

# THE STANDARD

*Beaver*

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## MEDITATION

### LOVINGKINDNESS

"... Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him."

"And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God?"

"... And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them."  
— Gen. 50:15b, 19, 21b

The living Church of Jesus Christ are not the only admirers of Holy Writ. Untold millions of people who are ultimately lost have seen the sublimity of the Scriptures. The very heart of the Bible, the everlasting Gospel is seen and tasted by many who will never dwell in the celestial beauty of the new paradise of God.

We underestimate the effect produced by the Bible on the minds, hearts and souls of the unregenerated.

In my reading of so-called classical literature I have very often come upon scenes and persons and situations which have a distinct flavor of God's special revelation. In fact, you may be able to see Christ reproduced, and saints copied in the most often read classics.

I could cite many examples.

I will just mention two outstanding cases.

You all know that the great theme of the Bible is Christ's substitutional suffering and death for His people: a revelation of the love of God.

Well, Charles Dickens really should have chosen a different title for one of his best loved novels: *The Tale of Two Cities*. He should have called it: *The Great Substitution*. And I do not doubt at all that it was inspired by Christ's vicarious suffering on the cross of Calvary. Sydney Carton's journey to the guillotine on the rough tumbrel to the place of execution where he sacrificed his head for Charles Darnay, or the Marquis St. Evrémonde, is Dickens' reproduction of Christ's *via dolorosa*.

And if you should doubt, then study the last whisper

into the ear of his "god" before his ascent to the "cross": "A life you love!"

The other example you will find in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*.

The simple M. Myriel, later exalted to the bishopric of D., is plainly Hugo's conception of Christ, but then not so much in his vicarious atonement as in his unspotted holiness, righteousness, and sweet humility.

Moreover, you will find a combination of Job and Joseph in the sufferer Jean Valjean.

Oh yes, Hugo was entranced with Christ's constant admonition: Love your enemies! Attend to Valjean's saving of his arch-enemy Javert!

And thus I could go on and on, and cite examples where wicked men, writing largely for wicked men have seen and tasted the good Word of God, have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were fructified in their imaginations to reproduce the great mystery of Godliness in the sphere of this wicked world.

There ever is a species of humanity who taste of the heavenly gift, and say: it is sublime!

But they never *did* the Word of God. Their very admiration of the great Vicar will condemn them in the day of days.

\* \* \* \*

Joseph's story is no fiction.

Joseph's story is authored by the Holy Ghost.

And it is beautiful, enthralling, sublime.

Look at that cluster of murmuring brethren: they are visibly scared.

Jacob, the patriarch is dead.

They never trusted Joseph's tears and kisses. They could not conceive of so great forgiveness on his part.

I have heard the title of a worldly song which came over the air waves: "Doing what comes naturally!"

Well, that was the tenor of their thoughts about Joseph.

Oh yes, they knew and remembered the awful past. Listen to these pregnant words: "all the evil which we did unto him!"

If you take time to study the life of Joseph, you will find that for a long time his life was a veritable *via dolorosa*, a way of suffering. From his earliest recollections he remembered how his father petted him, with the resultant hatred of his brethren.

When his good soul heard and saw the evil deeds of his brethren, it was love of God and love of his brethren that prompted him to bring to Jacob their evil report. But how was he rewarded? You know.

Sharing Jacob's anxiety for the welfare of his brethren, he travelled to Dothan; — and walked into the evil hands of his brethren. Amid his cries for mercy, he was stript of his hated coat, and cast into a pit. He saw the bargain of Judah, and felt the lashes of the slave.

Later he was tempted by a whore.

Still later he found himself in the dungeon, and even there he was forgotten by the man whom he helped.

Oh yes, they remembered "all the evil they did unto him."

\* \* \* \*

But now this same Joseph is on the throne, and has all the power and majesty of the great Pharaoh. Whom he willed he saved and whom he willed he destroyed.

Joseph will peradventure hate us!

And will certainly requite us!

He will do that which comes naturally!

How can he ever forget and forgive all the evil we did unto him, all the years of heartache, loneliness, pain and sorrow. How can he forget his long years of suffering. Oh, but we will have to pay for it now. Most certainly he will requite us all this evil!

And they sent a servant to Joseph.

And this servant carried a message from Joseph's father, now dead. That is, the message is really from the brethren of Joseph, but through this messenger they make it appear that Jacob left a special tidings for Joseph, to be revealed to him after his death.

How childish, yes, and evil!

Do these brethren think that Joseph could not see through this thin veneer of lies? If Jacob really had been concerned about what would befall the brethren after his own death, he certainly would have spoken directly to Joseph. Moreover, why this servant? Why did they not confront Joseph personally?

But Joseph shows the grace of God which dwelled so richly in him.

When the brethren follow this servant, fall down before his face, and confess their sin, Joseph wept.

Those tears were precious in God's sight.

They are the tears of lovingkindness.

And listen to his wisdom: Fear not: for am I in the place of God?

How seldom do we find this pure motive of lovingkindness to the undeserving?

Note: he will not requite anything at all, even though he has all the power to do it.

Do you not see that Joseph knew God? It was the wisdom of God which told him that there is one who judges and that one is God.

Now let us look into our own heart and history: how often did we judge this way? When it was in our power to revenge ourselves? When we could and did use hard speeches, evil faces and words against those that wrongfully used us? Were we always filled with lovingkindness and say: Am I in the place of God?

When I think on this my spirit is overwhelmed in me, and I feel guilty.

\* \* \* \*

It seems as though Joseph went to school with Jesus of Nazareth. It seems as though he stood on that unknown mountain in Galilee when Jesus preached His Sermon on the Mount.

Now let them say that the Old Testament is hard and cruel, but the New Testament sweet and tender.

Listen to Joseph as he talks to those evil brethren: Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.

Do you notice how beautiful the life of grace is?

Sin is very ugly, but lovingkindness is beautiful. Who can find fault with Joseph in not punishing his brethren? But contrariwise, dealing kindly with them?

I can easily see that Joseph throughout all the dreary years in Egypt had prayed constantly for his brethren, and asked of God to forgive their sin and their trespass.

An attitude such as we see here is not born in a day. Behind it lie years of self discipline, self condemnation and abhorrence of self.

And, positively, such an attitude of Joseph shows a liberal portion of the heavenly Gift, and that is Jesus.

And also this: such an attitude is the fruit of both the fear of God and of wisdom.

Joseph was a man of like passions as his brethren.

That they acted cruelly and that he acted in lovingkindness is due to the fact that Joseph had a great portion of the heavenly gift in him. That makes all the difference in the world.

Then you become a copy of the Christ of God. Then you begin to think, speak and act like Christ. That is the only explanation of the beautiful picture of Joseph in the Bible.

\* \* \* \*

Victor Hugo's christ is a phantom.

Charles Dickens' christ is a mirage.

But the prefiguration of the Christ of God in Joseph is beautiful.

And it fills us with holy jealousy on the one hand; and on the other hand leads us to pray: Oh God, make me like Joseph!

G.V.

### Attention: Synodical Standing Committees

We call attention to Article 9 of the Rules of Synod, part 1 which reads: "*The reports of all committees, except of the standing committees shall be published three months before Synod convenes, so that all the churches may be duly informed.*"

Will the following committees kindly take note: Committee on Liturgy, Rules, Catechism Books, Foreign Missions, Declaration of Principles.

G. VANDEN BERG, *Stated Clerk*

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

1898 — 1958

On February 18, 1958, the Lord willing, our dear parents

MR. and MRS. AART BLEYENBERG (KRAGT)

hope to celebrate their 60th Wedding Anniversary.

We are thankful to our Covenant God for all the blessings He has bestowed on them and us. Our prayer is that the Lord may grant them His peace the remaining days of their pilgrimage.

Their thankful children

Mr. and Mrs. James Ver Hey  
Mrs. Bert Docter  
Mr. and Mrs. Bert Brands  
Mr. and Mrs. John Docter  
Mr. Albert Bleyenbergh  
Mr. and Mrs. Marines Vander Wolde  
Mr. and Mrs. Dick Tillema  
Mr. and Mrs. Dick Bleyenbergh  
Mr. John Bleyenbergh  
Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Bleyenbergh, Jr.  
Mr. and Mrs. Lucas Vande Berg  
62 grandchildren  
34 great-grandchildren

Edgerton, Minnesota

### Teacher Needed

The Hope Protestant Reformed School will need a Teacher for grades 3 and 4 next September. Since we already know that this vacancy will exist, we are making our need known to anyone interested in applying. Write or call Miss A. Reitsma, principal, 1111 Boston, S. E., Grand Rapids, or Mr. John Kalsbeek, School Board Secretary, 4132 Hall St., S. W., Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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## EDITORIALS

### A Wonderful Meeting

On the evening of January 23 we had a most wonderful and enjoyable meeting in the auditorium of the First Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The meeting was called by the radio committee and a very nice and edifying program was prepared by them. The chief purpose of the meeting was to acquaint the audience with the work of the radio committee and to inform our people about the various stations from which our program is broadcasted and thus to create more interest in our radio work. In this they succeeded very well. There were representatives from all our churches in the vicinity and the down stairs part of the auditorium was well filled.

There was some beautiful singing by the men's chorus of First Church and by the mixed chorus of Hope Church as well as by some individuals. Besides, two members of the radio committee gave the audience an interesting number by passing through the auditorium with microphones and asking various people of those present whether they listened to our broadcast on Sunday and how they liked it.

A special number was arranged by the mission committee. The Rev. C. Hanko spoke on the work of the mission committee in connection with the radio. He read several letters from different parts of the world outside of the United States which revealed that it was possible to do mission work in foreign lands by means of the radio.

We may certainly be grateful to the radio committee for preparing for us such an interesting program.

The chairman announced that, after the meeting in the auditorium, there would be a social get together where coffee and cake would be served.

After a few remarks in which he emphasized the importance of preaching the Word of God in distinction from mere lecturing, even over the radio, the undersigned closed the meeting with prayer and thanksgiving to God.

Every one present certainly enjoyed the evening as was evident from the remarks made at the sociable aftermath in the basement.

It was a wonderful evening, indeed.

H.H.

### Did They Know That Jesus Is The Christ?

Sometime ago I received a bit of correspondence from the Rev. H. Veldman to which, I believe, I answered in a personal letter without, however, responding materially to the question that was asked in the letter. Although the parties that were interested did not directly ask me to answer the

question in *The Standard Bearer*, they, nevertheless, suggested that they would like to have me do so.

Here follows the question:

"At our Ladies' Aid meeting we were confronted with the following problem. We are studying John 8 and were busy with the vss. 25-30. Note what we read in vs. 28. Then someone made the remark that you had said in a radio sermon (April 7, 1957, third page, a little below the middle of the page) that the Jews knew that Jesus was the Christ because He had declared this repeatedly and had also manifested it in all His way and works . . . And this appears in harmony with what we read in Matt. 21:38. This latter passage appears to teach that the Jews recognized Jesus as the Heir. However, this seems to be in conflict with John 8:28; here Jesus says that they would know Him, that He is He, when they lift up the Son of man. And we also read in Acts 3:17 that 'through ignorance they did it as did also your rulers,' and in I Cor. 2:8 that 'had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.'

"So you understand our problem. Of what and to what extent were the Jews guilty when they crucified the Lord? What did they know concerning Jesus of Nazareth? This could be an interesting question for *The Standard Bearer*. The Ladies' Aid did not decide last Thursday evening to send this question to *The Standard Bearer*, but the thought was expressed after the meeting that it might be a good thing to do so. You would probably rather answer the question publicly than in a private letter to me. You understand the problem and can word the question as you please. You need not name me in *The Standard Bearer*, although I surely have no objection to your doing so."

Here, then, is the question. And I will attempt to answer it to the best of my knowledge.

First of all, I wish to quote the passage of my radio sermon to which reference is made in the above stated question. The whole passage reads as follows:

"We may ask the question: who were they that crucified the Lord? And the answer of Scripture is: the whole world as it lieth in the darkness of sin and death. In the first place, of course, there were the soldiers that were immediately instrumental in His execution. But they were personally responsible too, for they became more than executioners. Already in the trial before Pilate they had robed Him in a mock garment, and put a crown of thorns on His head, and a mock scepter in His hand, and saluted Him with a mock salute, 'Hail, King of the Jews.' They therefore were also responsible. Besides, they parted His raiments among them, and cast lots for His uppergarment, concerning which they said, 'Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be.' John 19:24. Hence, although the soldiers stood in the service of the Roman government, nevertheless they themselves became responsible. Next, of course, and behind the soldiers, stands Pilate, the Roman governor, who became

the judge of our Lord, and although he knew Him to be righteous and innocent, yet condemned him to death to please the Jews. His was, of course, the greater sin. But even back of the Roman political world was the religious world represented by the Sanhedrin of the Jews. They knew that he was the Christ, as He had emphasized repeatedly, and as all His way and work plainly revealed to them. And therefore, we repeat: it was the whole world, — the military, the political, and the religious world, — that crucified our Lord. It was the world that lay in the darkness of sin and death, with the prince of this world at their head."

The part to which Edgerton calls special attention in the above paragraph is, of course, that which speaks of the fact that the Sanhedrin knew that He was the Christ.

The texts to which Edgerton refers do, indeed, seem to teach that the Jews that crucified the Lord did not know that He was the Christ and that they did it in ignorance, so that they were not guilty of the sin of rejecting the promised Messiah and of killing Him.

But let us look at these passages a little more closely.

In I Cor. 2:8 we read: "Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." Now this passage does not prove that, at the time of the crucifixion and before, the leaders of the Jews, the Sanhedrists, did not know that Jesus was the promised Messiah. Let us note:

1. That the apostle here does not speak merely of the leaders of the Jews but of the princes of this world. Now, it is very probable that by this expression he also refers to the Sanhedrists, particularly to Annas and Caiaphas, but he certainly includes the leaders of the Romans, princes of this world like Herod and Pilate. Hence, the text does not answer the question whether or not the Sanhedrists knew that Jesus was the Christ when they crucified the Lord of glory. It refers to a different knowledge and to a different ignorance which characterized all the princes of this world in common.

2. Of this different knowledge the apostle speaks in the context. When in the text quoted he writes that, if they *had known it*, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory, he refers to a true, spiritual-ethical knowledge, a knowledge that is imparted by the Holy Spirit. For in vs. 6 and 7 we read: "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory." It is, evidently, to this true wisdom that the apostle refers when he writes in vs. 8 that had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. That this is true is still further evident from what follows. There we read, "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, even the

deep things of God." And once more in vs. 12: "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given us of God." This spiritual knowledge none of the princes of this world possessed. Spiritually, they were in darkness. They were foolish, spiritually foolish.

3. This darkness and spiritual foolishness, however, did not make it impossible for men like Annas and Caiaphas and the rest of the leaders of the Jews to know the fact that Jesus was the Christ. Let us ask the question: would they not have crucified the Lord if they had had some knowledge of the fact that He was the Christ? My answer would be: they certainly would have as long as he walked among them in the state of humiliation. Did they not deny Him and even invent the story that the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus after He was raised from the dead? In other words did they not really crucify Him again? And do not men today do the same thing even though they cannot deny the fact revealed in the gospel? But, surely, the darkness of the Sanhedrists and their spiritual foolishness certainly did not mean that they could not, in some measure, know that He was the Christ.

In the same way I would explain Acts 3:17.

In the context, Peter, who is speaking here, emphasizes the great sin they had committed by denying and killing Christ. They denied the Holy One and the Just; they preferred a murderer; they killed the Prince of life; and they had delivered Him to Pilate though he would rather let Him go. Such was their sin, and, surely, even apart from the fact that some of them knew that He was the Christ, they all knew that they had committed a heinous sin. But in vs. 17 the apostle adds: "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers." Now, in the first place, I am of the opinion, as is also expressed in some commentaries, that Peter expresses himself mildly in order to gain his audience. But, in the second place, I think that the term "ignorance" may be referred to, not to the fact Jesus is the Christ, but to spiritual foolishness and carnal lust and darkness. The fact that Jesus is the Christ, or, at least that He claimed to be the Christ, was well-known even to the high priest, witness the oath under which he put the Lord at the time of his trial. But, although he knew the fact, he did not have the faith and, hence, he lived in spiritual darkness. In that sense, he was ignorant, as were also the rest of the audience.

As to John 8:28, it is, undoubtedly, true that many of the Jews did not understand that He was the Christ. They expected an entirely different Christ. But after Jesus was lifted up, that is, after His cross and resurrection and exaltation, they understood, not only, but many also believed on Him. To be sure, the cross and exaltation of the Lord made it much clearer than before that He is the Christ.

Still, I would maintain that, even before His being lifted up many were acquainted with the fact that He was the Christ.

H.H.

## OUR DOCTRINE

### THE BOOK OF REVELATION

#### CHAPTER XV

#### *The Shake-up of the Physical Universe*

#### Revelation 6:12-17

The block signal changes, and reveals that the train is approaching. Smoke from the locomotive is seen in the distance. The shrill yell of the whistle is presently heard. And you are certain that the train is coming. These last signs are inevitable manifestations, the unavoidable signs of the coming train.

Thus it is also with respect to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and the signs that are connected with this coming. These signs are not arbitrary, — not signs that might just as well have been omitted. But they are signs that are inevitably connected with the final coming of the Lord itself. Jesus is coming. That is the message of the Book of Revelation in brief. It reveals the coming of the Lord. He is coming into a sinful and miserable world, into a world that has fallen into the power of sin and death and that is subjected to the dominion of Satan. Man and beast and all creation is subject to this bondage. The Lord, however, is coming to redeem that entire world, with His elect people in the center, from the dominion of sin and death and hell, and to establish the reign of righteousness and everlasting perfection in glory, to subject that entire world again to His God. He is coming, — coming throughout this dispensation, coming all through the present history of the world. And therefore, all through this dispensation the signs and signals of that coming, signs that are inevitably connected with that coming, are plainly visible. When He comes on the white horse, He appears in the spiritual world, and you can see His signs in repentance and faith and confession and obedience and a walk in newness of life. When He comes on the red horse, you can see Him in war and in nation rising against nation, as a sign of His coming for judgment in the end. When you see the black horse, you see the signs of His coming in the social world and in all the struggles of that world. And when the power of death mows away thousands upon thousands at the proper time and place, you see the signs of His coming in the physical world of man. So it is also with the blood of the martyrs. And thus it is also with the signs in the physical universe. You see Him come in the earthquakes and volcanic outbursts, in storms and floods, in the signs that appear in the heavens throughout the history of this present time. For also the physical universe is in the power of sin and death, in the bondage of corruption. And therefore you must not be surprised that the coming of Jesus also in this physical world causes strange signs. They are signs that our redemption, and also the redemption of the universe, is nigh. But the redemption of that physical universe is last of all. And therefore, the full reality of these signs will be seen only toward

the last of the present dispensation. They are the changing of the block signals, the rising of the smoke from the engine in the distance, the blowing of the whistle. When these signs shall occur, — and they surely shall occur, as the Scriptures everywhere testify, — then lift up your head: for then your redemption draweth nigh. The Lord cometh, and all the universe will be affected by His coming. Hence, all the universe will also reveal the signs of that coming.

The effect of these signs upon the world is most terrible. To be sure, it will also have its effect upon the people of God that these signs shall appear in the heavens and upon the earth. From a mere natural point of view these signs will also be terrible and alarming for them. I cannot understand how expositors of Holy Writ, particularly on prophecy, can deny that during these days the church, at least part of the church of God, will still be on earth. I fail to understand how they can deny that they shall experience at least the great tribulation in full. For Scripture testifies of this very plainly and emphatically. Whenever the Lord speaks of these things, He speaks of them as signs of His coming, as signs of comfort to His people in the midst of the world, and especially in the midst of the great tribulation of the last times. He speaks to them of the fact that they shall be in great tribulation especially when the fifth seal shall be fully realized. And He also declares that after this great tribulation the signs that are pictured in this sixth seal shall reach their fulfillment. And in connection with this, He tells His disciples and all His people: "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." Lu. 21:28. And it stands to reason that also for the people of God the beginning of these signs shall be dreadful from a mere natural point of view. But it does not fill them with fear and consternation. This will be impossible. They have suffered persecution. They have been in awfulest tribulation. Such is undoubtedly the course of events in the future, shortly before the coming of the Lord. The fear of the people of God, their suffering, their anxiety, their persecution has been terrible, most terrible indeed. Thousands of them have been killed and tortured because of the Word of God and the testimony which they held. And the spiritual result of all this was, naturally, that they longed for the coming of Christ and for their final redemption. Now these signs appear. And though these signs will also fill them with horror from a natural point of view, yet they fill them at the same time with a great hope. They begin to see in them that Jesus draweth nigh when these things begin to come to pass. Thus the Lord had told them: "Then lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh." Now He is still tarrying but, only for a little while. Already they see His signs. Already they hear Him come, for Whom their soul longeth. And lifting up their heads in expectation, they look for the sign of the Son of Man in the heavens.

But of this we must speak in a later connection. Our text speaks now of the effect of these natural phenomena, or rather, of these super-natural phenomena, upon the wicked



world. And what is that effect? Of this we are told in the last part of the passage we are now discussing, 6:15-17: "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" Notice here, in the first place, that all classes of men are included, but that the strong and mighty and rich are emphatically mentioned first, and are predominating to a large degree. They are predominating not necessarily in number, for that is probably not the case, but because it is exactly in their capacity as strong and rich according to the standard of the world that here they reveal their consternation. All classes, from kings and princes to bondmen and servants, are included in this crowd struck with fear. What they have all in common is that they hated the Lord Jesus Christ. They certainly have never loved Him, as is evident in their fear. For according to the apostle John, love driveth out fear. They hated Him. They have persecuted Him and His flock. And as such they were the kings and the mighty ones of the world, those that were rich in money, that dominated the social world, the strong in physical power and strong in authority, that dominated the political world. They are the ones that used to win victories in battle in the earth. They are also the strong in wisdom and learning, that denied the Christ in their worldly philosophy, and that in their imagined strength have always laughed at the folly of the people of the Lord, that believed the gospel. These all, — the mighty and the wise and the rich according to the measure of this world, — are now filled with terror. They are filled with a terror so strong that they seek death. They are filled with consternation. They know not what they are doing. They flee to the caves; but of course, there is no help and no protection there. They flee to the mountains and to the rocks; but behold, they find no refuge in them. Wherever they flee they see the signs of the Lord that is coming. And these signs do not cause them to repent. There is no forgiveness for them any more. The measure of their iniquity is full. They call to the rocks and to the mountains, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." The day of wrath and judgment has come, and they realize it. And because they have not kissed the Son, but continued in their wild rebellion, they are now struck with terror, and they seek death, but find not. Terrible in that day is the position of the ungodly. Terrible indeed is the day of the Lord for them that have not feared His name.

How is to be explained, you ask perhaps, that now they are so completely struck with consternation and fear? The answer is: because the stability of the material universe was the presupposition of the kingdom of the world which they intended to establish. They were to build up an imitation

kingdom, a kingdom of bliss and righteousness and justice and peace and of material blessedness. That was their purpose, and that was their strife. And all this they attempted to accomplish without Christ Jesus. They never believed that Christ was King. They never knew that He had the principle of His spiritual kingdom already realized in the world and in the hearts of His people. They laughed at the idea that this world was principally wicked, and that heaven and earth would pass away. And therefore they supposed eternal stability of the material universe was the basis of their hope. This hope was now frustrated completely, and in a moment. The whole universe seems to pass away. The heavens and the earth are shaking. They cannot account for it. Human wisdom is too small, and human science cannot explain the shake-up of the physical universe. It is beyond their comprehension. Human strength now availeth nothing. They have been able to do great things. They ruled over the elements, and they were in power over the sea and the land and the air. But all these things are beyond them now. Nothing can avail. They are overcome. And therefore, two facts are now powerfully impressed upon their unbelieving minds, namely, that the very basis of their imitation kingdom is going to destruction, and secondly, that the kingdom of Christ shall prevail. And therefore, they realize that their bitterest enemy, the King of heaven and earth, He Whom they have pierced, is about to have the complete victory. Therefore they fear. In their folly and impotence they pray to the rocks and mountains, and the Word of God is literally fulfilled: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and I will bring to nought the discernment of the discerners."

Blessed are they who in that day belong to the Lord and are in Zion. For Joel, after he has finished his description of that day, says: "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall there be those that escape, as the Lord hath said, and among the remnant whom the Lord shall call." It is in full harmony with this that the Lord our Savior has foretold us: "When these things begin to come to pass, lift up your head, for your redemption draweth nigh. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

### Notice for Classis West

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will convene, the Lord willing, in Doon, Iowa, Wednesday, March 19, 1958.

The consistories are reminded of the rule that they are expected to nominate an elder or elders who are able to serve as synodical delegate. And, all matters for the classical agendum must be in the hands of the stated clerk not later than thirty days before the date of Classis.

Rev. H. Veldman, Stated Clerk

## CHAPTER I

*The Sealing of the One Hundred Forty-four Thousand*

## Revelation 7:1-8

1. And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.
2. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea.
3. Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.
4. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.
5. Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand.
6. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephtalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand.
7. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand.
8. Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.

At this stage of our discussion of the Book of Revelation it seems necessary to remind you of the plan of the second part of this book, from chapter 4, verse 1, on. That plan is, as you will remember, dominated entirely by the number seven, the number of the completion of the kingdom of God. There are seven seals to be opened; and these seven seals cover the whole of the Book of Revelation. When the last part of the seventh seal shall have been realized, the kingdom shall have come, and the works of the devil and of the anti-christ shall have been completely destroyed. The seventh seal, however, when it is opened, reveals itself as seven trumpets. And the seventh trumpet is presented as seven vials of the wrath of God. Undoubtedly this implies that as time goes on the judgments of the Lord upon the wicked world will increase; His activity to bring the kingdom of God will become more pronounced and emphatic. Of course, it also implies that the seventh seal is revealed to the church more in detail than any of the preceding six seals.

Six of these seven seals we have thus far discussed. These, as we have noticed, formed two main groups, the first four belonging together and the last two also being closely allied.

In the first four seals we noticed the powers that were let loose upon the world of men in general in this dispensation. There is, first of all, the power of the spiritual kingdom, symbolized in the white horse. Secondly, there is the power of war, symbolized in the red horse. Thirdly, there is the power of social strife, in the black horse. And finally, there is the power of death, in the pale horse. As to the second group, seals five and six, we found that the first of these concerned the saints, and pictured to us the people of God that have been slain for the Word of God and the testimony which they had. And we found that the blood of these saints becomes one awful testimony against the world that hates and rejects the Christ, and rises in rebellion against His holiness and truth. This means also that the fifth seal furnishes the spiritual, ethical basis for the destruction of the world in the day of judgment. And thus, finally, the sixth seal affects the physical world. All creation belongs to the kingdom of Christ. And therefore, as the Messiah begins to establish His world-kingdom and reconquers it from the usurpation of the devil and his host, it is no wonder at all that also the physical world shows the signs of the kingdom of our Lord. This shake-up of the physical world, however, has the effect upon the world of evil that they begin to realize the coming of the great Judge, begin to realize that their imitation kingdom is after all vanity. However, they do not come to true repentance. On the other hand, we also remarked that according to the words of Jesus our Saviour, it is exactly these signs that may cause the people of God to lift up their heads in hopeful expectation that their suffering and tribulation will soon have an end, and that the Lord will come to redeem them completely.

We might perhaps expect that presently the book would continue to reveal to us the contents of the seventh seal. Evidently, however, this is not the case. The opening of the seventh seal is not recorded before we come to the eighth chapter of this book. On the other hand, however, it is also evident that this seventh chapter does no more belong to the sixth seal. For, in the first place, that sixth seal is very plainly completely revealed in chapter six, vss. 12-17. That portion is complete by itself, as is plain from the entire form of this section. And, in the second place, the manner in which this seventh chapter is introduced also shows plainly that here we have something new. For John tells us clearly: "After this I saw . . ." And therefore, this seventh chapter is neither the opening of the seventh seal, nor is it the continuation of the sixth. It is something in between. It forms an episode. Before the opening of the seventh seal is revealed, the Lord deems it necessary to come to His people with a message of a different nature. Terrible things have already been revealed in connection with the six seals that have thus far been opened. And the question that is asked by the world of unbelief when the sixth seal was opened has undoubtedly by this time also arisen in the midst of the people of God, the question, namely: "Who shall be able to stand?" Still more awful occurrences will be revealed when



the opening of the seventh seal is realized. And therefore, the Lord, before He proceeds to reveal the opening of this seal, answers the question that might so easily escape the worried souls of the faithful, "Who shall stand?" It is the answer to this question which we find in this chapter. It contains two parts, the first part consisting of verses 1 to 8, the second of verses 9 to 17. And the passage we are now discussing speaks of the sealing of the one hundred forty-four thousand.

The first question that naturally arises in our minds when we read these words is: who are these one hundred forty-four thousand of which the text informs us that they are sealed? Judging by the numerous interpretations that have been offered, it would seem as if it were indeed an impossibility to come to a satisfactory conclusion. The explanations that have been given may, in the main, be divided into two classes. In the first place, there are those authors who take it that Israel means the people of the Jews in the literal sense of the word, and that the names of the twelve tribes actually point to the people that used to be the people of God as a nation in the days of the old dispensation. These, therefore take this indication of the sealed ones in the literal sense of the word. They inform us that here we have the record of the sealing of the people of Israel. But among them there are different shades of interpretation. First of all, there are those who believe that the nation as such, the nation of the Jews, shall be saved and occupy a special place in the economy of redemption in the future. Israel as a nation shall in the future accept their Redeemer, Whom they have first rejected; and in our text we have the indication of the fact that the greatest destruction of the world may not be initiated before this has been realized. Secondly, there are also those that believe that in the future a time will come in which every individual Israelite will believe in Christ. Not only the nation as a whole, but every individual Jew that exists at that period will call on the name of the Lord. And the sealing of the one hundred forty-four thousand foreshadows this glorious event. In the third place, there are those that do not believe in the restoration of the nation of Israel in any manner, but who see in these sealed ones the salvation of the remnant of the elect of the Jews, that will be and must be grafted in into their own olive tree, from which they are cut out. Thus, the one hundred forty-four thousand indicate the elect from among the Jews of all ages and countries, into which they have been scattered. And finally, there are also those who take it that these one hundred forty-four thousand must be referred to the elect Jews, but not of all ages, but only of the period of the great tribulation. That, in general, is the interpretation of the first class we have mentioned. The second class consists of those that explain these one hundred forty-four thousand sealed ones as referring to true, spiritual Israel of the new dispensation. Israel, even in this portion of the book, must not be taken in the literal sense, but in the symbolic, or typical, sense of the word. And therefore, these sealed ones simply refer to God's own people of all ages. But then there is a difference of opinion even among these. There

are, in the first place, those who think that we have here a reference to a special class of people of God, who have either escaped from or experienced the great tribulation; and, in the second place, those who simply take it that these one hundred forty-four thousand refer to all the people of God at any time.

I must confess that for some time I was rather inclined to cast my lot with the first class of interpreters, and to explain that these one hundred forty-four thousand sealed ones had reference to Israel in the literal sense of the word. I did not believe that we have any reference here to the Jewish nation as such, so that the text would mean that there would be a restoration of the Israelitish nation. Nor did I ever think that there would be a special kind of salvation for the Jews. Nevertheless, I thought that these one hundred forty-four thousand symbolized the remnant according to the election of grace, all the elect of Israel that are to be saved in Christ Jesus. And therefore, if ever I was inclined to find a reference in Revelation literally to Israel as such, it was in this passage.

However, reflection and further study of this particular portion changed my mind. I am now firmly convinced not only that this section does not speak of Israel as a nation, nor of the Jews only, but that Scripture in general absolutely teaches that there is no more a national Israel with special spiritual privileges and with a special way of salvation. And since the subject of Israel as a nation is very frequently discussed, especially in our day, and since the error is often made of maintaining that the Jews as a nation still have special privileges, and still will have a great future as such, I must dwell for just a moment on the teaching of Scripture in this respect.

The portion of Scripture to which I naturally must call your attention for light on this subject is that which we find in the epistle to the Romans, chapters 9 to 11. There Paul begins in chapter 9 by expressing his heartfelt grief over his brethren according to the flesh because of the pitiful condition in which they are found at this time, after they have rejected their own Messiah. But he continues to argue that if anyone would think that the promises of God had failed, and that He had rejected His people, and that the promises of a great seed, as the sand on the seashore and as the stars of heaven, would not now be realized, since Israel as a nation was evidently rejected, he would be sorely mistaken. On the contrary, that promise never was fulfilled as it now is, in the days of the New Testament, if only we make the true distinction between Israel and Israel. "They are not all Israel that are of Israel," says the apostle. Not the fact that they are children of Abraham made them true Israelites. For Ishmael and the children of Keturah also were children of Abraham in the same sense. And yet Isaac was the only child of the covenant. The same was true of Esau. If Israel according to the flesh had been the true Israel, then surely Esau was a child of Abraham as well as Jacob. Yet Esau was rejected according to the election of grace. But what made anyone a true Israelite was the fact of election.

H.H.

## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

### The Prophecy of Zechariah

*Purification of Jerusalem*

Chapter 13:2-6

2. *And it shall be in that day, saith Jehovah of hosts, I will cut off the names of the idols of the land, and they shall be remembered no more; and also the prophets and the spirit of uncleanness, will I cause to pass out of the land.* 3. *And it shall be, if a man still prophesy, his father and his mother, who begat him, shall say to him, Thou shalt not live, for thou hast spoken a lie in the name of Jehovah; and his father and his mother, who begat him, shall pierce him through in his prophesying.* 4. *And it shall be in that day that the prophets shall be ashamed each of his vision in his prophesying; and shall no more put on a hairy garment to lie; 5. but he shall say, I am not a prophet, I am a husbandman, for a man bought me from my youth. 6. And (the other) shall say unto him, What are these wounds between thine hands? And he shall say, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my lovers.*

1. Regard must once more be had to the promise of this text that in that day there shall be a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. This fountain is the salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is accordingly the death-devouring life of Christ. It is His cleansing holiness. It is His guilt-cancelling satisfaction and righteousness. It is faith, living and indestructible faith. It is the hope that maketh not ashamed. It is the love that God sheds abroad in the hearts of His people. It is life everlasting. This fountain, in a word, is the total of blessings of Christ's cross. Salvation is a fountain because like a fountain of water it springs up unceasingly and tirelessly from God its eternal source. And springing up from Him the overflowing fountain of all good, it flows into the church through Christ the channel of all grace.

This fountain was always there, only, it had to be opened. It was opened when Christ assumed the flesh and blood of His brethren. It was opened when, as the incarnate Son of God, He suffered and died for the sin of those given Him of the Father, was raised on account of their justification, was exalted at the right hand of the throne and received the promise of the Spirit, which He poured upon the church, the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem set with Him in heaven. That was for us the opening of the fountain for sin and uncleanness. And as all the blessings of the cross, and other blessings there are not, are contained in Christ because He merited them by His suffering and death, as, in other words, He of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, drinking at this fountain consists in eating His flesh and drinking His blood. It consists, in other words, in believing in Him and

through Him in God the fountain of all our salvation. And whosoever believes in Him, drinks at this fountain the water that Christ shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that Christ shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

2. The Lord will not alone purge His people from all sin and uncleanness by the fountain that will be opened, but He will purge the land of all idols as well. The idol is a not-god. The idol is a lie. For the idol is the true God drawn down to the level of the corruptible creature. Idolatry, therefore, is more than the denial of God. It is vesting God with all the vices and limitations of the corruptible creature. In the words of the apostle, it is changing the glories, virtues, perfections of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to the corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts and creeping things. Conceptionally, all the virtues of God are changed into their opposites. God, all that may be known of God by the creation of the universe and by the Scriptures, is changed into the creature and is still called God. And the creature is worshipped under the pretence or in the imagining that the object of worship is God. The idolater does not admit that the god before whom he bends the knee is an idol, a creature, a not-god, according to the Scriptures, a devil-god, a fabrication, a god that he makes unto himself according to the desire of his own corrupt heart. But that it is the creature that is being worshipped is plain from the fact that the graven image, the idol of wood and stone before which the idolater comes in the dust, is made of him to bear the image of some creature.

In the light of these remarks, it is plain wherein idolatry essentially consists. It consists, surely, in conceiving of God in terms of the vile creature and in the deification and worship of this conception. If this is idolatry essentially, then it is plain that idolatry still abounds, however true it may be that in this age of culture and scientific achievement men are not literally sacrificing and burning incense to dumb idols.

The Scriptures over and over hold up man's idols, the graven images worshipped and the devil-gods represented and symbolized thereby, as objects for ridicule. "Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not. They have ears but they hear not; noses have they, but they smell not. They have hands, but they handle not; feet have they, but they do not walk; neither speak they through their throat." Yet it is in these dumb things, the graven image as well as the creature represented, the devil-god symbolized, that the idolater puts all his confidence, strange as this may be. "And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image; he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god."

In the light of what is presented above, it is plain that idolatry is but another name for heresy, false doctrine. Idolatry is the love and worship of godless thoughts about God.

But God will cut off the names of the idols from the land and from the whole earth, and they shall be remembered no more. He will cleanse the earth of all wrong thoughts about God. And the lie will be no more. In its place will be truth in the inward parts, right knowledge of God. And it will cover the whole earth as the waters cover the bottom of the sea. And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know Him, from the least to the greatest. Such is here the promise.

Also the prophets the Lord will cause to pass out of the land. The context makes it clear that the reference is to the entire prophetic order of the old dispensation and not alone to the false prophets of this age. The promise is made because there will be no more need of such prophets, seeing that the people of God will reach a perfect knowledge of him. Joel 2:28-31 expresses the same expectation, to wit, that it will come to pass afterward that the Lord will pour out His Spirit upon all flesh, and that their sons and their daughters will prophesy. And their old men will dream dreams, and their young men will see visions. And also upon His servants and upon His handmaids will the Lord pour out His Spirit. The hope of Joel interprets this passage. All the people will be blessed with prophetic vision. All will prophesy. For all will have the anointing, and the anointing which they will receive will abide in them, and they will not need that any man teach them. The special class of prophets will therefore be removed.

Further, in that day the Lord will cause to pass out of the land the spirit of uncleanness, that is, the unclean spirits from the abyss operative in the false prophets and these prophets themselves together with all the wicked, the worshippers of idols.

Such is the condition that will prevail "in that day." How God's people, the anointed ones, will love the truth in that day, how completely consecrated they will be to the cause of God, how intolerant of false prophets, how intensely the most intimate blood relations will be hated for Christ's sake in that day, is revealed in subsequent verses.

3. The man of this verse speaks in the name of the Lord. Yet he speaks not the word of the Lord but his own word, which is therefore the lie, heresy. And though the Spirit has been poured out the man still thinks it safe for him to prophesy. Is he not sent of the Lord? And does he not speak His word? And his doctrine is not new. It's the old time Gospel that he brings. So he says. But God's people are not deceived. For they too, have now the Gospel. It has been fully revealed, communicated to the church by the Lord speaking through the prophets and the apostles as His organs of special revelation. All know now. For all are in the possession of the whole counsel of God regarding the salvation of the elect. All have the anointing and by this anointing all are being led into all truth. God's people, therefore, these anointed ones, clearly perceive that the man speaks lies. To these anointed ones belong also the parents of the man, his

father and mother who begot him. And they say to the man, their very own flesh and blood, "Thou shalt not live, for thou hast spoken a lie in the name of Jehovah." And they pierce him through in his prophesying, that is immediately, without any delay. And this father and mother must not be taken as lone exceptions. So deal all the parents, the anointed ones, with their sons and daughters that speak lies in the name of Jehovah. They shew them no mercy but pierce them through. For all are consumed by this same terrible zeal of God's house. For the heretic there is no place in the church anywhere.

4-6. Owing to this zeal, all those in the church suspected of being false prophets still, because in the past they were known to have spoken lies in the name of the Lord, now live in perpetual fear for their very lives. No longer, therefore, do they prophesy. In the words of this verse 4, they are now ashamed each of his vision in their prophesying. And they do all they can to dispel the cloud of suspicion that hangs over them. In that day the hairy garment was the garb of the prophet. Such mantle was worn by Elijah and by John the baptist. The false prophets of this verse used to wear this garment to speak lies. Though spokesmen of the devil, they wanted the people to believe that they were true prophets of God speaking His word. To achieve their purpose they wore the hairy mantle. But now they are careful to be seen in it no longer. And they choose another occupation. They acquire a farm and go to tilling the soil. And when questioned by God's people, who have a clear recollection of their former evil practice, they say, Why no, I am not a prophet, I am a husbandman, a farmer. And I never was a prophet, but I have always been a farmer. I learnt farming in my youth from a man who bought me. And I have been a farmer ever since. So they all answer, in this vein, though not always in exactly these words. But what we have here in verses 5 and 6 are the exact words of one of their number interrogated. He, too, is saying that he is a farmer and not a prophet. But the man lies. He is a prophet of Baal even. And being such a prophet he was praying one day in Baal's temple. And in his frenzy he cut the palms of his hands with a knife — as all these prophets were wont to do — in the hope that as moved by pity his god would hearken to his cry. How otherwise explain those ugly scars between his hands. What are those wounds between thy hands, he is asked. He has the answer. He was in the house of friends one day. And they quarreled. And there was a fight. And in that fight his hands were cut. Whether the one who questions this man leaves it go at this, is not stated. Perhaps not. It is likely that it must be supposed that the man is pierced through. For instead of confessing his great sin and vowing that he has forsaken it, he tries to cover up his evil doing. He is still the false prophet of yore. If allowed to live, he would continue to be a corrupting influence in the land. And, therefore, he is put to death as are all his spiritual kin.

Such then will be the zeal of the church in that day. The

false prophets in the land will be killed. So the Lord had commanded ages ago by Moses as His organ. The commandment reads: If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, **which is as thine own soul**, entice thee secretly saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou nor thy fathers; namely of the gods of the people which are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shalt thy eyes pity him, but thou shalt surely kill him; thine eyes shalt be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he has sought to thrust thee away from the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. And all Israel shall hear and fear and shall not do no more any such wickedness as this is among you.

Such was the commandment. The idolaters and false teachers in Israel had to be put to death and thereby cut off from the congregation of the Lord, the holy land, the land of the (spiritual) living, the kingdom of God. And the parents of such persons had to take the lead in the killing of them. This may be considered as one of the reasons why it was rarely done. Natural love of the brother, son, daughter, bosom friend, the beloved wife was too overpowering. What could be more painful and agonizing to an Israelite than putting to death a heretic, if such a person happened to be his own son or daughter, father or mother, intimate friend? Rather than kill his own son, however ill-deserving, he would gladly die in his stead.

As to the commandment cited above, it is still valid surely. Only the church is not literally killing the heretic today, but slaying him by the Word of God and thereby cutting him off from the church, excommunicating him from fellowship with Christ, and the holy sacraments, and from all the spiritual blessing and benefits, which God promises to and bestows upon His church, so long as he obstinately and impenitently persists in his sins. What then can be more painful to the believer, more terrible, more soul disturbing than excommunicating a heretic, a false prophet, if such a one happens to be his own flesh and blood, or husband or wife or bosom friend? That man, believer, has great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart, as was the case with the apostle. And he could wish, as the apostle could wish, that himself were accursed from Christ for his son or daughter or brother according to the flesh. Such is the strength of the devotion of natural love, such the binding power of the ties of blood. Unless sanctified by the redeeming grace of Christ, natural love, pity, compassion is a thoroughly foul thing and nothing but a handicap in the service of God. What grace it requires to crucify this love and turn a deaf ear to its demands and groanings whenever a choice must be made between Christ on the one hand and the son, daughter, friend on the other; whenever these persons, because they have come to

stand between Christ and the believer, must be hated for Christ's sake. One thing is certain, the amazing zeal that characterizes the parents of the verses with which we now deal is as yet not ours, however spiritual we may be and however strong our faith and however consecrated we may be to the cause of God. It is not yet ours except in principle. But it one day will be ours. For such is here the promise. But the promise as yet has not been fully fulfilled. And it will not be fully fulfilled until in the hour of death and through death the earthy house of this our tabernacle is dissolved and we have a building of God not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, and when Christ shall have raised us up in the last day. When this shall have come to pass, God's people will not any longer be bearing the image of the earthy as used to be the case, but the image of the heavenly with all the ties that binded them to this earthy severed. Raised up unto everlasting life, they will sit with Christ in judgment over the world. And every man of them will pierce through his brother, and every man his friend and every man his neighbor, — the friend and brother and neighbor and son and daughter that perished in their sins. For as they bear the image of the heavenly and their love being now perfected, they no longer know any man according to the flesh. For flesh and blood and the natural love and affection of which they were the seat are no more. They have perished. For the kingdom is not inherited by flesh and blood.

*Some additional remarks.*

2. The announcement in this verse of the removal of the prophets — the prophetic order of the old dispensation — is surely not in conflict with the good tiding in Eph. 4:11, 12 that Christ exalted gave pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edification of the body of Christ, which is the church. The prophets, including the twelve apostles, were agents of special revelation through whom God communicated to the church the whole counsel regarding the salvation of His people. When at the death of the last apostle this counsel had been fully revealed, the prophets and the apostles alike had served their purpose and their office ceased, never to be revived. For the church was now in the possession of the full Gospel of God. But through the ages to come this Gospel had still to be proclaimed. It had to be ministered to the church according as from time to time the needs of God's believing people would dictate. And it had to be vindicated against all heresy. And for the performance of this task Christ gave pastors and teachers, instituted in his church the teaching ministry, be it that essentially God's people no longer have need that any man teach them, seeing that all now have the anointing.

3. This is the verse that makes mention of the false prophet pierced through by his own father and mother. The great sin of this man was that he spoke his lies in the name of the Lord. As the true prophets of God used to do, he

*(Continued on page 232)*

## FROM HOLY WRIT

### Exposition of I Corinthians 7

#### V.

(I Corinthians 7:12-16 — continued)

In our essay published in the former issue of *The Standard Bearer* we did not complete our discussion on the meaning of these verses, namely, the verses 12-16. This is particularly true of the verses 15, 16.

Since our discussion will be on the latter two verses, we will quote these once more in full. They read as follows: "*But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us in peace. For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?*"

In the interpretation of these two verses we ought to keep some very definite considerations in mind in the light of the preceding context.

It ought to be remembered that Paul is here speaking to "the rest," that is to those married people in the church, where the one is a believer and the other an unbeliever, or possibly a non-believer, one *not yet* believing in Christ Jesus, the Lord. Further, it should be noticed that to these he gives no direct and explicit word from Christ, but he here instructs the church to walk according to the *new status*, which has come into their families, since they and their children are taken up into God's covenant. The children are *holy* for the believing parent's sake.

And this new status he *works out* in "such cases" where the one parent (either husband or wife) is a believer while the other is not. Such a parent may be either an unbeliever (reprobate) or may be a non-believer, (elect) who does *not yet* believe, but will be brought to faith in God's sovereign purpose by His Word and Spirit when and where He wills.

As we stated in our former essay it is entirely possible that by amicable agreement the unbelieving party is willing to live with the believer, and will not disturb the peace of Christ in the family. Yet, should he (she) leave the believing parent the responsibility is wholly with such an unbeliever or non-believer who leaves the family.

Of "such cases" Paul is speaking here in the verses 15, 16.

It ought to be underscored from the outset that in "such cases" the believer is wholly innocent. It is his (her) heart's desire to live with this non-believing partner, only such a believer is worthy of Christ, for he will not allow the unbelief of the unbeliever to overrule the new *Status Quo* of the family in the Lord. He does not love father, mother, brother, sister or husband and/or wife more than Christ.

In this he is, therefore, innocent of the conduct of the unbeliever. No one has a *right* to unbelief!

The unbeliever willed not to live with the believer who was willing to live with unbelieving partner in holy wedlock!

Once, more, Paul is speaking of such cases.

And now Paul will outline the moral position and course of action of the believing partner in "such cases."

As the *moral position* in "such cases" of the believing partner in marriage, it must be noted that, according to verse 15, such a believer is not "placed under bondage," that is, continually up to the present moment to be placed in the bondage of a slave, while in reality he or she is a free-man in the Lord.

There are fundamentally really two interpretations which have come down to us since the time of the Reformation.

There is, first of all, the interpretation of H. A. W. Meyer, who holds that the verb "to be under bondage" implies "no longer *bound* in marriage to such a *departing one*." On the other hand there is the interpretation held by Dr. Weiss in the *Deutsche Zeitschrift*, 1866, page 267 (compare also his *biblische theologie*) who understands the verb "to be under bondage" to refer to *the burden of the conscience*.

In passing we may here remark that from the former paragraph it may be ascertained that expositors of name in Germany differ on the proper interpretation of this Scripture passage. It means that the interpretation of the school of thought to which Meyer belongs and which hold that Paul teaches in I Cor. 7:15 that "in such cases" the marriage-tie is annulled before God, did not go unchallenged, rightly or wrongly!

Let it be stated here that we agree with the "general thrust" of the interpretation of Weiss, and that for the following reasons:

Firstly, because the reason, which Meyer assigns from the context for his interpretation overagainst that of Weiss, is not valid exegetically. Meyer insists that the other alternative is given in the verses 12 and 13. He refers to the fact that Paul says "let him not put her away" if she desires to live with him. From this he draws the erroneous conclusion that "if such a party" does depart then a man can put her away or vice versa. The latter is then implied in that in such case "a brother or a sister is not under bondage." He says "the interpretation" of Weiss runs counter to the implication of "not under bondage."

Secondly, because the interpretation of Meyer puts more into the term "to depart" than is permitted by the simple meaning of the term (choorizoo). The latter means to depart *locally*. Therefore we agree with the thrust of the interpretation of Weiss which points toward the bondage of the conscience!

In the light of the foregoing observations, I would still

like to point out, that the interpretation that would make "dedouloutai," that is, to be under *bondage* tantamount to not be *bound* is against the plain sense, the root meaning of the verb in Greek for "to be under bondage." And it is also against the current usage of this term when compared with the verb in Greek for to be *bound*. The latter term is "deomai" in Greek. The verb "deoo" means that which is bound, tied together. And it is the term which always is used in those passages of Paul where there is no doubt but that Paul is speaking of the marriage-tie. Thus in Romans 7:2. But it is also thus employed by Paul in this indisputable sense in this very chapter now under consideration. Compare the verses 27 and 39 of I Corinthians 7.

Besides, the current usage of the term "dedouloutai" to be under bondage, is never employed in Scripture for the relationship between man and wife. Marriage is not bondage but the highest freedom, a picture of the relationship of Christ to His church. The term always refers to political bondage or spiritual bondage, being overcome of someone else, or of the power of sin and evil lusts. See II Peter 2:19, Acts 7:6 and Romans 6:22.

According to the meaning of the verb "to be under bondage," that is to be "placed" under bondage, which must not be confused with another verb in Greek "douleuoo," meaning "to serve," and according to the context it means that in the christian family the believer is not in the bondage of sin when the unbeliever party leaves him or her, while they would live with them, provided Christ could come to His own in the family. For the christian "family" is holy to the Lord. Such are the children born also from the unbeliever because of the believer.

Closely allied with the foregoing is also the implication of the sentence "For God hath called you in peace." That is the "reason" why the believing party is "not under bondage" when he allows the unbeliever to depart. And thus also the reason becomes clear that in such a manner it is possible that the believer will be instrumental in the hand of God to save his unbelieving wife, or the believing woman her husband.

Meyer, due to his conception of the verb "not under bondage" must here wrest the plain meaning of this "for what knowest thou, etc." Writes he "For neither does the (christian) wife whether, she, by continuing to live with her non-believing husband, know." And since she does not know whether the situation will ever change, she had better get rid of the husband, sever all relationships with him, and consider the marriage annulled. Writes he "this uncertainty cannot be a reason for any constraint to the hurt of the peace." Thus also De Wette, Osiander, Neander, Ewald, Maier and Hofman. This is the school of the Lutheran exegetes, following in the footsteps of Luther who taught that this passage gave the right for remarriage to the innocent party.

There is another school of thought on this verse following Calvin, the peer of exegetes. They, with Calvin, "hold that verse 16 enunciates a new reason for *not* breaking up the marriage, namely, the possibility of the conversion of the non-believer. In this school one finds such exegetes as Flatt, Reichert, Olshausen." Thus according to Meyer in his Commentary on this passage.

Meyer does not agree with this interpretation of the Calvinistic exegetes. He alleges that it "runs counter" to his interpretation of "to not be under bondage."

As has already been intimated by us, we agree with the interpretation of Calvin and others, and not with Meyer and the Lutheran divines.

We should notice, first of all, that Paul is evidently speaking of the efficacious calling in verse 15b. It means that the believer has been put by Christ through the Holy Spirit, and that through the preaching of the gospel of Christ, "in peace." They have been removed from the strife of sin and evil and are there where they may bear the fruits of the Spirit which are "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, forbearance, and temperance." Gal. 5:22. This "peace" in Christ is the new status of the family, the believers and their seed. Here there is a bond of peace, the fruit of the Spirit which must be maintained. And this "bond" is higher than the love for a husband or wife who is a non-believer, and who would subject the family to her unbelieving will. That would place the free family in Christ once more in "bondage."

Wherefore, if such a non-believing "husband" or "wife" desires to leave, let them leave. The responsibility is wholly that of the unbeliever. The family's status quo is not that of the unbeliever but of the believer!

Besides, it is good discipline. It might bring the non-believer to his or her senses. And that way they would still be exposed to the Word, and the Holy Spirit is mighty in His own way and time and place to bring such a one to the faith.

The avenues of a proper return of the unbeliever are thus kept open!

That is also, according to the sequence of this passage, the manner of God's dealing. The natural is first, then the spiritual. The ordinance in Adam stands, "What God hath joined together let not man put asunder!" Christianity does not change the order of things, but puts new life into the old forms.

The Christian is not "under bondage in such cases" but is free to serve the Lord. This may entail suffering. He thus sows in tears in the hope of reaping in joy, and that, too, in his own family!

Well may Paul say: "And I think I too have the Holy Spirit."

G.L.



## IN HIS FEAR

### Spiritually Sensitive

(7)

"In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in all things, love."

These words of Peter Meiderlin we quoted at the end of our discussion of these matters of spiritual sensitivity last time.

In themselves these words can stand and can even serve as the basis for an ecumenical movement. In essentials there must be unity. Where it does not exist, there can be no merger of churches. No church may possibly merge with a church that refuses to maintain essentials of doctrine. Where there is no unity of doctrine there can be no agreement on discipline and there can be no living and walking together. Then we say with Paul, "What part hath he that believeth with an infidel?", II Corinthians 6:15b. In nonessentials there must be liberty. And nonessentials may never be the reason for separation and separate existence as churches. In all things there must be love, or else there will be no unity in essentials or liberty in nonessentials.

But we find in the world today so many denominations, sects and parties exactly because essentials have been classified as nonessentials and because the love of God is not exercised in all things. We can begin with that last element. Love in all things, sad to say, usually means a love toward man that reveals hatred towards God. Among men we must surely give the accused the benefit of the doubt when there is no clear cut evidence of his guilt. But we may never give man the benefit of the doubt over against God. We may never assume an attitude over against man that reveals an attitude of hatred against God. In all things there must be love; but that love must always be love toward God. Thus when men begin to call essential truths of Scripture non-essentials, we cannot and may not show love toward these departures from the truth, lest we show hatred towards the God Who is insulted by denials of the truth and by the freedom given to the lie and to evil practices. If we love God and are spiritually sensitive, it will hurt us to have God called a liar by man; and in love to God we will fight that false doctrine even though it means expulsion from the fellowship of a church and the disruption of organizational unity.

We often feel so sensitive about hurting the feelings of fellow men. And consider it an act lacking in love to say something that might offend them. And yet we can stand all manner of evil being said about our God. His Word can be distorted, theories may be expressed that make Him less wise and intelligent than man, philosophies are taught which make Him be dependent upon the creature that He sustains, and these things never bother us. In fact so spiritually insensitive are some that they clamor for love to man in his

works of hatred against God. That the glory of God that is due His name is denied does not bother them. To this they are insensible. But the poor feelings of man, his name, and his honor are the things concerning which they are so sensitive. That is not in His fear and is not the spiritual sensitivity of the man of God. That is of the flesh. "In all things, love," indeed, but let it be the love of God.

When that is the case we will unite on the truth; and that truth is essential. The only proper basis of union is on the truth of Scripture. And that means the whole truth. Union that pleases God is a union of defense for His Word. Never may one point of that truth be classified as a nonessential so that factions with different opinions in regard to this truth are given liberty to think as they will concerning it. Even if it can be proven that a philosophy, a theory of man's mind, that is generally held by the denomination, is not a binding doctrine and is not considered an essential element of the faith of that church, one joining that church, in order to walk so that his principle is, in all things, love to God, must oppose that heresy, must fight against it with all the power and talent at his command. Those who do not intend to do that, before God have no business uniting with that church and ought rather to remain a separate church where they may show true love to God by maintaining His truth. In *all* things, love to God. And therefore in essentials, unity in love to God and in nonessentials, liberty in love to God. The great commandment is that we love God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind and strength and our neighbours as ourselves. But that love to the neighbour must not militate against that love to God. It must be a love to God and for His sake.

The sad situation today in the undenominational and ecumenical movements that have appeared is that they advocate in some essentials, unity, in others, liberality that in all things we may live in the love of man to man. Meanwhile God is insulted, His truth is not defended, the heretic is pampered and approved and in all things love to God is glaringly lacking. Fancy slogans are adopted: No Creed But Christ. Ay, yes but then let us have a union of the Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches once again! Both confess Christ. Let us call all the rest nonessentials and in all things live in love with one another.

— That is not the word of God!

Turn, if you will to that "love chapter," I Corinthians 13. We may read in verse 6, that charity or love, "Rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth." He who has that love of God in His heart will seek no affiliation with a church that shows hatred towards God by defending and approving iniquity and that rejoices in the lie. Such an one will not plead with such a church simply to declare these false doctrines and this support of wicked practices not binding for them, should they join. Instead such an one who loves God and in that love rejoices in righteousness and in the truth will call the church that maintains these wickednesses to repent-

ance in the love of God. And he will maintain his own separate existence in his own church in order not to be guilty of giving liberality and freedom to the corruption of essentials.

And this is the point, men begin to seek merger with such churches when they lose their spiritual sensitivity. In one way or another they become dull of hearing, they become calloused to the lie and to sin, no longer feel its sting and therefore pounce on the words of Jesus, "That they may be one" to soothe yet what little speech there is of their consciences. But God is not mocked. And unless it is a unity in the essentials, unity in the truth in love to God, it is not a union in the fulfillment of Christ's prayer but rather an act that militates against that very oneness of which Christ speaks. For it is a movement in the direction of worldliness and of the unity which for a time the anti-christian kingdom shall achieve, a unity of a false love to man in all things.

Therefore we wish to set down a principle from Scripture concerning merger and affiliation with a church other than the one to which at the moment we belong: Unite with others only when the cause of the truth is thereby advanced; Continue to maintain separate existence when there is any danger of any one of the essential truths of Scripture being denied. Is that really a principle of Scripture? Indeed, for one passage alone would suffice to prove that. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?", II Corinthians 6:14, 15.

Strong language?

Of course, for it was written by one who loved God, whose principle was, In all things, love God. The believer who loves God will not want to be unequally yoked with one who denies Him in any point of doctrine. Together they cannot serve the cause of the truth. It is an unequal yoke; and one drop of poison in the water does not make the poison less poisonous, it makes the water polluted. Never mind seeking the good of the poison; be concerned with the pure water of life. That point of unbelief that remains when such a union is sought will not be swallowed up and will not be neutralized by your faith on this point. You will find yourself unequally yoked to that unbelief; and your faith will suffer. For your motive of such union is and must be wrong, for it is contrary to the text quoted above. Other texts can be quoted and the above text can be explored further. But let us consider yet briefly that oft-corrupted yet important text in Revelation 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." It is the figment of man's imagination that makes this the door of the heart, which is not mentioned anywhere in the text or context. The letter is sent to the church at Laodicea that has corrupted its way; and Christ will no longer be in that church or speak His blessing there. But He has a few elect

children there, who by virtue of that election are given to believe and to hear His voice. At the door of that church, which He will not enter (because He wrote II Cor. 6:14, 15 through Paul) Christ calls to these elect to come out and be a separate people to maintain His truth — which is no longer possible in that church at Laodicea, which is neither hot nor cold — and then He will come in to them in this new church and sup with them, and they with Him. Christ is not pleased with heresies and denials of the essential doctrines of the Scriptures. And He detests, therefore, all mergers that are not motivated by the desire for the advancement of the cause of the truth. For that cause of the truth is His cause, for He is the way, the truth, and the life. He cannot approve of a merger that does not seek the good of His cause. And He will never bless it. And those whose spiritual senses are dulled to that extent that they seek merger for any reason that militates against the furtherance of the truth will find that they will become more and more dull of hearing and less and less sensitive to the will of God, till they classify more and more of the essentials of the truth to be simply a matter of emphasis, and so nonessentials in which one ought to have liberty of thought; and more and more they will boast of love to man, while they walk in this hatred against God.

Merger of a church with another or affiliation of an individual with another church must always be a step forward. Never may it be backward. Always must it be for more enjoyment of the truth. Never may it be for more liberty and freedom of thought in regard to the essentials of the doctrine of Scripture. Always must it be to promote a more godly life. Never may it be consummated where the danger lurks that we and our children are encouraged to a more worldly life. Always must it be to strengthen and encourage the saints in the good fight of faith. Never may it be consummated where one has to lay down the weapons of this spiritual warfare in order to remain in the fellowship of and to retain the friendship and favor of those **who have ceased** the battle — to any degree whatsoever — and who let unrighteousness have free sway.

Union of churches and affiliation of members must be in His fear, and must be done, therefore, in the consciousness that it is before His face.

J.A.H.

## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

(Continued from page 228)

prefaced all his discourses by the formula, "This saith the Lord," and thereby laid claim to divine authority for his false teachings. Thus though a prophet of the devil, he posed as the spokesman of God with communications from heaven by which God's people could come only through him.

5, 6. Of the Baal prophet of these verses it is stated that he was wounded between his hands, which may just as well mean that his whole body in various places was badly cut, particularly his shoulders and chest.

G.M.O.

## AN OPEN LETTER TO REV. J. BLANKESPOOR

I am addressing this letter to you as a reply to the article you wrote in the *Reformed Guardian* of Jan. 25, 1958. I will not quote it in its entirety. This I consider unnecessary. However, if I have in any way misquoted or misrepresented you I will gladly be corrected.

My first observation concerns your remarks about personal theological opinions. You state that "mere theological opinions may never be used as criterions for membership in Christ's Church." And you also write that "it is very characteristic of sects that they are based on and adhere to certain opinions of leaders." And although you mention the movements of the Jehovah Witnesses and of Christian Science and Mormonism, you do not particularly refer to them. Of course not! I am assuming that you refer to us. I assume this because you are writing about the Declaration of Principles and your synod's decision to discard this Declaration. The Declaration was not composed to bar Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Scientists, and Mormons. And the reason why you discarded it was because you did not need it in the organization of churches. The Three Forms of Unity you regard as wholly adequate in this organization of churches. Personal theological opinions may never serve as criteria for membership in Christ's Church.

Now concerning your remarks along this line I wish to observe the following. This is not the first time that remarks such as these have appeared in the writings of your magazine. Never, however, has anyone of you ever made an attempt to name a single one of these personal theological opinions. It is about time that you do so. Secondly, in these words you charge us with a very grievous sin. You accuse our churches, if you please, of the sin of regarding personal opinions above the growth, expansion, and development of the Church of Christ. It is your opinion that such is characteristic of a sect. And we are surely, in your opinion, a sect. Hence, when we must choose between the Church's development and adherence to the opinion or opinions of certain leaders we choose the latter. I request of you, Rev. Blankespoor, that you prove this. In the meantime I will show you that you are deliberately speaking an untruth. Your article was not hastily written. According to "Where To Look" of your *Reformed Guardian* your article represents an *investigation of the matter* (Italics mine). And now permit me to refresh your memory on a little history which has a vital bearing on this matter. You will recall that I was minister in Hamilton, Canada. You know all about the matter I am about to mention for two reasons. First, I revealed the entire history of what happened in Hamilton in *The Standard Bearer* at the time. Secondly, you were a member of the committee which came to Hamilton and conducted a thorough investigation of the entire matter. How, Rev. Blankespoor, did the undersigned labor in Hamilton? Did I place personal opinions of men above church membership? Now I am going to assume that one of these theological

opinions is Rev. H. Hoeksema's covenant conception. Did I try to "force this down the throats of the Liberated?" Did I tell them that they must agree to our conception or definition of the covenant as a requirement for admittance into our fellowship? I told them, Rev. Blankespoor, and you know this, that it made no difference to the undersigned whether they preferred Rev. Hoeksema's definition of "covenant" or Prof. Schilder's. We define the covenant as a relationship of friendship; Schilder defined it as the regulation of friendship. I told the Liberated immigrants that their preference for Schilder's definition would certainly not bar them from membership. But I also told them that I would insist on this: the friendship of God with His people is sovereignly particular. Does this smack, Rev. Blankespoor, of maintaining personal opinions at the cost of the welfare and growth of the Church? How well I remember Rev. Hoeksema's warning, in my installation sermon in Hamilton, to the effect that we must not make of the "covenant een stokpaardje." I am sure that the missionaries, Revs. A. Cammenga and W. Hofman, did not maintain personal opinions at the cost of the growth of the Church. I certainly was not guilty of this in my labors in Hamilton. Rev. Blankespoor, you are speaking an untruth.

My second observation, Rev. Blankespoor, concerns your statement, and I quote: "Hasn't it been said more than once that we are bound by the Confessions and our own peculiar historical position which must be explained in the light of 1924? What this latter means has always puzzled me, and still does."—end of quote. I am not surprised that this has always puzzled you. I begin to understand that you have never understood that the interpretations of the Confessions by the Protestant Reformed Churches is very distinctive in the light of our historical position of 1924. Surely, Rev. Blankespoor, you will not feel offended if I remind you, very briefly, of this distinctive position. After all, the Supreme Court of Michigan has awarded to you and to your congregation the name, "Protestant Reformed." But, how will you use this name if you do not even understand it? And that you do not understand it appears from your entire article. There is, according to your article, absolutely no reason why the Protestant Reformed Churches, the Christian Reformed Church, and the Liberated Churches should lead a separate existence. You have never understood 1924. You have never understood the name, "Protestant Reformed." But you have the name. You are stuck with it. It has been awarded to you. And it has been taken away from others who do understand it, love it, and will sacrifice for it. So, because you have the name, I will tell you what it means. First, we must never forget the history of 1924. God has not forgotten it. And we should forget it? Secondly, the grace and salvation of God are not only particular, but sovereignly particular. The Arminian also believes that salvation is particular. But he does not believe that it is sovereignly particular. And because the grace and love of God are sovereignly particular God is there-

fore the living God of the antithesis, and we must therefore walk antithetically. This, Rev. Blankespoor, is the meaning, the implication of the name that has been entrusted to you. And, you have my sincere sympathy if you are not faithful to it.

My third observation, Rev. Blankespoor, concerns your dishonest camouflage of the doctrinal position of the Protestant Reformed Churches. You speak in your article of the "Three Points of 'Common Grace'." I assume that you did this deliberately. It agrees with your entire article. Of course, I have no criticism of the expression, "Three Points of Common Grace," as such. My objection concerns what you have deliberately omitted. I realize that the Three Points of 1924 constitute the elevation by the Christian Reformed Church of the theory of Common Grace to a church dogma. But, why did you not also speak of the Three Points as the Three Points of Arminianism? These Points also teach Arminianism, do they not? Or, has it also always been "accepted as reformed" that God wants all men to be saved? Of course, this is essentially the same as what your churches have adopted in the first statement of Rev. De Wolf. It would have been more honest on your part, especially in the light of the fact that you were conducting a thorough investigation of the matter, had you called the attention of your readers to the fact that the Three Points of 1924 are thoroughly Arminian and Pelagian. Anyone, mind you, who expresses agreement with the Three Forms of Unity (Rev. Blankespoor, I do not believe you understand the Three Forms of Unity), although endorsing the Three Points of 1924, would be received by you into your midst with open arms. This you have written in your article.

My fourth observation, Rev. Blankespoor, concerns your repudiation of the very name that has been awarded to you. I now quote from your article: "This we have always maintained regarding the binding issues of the Three Points of 'Common Grace.'" We've said in the past that they are not confessional. Besides, we have refused for conscience sake to be bound by them, to consider them settled and binding. And correctly so, I think. For two or three centuries, so we spoke, there were in the Reformed Church opinions on "Common Grace," also some that denied it. There were free discussions on the subject. Those who believed in it were considered to be Reformed, nevertheless. But, what would we do today if someone believing in "Common Grace" desired to join our congregation? I'm afraid that some of us would want to set up another unwritten declaration, and set up another church wall within the Confessions. Remember, we are dealing with membership in the Church of Jesus Christ. And with unwritten declarations we would refuse people such membership . . . What would we do today if this man (Ursinus — H.V.) would seek entrance into the Protestant Reformed Churches? Would we apply some unwritten declaration about "Common Grace," which, by the way, he doesn't mention in this statement? Surely, there would be room for discussion on this opinion which he here holds.

But, when it would be a question of membership in our Churches, I for one would welcome him into our midst with open arms, on the basis of the Three Standards with no strings attached." This means that there is in your opinion no reason why the Protestant Reformed, Christian Reformed, and Liberated Churches should lead a separate existence. All that is required for membership is agreement with the Three Forms of Unity. And, you understand, all these churches profess agreement with these Forms of Unity. It is true that you write, and I quote: "We are not some kind of club, some kind of society or religious organization with various requirements for membership. No, we believe that we are Christ's Church. This is what we must always be able to say, and also that we are the best manifestation of Christ's Church." But, here you write nonsense. Must we insist that we are the best manifestation of Christ's Church? Must we insist on this also over against the Christian Reformed Church and the Liberated Churches? But, we must remember that these churches insist on the same thing. And, we should welcome people with open arms who believe in the Three Points of 1924? What would happen to our churches, Rev. Blankespoor, if and when the majority believe in the "Three Points of Common Grace"? There are certainly the Three Points of 1924, are they not? I now recall that Rev. A. Cammenga said to us once (my wife and me) when the Revs. Cammenga and W. Hofman were in Hamilton, Canada, in 1950 at the time of Labor Day. I told them that I did not expect the Liberated to understand our doctrine fully (take note of this, Rev. Blankespoor; you knew all about this). I also told them that we had decided, as the consistory of Hamilton, that they must not agitate, and also that they must express the desire to be instructed in our doctrine. Hereupon Rev. A. Cammenga replied that this was the least we could demand of them, and that anyone who adhered to the Heynsian view of the covenant could never be received into our fellowship. And a man as W. Huisken of Edgerton complained about Revs. De Jong and B. Kok at the same time, lamenting that these men wanted to lower the church walls of our churches and expose our churches to ruin. And you now repudiate the very name that has been awarded to you! Who, Rev. Blankespoor, elevated the theory of Common Grace to a church dogma? Did we not declare in 1924 that the matter of Common Grace should be discussed? Was it not the Christian Reformed Church that always and consistently refused such discussion? Did they not formulate Three Points, a pernicious mixture of Common Grace and Arminianism? Did they not cast us out of their fellowship because we could not subscribe to them? And now you welcome all adherents to the Three Points of Common Grace into your fellowship? You quote Ursinus and John Calvin. Tell me, please: were the writings you quote of these men condemned by the Synod of Dordt and its Canons? The doctrine of Total Depravity certainly constitutes one of the fundamental and vital teachings of these Canons, does it not?

*(Continued on page 238)*

## 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

#### REJECTION OF ERRORS

Article 3. Who teach: That in spiritual death the spiritual gifts are not separate from the will of man, since the will in itself has never been corrupted, but only hindered through the darkness of the understanding and the irregularity of the affections; and that these hindrances having been removed, the will can then bring into operation its native powers, that is, that the will of itself is able to will and to choose, or not to will and not to choose, all manner of good which may be presented to it. This is an innovation and an error, and tends to elevate the powers of the free will, contrary to the declaration of the Prophet: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly corrupt," Jer. 17:9; and of the Apostle: "Among whom (sons of disobedience) we also all once lived in the lusts of the flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind," Eph. 2:3.

With the above translation we have little fault to find, except that: 1) The word "separate" could better be translated "separated." 2) The rather clumsy expression, "the will can then bring into operation its native powers," could more simply be translated: "the will is free to exercise its native (or: inborn) power." 3) The texts quoted should be quoted from our Authorized Version, as follows: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," Jer. 17:9; and, "Among whom (the children of disobedience) also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind," Eph. 2:3.

This article follows quite logically upon the preceding one. It stands to reason that if the spiritual gifts, or good qualities and virtues, could not belong to the will of man when he was first created, and that these, therefore, could not have been separated therefrom in the fall, then it is also true that in spiritual death the spiritual gifts are not separated from the will of man. And this logical connection is also indicated by the clause, "since the will in itself has never been corrupted." We must bear in mind, however, what is meant by the last clause. What the Arminian means by the statement that "the will in itself has never been corrupted" is plain from the preceding article. And it is indeed important to understand this, so that we may be able to discern the

Arminian error also today. Let us therefore investigate this a little more closely.

First of all, we should remember that the Arminian aim is to deny the truth of total depravity. This, as we have observed before, is the crucial stage of the Arminian error; and the truth of total depravity is a crucial truth with regard to the Reformed doctrine of efficacious grace. If the Arminian wants to maintain his theory of conditional salvation, he must destroy the truth of total depravity, because he must have a man that is able to fulfill the conditions of salvation. However, the Arminian is confronted by the plain fact that Scripture speaks of the fall of man and of his corruption and his spiritual death. Hence, he cannot very well flatly contradict the fact that man has fallen into spiritual death. He must follow a devious course. He must recognize these Scriptural facts, and must employ the terminology of Scripture, and in the meantime get rid of the truth by constructing a new explanation of these Scriptural facts and terms.

Hence, in the second place, the Arminian, as we saw in connection with the previous article, begins with creation, and claims that the spiritual gifts of righteousness and holiness and goodness did from the creation not inhere in the will of man as such, and that therefore, there was no possibility that these gifts could be separated from man's will in the fall. This is what the Arminian means by the statement in the present article, "the will in itself has never been corrupted."

Thence, in the third place, the Arminian arrives at the position that the will of the natural man is of itself able to will and to choose, or not to will and not to choose, all manner of good which may be presented to it, just as soon as there are no hindrances in the way of that inherently free will.

Thus, you see, the Arminian has arrived at his goal, namely, a man with a free will. He denies the depravity of the will. But if then you would accuse him of denying the fall and depravity of man, he would adroitly sidestep you by making the claim that you cannot speak of a corrupt will since, to begin with, the term "holy and righteous will" is itself a misnomer. And so, characteristically heretical, he follows a deceitful and devious course in his denial of the truth.

In what, then, does the fall and corruption of man consist, according to the Arminian? And, if the will is not corrupt in itself, whence does sin arise? The Arminian answer is two-fold. In the first place, man's mind is darkened somewhat, so that he does not discern the good clearly. Fundamentally, this implies that in the Arminian view sin is an error, a mistake. It is due to ignorance. And the solution to the problem of man's sin and misery is, accordingly, that man must be educated, enlightened, persuaded of the good. And in the second place, man's affections, or inclinations, have through the fall become irregular, disorganized, so that he is somewhat inclined toward the evil, and so that he does the evil more easily than the good. But the will itself is untouched by the fall, and retains its power to

choose or not to choose the good. Hence, this darkness of the mind and irregularity of the affections constitute a hindrance, an impediment, to the will. And if only the hindrance is removed, then the will can again freely function in choosing or not choosing whatever good is presented to it.

Now let us clearly see the implications of this view.

In the first place, such a view constitutes the destruction of all true religion. It changes the Christian faith radically. It substitutes education, reform, enlightenment, training, moral suasion for regeneration. It is basically modernism. Build schools, and teach men social and religious values and virtues, teach a virtuous and religious way of life,—such is the slogan of this view. Then the enlightened mind of man will cause the will to go in the right direction, and also the irregularity of the affections will be overcome. Let us note that by whatever devious means the Arminian arrives at his view, the ultimate result is that man is not corrupt, but inherently good; there are only circumstances, both external and internal, that hinder the development and expression of this inherently good man. Remove those hindrances, and man will become manifest in his true greatness. God's help may be necessary in the removal of the hindrances; but the improvement comes from man himself. It is a religion of self-improvement through self-development. The damnable part of it all is that the Arminian is not nearly as honest as the modernist. If only the Arminian was as crass and as blunt as the modernist, he would not trouble the church as much as he does.

In the second place, it may be noted that the Arminian conception of man and of his spiritual and psychological make-up is very unrealistic. The Remonstrant makes separation between the various faculties of the soul, and he presents matters as if the fall could have more influence upon the one faculty, the mind, than upon the other faculty, the will. But man is one. And his soul, even though it may be distinguished into the faculties of mind and will, is also one. And if man falls into corruption, the entire man becomes subject to sin. And the presentation as if a man could be corrupt and darkened in his understanding, but not in his will, is a very strange and impossible view indeed.

This view the fathers here call both an error and an innovation. It is something new and strange and erroneous to the Reformed faith. And it is an innovation upon Scripture itself. And the article points out clearly that it is contrary to the Scriptures. The first passage, Jeremiah 17:9, is very happily chosen. For it speaks of the heart. And the heart is the spiritual, ethical center of the whole man and of his entire life. From the heart are the issues of life. Make the heart good, and the entire man will be good. Let the heart be corrupt, and the whole man and all the issues of his life will be corrupt. A good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and a corrupt tree bringeth forth corrupt fruit. Hence, if it is true, according to Scripture, that the heart of man is deceitful and desperately wicked above all things, then it can but follow that the entire man is deceitful and desperately

wicked, both in mind and will, in all his affections and inclinations, in all his thoughts and desires and actions. And thus also the passage in Eph. 2:3 teaches us that we all by nature perform the desires (the wills, literally) of the flesh and of the mind. Man has desires, evil desires, according to which he follows after the lusts of the flesh. Whence do those desires arise? From his will. Yes, but the text tells us that they are the desires of the flesh, of our nature as it is carnal, sold under sin. Hence, the will and its desires are under the power of our sinful flesh, are in the power of sin itself. This is the spiritual bondage of the will. Man cannot, and he will not, and he cannot will to follow the good.

\* \* \* \*

Article 4. Who teach: That the unregenerate man is not really nor utterly dead in sin, nor destitute of all powers unto spiritual good, but that he can yet hunger and thirst after righteousness and life, and offer the sacrifice of a contrite and broken spirit, which is pleasing to God. For these are contrary to the express testimony of Scripture. "Ye were dead through trespasses and sins," Eph. 2:1, 5; and: "Every imagination of the thought of his heart are only evil continually," Gen. 6:5; 8:21.

Moreover, to hunger and thirst after deliverance from misery, and after life, and to offer unto God the sacrifice of a broken spirit, is peculiar to the regenerate and those that are called blessed. Ps. 51:10, 19; Matt. 5:6.

The above translation is accurate, and can stand without change.

Here, of course, we have the consequence of the entire corrupt view of man and his fall which the Arminian maintains and which has been exposed as anti-Scriptural in the two preceding paragraphs of the Rejection of Errors. This is what the Arminian has been wanting all along: a man who is able yet to hunger and thirst after righteousness and life, and to offer the sacrifice of a contrite and broken spirit, which is pleasing to God. He needs such a man. For, according to the Arminian, the decision for or against salvation rests solely with man. The Arminian does not need a man who is perfect and who is able to fulfill the complete and perfect obedience of the law. But he does need a man who is able to fulfill the condition of faith and of the partial obedience of faith. He does not need a man who can of himself believe; but he does need a man who can accept the proffered gift of faith. He does not need a man who is righteous; but he does need a man who can desire, that is, hunger and thirst after, righteousness and life. This inherent need of the Arminian view, with its Christ for all and its conditional salvation and conditional election, compelled him to twist and to contradict the entire Scriptural teaching concerning the creation, fall, and corruption of man. And here in this fourth article we have the final product: man is not really nor utterly dead in sin, but can yet hunger and thirst after righteousness and life, and offer the sacrifice of a contrite and broken spirit, which is pleasing to God.

(to be continued)

H.C.H.



## DECENCY and ORDER

### Article 31

#### I. *To Whom Must the Contention of the Appeal Be Proved?*

Under this sub-heading we are concerned with the question whether, when an appeal is made to an ecclesiastical body, the appellant must prove his contention to the satisfaction of the body to which the appeal is directed or whether it is sufficient that he proves to himself that the decision questioned is contrary to the Word of God or the Church Order. That is the question!

With respect to this matter there have been and still are two conflicting opinions among the exponents of Reformed Church polity. The one contends that before submission to any ecclesiastical decision can be withheld, the body that made the decision must be convinced of its wrongness. The other holds to the view that one who is convinced in his own mind that a certain decision is in error is not bound, even for one moment, to submit to the same. This difference of interpretation has more than once occasioned sharp conflict in the church of Jesus Christ. Both sides have certain patterned arguments to bolster their position with the result that, although there are two seemingly opposite views here, both sides claim to maintain the same church order and find support for their views in the same article. The advocates of the former view reason that their view is the only tenable one because by it decency and order are maintained in the church. If decisions of the Classis and Synod were not binding upon any individual or consistory that might choose to disagree with them, anarchism would prevail. Everyone would then do as seemeth good in their own eyes and there would be no law and order in the churches. The very power of the ecclesiastical assemblies is then broken and the usefulness of the entire church order destroyed. Furthermore, it is argued that on the basis of the 31st. Article of the church order itself, this position must be maintained since it speaks of decisions taken by majority vote as being considered "*settled and binding*" and this would be meaningless and contradictory if any member of the church could be loosed from it by simply expressing disagreement with it.

On the other hand, those who favor the latter view, deny these claims and point out other things favoring their position. They reason that the main thrust of Article 31 involves the greater duty to be obedient to God rather than to man. Decisions of the church are made by man and, consequently, if one is convinced in his own mind that a certain decision is in conflict with the Word of God, he cannot allow himself to be bound by that decision even for a time. This would make an appeal against the decision impossible for in order to do so he would have to submit until such time as his appeal is heard. This he cannot do for this would be binding the conscience and no man may permit his conscience to be bound by anything other than the authoritative Word of God ir-

respective of the consequences. Furthermore, unless freedom be allowed for the individual right of protest without the suppression of the conscience, we impose upon the church order a most gruesome form of hierarchy which is contrary to all Reformed principle.

In evaluating these positions, it is our view that they are not as conflicting as they may first appear to be. Both of these views contain an element of truth but neither one expresses the right position fully. It is an over simplification of the problem involved to merely assert an "*either or*" position in the matter. On the one hand it is certainly true that the binding character of ecclesiastical decisions must be maintained. If this is not done, the whole structure of ecclesiastical machinery is destroyed. On the other hand, the right of the individual or individual church in federation with the denomination must be maintained. This is a fundamental principle of the Reformation that is clearly inscribed in Article 31 of the Church Order. To violate it is an evil that will inevitably lead to most serious consequences.

An interpretation must be sought in which both of these elements are preserved. This, we feel, can be done by placing a proper limitation upon the idea of "*submission*." What is meant by "*submitting to an ecclesiastical decision until an appeal is heard?*" The article itself does not speak of "*submission*" as such but it is implied in that it states that "*whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote shall be considered settled and binding.*" Now if this is to be the case, those affected by the decision must "*submit.*" If then this submission is interpreted to mean that one must bow absolutely to what has been decided even to the extent of acknowledging that the decision is correct ethically, the defenders of the second view cited above have a vital argument and Article 31 is painfully in need of radical revision so that the consciences of the individual may be freed from tyrannical hierarchy.

If, however, "*submission*" be interpreted to mean acknowledgment of a legally made decision and recognition of the fact that said decision, unless revoked, is binding upon the churches and every member thereof, the argument falls away. Such acknowledgment does not involve a violation of the conscience. The very fact that one appeals indicates disagreement and is evidence of conscientious objection. Lack of or failure to appeal indicates submission in the sense that one is consciously bound to agree with the decision.

Furthermore, it should be remembered by the appellant, however, that the right of appeal is not a license to rebellion. He must understand that in the event he is unsuccessful in his attempt to get the undesirable decision rescinded, he is duty bound to submit and if the matter is of such momentous consequence that this is for him an ethical impossibility, he must sever his connection with the church and seek affiliation with another that does not bind his conscience. He may not live in rebellion in the church, refusing to submit to her authority and doing as he pleases irrespective of her decisions any more than a citizen who may disagree with the propriety

of a twenty mile speed zone ordinance in a certain area, appeals to the authorities without success, may continue to ignore the law and drive his automobile through the area at forty miles per hour.

Hence, the appellant must prove to the ecclesiastical body the incorrectness of its decision. He does not have to do this to himself for of this he is already convinced as is evident from the fact of his appeal. If he fails to prove to the satisfaction of the ecclesiastical body, the decision taken remains "*settled and binding*" for him and then he is confronted with two alternatives: (1) Submit to the decision or, (2) sever his connection with the church for conscience sake.

### J. Majority Vote

Majority vote, in distinction from plurality vote, means that more than half of the total number of votes cast favor a certain measure making it a binding decision. Plurality vote denotes that the largest number of votes decides an issue which in some instances may be done with less than half of the votes. Thus, for example, there may be three candidates for a certain office. Let us say that one hundred votes are cast. The first candidate receives thirty votes, the second forty-five votes and the third twenty-five. By plurality vote the second candidate is elected although none of the candidates received a majority vote which, in this instance would be a minimum of fifty-one votes.

The church order in Article 31 speaks of "*whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote.*" Some conclude from this that no decision of any kind may be made except by majority vote in the ecclesiastical assemblies. There is only one kind of vote in the church that is recognized and that is the vote of the majority, viz. one over half. Others disagree with this (and obviously also with the Church Order) claiming that the only vote that is proper in ecclesiastical circles is that which is unanimous. All must be agreed on every issue so that there may be harmony and unity in the church. If this is not the case, debate on the question must be extended until all are convinced one way or the other. In this form, this position is as impractical as it is foolish. One member of an assembly could retard all of its progress and make impossible every decision. In a slightly altered form, however, it may contain a very worthy element. In the early assemblies of Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, two votes would be taken on every issue. The first was merely for the purpose of determining the opinion of the majority. Assent to this was agreed by the minority and, consequently, a second vote was taken for the purpose of making the expressed opinion of the majority the unanimous decision of the entire gathering. Thus matters would literally be agreed upon by common consent.

Occasionally this method is still used when a congregation calls a minister of the Word. The usual trio is made by the consistory and the congregation is called to vote. One is elected by majority vote and then another vote is cast to gain the common consent of the entire congregation. The call-

letter is then made out in which is stated that N.N. has been chosen by unanimous vote. Another significant example of this method being used is the adoption of our Church Order by the Synod of the Reformed Churches of Holland, held in Emden in 1571. This is evident from Article 86 which states: "*These articles . . . have been so drafted and adopted by common consent.*"

The rule of majority vote prevails in our churches. In article 5 of the "*Synod's Usages and Rules*" it is stated: "*All motions shall be carried by majority vote.*" Interesting in this connection is the action of the Synod of 1957. The committee appointed the previous year to draw up some Parliamentary Rules submitted its report. The committee of pre-advice treated it. This latter committee advised Synod in one instance (Art. VII, 9) where the report reads: "*majority of Synod*" to change this to read "*two thirds of Synod*" and in another instance (Art. VII, 10) where the report reads: "*requires a two-thirds majority*" to change it to read "*requires a majority.*" In the first instance the Synod rejected the advice of the committee while in the second instance she adopted the committee's advice and therein consistently maintained the former rule: "*All motions shall be carried by majority vote.*"

It is undersigned's opinion that the majority rule must be maintained in all matters involving policy and doctrine but sees no violation of any ecclesiastical principle if the two-thirds rule or three-fourths rule is applied to matters that are strictly parliamentary. G.V.D.B.

### AN OPEN LETTER TO REV. J. BLANKESPOOR

(Continued from page 234)

And you write as follows: "Does that mean that everybody must agree with everybody else in our church? O yes, on the fundamentals of the Church of Christ this is necessary. Those fundamentals of the Scriptures are declared in our Three Standards." The doctrine of Total Depravity is one of these fundamentals, is it not? And you would welcome Ursinus into your fellowship? Do you know, Rev. Blankespoor, what you are writing about? Does it occur to you that Ursinus and John Calvin, if living today, would undoubtedly not subscribe to the Three Points of 1924?

Finally, to you has been awarded the name of "Protestant Reformed." You are Protestant Reformed? The whole church world knows who are Protestant Reformed. You know it also. I am sure that you know that you are not Protestant Reformed. Anyone who sees no reason why the Protestant Reformed Churches and the Christian Reformed Church should lead a separate existence is surely not Protestant Reformed. Such a man is Christian Reformed, as eventually he will also become Christian Reformed. Humanly speaking, I often wonder what the sequence of events would have been in 1951 had the opposition to the Declaration of Principles revealed at that time the real reason for their opposition to that document. And, unless you repent, the Lord will judge between you and us. . . . H.V.

## ALL AROUND US

### Community Churches.

The Rev. H. J. Kuiper in his rubric *Timely Topics* writes in the February, 1958 issue of *torch and trumpet* on the question, "Do We Want Community Churches?" We have reason to believe that this is indeed a timely topic in his particular church.

Just before the first of the year we had a conversation with a member of the Christian Reformed Church in the Grand Rapids area who was just finishing his term as elder in his church. This brother expressed to me his deep concern, as he put it, "for the future of his church." Very critically he spoke of some of the conditions as he saw them in his denomination, and especially was he perturbed relative to the evangelistic zeal evidenced in the rearing of many chapels into which heterogeneous groups are being gathered. The brother had no objection to the evangelistic zeal. Nor was he alarmed by the fact that people of many different colors and backgrounds were congregated by means of the chapel services. Nor was he against the rearing of many chapels. His alarm was relative to the fact that these people are not being brought into the Christian Reformed Church in the proper manner, under the Confession and discipline of that church. In other words, as he put it, "the chapel is not serving the purpose for which it was established." And I gathered that he was referring to the very thing Rev. Kuiper is concerned about, namely, that the chapel to all intents and purposes will end up being a community church. If my surmise is correct, then Rev. Kuiper is not only writing on a timely topic, but he must be given credit for fearlessly uncovering a bad tendency in his church, or rather, his denomination.

We, too, observed first-hand a few years ago while visiting with relatives on Long Island, New York near the community of Hicksville, some of the methods used in establishing a so-called community church, as well as some of the conditions prevailing there which literally destroy all denominational distinctiveness, which in effect leaves the church no more than a social center, or a mere civic enterprise. Here was a case where over night, so to speak, a new community mushroomed. Its constituency comprised mostly business and professional men who commuted each day to New York City, but who desired the quiet and the advantages of a small country community far from the din and smoke of the big city.

The community we were told had been pre-planned as far as the homes, stores, etc., was concerned. And the denomination of churches that first applied for a church site was, if acceptable, given exclusive right to build a church and serve that community. In the case I am referring to, two churches made application almost the same time, namely, Lutheran and Reformed; and both were granted permission to build a church on the grounds that the community was sufficiently

large to accommodate only two churches. And I was told that both of these churches were being filled with people who, either had no former church connection whatever, or who came from many different denominations. And when I was told what goes on in these churches, as far as the preaching is concerned as well as activities in the churches themselves, the only conclusion you could come to was that they were no more than social, civic centers, and no church at all. A pathetic situation, indeed. And we can agree with the Rev. Kuiper in what he sees as the danger of community churches, and can easily understand why he considers this subject a timely topic in his own denomination.

The writer in his brief article delineates on two questions: What is a community church? and Should we have such churches?

Introducing the subject he asserts: "There is a sense in which every church should be a community church. No church, or congregation, should be isolated from the community in which it exists. Every church should be a city 'set on a hill' whose light cannot be hid. It should reach out into the community to bring the message of redemption to those who lead Christless lives.

"More than that, every church should welcome to its membership all who accept the gospel message and are willing to be instructed in the fundamentals of that gospel; who are ready to indicate their agreement with its teachings and to submit to its discipline."

In answer to the question: What is a community church? the Rev. Kuiper writes:

"A community church, in the sense in which that term is generally understood today, is quite a different organization from the one just described. It denotes a church which has no particular denominational affiliation and no definite creed, and which is ready to receive as members all who claim to be Christians and who are ready in some formal way to signify their desire for affiliation and to actually become members.

"We should add that the term 'community church' sometimes has a wider connotation. There are churches which call themselves by that name even though they *do* have denominational affiliation and a specific creed but which at the same time make the terms of membership so general that all who hold to some form of that evangelical faith, whether Reformed, Lutheran, Methodist, or Baptist, are permitted to join.

"Such community churches are numerous especially in new neighborhoods, particularly where no single denomination is represented by more than a very few individuals or families.

"It stands to reason that this type of organization, especially in new and fluid communities, has decided practical advantages over strictly denominational organizations. Yet there are very serious objections to the community church idea."

Not to quote his entire article because of our limited space, his main objection is a doctrinal one. Kuiper contends, and rightly so, "The church of Jesus Christ is not a service

club, or merely an organization to satisfy the 'religious aspirations' of people. According to I Timothy 3:15, the church of the living God is 'the pillar and ground of the truth.' Its mission is to preach the truth, teach and expound it, confess it, and defend it against all error . . .

"The typical community church, with its diluted gospel and its half-baked messages, can never meet the spiritual needs of its members. For such a church will fail to present the great themes of the gospel, the basic tenets of the Christian faith, for fear that this will provoke disagreement and contention within its own bosom. For that reason it is bound to disappoint its best members who want it to strike a spiritual note and to bring a rich as well as distinctive message." In answer to the question: Should we have such churches? Kuiper writes:

"Even if we should want such churches we should not have them because they are bound to be a detriment to their own members and to the denomination of which they are a part." He then proceeds to commend his churches for the zeal they have evinced in making each one a center of evangelistic activity. He cites several areas in his denomination where this zeal is particularly noticeable. But he concludes:

"We must not fail to face the fact that this worthy program of neighborhood evangelism exposes us to the danger of establishing anemic community churches. If our leaders give ear to the plea of some to lower the bars of membership for mission converts by requiring no expression of agreement with our Reformed faith—which is nothing but the Christian faith in its purest and clearest expression—but demanding only that they confess their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, it will not be long before we have a number of community churches which are Christian Reformed only in name.

"Such an approach to evangelism is bad for more than one reason. It is bad because it substitutes worldly standards of success for those of Scripture, . . .

"Second, such an approach to evangelism as characterized above is bad because it ignores the law of discipleship: 'deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me'—which includes forsaking the world, the lodge included. It is bad because it puts more stock in 'bigness' and 'numbers' than in knowledge of the Word, spirituality, and perseverance in the faith." Rev. Kuiper emphasizes in the concluding part of his article this badness when he notes that this "approach to evangelism is bad for the convert, for the community church which he joins, and for the denomination."

In respect to the latter, he writes: "If the community church idea once finds entrance it will spread and the result will be that in the end we shall lose our creedal distinctiveness. For we cannot consistently require of our own children to receive instruction in and subscribe to our Reformed doctrines if we do not require this of mission converts. *No church can successfully maintain a double standard of admission to membership.* Such a dualism cannot last. The

community church idea, once accepted, will permeate our Church like a leaven, though the process be very slow, and in the end reduce us to the colorless level of many denominations today."

#### *Hoeksema An Example of Immigrant Production.*

In the same issue of *torch and trumpet* above referred to, appears an article of Professor Henry R. Van Til of Calvin College under the title: Is Our Theology Vital? In the January 15th issue of *The Standard Bearer* under the title: Dr. Daane Again Under Scrutiny, we called attention to the fact that Dr. James Daane, minister in the Christian Reformed Church was being severely taken to task because of some of the aspersions he casts relative to the theology of his own church. In the December, 1957 *torch and trumpet* no less than two articles are directed against him in defense of the theology of that church.

Now again Professor Van Til, very handily in our judgment, answers Daane. I am not so much interested now in repeating what Van Til says about Daane. More particularly I am interested in what he writes about Rev. H. Hoeksema.

Under the sub-title: Immigrant Production, Van Til calls attention to certain outstanding men, immigrants from the Netherlands, to whom he pays tribute as having contributed considerably to the development of theology in this country. He mentions men like Geerhardus Vos, Louis Berkhof, William Hendriksen, Diedrich H. Kromminga and others. Among them also appears the name of Professor Herman Hoeksema. This is what he says about him:

"Another redoubtable immigrant, who has been very productive while *holding the fort and maintaining the faith*, as he conceives of it, is Professor Herman Hoeksema of the Protestant Reformed Seminary. This man has produced prodigiously. While pastoring his people he taught many subjects to his theological students and managed to write a ten-volume commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism and a complete Dogmatics, which is available at his Seminary. Hoeksema is no mean exegete and dogmatician, but neither has he neglected biblical theology, as may be seen from the articles he has written for the last thirty or more years in *The Standard Bearer*. Although we believe Hoeksema's rejection of Common Grace vitiates his work at many points and we must agree with Professor John Murray that he sometimes commits exegetical violence, we must acknowledge that he has been theologically productive."

We are happy with this recognition which Rev. Hoeksema surely deserves. But we are also greatly disappointed with the concluding remark Van Til makes. How much better would it have been had Van Til showed his readers how Hoeksema's rejection of Common Grace vitiates his work at many points. And why does he not give them some examples where sometimes Hoeksema commits exegetical violence? Hit and run drivers are dangerous to have on the road.

M.S.