

THE STANDARD

Bearer

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MEDITATION

THE BIRTH OF THE SAVIOR

"And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn." Luke 2:6, 7.

We are inclined to pity both Jesus and Mary!

Here we have the eternal Miracle about to be revealed: God manifested in the flesh — but we have to go into a dirty stable to see it!

Here is the most blessed of all women: the mother of God according to the flesh: but she has not even a layette for the little Jesus! And just a sour-smelling manger for a cradle.

I have seen humble homes in my day — but never did I see such misery as we meet here. Even if there is no more than a reed basket: it is at least lined with pretty cloth.

Yes, our thoughts turn to the pitiful picture once more.

And yet — what a mistaken pity.

If you *must* pity, then pity the hostelrys, the inns and taverns of Bethlehem. Yes, and also all the wicked inhabitants of Bethlehem. There were others.

Here they have the birth of God in their midst, and no one lays it to heart.

What wondrous circumstances surround the miracle of all miracles.

Yes, and everyone of these circumstances are Divinely ordained.

It was of God that Augustus desired the tally of his subjects. And so his messengers went out into all the world.

It was of God, therefore, that Joseph and Mary went on their way to the city of David.

It was of the Lord that this little city was over-crowded so that there was no room for this little group.

No, Joseph and Mary did not know of all these Divinely ordained circumstances. I would not at all be surprised if Joseph and Mary often said in these days: How unfortunate that exactly in these days we have to make such a journey! But the angels smiled! They had their instruction, and they knew.

* * * *

And so it was, that, while they were there . . .

There you have it: God's time had come. The time in His counsel which is called: the fulness of time.

The time had come that she should be delivered.

That is proper: there are a certain number of days that are set for the mother to deliver her child. God is an orderly God, and He certainly had reckoned with that order of His Own creation.

And so she brought forth her firstborn Son.

And she was the end of the line, and what a line!

It had been a most miserable line: the seed of the woman.

It had been a most tortuous line, a line which was influenced by all the wiles of the devil. He had exhausted all his devilish resources to stifle the issue of that line at every juncture. From generation to generation he had stood before that WOMAN, ready to kill the seed as soon as it would appear. See: Rev. 12.

What a line: it includes murderers, harlots and miserable deceivers and liars.

And now?

All we have left is a virgin that knows not a man! What can a virgin do with reference to the line of coming, ever coming seed, without a man?

It's against all God's ordinances of genetics!

But wait: here is the fulfilment of the woman of Rev. 12: Mary is in pain; she is in pain to be delivered!

And so it was that the virgin who knew not a man is

nevertheless in pain to be delivered of a Man child; and she did! She did bring forth the song of the angels. Hallelujah!

* * * *

And what was God's part?

Mary's part we know. This Baby is not any different from any other baby that was born then or now, sin excepted.

But what was God's part?

This was God's part first of all: He supplanted the will of man in the genesis of this Man child. The almighty power of God overshadowed Mary, and that Holy Thing that was born of her was consequently called: The Son of God!

That was God's part.

But there is more.

Although this Baby did not differ as far as we could see, He is nevertheless God's Only Begotten Son. He is personally God out of God.

Let us put it this way. If you had been present at this deliverance; and if you had seen the swaddling of this Infant, and the laying down in the manger; you would have been absolutely right if you had cried out at that time: There lies the living God in that manger! There lies the Son of the living God!

Yes, we agree with the text: And she brought forth her firstborn Son . . . , but it is also true that at the same time the living God said in heaven: Thou art My Son: this day I have begotten Thee!

That is the marvel of Christmas: God manifests Himself in the flesh: I Tim. 3:16.

And from that truth come superabounding riches of salvation.

* * * *

Attend to this: God brings forth His eternal Son; and Mary brings forth *her* Son. And that means this: His name is Immanuel: God with us. He is both God and man.

Oh, beloved reader, that name means unspeakable riches for you and me.

This miracle of the Incarnation spells innumerable riches for God's people.

It is the manifestation of the sweetest mercy and pity for us.

Here we are: filthy and corrupt. And that is bad, but it is not the worst of our horrors. Such filth and corruption makes us guilty before God. And do you know what guilt is? It is liability to punishment. And do you know what the punishment is: it is eternal desolation in hell for all eternity.

But the birth of the God-child means that God has identified Himself with all these horrors which are the

portion of every elect son and daughter of Adam. The Incarnation means that God enters our prison, that God takes upon Himself all our damnation.

Is that not mercy? Is that not pity?

Oh, beloved, how happy must have been the church that this God-man came down to us!

* * * *

No, His reception is cold.

There is no room for Him.

Here is the Son of the King, but his cradle is a manger.

He came to His own, but His own received Him not.

He came to do good. (What poverty in this little sentence: He came to do good! Forsooth! Read the last two chapters of Revelation, and then come back to my little sentence! I wish that I had command of all the words, all the music, all the wondrous melody of the Universe. And then I would again say and sing: He came down to do good!)

Again: He came to earth to do good, but everyone turned away from Him. Judas sold Him after prudent appraisal: he came to the conclusion that 30 pieces of silver was enough!

Peter was ashamed to be named in one breath with Him: I know not the Man!

All the disciples fled, and were offended at Him.

He was fully announced, but no one organized a reception.

* * * *

And yet: we can understand it.

There is no place in Bethlehem, the world, the human heart.

First of all: the fact that there was no room for Jesus and His parents was not because they hated Jesus. The inn keeper knew nothing about the coming of Jesus. The fact that there was no room in the inn was a God-ordained *sign*.

No, the fact that there was no room for Jesus in the inn tells you the following:

This occurrence announces a program, a program which will end on the Cross.

This occurrence announces the truth that for our sake Jesus became poor. Only remember this: the poverty you see in Bethlehem in stable, manger, swaddling cloths is a sign of our spiritual poverty. And we do not like to be reminded of it.

This occurrence tells us that Jesus is born lying on the very edge of the world, and that we will finally push Him off that edge. Away with Him! Away with Him! Crucify Him! Crucify Him!

They serve a different god in Bethlehem. They serve self, humanity, sin and corruption.

Consciously or unconsciously, but everyone says *no* to Jesus.

Mary said *no*: How can this be seeing I know not a man?

Joseph says *no*: he was going to put Mary away privily.

Zechariah says *no*: he even has to be made dumb for his sin.

And now Bethlehem says *no*: and this *no* is your and my *no*, the *no* of all the world, the elect included.

And if you say: but the shepherds were glad and obedient to the heavenly vision, were they not? Then I would take a phrase out of your very objection: *heavenly vision*. If it were not for that phrase, they also would have said *no*.

Oh yes, if you have the heavenly vision the matter becomes entirely different. Then you worship; then you worship; then you worship! Hallelujah!

* * * *

How blessed a fact that He was rejected!

For His rejection is our acceptance.

Remember that He became poor *for us*. He became poor in order to make us fabulously rich.

And as far as place, room, is concerned: He captivates a place, and what a place!

That place is now a broken and contrite heart: there He dwells and feels at home.

Oh yes, He captivates a place.

And that place will be a new heaven and a new earth.

There will be ample room for Jesus and His own in that wondrous new heaven.

Blessed night when Jesus was born!

G.V.

NOTICE!

Office-bearers Conference will be held January 7, 1958, at our Creston Protestant Reformed Church at 8 o'clock.

The speaker for the evening will be our Rev. G. Vos. The topic, "What place should formality hold in our churches."

Henry Veldman, Sec.

IN MEMORIAM

The Protestant Reformed Men's Chorus of Grand Rapids suffered the loss of one of its members,

RICHARD ONDERSMA

May our covenant God give abundant grace to the bereaved family is our prayer.

Edward Ophof, President
James Schipper, Secretary

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Editor — REV. HERMAN HOEKSEMA

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EDITORIALS

THE DECREE

Following is the decree of the Supreme Court in the case of the Second Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Mich.

That we publish it here needs, I trust, no explanation.

STATE OF MICHIGAN
SUPREME COURT

SECOND PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH
OF GRAND RAPIDS, a Michigan
corporation,

Plaintiff and Appellant

v.

JOHN BLANKESPOOR, et al.,
Defendants and Appellees

SECOND PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH
OF GRAND RAPIDS, a Michigan
corporation, et al.,

Plaintiffs and Appellees

v.

MARINUS SCHIPPER, et al.,
Defendants and Appellants
BEFORE THE ENTIRE BENCH.
DETHMERS, C. J.

This case is a sequel to First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids v. DeWolf, 344 Mich 624, hereinafter called First Case. The doctrinal dispute there involved is at the root of this case. There we spoke of the so-called Hoeksema faction and DeWolf faction. The identical division and alignment exists here. For convenience, we shall refer to the Schipper group, affiliated with Hoeksema, and the Blankespoor group, kindred spirits with DeWolf. The question here is which of the two is entitled to possession and control of the real and personal property of the corporation known as Second Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, hereinafter called Second Church. Two cases are combined in the presentation of this appeal. In both, Second Church is named party plaintiff. In the one, it is the Schipper group and, in the other, the Blankespoor group, each purporting to act as Second Church, which brings suit as plaintiff against the minister and Consistory members of the opposing faction. Reverend Blankespoor and his Consistory members prevailed below and, hence, are here as appellees, while the appellants are those of the Schipper group.

Essential to decision is determination of the preliminary question whether the form of government of the denomination in question, the Protestant Reformed Churches of America, is congregational or presbyterian. In other words, is the decision of the majority of the members of Second Church or of its local governing body, namely, its Consistory, on the one hand, or the decision of the majority of the highest governing body of the denomination which has

passed on the controversy controlling with respect to the religious discipline to which the property shall continue to be dedicated. The trial court, in holding that the latter is controlling and, hence, that the form of government is presbyterial, relied on First Case. In that case the trial court had held to that same effect. In affirming on appeal, we said that the Church Order of this denomination is substantially the same as that of the Christian Reformed Church, under which, in *Borgman v. Bultema*, 213 Mich 684, we held the form of government of the latter to be presbyterial. Accordingly, in First Case we noted that the powers and functions of the several church judicatories of the Protestant Reformed Churches of America, the denomination here in question, were as set forth and explained in *Borgman* and in *Holwerda v. Hoeksema*, 232 Mich 648, with respect to the Christian Reformed Church. Appellees point to the provisions of articles fifth and sixth of Second Church's articles of association, which, in effect, purport to give control of its property to a majority of the membership of the congregation. In *Borgman* we held a similar provision in the articles of association was void as an attempt to establish a congregational form of government in a local church which was part of a denomination whose form was presbyterial. Appellees say, however, that Second Church was not incorporated under the special statute involved in *Borgman** but under the 1931 general corporation act, of which section 181 (CL 1948, §450.181; Stat Ann §21.182) provides:

"Every such ecclesiastical corporation shall have authority to adopt by-laws prescribing * * * how far such corporation shall be subject to the approval or control of any other corporation or higher church body which corporation or body shall be named; * * *"

Appellees urge that this provision of the statute authorizes and validates the mentioned provisions of articles fifth and sixth of Second Church's articles of association. We do not agree. The quoted statutory provision authorizes by-laws prescribing how far the corporation shall be subject to the approval or control of a named higher church body. The fourth article of Second Church's articles of association does so prescribe by providing that:

"Fourth, The members of said church or society shall worship and labor together according to the discipline, rules and usage of the Protestant Reformed Church in the United States of America as from time to time authorized and declared by the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches."

The combined effect of the provisions of section 181 of the statute and of the fourth article of association is to place this local church in the same relationship to the denomination and to its higher church bodies as was the case in *Borgman*. Consequently, as in *Borgman*, the provision in the articles of association for congregational control must be held to be in-

*PA 1901, No. 148 (CL 1948, §458.421 et seq. (Stat Ann §21.1941 et seq.), being an act to provide for incorporation of Christian Reformed Churches of America.

consistent with the controlling Church Order of the denomination and, hence, void. The form of government of this denomination is presbyterial. Applicable, therefore, is the following, quoted in our opinion in *Borgman*, from *Fuchs v. Meisel*, 102 Mich 357:

"In the freedom of conscience and the right to worship allowed in this country, the defendants and the members of this church undoubtedly possessed the right to withdraw from it, with or without reason. But they could not take with them, for their own purposes, or transfer to any other religious body, the property dedicated to and conveyed for the worship of God under the discipline of this religious association; nor could they prevent its use by those who chose to remain in the church, and who represent the regular church organization. If complainants maintain the allegations of their bill,—that they represent the regularly organized body of the church, and are its regular appointees,—they are entitled to the relief prayed."

Also in point is the following from the syllabus in *Hanna v. Malick*, 223 Mich 100, quoted in *United Armenian Church v. Kazanjian*, 322 Mich 651:

"Where the articles of incorporation and the by-laws of a local Orthodox Greek Church, as drafted and adopted by the original incorporators, who were natives of Syria, clearly express the intention to bring the church under the supreme authority and jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Antioch, those who adhere to that declaration of faith and recognized jurisdiction are entitled to the possession, control, and use of its property for its declared purpose as against those seceding from the original organization and seeking to divert its use and control to the jurisdiction of a Holy Russian Synod or patriarch."

In view of the above language of this Court, the next question presented is which of the contending parties here adheres to the declaration of faith and recognized jurisdiction of, remained in, and represents the regular organization of Protestant Reformed Churches of America to which the property was dedicated.

This controversy, as previously indicated, stems from doctrinal disagreement as to the content or interpretation of the denomination's confession of faith and who are its true adherents. As held in *First Case*, the Church Order controls on questions of faith and of who adheres thereto and in that case, as in *Borgman*, we further held that Synod is the supreme governing body of the denomination and that its decision of questions of faith and adherence is final and binding upon the courts.

For an understanding of the problem before us, note should be taken of the organizational structure of the church and denomination in question. Having been delineated in *First Case*, *Borgman*, and *Holwerda*, we need not outline it in detail. Suffice it to say for our immediate purpose, the denomination has 24 churches or congregations, each composed of communicant members under the immediate governing of a local Consistory consisting of the minister and elders

and deacons elected from and by the membership. The Consistory is in charge of the property of the local church. The next higher judicatory is a Classis, of which there are two in the denomination, namely Classis East and Classis West, with 12 churches belonging to each. Two delegates, a minister and an elder, are selected and sent by each Consistory to its particular Classis. Each of the two Classes selects and sends eight delegates, four ministers and four elders, to the Synod, which is the highest judicatory of the denomination.

One of the articles of the Church Order provides that when an annual Synod closes it shall designate one of the churches as a calling church to issue a call, fixing time and place, for the meeting of the next Synod in the succeeding year. First Church was the calling church for the meeting of the 1953 Synod. The regular meeting of Synod was held in that church in June of 1953. At that time the mentioned doctrinal differences came to the fore. The 16 delegates of Synod were equally divided with respect thereto. The eight delegates from Classis West supported the DeWolf, or Blankespoor, view, and the eight delegates from Classis East, to which the First and Second Churches of Grand Rapids resort or belong, supported the Hoeksema, or Schipper, view. Synod decided to refer the matter to a study committee which was to report back and make recommendations to an adjourned meeting of Synod. Synod voted to hold such adjourned meeting on the second Wednesday of March, 1954, in First Church of Grand Rapids. Synod then adjourned to said date. A meeting of Classis East was held from Oct. 6th to 9th, 1953. Theretofore the rift in First Church had occurred which was considered in *First Case*. In consequence, two sets of delegates came to that meeting of Classis East from First Church, one representing its original Consistory, loyal to DeWolf, and the other representing the so-called reorganized Consistory of First Church, adhering to Hoeksema. Classis seated the Hoeksema delegates. Defendant, Reverend John Blankespoor, minister of Second Church and a delegate to Classis East, together with two other minister-delegates, voted against seating the Hoeksema delegates. These three were then called upon by Classis East to state that they would abide by its decision in the premises or forfeit their rights to seats as delegates. They declined, reserving the right to appeal to Synod. Thereupon Classis East notified the Consistories of the churches served by these three ministers of what had occurred. On October 9, 1953, at a special meeting of the Consistory of Second Church, a motion was offered to support the action of Reverend Blankespoor in the Classis. The motion carried, receiving the affirmative vote of the six elders but the negative vote of the two deacons who comprised the Consistory. The two dissenting deacons thereupon withdrew from the Consistory meeting and called a meeting of the congregation for October 19, 1953. A minority group of the membership of the congregation attended the meeting thus called and undertook to supplant the elders who had supported Reverend Blankespoor by selecting four new members to Consistory, who

joined the two deacons and called themselves the reorganized Consistory. This group, representing a minority of the congregation, called the Reverend Marinus Schipper as their minister and, since then, they have held church services in a nearby building. The Blankespoor group in the original Consistory, representing the majority of the congregation, has continued in possession of the church property and changed the locks on the doors. On October 20, 1953, the new, reorganized Consistory elected two delegates to Classis East. On October 21, 1953, Classis seated them as delegates from Second Church in place of Blankespoor and his elder, whom it deemed to have forfeited their seats. There were similar occurrences in the churches of the other two ministers who had voted with Blankespoor at the meeting of Classis East against seating the Hoeksema delegates from First Church. Thereupon, DeWolf, Blankespoor, and the other two ministers mentioned together with their adherents, created a so-called reconstituted Classis East, which, in competition with the original Classis East, elected delegates to Synod to serve in place of the original delegates from Classis East who adhered to Hoeksema.

The Schipper group contends that the action of Classis East, declaring Blankespoor's right to sit as a delegate in Classis forfeited and seating new delegates elected by the reorganized Consistory of Second Church, constituted a determination by Classis East that those in the Schipper group in Second Church are the true adherents to the denomination. They say that this action by Classis was the action of the highest judicatory in the denomination which passed on the question and that, hence, they and their Consistory are entitled to the use and control of the property of Second Church.

The Blankespoor group, in answer to the above contentions, claims that there were subsequent actions of Synod, recognizing them as the true adherents of the denomination, and that, thus, they are entitled to the property. This requires redirecting our attention to the actions of Synod. In June, 1953, as hereinbefore noted, Synod had adjourned to the second Wednesday in March, 1954, and had voted to hold that adjourned meeting in First Church. The subsequent split in First Church had left its building and property in the hands of the DeWolf group. Consequently, the persons of the Hoeksema group who constituted the so-called reorganized Consistory of First Church, deeming themselves to be the calling church of the 1953 Synod, caused a notice to be published in one of the denomination's related publications that the adjourned sessions of Synod would resume on the second Wednesday of March, 1954, in the Fourth Protestant Reformed Church. At the appointed time, the eight persons who had been delegates to the June, 1953, meeting of Synod from Classis West, together with one alternate delegate from the original Classis East, met in First Church as provided in the motion for adjournment adopted by Synod the previous June. At the same time, the eight persons who had been delegates to that Synod in June, 1953,

from the Classis East, together with one alternate delegate from Classis West, met, as per the published notice, in Fourth Church. The Stated Clerk of Synod attended the First Church and the President of Synod the Fourth Church meeting. Inasmuch as Synod had a total authorized membership of 16, each of the synodical groups claimed to have a quorum, with nine present, and proceeded with the business of Synod. Those meeting in First Church sent a communication to those meeting in Fourth Church, inviting them to join in the meeting of Synod in First Church. No response thereto was made. The delegates selected by the so-called reconstituted Classis East of the DeWolf-Blankespoor group presented themselves at the Synod meeting in First Church, but, while favorably received, they were not seated on the ground that this was but an adjourned meeting of the Synod which had met in June, 1953, and that the delegates who then had been seated thereat were still the only lawful delegates to be seated at the adjourned meeting. This synodical meeting designated a calling church and adopted the authorization for selection of time and place for its 1954 successor Synod and thereupon adjourned. At the 1954 Synod so authorized by the group meeting in First Church, the DeWolf-Blankespoor delegates of the so-called reconstituted Classis East, including Reverend Blankespoor and his elder, Ondersma, were seated. That Synod and its successor Synods ever since have recognized the reconstituted Classis East and the Consistory members and congregations of the DeWolf-Blankespoor group as the true adherents to the denomination and, particularly, with respect to Second Church, have they so recognized Blankespoor, whom they elected President of the 1955 Synod, and his Consistory, which has selected and sent its delegates to the reconstituted Classis East. Each "Year Book," published as part of the acts of that succession of Synods, names Blankespoor as minister and defendant Ondersma as clerk of Second Church, and states that their church is a member of Classis East. Those books also list Blankespoor as a member of the classical committee of Classis East. On the other hand, the synodical group which met in March, 1954, in Fourth Church and its successor Synods from year to year have consistently recognized the Hoeksema-Schipper group in each of the churches, including Second Church, as being the authentic group adhering to the Protestant Reformed denomination.

The issue of adherence being one for determination by Synod, the question is which was the true and lawful Synod. There is nothing in the Church Order, articles of association, or in any other rules or regulations limiting the power of Synod to adjourn to a specified time and place or providing that a call for such adjourned meeting either may or must be made by the Consistory of a calling church or by any other church, body or officer, or that any of them may change the time and place therefor as fixed by Synod. It follows that the lawfully fixed and official time and place for the adjourned meeting was that voted by Synod, namely, the second Wednesday of March, 1954, in First Church. Because it was not

competent for any other person, church or body to change the place, the lawful meeting of Synod occurred on said date at First Church. The quorum of nine, composed of eight delegates and one alternate, which gathered there that day constituted the true and lawful Synod in meeting assembled. *First Church of Christ Scientist v. Rentzel*, 242 Mich 120; *Krecker v. Shirey*, 163 Pa. 534 (30 A 440); *Schweiker v. Husser*, 146 Ill. 399 (34 NE 1022); *Auracher v. Yerger*, 90 Iowa 558 (58 NW 893); *People v. Esher*, 6 Ohio CC Rep 312; *Kerr v. Hicks*, 154 NC 265 (70 SE 468); *Stone v. Bogue*, 238 MA 392 (181 SW 2d 187). Therefore, it must be held that the Reverend Blankespoor and the members of his Consistory are the adherents to the denomination in question, as they have been recognized to be by the body herein held to be the true and lawful Synod, and that the Reverend Schipper and the members of his Consistory are not, for which reason the former and not the latter group is entitled to possession and control of the Second Church property.

Appellants insist that First Case is controlling here and stress that there the Hoeksema group, with which they are aligned, prevailed. It is to be noted that in that case no denominational action higher than that of Classis East, which upheld the Hoeksema group, was urged upon nor considered by this Court. In this case the subsequent and countermanding action of the higher judicatory, Synod, was put into evidence as it was not in First Case. It is on that basis that the court below made and we affirm its decision herein, even though it be at variance with the result in First Case.

Seeking to obviate the controlling effect of the actions of Synod above considered, appellants urge that procedures prescribed by the Church Order for taking appeals from Classis to Synod were not followed by Reverend Blankespoor nor by his Consistory and that, hence, they had no right of appeal; that, as a matter of fact, neither the adjourned meeting of Synod in First Church nor any of its successor Synods considered any such appeal or directly acted upon or reversed the action of Classis East in unseating Blankespoor and his elder, Ondersma, as delegates thereto; that his subsequent acceptance as a delegate to Synod was merely as an individual and that this was not conclusive of the question of which is the true Consistory of Second Church because Synod is not composed of delegates from churches or Consistories, but only from Classes; that the reconstituted Classis East of the Blankespoor group was rump and not lawfully created under the Church Order; and, finally, that the original Classis East is the highest judicatory which has passed, (1) on the right of Blankespoor and Ondersma to represent Second Church in Classis East and, (2) on the authority of the reorganized Consistory of Second Church to take over and to elect new delegates to that Classis in their places. To all of this we say that the question to be determined by this Court is not the propriety of the action of Classis East in unseating Blankespoor and Ondersma as delegates and seating others in their places, nor whether a proper appeal was taken therefrom, nor whether Synod had jurisdic-

tion to and did reverse such action, nor whether the reconstituted Classis East could, under the Church Order, be brought into valid existence in the manner employed by the Blankespoor group. Rather, the question to be decided by us is which Consistory, with the congregation it represents, is entitled to possession and control of the property of Second Church. This, in turn, depends on which is composed of those who are the true adherents to the denomination. Determination of that ecclesiastical question was properly a matter for Synod and was, by its actions above noted, made by the successive bodies which we have held to be the true and lawful succession of Synods. We are bound thereby. As for the propriety of the methods of the successive Synods' expression of such determination, its correctness under the Church Order, or the regularity of proceedings in connection therewith we quote as applicable the following:

"Whether the decision of the classis, excluding defendants, was prudent or imprudent, right or wrong, we have no right to inquire. Nor will we undertake to determine whether the decision was in accordance with the canon law of the church, except insofar as it may be necessary to do so in determining whether the classis had jurisdiction of the matter, whether the act is that of the society itself." *Holwerda v. Hoeksema*, 232 Mich 648.

"The supreme governing body of the First Reformed Church is the synod. This supreme body has sole and exclusive power to make and establish all laws and regulations for the government of the church. It has supreme ecclesiastical power over all those who adhere to that confession of faith. It is the only body in the church which can say what the confession of faith is or shall be." *Borgman v. Bultema*, 213 Mich 684.

"Civil courts will not enter into a consideration of church doctrine or church discipline nor will they inquire into the regularity of the proceedings of church tribunals having cognizance of such matters. To do so would be inconsistent with complete and untrammelled religious liberty." *VanVliet v. VanderNaald*, 290 Mich 365.

"Neither will the court as a civil tribunal undertake to determine whether the resolution directing exclusion was passed in accordance with the canon law of the church, except insofar as it may be necessary to do so in determining whether it was, in fact, the church that acted." Quoted in *Borgman v. Bultema*, 213 Mich 684, from *Morris Street Baptist Church v. Dart*, 67 SC 338 (45 SE 753).

We hold that Synod was the body which had the ultimate jurisdiction and power to determine the question of adherence to the denomination; that it made such determination in favor of the Blankespoor group; that we will not look into the regularity of the proceedings by which that power was exercised; and that when the Synod so determined this ecclesiastical question it was the church that acted and we are bound thereby.

Inasmuch as the decrees below are consonant with this opinion, they are affirmed, with costs to the prevailing parties.

Daane's Distortion of Reformed Truth

The way Daane, in his article in *The Reformed Journal*, presents or rather misrepresents me is so shocking that it is virtually unbelievable.

He never quotes me. He never even gives any references in my several books and other writings where one may find what he alleges to be my views. He merely attributes some views to me which are not mine at all and for which he certainly cannot find proof in any of my writings.

This is not only very unscholarly, it is also dishonest.

Thus he writes on p. 9 of the above named paper:

"From this simplistic conception of God's counsel some very simplistic theological definitions were deduced. Human responsibility, for example, was defined by Herman Hoeksema simply as the necessity of man's response to God. (Where please? H.H.). The ethical notion that man ought to make the *right* response did not enter into the definition. In a similarly simplistic manner man's fall into sin was sometimes explained. The Fall was simply regarded as another item in God's all-inclusive plan. It was then said that the ultimate truth about the Fall is that God was its Ultimate Cause. (Quote, please! H.H.) This was even said to be the very essence of the Reformed faith, and the contention that Adam was created with the freedom and possibility of not sinning was assayed as heresy." (Quote, please! H.H.)

Daane, in the above paragraph, does not literally ascribe all the above nonsense to me: all he literally attributes to me is the definition of human responsibility. Yet, I take it, that in all that follows he has me also in mind. Hence, I emphatically assert that there is not one word of truth in the above paragraph. I never defined human responsibility as the necessity of man's response to God, or that man was not responsible to make the right response to God. Such a definition of responsibility I never gave in any form. This simply is an untruth. I never wrote anywhere that God is the ultimate cause of the fall. This is another untruth. I never taught that Adam, before the fall, did not have the freedom and possibility of not sinning. This is the third untruth.

This I am able to prove.

Let me begin with the last contention, namely, that it belongs "to the very essence of the Reformed faith" that it is heresy to say "that Adam was created with the freedom and possibility of not sinning."

In the first volume of my work on the Heidelberg Catechism, p. 106, I write:

"However, man was originally created so that he actually possessed the image of God. He was not only formally adapted to bear the image of God, but he was also materially endowed with the spiritual ethical virtues of that image. These virtues are usually distinguished as true knowledge of God, righteousness, and holiness . . . All three are often expressed in the one term: 'man's original righteousness.' It is that original goodness of man's nature, according to which it was wholly motivated by the love of God, and with all its faculties and powers moved in the direction of God, so that the opera-

tion of his heart and soul and mind and will and all his strength were in accord with the will of God. And this one virtue of complete integrity is distinguished as true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness."

Can anyone conceive of the possibility of adding to the above quoted paragraph that Adam did not have the moral freedom to walk in the way of God's precepts and not to sin? To me this is absolutely impossible. True, with all Reformed theologians, I teach and always taught, that Adam was not created with the highest freedom. We will remember the distinction between stages of moral freedom: 1. the freedom to sin and not to sin; 2. the freedom of sin; the freedom not to sin. The last is the highest possible freedom and is attained only in Christ, the Son of God in human nature; the second is the freedom of the natural man who is a slave of sin; the first is the freedom of Adam in the state of righteousness. But how a mind like Daane's can possibly deduce from this that Adam did not have the freedom of not sinning, — that I must confess is a mystery to me.

Let me quote one more paragraph from the same work quoted above to refute Daane's false allegation. It is found on p. 108:

"By these three spiritual virtues, that originally adorned the nature of man, the rectitude of his whole being in relation to God and all things is denoted. By holiness is meant, not any acquired purity, but that original rectitude of his nature, according to which he was consecrated to God in love with all his mind and heart and soul and strength. His whole soul yearned after the living God, and had its delight in its favor and fellowship. His righteousness was not an imputed righteousness, nor was it acquired, but it was that virtue of his whole nature according to which he was wholly in harmony with the will of God and that according to the judgment of God, so that he was fully capable of doing the will of God, and to do that will was his delight. And his knowledge of God was not a mere intellectual knowledge of the Most High, so that he knew who and what God is; nor was it a ready made system of dogmatics with which Adam was endowed from the beginning; but it was that original rectitude of mind by virtue of which he immediately and spontaneously knew God, both through the revelation of all the works of God round about him, and through the direct Word of God that was addressed to him in paradise. And through this positive knowledge of God he had a living contact with the Most High, the fellowship of friendship that was his life. And thus Adam was 'good.' He was so made that he was quite capable of serving the Lord his Creator, to be His representative in all the world, His prophet to know and to glorify Him, His priest to consecrate himself and things unto Him, His servant-king to rule in righteousness over the works of God's hand, and thus to live in 'eternal happiness to glorify and praise Him.'"

How about this, Daane?

Do you still maintain the folly of ascribing to me the

(Continued on page 136)

OUR DOCTRINE

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

CHAPTER XIV

The Slain Witnesses and Their Outcry

Revelation 6:9-11

How they were put on the rack and tortured in every conceivable way! How they were brought to the scaffold and burned at the stake! In a word, as you go through history from its very dawn to the present time, you will find a host innumerable under the altar, slain for the Word of God and the testimony which they held. And what is the reason for all this? It is simply because of the tremendous contrast between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of the devil, the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness, striving for the possession of the same world.

Now these souls under the altar make a loud outcry. Thus we read in vs. 10: "And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" We must constantly remember that also this fifth seal, as well as all the others, represents a vision. And therefore we have symbolism in the text. As soon as we lose sight of this fact, we are apt to raise all kinds of objections and questions. Forgetting the fact that we have a vision here, we might simply conceive of these souls under the altar as glorified souls in heaven, and no more. Then, of course, the question arises: do these souls in heaven still suffer? Are the saints in glory still impatient, as is evident from the outcry? And are they still unhappy after death? Does not this outcry represent a very deep need that is not fulfilled as yet? Are not the souls especially of those that have suffered for the name of Jesus in this world perfectly blessed after this present life? But this question is not essential, and it should never be asked. We will understand this as soon as we remember that the text represents indeed a very important truth, but that nevertheless it is a vision, and that therefore in the outcry of the souls under the altar we have symbolism. Again, the question might be raised: do these souls in the state of perfection in glory cry out for vengeance? Is it not true that while they were still in this present world they prayed for their enemies, according to the injunction of the Lord Jesus that they should love their enemies, do good to them that hate them, and pray for them that despitefully use them? How then is it possible that now they invoke the wrath of God on them, and that too while they are in the state of perfection in heaven? Is there then still sin in the state of glory in the hearts of the saints? But also this is not essential, and has nothing to do with the idea of this outcry of the saints under the altar. As we shall see, they do not cry for sinful vengeance, but for the final manifestation of righteousness and justice and for the glory

of their God. Hence, we must constantly bear in mind that we have also in this outcry symbolism in the highest sense of the word. This is in harmony with the whole Book of Revelation; and it is also in accord with the passage we are now discussing. For the entire passage is visionary and symbolic. It is only in the vision that John is able to see the souls. The altar under which they are found is visionary and symbolic. And the same must be applied to the outcry of these souls under the altar. The question we must ask is this: what is really the meaning, what is the reality of the outcry of these souls under the altar? What is the essential idea of this symbolism? The answer is not difficult to find. The outcry is symbolic of the necessity of ultimate justice, of the final manifestation of the righteousness of God that is to be revealed in the just vengeance upon the heads of those that have killed and persecuted the saints in Christ Jesus. It is an outcry that ascends to the throne of God throughout all the history of the church in the world. It represents the longing of the saints for the day of their final justification and of just retribution for all that have hated and persecuted them in the present world. This must be perfectly evident from the contents of this outcry. The saints under the altar address Christ Jesus, Who is exalted at the right hand of God, as King over His church and as Sovereign over the whole world. This is evident from the expression used in this address, which in the original means "despot," — not in the evil, but in the good and favorable sense of the word. It means "master, lord, absolute sovereign." Some would have it that in this expression the Triune God is addressed. With this, however, we cannot agree. Not to God directly, but to Christ their Lord these saints address the outcry. This may also be gathered from the addition, "thou holy and true one." The same expression occurs chapter 3:5, where the Lord Jesus refers to Himself in these same words when He addresses the church of Philadelphia. Not the Triune God, therefore, but Christ is addressed. For to Him is given all power in heaven and on earth; and the Father also has delivered all judgment to Him Who sits at His right hand. That this outcry is not the expression of sinful longing for vengeance, but of just and necessary judgment, is plain from the fact that the judge in this case is called "holy and true." According to His holiness, He cannot allow sin to have the victory. He must execute wrath against all the iniquity, injustice, and oppression of men. And according to His truth, He must reveal Himself as He is, in harmony with His holiness and with His justice against all sin and unrighteousness. These souls under the altar, therefore, do not cry for a mere human and sinful vengeance. On the contrary, they long and cry for nothing less than the perfect manifestation of the holiness and truth of their King and Master. For His glory they have suffered in the midst of the world at the hands of those that hate their Christ.

We must remember that these souls under the altar have suffered because of the Word of God and the testimony which they held. They have suffered for the name of Christ Jesus

and because they represented Christ's cause in the midst of the world. The enemies that have caused them to suffer have done so not because any unrighteousness was found in these souls under the altar as they lived in the world, but only because they hated the very name of Jesus and were opposed to the cause He represented, the cause of God Himself. Hence, when Jesus Himself was in the world, they manifested this enmity directly against Him. They caused Him to suffer and die on the accursed tree, and cast Him out of the world. But He has been exalted to glory, and they can never touch Him personally any more. But the saints are still on earth. And they follow in His steps, and represent His cause. They do so by bearing faithful testimony of Him as shining lights in the midst of the darkness of this present world. And because of this testimony concerning Him, they must needs also bear His reproach. What the enemies of Christ can no longer do against Him personally they now do against His people, against the saints that represent Him. And the principle of this persecution of the saints in the midst of the world is the same as that which motivated them in casting out the Christ. To harass and persecute and butcher the saints that are still in the world is a manifestation of their hatred of Jesus the Christ, the holy and true One. The holiness and truth of Christ is trampled under foot when the world kills His saints. Moreover, in the present world this hatred and enmity appears to be quite victorious. It seems as if the enemy can kill and persecute the people of God in Christ Jesus their Lord with impunity. As far as the present history is concerned, Christ does not avenge the blood of His saints. Many years and centuries already have elapsed, and in these centuries rivers of blood have flowed. And the souls under the altar have always been crowded out of the world. The world still goes on. And the enemies of Christ, trampling under foot His saints, and thereby also trampling under foot the truth and holiness of their Lord, have never been punished. The saints have never been avenged. This, therefore, is the essential meaning of this outcry of the saints under the altar. It is the blood of the saints that cries out. And it cries out with a great voice. If only you will listen closely to the voice of all history in this new dispensation, you can very plainly hear this cry of the souls under the altar. There are the cries, first of all, of the apostles, butchered for the testimony of Jesus which they proclaimed in the midst of the world. They were butchered relentlessly, but they were never avenged. And there is also the blood of all the saints that followed the apostles throughout the history of the church. Many of them were tortured to death for the sake of Jesus and the testimony which they held. They were butchered for their faithful witness of the name of Christ. In fact, all the saints of the new dispensation as they have suffered in the world for the sake of Christ their Lord are represented by the souls under the altar. Their blood must be revenged. The holiness and truth of their Lord is at stake. And therefore, all history cries as these souls under the altar do for

revenge and for the final manifestation of the holiness and truth of their Lord and Master. Such, then, is the meaning of the outcry of these souls under the altar. It is the expression, the historic expression, of longing for a day of vengeance that swells and grows louder and stronger as time goes on, a longing for the final day of judgment and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus it also must be plain that this fifth seal is of importance for the completion of the kingdom of God and His Christ. That kingdom cannot come by way of gradual development, but can only appear in a public day of judgment and destruction of the world. Those that have it that the kingdom of God will come without this day, that it must come along lines of gradual development here upon earth, are cruelly unjust in respect to the past and the history of the saints in the world. Hundreds of thousands, yea, millions of Christ's saints have suffered martyrdom; and the world has rejoiced over their death. Shall their suffering and death be passed by in silence? Shall the justice of God in Christ never be revealed at all? God forbid! These souls under the altar would cry unto all eternity if the Lord would not come and if He would not avenge them publicly, if He would hide His name of truth and holiness and justice so that it was never publicly manifest. In a final day of judgment the righteousness of Christ, the King of His people and the Lord of all the world, must be made very plain; and it must become very manifest that He is holy and true indeed. Hence, the fact that this fifth seal is opened, and that the witnesses of Christ that are slain cry out for vengeance, certainly implies that the kingdom of God will be completed by a final day of judgment. He must judge in righteousness. In that day it must become perfectly plain that the world actually hates Christ Jesus, and that in this hatred of Him they hated the Father. This hatred they also reveal in the slaying of the saints that witness for the Word of God and the name of Christ. Hence, it is because these souls have been slain that the perfect revelation of the righteousness of God must be revealed in a day of judgment, so that it will become perfectly manifest to all the world, as well as to all the church, that Christ is holy and true, and that He represents God in His perfect righteousness and justice.

What answer do these souls under the altar receive to their outcry? It is found in vs. 11 of this same chapter: "And white robes were given unto everyone of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled."

The answer, therefore, is two-fold. In the first place, they receive a white robe. And this white robe is, of course, symbolic of their glorified nature. A long white robe it is which they receive. As we have said before, white is first of all the symbol of their justification in the blood of the cross, of the fact therefore that Christ Jesus does not condemn them, and that they are justified in Him. In the second place, these white robes are also the symbol of their holiness. They

are now perfectly cleansed from sin, and they are holy before God in Christ. They are perfectly pure, and they can sin nevermore. In the third place, white is also the symbol of victory in the battle. Even as the white of the first horse is the symbol of victory of the cause of Christ Jesus, so also is the white of these robes that are given to the souls under the altar symbol of the fact that they have conquered in battle, in the battle of faith. And thus the meaning is perfectly clear. These saints have suffered for the cause of Christ. They have been put to death violently. They have been butchered innocently. They have suffered crying injustice. And therefore, here upon earth their blood cries out for just revenge and for the manifestation of the holiness and truth of Christ Jesus. Nevertheless, these saints under the altar have gone on to glory. They are perfectly blessed from the very moment that they entered into the state of glory. And as they entered into the blessed abode, they immediately received their white robes, their perfect and glorified nature, robes of justification and holiness and purity and victory. In these white robes they are blessed forevermore. In the world they were despised; in heaven they are glorified. In the world they were treated unjustly and trampled under foot; in heaven they are justified from the very moment of their entrance. In the world they seemed to be wrong, and the world appeared right in persecuting them; in heaven they are immediately given the symbols of their justification and victory.

In the second place, however, they are told that they must wait just a little while. Their question in the outcry was: "How long, O Lord?" And the answer is: "Not yet, but within a short time." This little while which the souls under the altar must still wait may seem a long time from our present point of view. Centuries already have elapsed since this was written, and yet these souls under the altar cry upon the earth. Still they must wait a little while. We must remember, as it is always in the Word of God, that the day of the Lord is always represented as being very near. It is the last hour. And in the Book of Revelation we are assured by the Lord Himself that He will come quickly. Therefore, although to us it may seem a long time, the Lord actually comes very quickly. He comes as quickly as possible. In view of all the tremendous facts that must happen in the present dispensation before the time is ripe for the coming of the Lord and His kingdom, it is indeed but a little while that the Lord waits. And besides, in view of the fact that the souls under the altar are already glorified, and that they have received their white robes of justification and holiness and victory, they can afford to wait. To them the time cannot seem long, for they have already entered into eternal glory.

However, this time that these souls must wait before their blood shall be avenged in the day of judgment, publicly, is also further defined, and defined materially. How long must they wait? The answer is: until their fellow servants and their brethren, that should be killed even as they were, should have fulfilled their course. This is plain language.

It simply means that the time is as yet not ripe for judgment. The world has not yet shown its real character in all the hatred of its corruption. And before the world is ripe for that day of judgment, the Lord cannot and will not come. We find this phenomenon time and again in Holy Writ. The prediluvian period lasted about sixteen hundred years before the measure of their iniquity was full. And even when the climax was almost reached, the Lord still gave them one hundred twenty years in which they might hear the testimony of God through Noah, so that it might become fully evident that the day of judgment was a day of righteousness and justice. The same is true of the history of Israel. That history shows us that they had killed the prophets and stoned the messengers of God that had been sent against them. And it seemed as if the Lord would never visit them for their iniquity. But the time was not yet ripe. Not until they had revealed their hatred to the full, not until they had clearly shown that they rejected the Son of God, could the day of judgment come and Jerusalem be destroyed. These judgments, so the Bible tells us, are but typical of the great day of the Lord that is to come. And therefore, also for that day the time must be ripe, and the measure of iniquity must be filled. The witnesses of Christ also in the future must let their testimony go forth. They must witness of the Christ. They must witness of the blood of His cross. They must witness against all that rises up against Him. And over against this testimony the world must reveal its hatred still more plainly than already it has done in the past. In the past all these things were mere local affairs. In the future the Christian world in general, so-called, will rise up against the church. In the past the witnesses of Christ were butchered; but the enemy was not so directly conscious that they rose up against the name of Jesus Christ. In the future the enemy will do so fully conscious that it is the hateful name of Jesus Christ that is the great obstacle to all their plans for the world. And thus the world becomes ripe for judgment. There are still a certain number that must be killed for the Word of God and for the testimony which they hold. And when they are killed, then the Lord will come and avenge His holiness and truth and establish His kingdom forever.

Hence, we also must bear testimony for the name of Christ in the midst of the world. No, we do not have to seek martyrdom. We may not seek it purposely, just for the sake of dying and suffering for Christ. Nevertheless, we must bear testimony for the Word of God and for the name of Jesus as children of the kingdom. And if we do, we may have the hope in our hearts that presently we receive the white robes of justification and holiness and victory. And let us never forget that the enemy that persecutes us merely serves as an instrument to bring us to that state in which we shall enjoy the glory of the kingdom of Christ forevermore. The Lord rules. He opens the seals, also the fifth. And not a hair of your head shall ever be touched against His will.

H.H.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Prophecy of Zechariah

The Second Burden

Chapters 12-14

Chapter twelve begins the second of the two parts of this prophecy. In it is depicted the position and struggle of Jerusalem in the midst of a hostile world that is bent on its obliteration. Suffering is foretold for the holy city but also preservation and ultimate victory. It is one prophecy seeing that the theme treated in it is the same. But this last part divides into two sections. In the first section that runs to the sixth verse of chapter thirteen Jerusalem is described as besieged on every hand by its enemies but also as preserved and refined as silver through the fire. The second section that runs to the end of the book foretells this same struggle now as ending in victory for Jerusalem.

Israel's Conflict and Preservation

Chapter 12:1-9

The burden of the word of Jehovah upon Israel, saith Jehovah who stretches forth the heavens, and lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him. 2. Behold, I make Jerusalem a bowl of trembling to all the peoples round about, also upon Judah shall it be in the siege against Jerusalem. 3. And it shall be in that day, I will set Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all peoples, all who lift it shall tear themselves, and all nations of the earth shall be gathered against it. 4. In that day, saith the Lord, I will smite every horse with terror, and his rider with madness, and upon the house of Judah I will open my eyes, and every horse of the people I will smite with blindness. 5. And the chiefs of Judah shall say in their hearts, The inhabitants of Jerusalem are my strength, in Jehovah of hosts their God. 6. In that day I will make the chiefs of Judah as a pot of fire among sticks of wood, and as a torch of fire in a sheaf, and they shall devour on the right and on the left all the people round about, and Jerusalem shall dwell again in her own place in Jerusalem. 7. And Jehovah shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David, and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem may not exalt itself over Judah. 8. In that day will Jehovah defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the feeble among them in that day shall be as David, and the house of David as God, as the angel of Jehovah before them. 9. And it shall be in that day, I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

1. The expression "burden of the word of the Lord" or usually simply "burden" is found only in the discourses of the later prophets. Denoted are the predictions of Jehovah in their totality the one Word of God, the Gospel of Christ

already proclaimed in the first days of paradise. That the prophets should speak of the burden of the Word is owing to the nature of its content which is terrible and awful and dreadful in its weightiness. For it speaks, does this Word, of Jehovah's terrible works that He will do in righteousness, of the redemption of Zion with judgment and righteousness, of the passing away of the world and the destruction of the wicked in the final judgment and of the renewal of all things. Thus He will do a thing in Israel at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. He will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling and a burdensome stone for all the people. He will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the house rifled, and the women ravished. Then He shall go forth and fight against those nations. And they shall be consumed. And He shall be king over all the earth (Zech. 13:1ff). The burden of the Word then, of the predictions of Jehovah, is their weighty, terrible and glorious content. His word is a burden because of the nature of what it foretells. And the prophets themselves were bowed down under the weight of His word, laid of Him upon their hearts. Its awful predictions pained and distressed and depressed them. Their souls were disquieted in them because of what they were made to see and hear. Having been told the vision, Daniel fainted and was sick and for days was unable to do the king's business (Daniel 8:27). And the prophet Habakkuk was likewise affected. When he heard and saw the vision, his belly trembled and his lips quivered at the voice. Here the burden is upon Israel.

Saith Jehovah — He is the speaker. The prophet speaks too but solely as His organ. And He is Jehovah, the I am, the eternal and unchangeable God, who keepeth covenant trust and is ever faithful to His promises, the First and the Last, the Alpha and the Omega. And therefore He can also make known unto His people what the future has in store for them, and the reach of His predictions extends to the end of time. And His word will stand. "Thus saith the Lord," is followed by a reference to the sustaining power of God which is infinite. He is continually stretching forth the heavens and laying the foundations of the earth. So these clauses must be read seeing that the original text has the participles of the verbs. The meaning is that the heavens that He once stretched out and the foundations of the earth once laid remain in place not of themselves but only by His power, implying that the heavens and the earth and the fulness thereof are in His hand. And He forms the spirit of man that is within him. Also the spirits of men are in His hand. They can think only as He has determined and cannot plot against Jerusalem except that He wills. How securely therefore Jerusalem dwells, and how capable He is to bring to pass all that He promises.

2. This verse begins what Jehovah says. That it forms the content of the burden of the word upon Israel and Judah means that it is a word, a message, spoken to Israel, the Jewish nation of our prophet's day. But it is a Gospel also

for the church of this day. For Israel was the church and the church is one. In the conception of the Chiliast Israel and the church are separated. The church is limited to the Gentiles and Israel to the Jews. The promises to Abraham, to Israel, to Zion, pertain therefore only to the Jews, so that to illustrate in declaring, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion . . . thy king cometh unto thee: he is just having salvation" (9:9), Zechariah is speaking only to Jews and not also to the church, to the Gentile elect. How tragic this would be were it true. It is true that in the old dispensation the church was gathered from one people only and that people the Jews. Hence in that day God's people were only Jews and the church was limited to Canaan. But when the day of Pentecost was fully come and the glorified Christ poured of His Spirit upon all flesh and the blessings of Abraham thus came also to the Gentiles, the church began to be gathered from all nations and today she is spread over the whole earth.

Jehovah will set Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the city of the living God, the God and Father of Christ. Here God dwells with His people and satisfies them with His likeness. Here His people see Him as He is in the face of Christ, walk and talk with the Lord and taste that He is gracious. This is Jerusalem as to its essence. It is plain that Jerusalem, too, is the church. In the old dispensation Jerusalem was represented by an earthy city by this name. In this Jerusalem was found an earthy throne occupied by earthy kings. In this Jerusalem was found further an earthy temple over which had been set earthy priests serving earthy altars with earthy sacrifices. This Jerusalem was not the true but only the shadow of the true. It was the form in which the true Jerusalem, city of God, was temporarily seen and by which the faith of the saints for a time received expression. Hence, when Christ, Jerusalem's king, had done atoning the sins of His people, the holy city shed this form like a garment through its being exalted with her King and Saviour into the highest heavens. And nothing was changed but the form. The old form, the earthy Jerusalem with its earthy institutions and ceremonies was but shadow, and this according to the plain teachings of the Scriptures. Being but a shadow, it necessarily had to vanish away when the body, the reality foreshadowed, came. And centrally the body is Christ.

Jerusalem then, is now above. Sanctuary, priest, altar and sacrifice are now above. King and citizens are now above. "Ye are come," one may read in the Hebrews (12:22ff), "unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." And having carried John away in the spirit to a great high mountain, God shewed him that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descend-

ing out of heaven from God (Rev. 21:10). And the form of the city was now heavenly.

Surely, Jerusalem is now above. But the chiliast will not have it so. Not only that he insists that the great city is still on earth, but he also identifies it with the earthly Jerusalem, thus with the shadow, the typical form in which the great city was temporarily seen. And mistaking the shadow for the reality, the form for the essence, he insists that the shadow, the form, the earthy Jerusalem and the earthy, Israelitish kingdom of which it was the capital and which therefore was also shadow, form, is going to be restored according to all God's promises to Israel, that is, to the Jews — promises contained in the Old Testament Scriptures — and that this is to be an accomplishment of Christ which will consist in His establishing Himself as king of the Jews in the earthy Jerusalem. Such is the view. The basic error here is the failure to distinguish, differentiate between form and essence, shadow and body.

In the vision of John, Jerusalem, the church, descends out of heaven glorious as to her appearance. And its glory was the effulgence of inward spiritual beauty. But this was prophecy. Though now above, the city is not yet in glory. And the same is true of the church, for Jerusalem is the church. Jerusalem, the church, (in glory) and the kingdom of heaven (in glory) though nearly the same must be distinguished. Jerusalem is the body of the elect. The kingdom is the redeemed cosmos and the fulness thereof. And of this kingdom Jerusalem is head and fountain of life. For here is the throne of God and of the Lamb from which proceeds the river of life. This is what John was given to see concerning Jerusalem and the kingdom of glory on the new earth.

But though Jerusalem has not yet been clothed with life in glory, the holy city is nevertheless above and not on this earth as was the case in the Old Testament dispensation. That Jerusalem was the capital of Israel as a nation. And there were many other nations round about. To mention just a few of them, there was Moab, Ammon, Egypt, Philistia, Syria, Assyria, Media, Persia and Greece, etc. And all without exception were bitterly hostile toward Jerusalem, and in turn made war against the holy city through the centuries, their common purpose being to destroy the city that it might no more be in remembrance. They defiled the temple and laid Jerusalem in waste. And the enmity here was spiritual. The nations were in darkness and the devil was their prince. And Jerusalem was the city of the living God. Here at the time was found the throne of God and of the Lamb. And therefore Jerusalem was to the nations a burdensome stone that they wanted removed, put out of the way forever. And in this new dispensation of the world it is not any different certainly. As ever Jerusalem is the burdensome stone that must be put out of the way.

From the beginning of our Christian era up to the present time the Jews as a people have always been more or less hated and periodically persecuted by the nations of the world

among whom they are dispersed. How shameful! Only recently Hitler before his fall was engaged in exterminating the Jews in Germany! How terrible! Even so this enmity toward the Jews as a people must not be identified with the enmity of the nations of old against the earthy Jerusalem of the old dispensation. The latter was spiritual. It was the realization in that day of the Word of God which He spake in the first days of Paradise, "I will set enmity." The nations made war against Jerusalem for the sake of Jehovah's name. But Hitler surely did not persecute the Jews in his realm for Christ's sake. For the Jews as a people do not believe in Christ but despise Him. Some of them may honor Him as a teacher, but as the Lamb of God that bore away the sin of the world, He is an offence to every orthodox Jew and foolishness to every modernist Jew. And for this same reason the Zionist movement of our day, the emigration of Jews to the modern Jerusalem, cannot be the fulfilment of the promises of God to the Israel of old. And the recently established Israeli kingdom with headquarters in Jerusalem is not a restoration of the Davidic kingdom of ancient Palestine. Is this modern Jerusalem the city of the living God? Is the throne of God and of the Lamb found there? Surely not. But this is not saying that God does not have His people also among the Jews.

If Jerusalem is now above, it can also be rightfully said that the holy city is on this earth because of the presence of so many of its citizens on this earth. These citizens are the church militant. Their conversation is in heaven, they confess the name of Jerusalem's King, condemn the world by their witness, and say that they seek a heavenly city. It is not as nations that the world now is making war against the church. This is not possible seeing that the church is now sown among all the nations and dwells in their very midst. But the enmity is not less real, the opposition less determined, and the hatred less bitter on this account. As united in the truth under a teaching and ruling ministry faithful to its calling, the church is just as conspicuous and unwanted of the world as she ever could have been as the body of inhabitants of the Jerusalem of old.

Though the aim of the world is always to destroy the church, the methods employed vary. Now the world resorts to violence and threats of violence. Then it comes with fair promises of worldly gain. Satan offered Christ all his kingdoms, if only He would kneel down and worship him. Now the world is the roaring lion, then it will assume the appearance of a lamb. Always the purpose is to separate from Christ, which, were it possible, would be the ruin of the church.

The Lord comes to His oppressed church with promises. First He will set the church a cup of trembling to all the peoples round about. The figure is that of a man who brings to his lips a cup that he believes to contain a pleasant potion. But when he has consumed the draught, he reels and trembles. The cup is the church. Eagerly the adversaries grasp her and she is killed of them all the day long, con-

sumed. But the draught results in their undoing. They are confused and astonished and do foolishly.

And also upon Judah shall it be in the siege of the nations against Jerusalem. The pronoun *it* looks back to the *burden of the word* of verse 1. It will be also upon Judah, so that Judah as well as Israel will be set of the Lord a cup of trembling to all the peoples round about. This is the meaning and not, as some say, that Jerusalem will become a cup of trembling to Judah as well as to the other nations, which would imply that Judah would make common cause with the nations against Jerusalem.

3. Not alone that the Lord will set Jerusalem and Judah a cup of trembling to all the peoples round about but also a burdensome stone, so that all the nations who lift it shall tear themselves. According to some the stone is rough, so that all nations tear themselves on the stone. But it is stated that the stone is burdensome, heavy and not that it is rough. This plainly suggests the thought that the figure is meant to convey. The stone is one of such weight that in lifting it the people will rupture themselves, or, dropping the figure, any attack upon Jerusalem will prove the undoing of all those who attempt it. *And all the nations of the earth shall be gathered against it.* Gathered they shall be against the stone or Jerusalem.

So does the Lord comfort His people, Jerusalem, the church. This comfort is fourfold.

First, the church is invincible. She may become exceedingly small as was the case at the time of the Deluge when her number was reduced to the eight souls that entered the Ark, but she cannot be overcome, obliterated. There will always be the true church on this earth as long as the world endures. Not is the church overcome of the world, but the world is overcome of the church. For the victory is hers in Christ.

Second the individual saint cannot be overcome. His outward man may perish even as destroyed by the world, but his faith abides. It cannot cease, because Christ prays for him.

Third, the more the world assails the church, the more it is destroyed and the more foolish it becomes.

Fourth, it is Jehovah who sets Jerusalem a cup of trembling and a heavy stone to all the nations. And His purpose in doing so will be achieved. For He is Jehovah who stretches forth the heavens, lays the foundations of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him. In the way of its persecuting the church, the world therefore shall pass away, that the kingdom of Christ may come and as coming appear with Christ in glory at His coming.

G.M.O.

SUBSCRIBERS NOTICE

Beginning January 1958 a charge of \$5.00 per year will be made to meet the increased cost of publishing *The Standard Bearer*.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of I Corinthians 7

I.

(I Corinthians 7)

For some time in the past the undersigned has been more or less occupied with a study of and reflection upon the meaning of the question of marriage, abstinence from the marriage tie, the unbelieving party in the marriage tie in the church which had been called out of heathendom and idol worship, and the relative betterment of one's lot and position in the world, by not entering into the marriage state.

Upon all these matters the apostle to the Gentiles reflects here in I Corinthians 7.

Paul really treats of certain questions which were directed to him by the members or leaders of the church in Corinth. Paul had received other questions. We have discussed rather at length the question of the "spiritual gifts" in the church, during the past months, in a series of articles in *The Standard Bearer*. Among the questions of the spiritual gifts were also such questions as the proper conduct of women in the church services, even up to the manner of wearing their hair.

Evidently the question of marriage was organically connected with certain patterns and conduct amongst heathendom in regard to sex and marriage, and was possibly rooted in the *weak consciences* of the saints. They evidently did not fully understand how they could fight with a free and good conscience against sin in the marriage tie, as well as outside of the bond of matrimony. This too is an area of life that can and must be sanctified by the Word of God and prayer. I Tim. 4:1-6. But in the weak consciences of these Corinthian saints this was not yet thus established. Hence, there was a leaning towards an over-evaluation of the moral value of a life of celibacy!

(Celibacy is a noun which is derived the Latin term *caelebs*. A caelebs was an unmarried person, he was either unmarried because he had never married, a bachelor, or because he was a widower).

There have been various attempts made to associate this tendency toward an over-evaluation of celibacy with one of the various parties in the church at Corinth, to wit, the Pauline, Apollos, Petrine and the Jesus' parties. Each of these explanations, however, rests more or less on a hypothetical supposition, which is hardly warranted either by the direct teaching of Paul in this chapter, or by the manner of the argumentation of Paul, or by the general thrust of the positive instruction here given.

Thus, for example, those, who would link this tendency with the Peter party, certainly have arguments that fall by

their own weight, since Peter was very much married. The same must be said of any Judaizing party. Those, who connect this tendency with the Jesus' party, insisting that this party appealed to the fact that Jesus was never married, rest such teaching upon a pure hypothesis, which is nowhere borne out in this chapter. Thus Ewald. There are also those, who would connect this matter with the Pauline party. However, the mere fact that Paul was not married would be insufficient reason for such a contention. Besides, Paul himself is not ashamed to wish that all men were like he is, having the gift of abstinence. Surely Paul would not place wood upon such a fire of contention. Thus Meyer, Storr and many, many others.

We believe that the matter was not simply a matter of contention. It was a question of conscience for these early believers. They had just been "called" from darkness into God's marvelous light. They hated sin. There was much confusion. And there had even been laxity of discipline in the matter of a man living with his father's wife, that is, with his step-mother. It was a sin which was not even condoned amongst the heathen. I Cor. 5, which see. And now in their anxiety about the moral question of fornication and adultery all kinds of questions reflecting a tendency toward a *false* celibacy were being raised. It touched the entire field of matrimony. Paul treats all these aspects of the matter seriatim. And he does not treat these matters in the abstract but rather treats them as the questions to him which must have either suggested or stated the actual spiritual problems of the congregation.

These questions are treated by Paul under the here following headings. In the verses 1-7 Paul gives the proper *point of departure* to this entire question from a moral and spiritual point of view. He draws the line here in such a way that celibacy is neither outlawed nor is it evaluated in such a way as to come into conflict with the first institution of God, the institution of marriage, Gen. 2:24. Celibacy is simply given its *relatively rightful place*! Nothing more. In the verses 8 and 9, Paul applies this principle of the *relative merit* and *advantage* of celibacy to the unmarried and to the widows. It is a very relative question, for here one chooses between what is "good" and "better" and not between what is *good* or *evil*. Such is the point of departure of Paul.

From here on he can discuss the matter of the "married," those who have entered the married state. Certainly the relative value of celibacy could never be a basis for leaving the marriage state, the original institution in which the bond is inviolable before the face of God. The relative value of celibacy is no licence for breaking what God has joined together! For the Lord Jesus Himself has given a commandment that the marriage tie be not adulterated by a wife leaving her husband, nor by a husband putting his wife away. See the verses 10, 11.

The next aspect, relationship of the marriage tie is now picked up. Paul speaks here "concerning the rest," that is, concerning those who are in the marriage-tie but who, due

to being called by the efficacious calling of God through the Word and Spirit, are now believers, while their wife or husband has not so been called. Thus we have it in the verses 12-24. This has been called a matter of "mixed marriages." We believe incorrectly so. This is not a matter as in the days of Nehemiah (See Ezra 9 and 10) where the believing Israel must put away their heathen wives and children begotten by them, for this is the day when the "heathen" have entered the kingdom. It was a case of a Gentile husband or wife becoming a believer, while the wife or husband remained steeped in heathendom and the worship of idols according to the heathen tradition. Hence, to denominate this question here as the "problem of mixed marriages" is erroneous, as erroneous as it seems plausible. Hence, this cannot either be placed on the level with a christian young man, who after he knows the ways of the Lord, goes and seeks an unbelieving wife. In the case in point, it was not the doing of the husband or wife that she was in marriage with one, who *was not*, or possibly *not yet* (!) in the Lord. It was due to the free and sovereign dispensation of the Lord, who works all things according to the counsel of His will, *calling* His own by name when and if He will!

The verses 17 through 24 have been interpreted as being a little discursion from the matter of the marriage of a believer with an unbeliever nor not-yet believer, a going into generalities. However, we are convinced that Paul is here developing the *general principles* of the Kingdom of heaven being as a *leaven* in the meal; the kingdom of heaven does not necessarily replace the old relationships. Its immediate effect is that it sanctifies these relationships through the unction of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers. Wherefore a relationship between the unbeliever and the believer is sanctified by the virtue of the believer, and the children are "holy" for the believer's sake. Standing in the old relationships in which we were "when called" says Paul sanctify all these relationships. That is the "freedom" with which we are called and which allows for not sinful licence. Hence, the verses 17-24 are not an appendage, but an argumentation for the fact that a believer is not to leave his or her unbelieving husband or wife, but rather to sanctify the relationship as far as is possible, and always in the ardent hope of being a means in God's hand to "save" the unbelieving husband or wife. This principle that grace sanctifies the natural relationships at hand, is also applied by Paul to other commandments of property, etc. It is expanded to the entire "fashion" of this world, which passes away.

Finally, in the verses 25 through 40 Paul is speaking of the proper course of action of a father in relation to an eligible daughter for marriage, who is a virgin. Paul points out the disadvantages of those who marry, yet insists that marriage is justifiable, providing it be done in the Lord, that is, *according to His ordinances* laid down in His holy Word. Paul insists that, due to certain circumstances of a pressing nature, it might be better for a man not to marry. However, this does not mean that if a man is *bound* to a woman he

must seek to be loosed from her, due to these pressing circumstances. To be married is no sin, neither is it a sin not to be married. Paul is not here speaking of good and evil, but is rather speaking of what is good and better under certain circumstances. One should always remember, according to Paul, that the entire era of marrying and giving in marriage passes away. Marriage, earthly possession, all belong to the scheme of this present Cosmos. Wherefore we ought to be married as not having a wife, those weeping as not weeping, rejoicing as those not rejoicing, buying as not possessing, and using the things of this life as not abusing them!

One must continually see that all the earthly is but a means for us to attain unto the heavenly.

Wherefore marriage is not an aim in itself. It is a means to an end. And the silly songs of the world about "happiness ever afterwards" is contrary to life. They that will marry shall have affliction — more than they who do not.

She that marries is interested in the things of the husband. She that marries not is interested in the affairs of the Lord. Such is life.

However, Paul emphasizes overagainst all false asceticism and celibacy, that he who marries sins not. However, from a practical point of view there are times when he, who marries, does "well," while he, who marries not, does "better"!

Such is in general the thrust of this rather misunderstood passage in the first Epistle of Corinthians.

We plan to look at these matters a bit more in detail.

We solicit especially the attention of our covenant youth to these articles of ours. There is no need of a "Dorothy Dix" column in our homes to give direction to our thoughts. Nor do we need a "How to Get the Most out of Life" to teach us the way of life. What we need is solid instruction in the principles of the kingdom of heaven in the marriage relationship, either before or after we enter the marriage state, or whether the Lord wills us to go through life in celibacy.

We know that the whole duty of man is summed up in the last words of Ecclesiastes 12, which are: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

With that injunction as a beacon light before our eyes, we shall pursue our studies of this Seventh Chapter of I Corinthians.

G.L.

EDITORIALS

(Continued from page 128)

heresy that Adam in the state of righteousness did not have the freedom not to sin?

In the above paragraph I positively state that Adam had the freedom to know and serve and consecrate himself to his God with all his heart and mind and soul and strength.

The freedom only to sin is the freedom of the natural man, not of Adam in the state of righteousness. Please, Daane, admit that you knew not what you were talking about.

More about this next time, D.V.

H.H.

IN HIS FEAR

Spiritually Sensitive

(3)

"Any Christian, truly sensitive to evil as the body is sensitive to pain, should and will readily see, that the commercialized movie is a tremendous influence for evil, for social, moral, intellectual, and spiritual corruption."

That statement reads as though it had been written under our title above, *Spiritually Sensitive*, and for this department.

It was taken, however, from the pamphlet *The Movie*, written by the Rev. R. Veldman and to which we referred last time. We like to quote just a little from this pamphlet at this time. And we still urge you, whether you have a television set or not, to procure a copy, read it yourself and give it to your children to read. What we quote now is but such a little part of the whole excellent treatment of this important subject.

The Rev. Veldman begins with these words, "It is not complimentary to the church of God at large or to our Reformed young people in particular, that sermons must be preached, speeches must be given and pamphlets must be written on a thing so obviously evil as our present day movies. Nevertheless, it has become necessary, and no one will gain-say, that also in our Reformed circles the question of the movies has become a timely one . . . The movie evil has become more and more prevalent, also in Reformed circles. The thing has assumed epidemic proportions."

We are not able to state in what year these words were written. The cover of the pamphlet informs us that the pamphlet had been reprinted ten years ago, December 1947. Since that time the matter has come so much closer with the key to the movie in the living room in the form of the television screen. And that is true also of Reformed circles. And it is not complimentary to the slightest degree that now, ten years after this reprint, we have gone so far that these lines must be written about going to the movie in the living room of a Reformed family. So far have we slipped and gone along with the world that today father and mother sit down with their children before the idols and heroes of Hollywood.

Lest the erroneous argument be raised that these films which are shown on the television programs are not the films shown in the theaters, let us quote a little more from this pamphlet of Rev. Veldman.

"Let us note, before we enter into greater detail, that the movie question is one of a moral, intellectual, spiritual nature entirely. In this the movie differs radically from any of the well-known sports, such as baseball, football, basketball, hockey, bowling, billiards, etc. Any one of these may bring us into very objectionable environments. As such, however,

they have little or no moral, intellectual, spiritual content. In the case of the movie this is different. It influences the mind and the heart and gives content to our thoughts and desires. It depicts the life of the world; it speaks the language of the world; it instills into the minds and hearts of its patrons the philosophy of the world. In the movie the world reveals itself, its heart and soul, its inner aspirations and ideals, its attitude toward all things, good and evil. In the movie the world pictures life itself, life as the world lives and desires to live it. Here, therefore, the world manifests itself with relation to God, to His Church, to the Name of the Lord, to heaven and hell, to marriage, to the goods of the world as well as to many sins, such as idolatry, profanity, sabbath desecration, divorce, murder, theft, immorality, and many others. This moral intellectual, spiritual character of the movie makes it all the more dangerous.

"This element, it should be clearly understood, points to the heart of the movie question. Some people seem to lay all stress on the element of *place*. The movies are wrong because they are shown in worldly places and because they bring us in company of worldly people. The objection is removed if only the picture is shown in East High and sponsored by the Christian ex-service men's club . . . It is the movie *itself* that stands condemned, wherever it is shown, and unless we see this plainly we shall never be able to offer this evil reasonable opposition. For that reason the movies sponsored by the Christian ex-service men's club stand condemned along with the rest . . ."

Indeed, the place does not make the movie evil. On the other hand, neither does the place make it good. That it is shown in the living room of confessing members in the church of Christ does not take its evil away. The movie does not become good because it enters the home of members in the church of Christ. Instead the members in that church of Christ, who allow it to enter into their homes, are corrupted by this inherently evil thing. Make no mistake about that. God is not mocked. As the Rev. Veldman writes a couple of paragraphs later, "Who in all these United States, is known like the actors and actresses of Hollywood? What congressman, or preacher, or business man or sports hero, for that matter, can rival a Bob Hope, or Clark Gable, or Dorothy Lamour, or Hedy Lamar in popularity? Their pictures are recognized at once, whether in the newspapers, on a magazine cover or on billboards. Their every move is studied, admired, — and copied. America knows precisely how they look, dress, talk, walk, act, eat, make love, and roll their eyes. Consequently, the movies today determine much of life. 'They teach the songs America sings; popularize the slang America uses; sets the standards for conversation, morals, dress, making up of the hair, love-making, etc.' " This last quotation is taken from *What is Wrong With The Movies* written by John R. Rice, D.D., pastor, at that time, of the Fundamental Baptist Church at Dallas, Texas, whom the Rev. Veldman quotes.

That is, indeed, a matter for us to ponder seriously in the full understanding that God cannot be mocked. Our neighbours we can deceive. Our church boards and pastors can be kept in ignorance; and to them we can lie. But God sees and knows; and what we do in secret will soon be made known in public as we and our children show by our speech, dress, songs, likes and dislikes that the influence of the world has a firm hold upon us. Children, who show such "difficulty" in learning a few names from Scriptures and a few facts from the Scriptures have a way of showing a very detailed, comprehensive and deeply impressed knowledge of these heroes of the world, their lives, their sensual songs. And not seldom is it that their parents will protest that Johnny and Mary cannot learn this long Bible verse or this song of Zion while the repeated and steady contact with the world through these television sets — and of course also radio and corrupt magazines — has for its fruit a veritable flood of filthy, suggestive, sensual songs and a rich knowledge of the world and the lust therein. These things they learn with little difficulty. And their application to them not infrequently is the reason why they have no time or "ability" to learn the things that count. We say again, God is not mocked. He declares Himself, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." What training are we giving our children in the home? When they are old from what way will they not depart?

And lest the argument be raised, again, that the films shown on television today are not the same movies that are shown in the theatres and are advertised in the newspapers, let it be understood and not be denied that they are made by the same wicked world for the same evil purposes. What is more, is not the fact that all the old movies of yesteryear are being used on the television programs today the subject of many a joke that is made today? And, as we wrote some time ago, today you have parents viewing on their television screens the same movies for which they would have severely punished their children had they gone to see them in the theatre. Where has our spiritual sensitivity gone? And we may be sure that the movies of today will eventually find their appearance on the television screen. But even then, all these things which the Rev. Veldman wrote about the moral, intellectual, spiritual influence that the movies has on man is true also of the greater share of what is televised today.

The set as such we cannot and will not condemn, of course. Nor will we dare to say that having such a set in itself brands you as not having the fear of the Lord in your heart. But we will make bold to say, that if you are not spiritually sensitive enough to keep the world away from you and your children, you had better get rid of that set as fast as you can.

What the eye sees while the ear hears does make a far greater impression upon man. And we certainly gain a far clearer and correct picture of the events of the day when they are shown, at the scene of the action, on the television screen. There can be no doubt about that either. A weather report,

shown on the map of the land in which we live, gives us a far better picture of weather conditions and what we might expect on our trip than a word picture. Educational it is to see the coronation of a queen, the inauguration of a president, the method of political conventions that nominates men for president and vice-president of the land and such events of our daily life.

But from the titles and advertisements of many of the television programs it is evident that there is so very much that one, who is spiritually sensitive, will not allow to defile his mind and that of his family by letting it shine into his home. It is not simply these old movies that are re-run. It is not simply the movies made purposely for the television audience. It is so much of the entertainment of the world that is televised that we must avoid and from which we must keep our children. And if we are spiritually sensitive we will. Otherwise we are going to become furious even at these lines written against this great corruption. Are you spiritually sensitive enough to feel the rebuke in these lines, if you have been going to Hollywood per television?

Do you agree with these lines from the Rev. Veldman's pamphlet?, "All their mighty influence, however, is for *evil*. Wherever the movies advertise themselves, they prove this beyond the semblance of a doubt. Sin is the one theme every movie ad glorifies. The movie is indubitably the greatest individual agency for evil today. Dr. Rice speaks the truth when he says, 'It is a feeder of sinful lust, a perverter of morals, a school of crime, a betrayer of innocence.' Those who still are blissfully innocent when they begin attending movies are soon made wise to all the ways of an ungodly world. 'Impurity is glorified as love; murder as entertainment; nakedness and indecency as beauty; drink, divorce, revelling, and gambling as proper and legitimate.' The result is inevitable. They ruin all that is sacred. They debauch the minds of children and youth. They inflame the lusts of mere children as well as adolescent youth. They educate and harden in every sinful way. They mock with God and His church, with angels and devils, with heaven and hell, and do so plainly in all the profanity they utter."

That same thing can be said of the plays and of most of the programs that are televised today, can it not? Is that not true also of the children's programs that are televised? Are they not through these programs taught the morals (or lack of them) in the word. Let us be honest now, the *greater share* of what is available on the television screen is exactly as the Rev. Veldman describes it above, is it not?

Your answer will depend on how spiritually sensitive you are.

Your behaviour, what you will seek on your set, will reveal whether you desire to live in His fear.

J.A.H.

The Voice of Our Fathers

The Canons of Dordrecht

PART TWO

EXPOSITION OF THE CANONS

THIRD AND FOURTH HEADS OF DOCTRINE

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

Article 17 (continued)

In their explanation of this relation between the work of God's grace in regeneration and the use of the gospel, the seed of regeneration and the food of the soul, the fathers begin by making a very apt comparison between the natural and the spiritual in regard to the use of means: "As the almighty operation of God, whereby He produces and sustains this our natural life, does not exclude, but requires the use of means, by which God of his infinite wisdom and goodness has willed to exercise this his power, so also the before-mentioned supernatural operation of God, by which he regenerates us, in no wise excludes, or subverts the use of the gospel." Now it is in the nature of such a comparison as this that it does not by itself and directly expound the principle of truth that is here involved, namely, the principle of the means of grace. Nevertheless, by means of this comparison between the natural and the spiritual much light is shed on the subject, and through the parallel that is drawn we may at once see the principle, and we may also draw certain conclusions from this comparison concerning the spiritual relationship here in question. We may also note that the fathers here follow a Scriptural method. They do this not only in regard to the general principle of their method, namely, that the spiritual is reflected in the natural; but they do it in regard as well to the specific principle that is discussed in this article. It is not difficult to see, for example, that many of the elements taught in this article are directly or indirectly taught in the parallel between the natural and the spiritual which our Lord Himself draws in the Parable of the Sower.

On the basis of this comparison we may note various factors which are of controlling importance for the entire argument of the fathers in this article:

1) There is mention made here of two almighty operations of God. One is in the sphere of the natural, is an operation whereby He produces and sustains our natural life. The other, which is not here called an almighty operation, but which is described as "the beforementioned supernatural operation of God, by which He regenerates us," is in the

sphere of the spiritual, and is the operation by which He produces and sustains our spiritual life.

2) Both these operations are *almighty*. This is to be emphasized in this connection. After all, by their argument the Arminians meant to destroy the doctrinal position of the fathers, namely, that the conversion of man takes place through an almighty, efficacious, irresistible act of God's grace. And therefore the fathers do not retreat at all here from their previously assumed position. They do not intend to have their insistence upon the necessity of the gospel and its admonitions be understood as vitiating or compromising their position that God's grace is absolutely efficacious.

3) In the third place, it is to be noted that it is this almighty operation of God which produces and sustains our natural life; and it is the supernatural operation of God, called regeneration, which produces and sustains our spiritual life. It is not the means which do this. It is not our use of the means which does this. It is not a matter of cooperation between God's almighty operation and our employment of the gospel and heeding of its admonitions. It is, according to this article, strictly and only the almighty operation of God's grace which produces and sustains our spiritual life.

4) When this is well established, we may begin to speak of the nature of that operation of God, both in our natural and in our spiritual life. In regard to our natural life, the article states that this almighty operation of God, producing and sustaining our life, does not exclude, but requires the use of means. This is a statement concerning the nature of God's operation, therefore. That operation of God is of such a kind that it requires the use of means. And if you inquire as to why that operation requires the use of means, the answer is not that there is any reason outside of God, any reason in the creature, compelling Him to use means. The answer is simply that that is the way in which God has chosen to exercise His power. In the abstract, it might be conceivable that God would produce and sustain our natural life immediately, that is, without any means. Then our life would be sustained without food, without drink, without air, without any of the thousand and one elements that enter into the sustenance of our natural life. But God did not choose to operate in this way. It was God's good pleasure to operate mediately, and that too as a matter of His infinite wisdom, according to which He always knows and follows the best way to the best end, and His goodness, according to which as the Fountain of all good He bestows good things upon His creatures. And as it is in the sphere of things natural, so also in the sphere of the spiritual. In the abstract it might be conceivable that God would produce and sustain our spiritual life directly and immediately, entirely without the use of the gospel. But that is not the nature of God's work of grace. And that it is not is a matter of His sovereign choice. God Himself, without any compulsion, chose to regenerate His people through means of the gospel. And as

in the natural sphere He also chose the means through which He operates, so in the spiritual He ordains the gospel to be the seed of regeneration and food of the soul. And again, that is a matter of His infinite wisdom and goodness. What better means could there ever have been to bring a sinner to faith and repentance? What better means could God ever have used to cause an elect sinner to come to the consciousness of His matchless grace and to the acknowledgement of His marvelous praises than that gospel, through which the Almighty operates effectually in the heart and mind and will of His rational, moral creature? And how that gospel is a manifestation of His goodness! How good it is that God through the Word of the gospel causes us to know and taste and consciously enjoy all the infinite blessings of His grace, to know consciously, to experience all that takes place in that almighty operation whereby He produces and sustains our spiritual life! How wise and good it is that God has so arranged the affairs of our spiritual life that we grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ and in the assurance of all the blessings of salvation only according as we are diligent in regard to His own divinely ordained means of grace.

5) We may add to this all the principle that this almighty operation of God does not take place without the God-ordained means. Again, this does not imply at all that God is dependent upon the means, nor in any wise that the production and sustenance of our life is achieved through a cooperation of God's operation and the means. Much rather does it mean that those divinely ordained means, both in the sphere of nature and grace, are an integral part of God's arrangement: God does not choose to operate without those means. And it implies, therefore, that we are dependent upon these God-ordained means, are bound to the use of them, so that we cannot experience the almighty operation of God without these means, either as far as our natural or our spiritual life is concerned.

This brings us to the subject of means, and of means of grace. Means in general are elements through which God always works the same effect. And means of grace are elements from the world of our experience through which God in His church bestows His grace upon His people, and without which He does not bestow that grace. The *means* of grace is the gospel, distinguished in this article in a three-fold way, as consisting in the Word, the sacraments, and discipline. That gospel is called the seed of regeneration here in the same sense as in the Parable of the Sower. The seed is the Word. And where that seed is sown in the hearts of those who are like the good soil in the parable, that is, in the hearts of those who are already regenerated in the narrower sense of the Word, there it springs forth and produces the whole fruit of faith and repentance. That same gospel is at once the food of the soul. For it is not thus, that the means of the gospel is used but once, to produce the conscious life of regeneration, and never used again. But that

life must also be sustained and nourished. And as the food of the soul to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, who hunger for the meat and drink of life eternal, that gospel also serves. Thus also the Scriptures admonish the people of God to "desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." To that gospel belong the sacraments as a secondary means of grace. And in the broad sense, discipline also belongs to it, not only because it serves the function of maintaining the purity of Word and sacraments, but also because discipline itself is a special application of the Word. These means God always uses in the same way in His church, and He never operates unto our conversion apart from these means.

In this connection, the fathers distinguish between the instruction of the gospel and the admonitions of the gospel. On the one hand, they mention that the apostles and teachers who followed them instructed the people concerning this grace of God, to his glory, and to the abasement of all pride. On the other hand, they emphasize that the apostles did not neglect by the holy admonitions of the gospel to keep God's people in the exercise of the Word, sacraments and discipline. Hence, the fathers conceive of the gospel-admonitions as related to the gospel's good tidings of grace in such a way that the former serve to keep God's people in the gospel, in the exercise of Word, sacraments, and discipline.

Hence, the fathers emphasize in all this that God has most intimately joined together grace and the means of grace, grace and admonitions. And because God has most intimately joined them together, neither those who instruct nor those who are instructed should have the presumption to tempt God by attempting to separate the two. Furthermore, they emphasize that there is a most intimate and proportionate relation between the diligence of the church and of the people of God in regard to the means of grace and the measure of the blessing of God working in us. This is well to remember. The means of grace must be diligently used in the church. And God's people will surely manifest this diligence also. Those who administer the means of grace have a duty, an office, in this respect, for their duty it is to see to it that the means are properly and purely administered. And those who partake of the means of grace have a duty, according to their office of believers, to desire and to seek and to partake of these means with all diligence. And we must never imagine that we are wiser than God, and forsake these means. For it is through them and through them alone that the Lord will bless His people. And it is in this way that the work of God's kingdom is advanced.

And since then the grace and the means and the fruit of that grace is of God alone, all the glory, both of the means and of their saving fruit and efficacy, is due alone to Him.

H.C.H.

DECENCY and ORDER

Article 31

Material

Last time we quoted this article, together with decisions that have been made concerning it, as well as various revisions that are at present being considered by different Reformed Church bodies. We also expressed that the heart of the matter as far as Article 31 is concerned has to do with the right and duty of appeal by members of the church who may find themselves aggrieved by decisions which are made by the various ecclesiastical assemblies. We will now proceed to outline the course of our discussion of those matters that are either expressed or implied in this article. To do so we present the following brief statements of the matters we propose to consider:

- A. The Right of Appeal.
- B. Cases To Which It Applies.
- C. Methods of Submitting an Appeal.
- D. Time Limitations of Appeals.
- E. Bodies to which Appeals are to be directed.
- F. "Unless" or "Until."
- G. Status of the Decision until such Time as the Matter of Appeal has been Resolved.
- H. Status of the Appellant during this Interim.
- I. To Whom must the Contention of the Appeal be Proven?
- J. Majority Vote.
- K. Settled and Binding.
- L. Relation of Major Assemblies Decisions to Those of the Minor Assemblies.
- M. Was Article 31 Violated in 1953?

A. *The Right of Appeal*

Since we already touched upon this point in our last article, we may be brief here. The right of appeal is that right which every member of the church of Jesus Christ possesses according to which he may express before the assemblies of the church wherein and why he is in disagreement with a certain decision or decisions which have been made. This right stems from the fact that a member, by virtue of his faith in Christ, stands in the office of all believers. He is prophet, priest and king in Christ. This three-fold office not only involves a serious obligation to seek and strive to attain the truth in all things pertinent to the cause of Christ in the world but it also implies a sincere interest and desire to do so. One who is conscious of his

christian calling will exercise a serious concern about the affairs of Christ's church. When, according to his conviction, matters are decided in conflict with the truth, he must speak and be heard. He has this right, given to him not by the church but by Christ Jesus Himself!

Further, this right of appeal is necessitated by the fact that the church in the deliberations and decisions of her assemblies is not infallible. History provides abundant evidence of this. Consistories, Classes and Synods are constituted of fallible and even sinful men. They can and do make mistakes, commit errors and perpetrate injustices. Although the guidance of the infallible Holy Spirit is invoked upon these assemblies, this guidance is not always followed. This may be due to the inability at the moment to properly discern the course of truth and then again it may result from a carnal element gaining the majority vote in the assemblies and deliberately directing matters in a way contrary to the truth. Irregardless of the cause, however, Christ gives unto His people the right and duty to militate against all evil through the medium of lawful and orderly appeal.

B. *Cases To Which Appeal Applies*

The question may arise: "Is any and every decision made by an ecclesiastical assembly subject to appeal?" The present Article 31 would seem to imply a limitation in answer to this question. It states: "*If anyone complain that he has been wronged by a decision . . .*" so that it would follow that appeal can be made only where an injustice has been perpetrated. In fact, literally understood, this injustice must be of a personal nature for the article reads: "*that he has been wronged . . .*" Monsma and Van Dellen state that "the very word *appeal* would also signify this" although they hasten to add that these appeals are not to be limited by the article to cases of personal injury. They stress that appeals which involve no personal injury or injustice but which may concern the welfare of the churches, the purity of confessions, etc. are also legitimate. It seems to me that this limitation of Article 31 is very broad and may be construed so as to include virtually any decision. Two things should be very evident. First of all, no one will appeal unless he feels wronged or aggrieved and, secondly, no decision that affects the welfare of the churches can possibly leave the individual member of the church unaffected. The one is bound up in the other!

It may be said, however, that although in the abstract any and all decisions of ecclesiastical assemblies may be a lawful cause for appeal, yet, concretely there are many decisions made which in their very nature would be unworthy of an appeal to Classis or Synod, even though one might be personally dissatisfied with them. For example, a Consistory may decide to give the janitor a small salary increase, to forbid Saturday evening meetings in the church building, to close off a certain section of an overly-large auditorium, to forbid smoking on the church premises, etc. Such decisions may not meet with unanimous agreement in the congrega-

tion but they certainly do not warrant appeal to a broader ecclesiastical body.

It is interesting to see how the proposed revisions of Art. 31 affect this particular point. The Christian Reformed proposal retains the literal wording of the present article in one place but adds thereto the words, "*If anyone is persuaded that a decision of an assembly is contrary to God's Word or the Church Order, he shall have the right to address a protest . . .*" The revision proposed in the Netherlands changes the wording quite radically. It has: "*Those who have objections to submit to the sentiment of the majority, because they deem them in conflict with the Word of God or with the articles of the Church Order, can make their appeal to the next broader gathering.*"

Summing this point we may say that any member who, in good conscience, feels that the churches in doctrine or practice have deviated from the way of truth, has the right to voice his objections and attempt to convince them to return to what he believes is the right way according to the Holy Scriptures.

C. Methods of Appeal

To the common layman this matter of method may enhance some difficulties. It may be out of fear that one will fail to follow precisely every rule of technical procedure and thus have his case nullified before it is even heard that one with a grievance will refrain from registering his rightful appeal. This should not be so and probably would not be so if it were remembered that the process of registering an appeal is not as involved as it is often made out to be. There are only a few simple rules to be observed:

Firstly, Dr. Jansen recommends that an appeal should include the following points: "(1) Presentation of the matter at issue in the appellant's own words. (2) Quotation of the official decision concerning which the appeal is being made. (3) Enumeration of the reasons because of which the appellant feels himself aggrieved and upon which his appeal rests. (4) Petition that the major assembly declare for reasons adduced, that the minor assembly's decision was erroneous and unfounded." These four points, of course, concern the material content of the appeal. To this we would like to add that appeals should be as brief as possible and well documented. By the latter we mean that there should be clear and authenticated proof given for the points in question. The strength of an appeal does not lie in its length. Ecclesiastical bodies are not generally impressed, frightened or intimidated by voluminous writing. There is a danger, too, that the point the appellant wishes to establish will be lost in the ramble of many words. Better it is to state the point concisely and add thereto the desired grounds which in themselves will be convincing if they are really valid.

Secondly, to register an appeal a proper notification must

be given to the secretary of the body which made the decision that is being called in question. For example, if an appeal is being made to Classis concerning a decision of the Consistory, the secretary of the Consistory must be first notified. Such notification does not consist of mere information but includes a copy of the appeal that is being forwarded. This is necessary, of course, in order that the Consistory may be prepared to render its defence. That is just!

Finally, in the past Reformed Churches permitted an appellant to explain and defend his position by means of another who was called "*een mond*," i.e. a mouth. If one feels that he has a just case but lacks the ability to properly present it, he may employ "*een mond*." Such a person, however, must be a member in good standing in the churches and must conduct himself throughout in a worthy manner. It may be added that although this practice has its commendable features, it should not be encouraged but rather each one should act, if at all possible, in his own case. That is better!

D. Time Limitations on Appeals

This matter is governed by a rule in our churches to the effect that appeals must be made at the very next meeting of the body to which the appeal is directed. Thus, if one is aggrieved by a decision of a Consistory, he cannot wait several months before registering his grievance. He must do so the next time the Consistory meets. If he fails to do so, he forfeits his right of appeal. Also here, as is generally true with rules, there must be allowance for an exception. Circumstances may make an early appeal impossible. A man may be on a trip to Europe. During his absence the Consistory may make a decision which he learns of only after his return. If desired, such a person would be allowed the right to appeal at the first Consistory meeting after he gained knowledge of the decision. Common sense and good-will must prevail in every circumstance but as much as possible adherence to the rule must be maintained in the interests of decency and good order.

G.V.D.B.

IN MEMORIAM

The Men's Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church hereby wishes to express its sympathy to one of its members, Mr. Simon Ondersma, and family in the loss of his father,

MR. RICHARD ONDERSMA

Psalm 116:15: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."

D. Van Alten, President

R. Kamminga, Secretary

ALL AROUND US

A Reformed Church An Enemy Of Christian Schools?

The implied thought in the question above is that this is an impossibility. A church that is an enemy of Christian schools and therefore of Christian private education cannot be Reformed. And yet there is a church that calls itself Reformed that actually has no use for Christian schools. That church is the Reformed Church in America, a denomination that historically finds its roots in Western Michigan with the coming of Dr. A. C. Van Raalte from the Netherlands to this community.

The editor of *The Banner* in the November 29th issue of this periodical critically takes the Reformed Church in America to task for her very weak position on the matter of Christian schools. Writing under the title: Van Raalte's Anchor of Hope, the editor points up the spiritual decadence of this denomination of churches which to all intents and purposes has allowed Van Raalte's Anchor of Hope to be lost for ever. Van Raalte, so we are told, in 1851 made a significant statement shortly after the establishment of an academy under church control in Holland, Michigan that envisioned good hope for the future of his church. That statement was: "THIS IS my anchor of Hope for this people in the future." The academy upon which Van Raalte set his hope, so we are told, was closed in 1936. The reason for its closing is given by the Board of Education of the Reformed Church in America as follows: "The decline of the academy began about the early 1900's and it was finally closed in 1936. Lack of financial support, the demands of college accrediting agencies and the establishment of a Christian Reformed high school are among the reasons for its demise." *The Banner* editor points out that the above quotation "leaves room for the possibility that there may also have been other reasons." And he further interjects that "there can be no doubt that it was due primarily to a lack of conviction for the need of such an academy. Van Raalte's anchor of hope, at least concerning the academy, has apparently been lost or discarded somewhere in the watery deep, and the Reformed Church Board of Education seems pretty well satisfied to leave it there . . ."

Moreover, the editor calls attention to a document which was composed by leading men in the Reformed Church in America and adopted by the synod of this denomination which met in 1957 and ordered that it be sent to every pastor in the church for reading, reference and study. Concerning this document the editor remarks: "One wonders whether to call this document specious reasoning or misguided thinking. Certainly it is a glaring example of failure to recognize the mandate of our Covenant God to train His children consistently according to His Word and will." And further he asks: "What does this 45-page document sent to all pastors . . . have to say about Christian Schools? A glance at

the 'Summary and Recapitulation' at the close tells the sad story as seen from the following quotations . . .

"The vitality of the Christian school movement is noteworthy. Through unceasing sacrificial effort a relatively small group of devoted people have established a unique system of elementary and secondary education. (Merely 'noteworthy' and 'unique'? Ed.) However, we cannot advocate a restricted absolutism which requires a separate Christian school wherever there is a Reformed Church community, no matter how small the community and no matter how good the public schools. This tends to produce a sectarianism which threatens the common life of christians in the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"We must defend the right of the church or any association of individuals to organize and maintain systems of private education. It is optional procedure and may be desirable (Just how mild can one who still calls himself Reformed become! Ed.) in those instances where public education is morally and spiritually detrimental and where such baneful conditions cannot be remedied. The venture cannot be forced upon the consciences of believers as a divinely sanctioned imperative. It is not an essential element in the covenant of grace nor a necessary consequence of baptismal vows.

"We must avoid such criticism of the public schools as tends to destroy the public school system. Despite our concern about some of the tendencies in public education we retain our confidence in our free school system."

The editor of *The Banner* interrupts his quoting of the document to observe "that the authors of it are by no means as charitable toward our own Christian school movement. In contrast to what is said about the public school system, ours is certainly not handled as if it were sacrosanct. In a section about 'religious day schools sponsored chiefly by the membership of the Christian Reformed Church' the document states:

"The origin of these day schools may be traced directly to The Netherlands in the middle of the Nineteenth Century.

"This system claims (A claim which this document repudiates. Ed.) to find its theological justification in an interpretation and application of the Covenant.

"In the Netherlands, the Christian school movement thrived upon criticism of the State School. This attitude of attack has been pursued with even increased ardor in America. Catch phrases are often employed, such as: The public schools are godless, public schools are secular, the public school is dominated by the *progressive* movement. Slogans like these always defy critical analysis and satisfy the unthinking."

"TO QUOTE further from the 'Summary and Capitulation' of this document we call attention to the following . . .

"We caution against the acceptance of any interpretation of the Covenant which prescribes the type and quality of education. We cannot conceive of the Covenant as yielding

built-in patterns of education determining in a specific manner its method, form and content.

"Christian parents who adhere to sound Reformed tradition will strive to retain freedom of judgment, freedom to choose for themselves the means they deem best for the education of their children. They will resist dictation by a pressure group be it that of a church or an organization. They will repudiate as unsound and unscriptural the notion that only those who decide for parental or parochial schools are qualified to hold positions of responsible leadership in the church."

The editor continues: "The theological presuppositions which are supposed to be basic to this amazing and pathetic thinking on education which the synod of the Reformed Church in America has seen fit to send 'to every pastor in the Church for reading, reference and study' are set forth in this document at great length. Space permits us to quote only a sample of the reasoning which makes this document so disappointing. Even if one strains christian charity to the limit, the following still seems preposterous:

"This puts the question of means before us: Is education in a *parental* or parochial school an essential means to bring the child from baptism to public confession of Christ and confirmation of the vows made in his behalf at infancy? To this question we are compelled to answer with an unqualified and decisive No, and all who hold the Reformed position join us in this answer . . . For to give any other answer, or to answer with a mild yes and no, is to abandon our Reformed position which stoutly insists that Faith and Works are not to be mingled. To say that such schools are essential is to rob Divine grace of its sovereignty. It is to say that God's grace cannot operate without human assistance. It ultimately lands us in the camp of Rome. If the door is opened even a chink the Satanic scheme of *work-righteousness* slips back in to rob us of the security and freedom that we have in Christ. Our Reformed theology absolutely forbids us to say: *Unless you send your child to parochial school he cannot be saved.* When this is said or when it is implied the whole structure of Reformation thought comes tumbling down."

The editor concludes this portion of his editorial with the statement: "One finds it difficult to believe that the writers can really be serious about this. But apparently they are dead in earnest."

That the editor of *The Banner* rises to the defense of Christian schools and becomes a bit indignant when these institutions are attacked is commendatory, of course. It would seem that if there were no other reason why the two churches, Christian Reformed and the Reformed Church in America, should have a separate existence this one would be sufficient, despite the fact that there have been serious attempts to bring these denominations together. They who would be Reformed more than in name cannot think nor speak disparagingly of the matter of covenantal training of their youth.

The Reformed Church in America, in our judgment which is again strengthened by the above referred to editorial, has lost not only Van Raalte's Anchor of Hope, but pathetically also the right to its name. Indeed, there are serious minded people in this church who have concluded that it is utterly impossible for Christian parents to send their children to public schools because of conditions that prevail there. Even ministers of these churches appear to be strong advocates of private Christian schools. To mention one, the editor of *The Church Herald* whom we know sent his child to a Christian high school. Does this mean that they all do this for principle reasons, because they understand, believe in the Reformed covenant idea. I fear not. But it becomes plain from the action of the synod of these churches above cited in the sending out of the above mentioned document that the church in general has absolutely no use for a Christian school, nor does it have any understanding of the Scriptural conception of God's Covenant. Rev. Vander Ploeg is very mild in his editorial when he asserts: "Certainly it is a glaring example of failure to recognize the mandate of our Covenant God to train His children consistently according to His Word and will." I make bold to say that the document passed on by the synod of the Reformed Church in America and sent to all their pastors for study, is a clear indication that this particular church is hopelessly lost as far as the Reformed faith is concerned. Here again it is clearly obvious that the church which steps off the line of the truth somewhere in history never returns, but proceeds farther in its decadence until it destroys itself. The very hope of the church of tomorrow is the covenant training of her youth today.

Will the document for study by the pastors of this church bring about a good reaction, so that a host of their constituency will rise in repudiation of the synodically approved document? I think not. Many of the ministers and people I have spoken to of this church about the matter of Christian education in Christian schools will not need to even read the document to form an opinion. They are in perfect agreement with the tenor of the document before they read it. Some have even been bold enough to derogate all defenders of Christian private schools as undesirable citizens of these United States. Of course, those who speak thus show plainly that they know even less of the truth.

M.S.

Announcement

Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet the second Wednesday in January, January 8th, at 9:00 A. M. in the Creston Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Consistories residing in this Classis will please take note.

M. Schipper, Stated Clerk