, although unseen ruler of Canada and the U.S.A. — as the Bible teaches He is the actual ruler of all nations at all times. This, neither country has yet done. Until this is done, God's sovereignty is eclipsed, to say the least."

And once more we read from MacKay's pen: "We believe that it is long past time for those who adhere to the Calvinistic Reformed Faith to challenge the whole North American conception of religion in relation to the state. Unless or until this is done, we believe that there is, humanly speaking, not a chance for the Reformed faith to 'get anywhere' for the exclusiveness of the Christian faith, especially as it is emphasized in the Calvinistic doctrine of sovereign and particular election is everywhere opposed by the madness for equality of all religions, and partiality toward none. No wonder, then, the Calvinistic doctrine of a Predestination that is neither equal nor impartial — for the Bible teaches us that God does not dispense His grace equally or impartially among all men — is in great disfavour on this continent."

Hence, the view of Rev. MacKay, if we understand him correctly, is that the doctrine of separation between church and state is a denial of the "cor ecclesia"; the truth of Predestination and the Sovereignty of God. But the author has other objections to this view concerning church and state which, D.V., we will present the next time and then proceed to evaluate this view that is critical of our Confession and the original 28th article of our church order.

G.V.D.B.

ALL AROUND US

(Continued from page 144)

sical level to the time of the split. This Judge Searl refused to see.

Therefore, in the second place, the case of Second Church is being appealed to the Michigan Supreme Court. There can be no doubt that the latter court not only will be able to "untangle the present confused picture," but will also sustain the Hoeksema group for the same reasons it decided in their favor the first time.

M.S.

"The reproaches of Christ are precious! It is better to be preserved in brine, than to rot in honey."

— Dyer

"God has two thrones: one in the highest heavens, the other in the lowest hearts."

— Arrowsmith

ALL AROUND US

Barth's Lord's Prayer.

In the November 15th issue of *The Presbyterian Guardian* we came upon an article with the above title which we thought interesting as well as instructive especially for those who would know more about this Swiss theologian, Karl Barth. Because it is a short article, we are quoting it in its entirety and without further comment. The article is written by Robert S. Marsden, associate editor of the *Guardian*. He writes as follows:

"The NAME OF KARL BARTH has become more widely known in our day than that of any other contemporary theologian. An obscure Swiss pastor of thirty years ago has become the most influential voice in Protestant Christianity today!

The faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary was alert to the danger of Barthianism in the very early days of Barth's influence. His extremely voluminous and difficult writings were brought to the attention of the American public by Dr. Cornelius Van Til in his book, 'The New Modernism,' published ten years ago, and Dr. Van Til has kept up with the developments of Barth's thought and the acceptance of Barthianism since that time.

On the other hand, Barth's work has been hailed by a very large segment of the Christian Church as a marvelous and vital statement of Christian orthodoxy. Princeton Theological Seminary was one of the first of the older conservative institutions to accept Barthianism. The latest issue (October, 1956) of the journal *Theology Today* is almost entirely devoted to the life and work of Barth, in connection with his seventieth birthday, which was celebrated last spring. The leading editorial is by Dr. John A. Mackay, chairman of the editorial council of *Theology Today*, and President of Princeton Theological Seminary. As everyone connected in any intimate way with the journal is also connected with Princeton Theological Seminary, the journal is generally considered to be a publication which reflects Princeton's position. Dr. Mackay's editorial is called, 'A Lyrical Tribute to Karl Barth' and while he does take exception to certain comparative details in Barth's position, it is a 'tribute' indeed, which he pays.

Immediately following the editorials is a two-page article, 'The Lord's Prayer' by Karl Barth. This is given as a kind of gem from Barth's writings. It is obviously to be regarded as a sample of the marvelous things that Karl Barth has written and said in the hundreds and thousands of words which he has published.

From the point of view of historic Christianity, it is a very fortunate selection. One does not have to be the least bit of a theologian nor be able to read the heavy writings of Barth, nor be particularly erudite to see that Barth's Christ is not the Christ of the Bible and is not the historical

Christ. He calls Jesus Christ the 'Son of God, who has made himself our brother and made us his brothers.' He calls God 'our Father,' 'A Father who is a father to us in a most particular fashion.' Then he tells us that the Lord's Prayer 'implies the communion of man praying with Jesus Christ, his existence in the brotherhood of the sons of God.' He says, 'Jesus Christ invites, permits, commands man to join him, especially in his intercession with God his Father. Jesus Christ invites us, commands us and allows us to speak with him to God, to pray *with him his own prayer*, united *with him* in the Lord's Prayer.' (italics mine, Ed.)

Historic Christianity has always been able to read the simple statements of Scripture and to see that Jesus never united himself with his disciples in prayer nor does he ever imply that what we know as the Lord's Prayer is his prayer to God the Father. Jesus said, 'when ye pray,' and then he gives the prayer which we call the Lord's Prayer. If Jesus unites in that prayer then Jesus is a sinner who needs to pray, 'forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors' and if Jesus is a sinner he is certainly not the saviour. If Barth writes a million words which all sound equally pious and orthodox, his words must all be related to his unbiblical conception of Christ. If the Christ of Barth's Lord's Prayer is the historical Christ then we have no saviour and Christianity is a sham. It is inconceivable that those who love the Lord Jesus Christ as he is revealed in the gospel, should make common cause with a system of religion which rejects this Christ. Let those who are Christians and who have been speaking wildly concerning Barth and have been judging him to be a new Martin Luther or a new John Calvin be awakened to the fact that the religion of Karl Barth and historic Christianity are poles apart and that the acceptance of the one is the rejection of the other."

Wade to Go to Guam.

In the same issue of *The Presbyterian Guardian* above referred to we came upon another short article with the above title. The readers of the *Standard Bearer* will recall that just recently we reflected on an article appearing in the *Canadian Reformed Magazine* which mildly yet critically rebuked the schismatic group that left us for hiring the Orthodox Presbyterian Missionary, Rev. E. L. Wade, to labor for them on the Island of Guam. *The Presbyterian Guardian* now gives us further information respecting this matter. The article *in toto* reads as follows:

"The Rev. E. Lynne Wade, formerly a Navy Chaplain, expects to go soon as a missionary to the Island of Guam in the Pacific. Mr. Wade was stationed there for a time while in the Chaplaincy.

This arrangement is a sort of joint project. The Protestant Reformed Church consulted with Mr. Wade during the summer and agreed to provide him financial support if the Orthodox Presbyterian Church would agree to have him go to the field. The Presbytery of California, after reviewing the arrangement with the other group, approved the

financial contract and determined to send him out under that plan. The purpose of his work is to establish a national Reformed Church of Guam. The present contract is for two years, with the promise of three more years if the initial period is satisfactory. Mr. Wade will continue as a minister of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and a member of the Presbytery of California, to which he is to submit regular reports."

Like the chameleon which has the power to change its color to remain undetected in its surroundings, so this schismatic group appears to have the power to change its name at will to suit the circumstance. When they lose a court case, they quickly assume the name *Orthodox Protestant Reformed Church*. When they negotiate a financial contract with another church group to give vent to their great missionary zeal, they return to their original name and sign the contract with the name *Protestant Reformed Church*. And now, if the Rev. Wade is successful on the Island of Guam in establishing a church there, they are going to call it "a national Reformed Church." It's a good thing that the government does not assess them for taxes. For pity the government that would have to untangle the names to get to the taxable party.

It is also remarkable how this schismatic group with so many aliases has succeeded in attaining to their other objective besides foreign missions, namely, ecumenicity. Oh, how they despised the narrow confines of the Protestant Reformed Churches! How they longed to break the boundaries and be united in the ecumenical movement of our day with other church groups. Well, now it appears that they are reaching the goal for which they have striven. They did it under the name *Protestant Reformed Church*. This, of course, is also a reflection on the sagacity and sincerity of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. How can they decide just like that to collaborate with a group that has so many aliases and which signs a contract with the name *Protestant Reformed Church*, while they must have known that our churches also have the name Protestant Reformed, not even making an attempt to inquire of us who is really Protestant Reformed? Doesn't it make any difference to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church what the doctrinal standards are of the churches with whom they unite? Or, did they perhaps find when they interrogated the schismatic group that left us that as far as doctrine is concerned they could be in perfect agreement? If the latter is the case, I would like to warn the Orthodox Presbyterian Church that the doctrine of the group they collaborate with is not the doctrine of the Protestant Reformed Churches. And, therefore, the name on the contract between them made is fictitious.

But it cannot be gainsaid that the schismatic group which left us, whatever their name may be, has by hook or crook reached their objective. Yes, they are really going places. One can only wonder what will be the next item on their agenda.

Another Church Property Judgment.

In *The Banner* of November 23, 1956, p. 1448, the Rev. Peter Van Tuinen writes the following under the above title:

"The situation with respect to the church property disputes between the two sides in the Protestant Reformed Church schism is becoming more complicated. The newest complication arises from the decision of circuit judge Fred N. Searl with respect to the property of the Second Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan. By deciding in favor of the group associated with Rev. H. De Wolf, Judge Searl brought about a situation with respect to Second Church directly opposed to that which the Michigan Supreme Court sustained with respect to First Church. The First Church property was awarded to the Hoeksema group, and now the Second Church property has been awarded to the De Wolf group, locally headed by Rev. John Blankespoor. Both decisions assume a Presbyterian church polity as basis for the action taken.

How could this confusing situation arise in the same city? It appears that the latest decision is based on a much more complete picture of the schism than the earlier decision. Judge Searl's ruling finds the Hoeksema group schismatic in that it ignored the properly constituted Synod of the Protestant Reformed Church. In the decision regarding First Church's property, this broader question did not enter.

Whether the losers in this case will appeal to the Supreme Court of the State, and whether the Supreme Court will be able to untangle the present confused picture, remains to be seen."

I have two brief comments to make. In the first place, it is true what Rev. Van Tuinen writes "Both decisions assume a Presbyterian church polity as basis for the action taken." Here was a case where the chameleon changed his color again. In the First Church case both before Superior Court Judge Taylor and the Michigan Supreme Court the case was won by the Hoeksema group on the basis of Presbyterian church polity. In spite of the fact that the De Wolf group tried desperately to defend the Congregational form of church polity, under the leadership of the Rev. B. Kok, the courts would not listen, and decided that the Protestant Reformed Churches have the Presbyterian form of church government. When the case of Second Church came before Circuit Judge Searl, the De Wolf-Blankespoorian group realized they wouldn't get to first base on their old tactics, so they initiated their cause by conceding that the form of government in the Protestant Reformed Churches was Presbyterial. And then introducing what appeared to be a new phase in the case, the matter of the Synod, they succeeded in impressing the judge with the idea that the highest ruling body in the church had been ignored by the Hoeksema group. The fact of the matter was that neither the case of First Church, nor that of Second Church had ever gotten any higher than the Clas-

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