

THE STANDARD

Bearer

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MEDITATION

REMEMBER ME!

"And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." — Luke 23:42

Everyone mocked the Christ when He hung on the Cross. The people stood beholding.

The rulers derided Him, but also with them, that is, the people.

The soldiers mocked Him.

Even the written word meant to deride Him. The superscription on the cross was meant as a taunt of the ruler, the governor: This is the King of the Jews! Imagine: a King on a Cross??!!

Yes, and even a man who was in the same judgment with Jesus mocked Him, saying, If Thou be the Christ, save Thyself and us!

Everyone derided and mocked Jesus.

But wait! There is one solitary exception: the other murderer.

He turns his tortured body toward the other murderer and after chiding him for mocking Jesus, he turns to Jesus and says: Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom!

Marvel of marvels!

There is one in the whole universe that believes in the crucified One!

And he is a murderer.

* * * *

I love that murderer.

No, not as a murderer. A murderer is an ugly person. He takes the life of his fellow. And that is horrible. There is only One who can do that, namely God, who killeth and maketh alive. He is the Great God who is the Creator and Sustainer of life. He speaks and there you are! He speaks again and you stop breathing. You are dead.

Man may not kill man.

And this man was a convicted murderer. Also, he sustains the judgment and condemnation. Just a minute ago he admitted that before the whole world. And since then the whole world, wherever this Gospel is preached has heard his assent to the just condemnation of himself. He said: "And we indeed justly!"

But I love him because he is my representative. Indeed, he is the representative of all God's elect people. We all are by nature murderers. Jesus said that whoever hates his brother is a murderer. And I admit that many times I have hated where I should have loved my brother. Yes, we all are murderers.

But this murderer is a converted murderer. Thru the ages the church has given him a beautiful name, he is called the penitent.

That he is penitent is evident. The whole world knows that. Penitence begins by admitting our sin. And he has done that in the preceding verse. We indeed justly.

Moreover, he said to the other, mocking, murderer: Dost thou not fear God? And that surely implies that he feared God even though the other did not. The fear of God was implanted in his heart. And he showed it.

He is penitent. He is sorry for his sins.

* * * *

But there is more.

He does what no one thinks of doing in this dreadful hour when the church and the world combine to crucify the Saviour of the world: he is going to confess Him.

He calls Him Lord!

I do not know how much this poor sinner knew of Christ's Lordship. He is a little premature too. We know that God made Jesus both Christ and Lord, but that was after, or, rather, at His glorification at the Father's right hand. But this man calls Him Lord when He hangs on the accursed tree. Did I say too much when I cried out: Marvel of Marvels?

Lord is He Who has the regiment over the whole Universe. I do not think that this murderer was present when Jesus said: You call Me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. No, I do not think that he heard those words. It was not necessary: God must have told him later, later,

perhaps on the cross. Flesh and blood had not revealed it to him. But you may be sure that he knew. His very little speech carries conviction: Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom! What a little speech, but how fraught with beautiful conviction! Jesus, Thou art my Lord!

Oh, I am sure that God told him in his heart. He hung in the light, in the dazzling light of the everlasting Gospel. And when you hang in the light, even though you hang on the cross, you see clearly: you recognize God, and God's Son.

* * * *

When Thou comest into Thy Kingdom!

How utterly marvelous! This man is talking of a Kingdom while his addressee is hanging on the accursed tree! If anyone seemed to be far from dominion and royal majesty it surely was Jesus at this dreadful hour. Dominion? He is bound hand and feet, and what bonds! He is *nailed* to the tree! He cannot move.

But this penitent knows: Jesus is on the way to His Kingdom of light and glory.

How did he know? I do not know. Perhaps he was instructed by a godfearing mother or father. Maybe he had heard of the coming of Goel, of Shilo, of the Messiah. And now that God gave him life and light, perhaps all that knowledge was applied to his heart. But I do not know. Perhaps he had enough of the Word of God in that little wooden board above the tortured form of Jesus. You know, that board that read in three languages: This is Jesus the King of the Jews. Maybe that was enough. God needs very little to preach His Gospel. He is the Almighty.

But he knows.

Jesus, my Lord, Thou art on the way to inherit a glorious Kingdom!

Here on this cross, the cross that clearly reveals what kind of man I have been and am, I feel the urge to confess Thee. Thou art the Lord of the Universe, and Thou art the King of God's Zion! Thou art on the way to unspeakable glory and honor. Yes, Lord, and Thou art also on the way to wondrous dominion. All things testify now that Thou art bound, nailed, tortured, dying, but this is the way to the Kingdom!

I know, Lord, that all appearances are against Thy having either Lordship or royal majesty, but I know that Thou art both Lord and King!

Marvellous faith of the penitent!

* * * *

But Lord, my Lord and King, I have a little petition, a very little petition: remember me! When Thou art in Thy Kingdom, surrounded by honor and majesty; when Thou art on the great throne, the great white throne in the heaven of heavens then, O Lord, remember me!

Two words: remember me!

What a little prayer!

But, dear reader, what an immensity of blessedness is asked for.

In case Jesus would give him his petition he will have everything that is blessed and lovely. If Jesus remembers him he is safe, safe for the little time he has, and surely for all eternity.

O, all we need, really need is to be remembered by God, by Jesus.

There is a hymn, but I do not know the correct reading of all the stanzas. It must have been composed with an eye to this beautiful story, for there is a line: And when Thou sittest on Thy throne: O Lord, remember me! It is the penitent murderer's song.

It was a little prayer, but how dared he utter it?

Remember *him*? A foul murderer?

If a poll would have been taken at the very spot, I am sure that the unanimous verdict would have been: No, he is not worthy to be remembered by Jesus the King. Everyone, both the church and the world had decreed that he was worthy of death, and so he found himself on the cross.

Yes, and note the little detail, little but important: he voted for his own condemnation. Verse 40, and 41.

He was worthy of death, physical and eternal.

And now, remember him? With all that it implies?

What are the implications? This: he would be forgiven all his sins. He would be justified before God's tribunal. He would receive the beauty of heaven and heaven's God in heart and soul and body. He would be changed into a fit companion of the angels, of Christ and of God. He would receive all the happiness of heaven unto all eternity.

That, my friends, is contained in this little petition: remember me!

Was it not presumptuous to pray for all that?

* * * *

No, my brother. It was not.

Jesus, the Crucified One, fits such penitent murderers.

That is exactly why He came on the cursed earth. It was His mission to seek out and find all those murderers, thieves, adulterers, idolaters and corrupters. No, not all. He came and wrought salvation only for those evildoers that were written in the book of life. But all those written in that book deserve such terrible names as I wrote down. That is our natural name.

We thought this man presumptuous for asking for so much blessedness, while we all know that he deserved so much cursedness. And no wonder. Instinctively we feel that it is not correct to reward the murderer with heaven.

But we must remember that Jesus came and willingly stood in the place of all His beloved people who in history became murderers, thieves, adulterers, idolaters and corrupters.

And God treated Jesus just as though He Himself had done all that abomination.

That is the everlasting Gospel.

It is not in my text, but I better tell you anyhow. This man's little petition was heard.

Remember you? Yes, I will remember you. I have paid, I am now paying for your entrance into the same Kingdom toward which I journey.

I will precede you by a few hours. But even today, this very day, shalt thou be with Me in Paradise!

And it came to pass. Both Jesus and this murderer are now, while I write this, in God's Paradise.

Some day we will see him there.

I do not think that we marvel so much that *he* was taken to that beautiful Kingdom of God.

When the light of the Gospel shines in our hearts, discovering all our terrible sins, *we* softly sing to *ourselves*: And when Thou sittest on Thy throne, O God, remember me!

Trembling: O God, remember me!

G. V.

Announcement

Anyone interested in writing for our Sunday School Paper, the "Our Guide," for the smaller children, contact the Editor, John Bos, 4238 Fuller Ave., S. E., Grand Rapids 8, Michigan. We are in serious need of such a writer.

The Sunday School Association

IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory of the Protestant Reformed Church of Randolph, Wis., hereby expresses its sincere sympathy to a sister, Mrs. Ray J. Alsum, and her family in the sudden death of her husband and father,

RAY J. ALSUM

May the testimony of the Spirit of Christ through His Word impart comfort and peace to her and her family.

Dewey Alsum, Vice President
Herman De Vries, Clerk

IN MEMORIAM

In the early morning of May 10 it pleased our heavenly Father to suddenly take unto Himself our husband and father,

RAY J. ALSUM

at the age of 70 years. We mourn his loss, but are comforted with the thought that he now has the complete victory over sin, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Mrs. Ray J. Alsum
Mr. and Mrs. John Alsum
Mr. and Mrs. Ted Huizenga
Mr. and Mrs. Henry Slager
Mr. and Mrs. Ben De Young
Mr. and Mrs. Ted Westra
12 grandchildren
1 great grandchild

Friesland, Wis., Randolph Prot. Ref. Church.

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Editor — REV. HERMAN HOEKSEMA

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Rev. H. Hoeksema, 1139 Franklin St., S. E.,
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EDITORIALS

The Importance of Christian Discipline

We called your attention to the fact that, also according to our Church Order, Christian Discipline is important as is evident from the several articles it devotes to this subject. To five of these we already called your attention. But there are still others. Article 76 reads as follows:

"Such as obstinately reject the admonition of the consistory, and likewise those who have committed a public or otherwise gross sin, shall be suspended from the Lord's Supper. And if he, having been suspended, after repeated admonitions, shows no signs of repentance, the consistory shall at last proceed to the extreme remedy, namely, excommunication, agreeably to the form adopted for that purpose according to the Word of God. But no one shall be excommunicated except with the advice of the classis."

Also this article emphatically speaks of especially two items: admonition and repentance.

As I have said before, there is, ultimately, only one sin that may or can lead to excommunication and that is the sin of impenitence. One who does not repent before God and man cannot receive forgiveness. But, on the other hand, if the sinner repents he must be forgiven no matter how great his sin may be or how often he sins. This is very evident from the answer which the Lord Jesus gave to Peter. The latter, evidently, was of the opinion that there must be an end to compassion and forgiveness and, therefore, he asked the question: "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" It is plain from this question that the apostle considered himself rather generous, and we might be of the same opinion. After all, if the brother repeatedly commits the same sin against us, must we not come to the conclusion that the case is hopeless and that, when we have forgiven him seven times and he again expresses repentance and asks for forgiveness, we may refuse? But the Lord answers Peter: "I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven." And then Jesus finishes His answer by the parable of the king and his servants, the meaning of which is clearly that, if God forgave us all our sins by blotting them out in the blood of the cross, there can be no end of our forgiving one another.

Hence, there must be repeated admonition in order to bring the sinner to repentance, and only when the impenitence of the sinner has become clearly manifest can he be cast out as a heathen man and a publican.

The same idea is expressed in Article 77 of the Church Order:

"After suspension from the Lord's table, and subsequent admonitions, and before proceeding to excommunication, the obstinacy of the sinner shall be publicly made known to the congregation, the offense be explained, together with the care

bestowed upon him, in reproof, suspension from the Lord's Supper, and repeated admonition, and the congregation shall be exhorted to speak to him and to pray for him. There shall be three such admonitions. In the first, the name of the sinner shall not be mentioned that he may be somewhat spared. In the second, with the advice of the classis, his name shall be mentioned. In the third, the congregation shall be informed, that (unless he repent) he will be excluded from the fellowship of the church, so that his excommunication, in case he remains obstinate, may take place with the tacit approbation of the church. The interval between the admonitions shall be left to the discretion of the consistory."

We may ask: why must this lengthy process be followed, and why must all these admonitions be bestowed upon the sinner? The answer is that, before any member may be excommunicated, it must become perfectly manifest that the sinner is obstinate and impenitent. And in the deeper sense, the answer is that the motive of Christian discipline is, unlike that of the sword-power, love, the love of God in Christ, the love of the church, and the love of the sinner.

Yet, even after the impenitent member has been excommunicated and is, therefore, to be regarded as a heathen man and a publican, the admonitions may and ought to be still continued. For in the Form of Excommunication, the congregation is admonished as follows: "Further we exhort you, beloved Christians, to keep no company with him, that he may be ashamed; yet count him not as an enemy, but at all times admonish him as you would a brother."

This means, of course, that the members of the congregation do not invite him into their homes, have no social gatherings with him, and also that they do not shake hands with him. But, on the other hand, they must not treat him as a personal enemy, but by admonishing him treat him as they would treat a brother.

This is also evident from the prayer that, in the Form of Excommunication, is sent up to God. We refer to the following passage: "grant us to avoid all pollution of the world, and those who are cut off from the communion of the church, that we may not make ourselves guilty of their sins; and that he who is excommunicated may become ashamed of his sins; and since thou desirest not the death of the sinner, but that he may repent and live, and the bosom of thy church is always open for those who turn away from their wickedness; we therefore humbly beseech thee, to kindle in our hearts a pious zeal, that we may labor with good Christian admonitions and examples, to bring again this excommunicated person on the right way, together with all those, who, through unbelief and dissoluteness of life, go astray. Give thy blessing to our admonitions, that we may have reason thereby to rejoice again in him, for whom we must now mourn . . ."

Hence, it is evident that, even after someone has been excommunicated, admonitions may and ought to be continued.

The Church Order also visualizes the possibility that an excommunicated person may repent and desire to return to

the bosom of the church. The following provides for that possibility:

"Whenever anyone who has been excommunicated desires to become reconciled to the church in the way of repentance, it shall be announced to the congregation, either before the celebration of the Lord's Supper, or at some other opportune time, in order that (in as far as no one can mention anything against him to the contrary) he may with profession of his conversion be publicly reinstated, according to the form for that purpose."

The possibility may be remote, but it must be provided for: all things are possible with God. And after all, it is not the admonitions by the church or by the members of the church that cause any sinner to repent, but only God, even through the admonitions by the church and its members. Who can convert the sinner and bring him to repentance.

* * * *

We now come to the important subject of discipline over office-bearers, ministers, elders, and deacons. To this the Church Order devotes three articles.

Article 79 reads as follows:

"When ministers of the Divine Word, elders or deacons, have committed any public, gross sin, which is a disgrace to the church, or worthy of punishment by the authorities, the elders and deacons shall immediately by preceding sentence of the consistory thereof and of the nearest church, be suspended or expelled from their office, but the ministers shall only be suspended. Whether these shall be entirely deposed from office, shall be subject to the judgment of the classis, with the advice of the delegates of the (particular) synod mentioned in article 11."

Let us notice here, in the first place, that this article does not speak of Christian discipline as such, i.e., of discipline that leads to excommunication, but merely of suspension and deposition from office. It, however, stands to reason, especially in the light of the fact that the article speaks of public gross sins which are "a disgrace to the church or worthy of punishment by the authorities" that, even after suspension and deposition from office, Christian discipline must still be exercised upon those that have been suspended or deposed from office. If those deposed office-bearers do not repent they must finally be excommunicated.

Here we must face the question: what gross sin did the office-bearers that were deposed from office in 1924 commit? The answer is: none at all. They certainly did not commit the sin of preaching or teaching false doctrine or heresy which are mentioned in the Church Order, Article 80. It is true, the Synod of 1924 adopted the notorious Three Points and with these the above named office-bearers did not and could not agree. But, in the first place, we must not forget that the Synod, no doubt intentionally, never decided to advise discipline in spite of the fact that the committee of pre-advice proposed so to Synod. And, secondly, the Synod of

1924 gave what I consider a beautiful testimony to the two accused ministers. This testimony reads as follows: "On the other hand, synod declares that these ministers in their writings, according to their own repeated declarations, do not intend or purpose anything else than to teach and maintain our Reformed doctrine, the doctrine of Scripture and the Confessions; and it cannot be denied that they are Reformed in respect to the fundamental truths as they are formulated in the Confessions even though it be with an inclination to one-sidedness."

Now, let it, for the sake of argument, be admitted that this "inclination to one-sidedness" is true (which it is not), then I ask: when was it ever heard of that ministers who "are Reformed in the fundamental truths as they are formulated in the Confessions" were deposed from their office?

I never heard of such a thing. At any rate it ought to be evident that the office-bearers that were deposed in 1924 did not commit the public or gross sin mentioned in Article 79 of the Church Order.

Secondly, Article 79 clearly states that discipline over ministers, elders, and deacons, i.e., their suspension or/and deposition shall begin at the consistory with the presence of the consistory of the nearest church. Also this fundamental rule of Reformed Church Polity was violated in 1924 by both Classis Grand Rapids East and Classis West. It is true that Classis Grand Rapids East was not as bold in its thoroughly hierarchical decisions as was Classis Grand Rapids West, but there was no essential difference. Both certainly violated Article 79 of the Church Order which clearly states that suspension of office-bearers belongs not to the jurisdiction of the classis but to that of the consistory in connection with the consistory of a neighboring church. This principle both classes entirely ignored.

Both deposed ministers and their consistories. In fact, Classis West deposed ministers, not only without any formal complaint against them, but even without any formal suspension from office. They were immediately deposed and that, too, in a comparatively few days!

Talk about hierarchy!

H.H.

IN MEMORIAM

The South-Lawn Choral Society of the South Holland and Oak Lawn Protestant Reformed Churches wishes to express its sympathy to two of its members, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Van Baren, in the loss of Mr. Van Baren's mother,

MRS. GILBERT VAN BAREN, Sr.

"For we know that if our house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." II Corinthians 5:1.

Ernest Medema, President
Ruth Poortenga, Secretary

OUR DOCTRINE

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

PART TWO

CHAPTER XIX — Revelation 20:1-10

The Binding of Satan With a View to Gog and Magog

For blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments! And let us be of good cheer! For our King is given us of Israel's God. He has all power in heaven and on earth. He has a Name above all names. The victory, therefore, is His, and ours through Him. "In the world ye shall have tribulation. But be of good cheer: I have overcome the world!"

We must add a few words yet about the rest of this section. In verse 9 we read about the judgment of the nations: "And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." We may note here: a) That in this verse the prophecy contained in this section of Revelation changes again from direct prediction, as we had it in the preceding, into the form of the vision. In the vision John now beholds the nations marching up from the ends of the earth against "the beloved city." b) That in the vision "the camp of the saints" and "the beloved city" dare not to be allegorized. They are certainly Jerusalem and the people of God encamped round about it. Only, we must remember that this is true only of the vision, and that also this part may not be read as if it were history literally foretold. c) That therefore they violate all the rules of interpretation, who apply this prophecy in such a way that they find here a prediction that Jerusalem (the earthly capital of earthly Canaan) shall be rebuilt, that there Christ and His resurrected and glorified saints in their spiritual bodies shall live and reign a thousand years (the millennium), and that after the millennium the nations of Gog and Magog shall actually gather for battle against these glorified saints and their Lord. This interpretation errs because: 1) It violates the apocalyptic character of the whole book of Revelation in general and of this passage in particular, and reads it as if it were literal history, although it may only be interpreted as a vision. 2) Because in the whole New Testament Jerusalem as it exists after Christ's exaltation is the church, the heavenly Jerusalem. Cf. Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 11:16; Hebrews 12:22. And this is also true in particular of the book of Revelation. Cf. 3:12; 21:22. It is quite in accord with this to explain "the beloved city" in this passage as representing the same Jerusalem. 3) Because "the first resurrection" is not bodily resurrection, but the glorification of the saints with Christ after death. Cf. my interpretation of verses 4 and 5. 4) Because of the absurdity of the presentation of glorified saints in their incorruptible and spiritual bodies with their glorified Lord living in an earthly, material city in a corruptible and corrupt world and being actually attacked by earthly enemies with material

weapons. d) The camp of the saints and the beloved city, therefore, certainly represent the church and the people of God. And they represent the entire church, in the whole world and even in heaven. In the first place, the church, of course, is centrally in heaven in Christ their Lord and through faith reigns with Him. And they are actually in heaven as far as the church triumphant, or the church glorified, is concerned. In the second place, they are, notwithstanding their heavenly character, in part still in this world and are represented by the church visible on earth. And thirdly, in their widest representation in the world they are known as Christendom, that is, nominal Christianity. It is especially Gog and Magog that look upon all Christendom, no matter how apostate, as the beloved city, even as the heathen nations in the old dispensation considered earthly Jerusalem to be the city of God, no matter how apostate and how wicked it had become.

e) That the nations of Gog and Magog in compassing about and coming to battle against Christendom in its widest sense certainly intends to destroy "the beloved city," the cause of Christ, and to make paganism supreme in the world. In this they reveal their wickedness and become ripe for the judgment. God nevertheless uses them to inflict His judgments upon the antichristian world. Cf. Isaiah 10:5, ff. There we read: "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few. For he saith, Are not my princes altogether kings? Is not Calno as Carchemish? is not Hamath as Arpad? is not Samaria as Damascus? As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, and whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria; Shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols? Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks. For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent: and I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasurers, and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man: And my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people: and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped. Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood. Therefore shall the Lord, the Lord of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness; and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire." H.H.

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

Judgment and Deliverance

And it came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt . . .

And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead.

And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as ye have said.

Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also. Exodus 12:29-32

The sun set that night on a land divided within itself. There were the slaves of the land, Hebrews all, busily engaged in most unusual activities, the sacrificing of choice young lambs, the painting of their door posts with blood, and the preparation of the bodies of the sacrificed lambs into a unique meal with bitter herbs, and bread that had not been leavened. The atmosphere over Goshen was tinged with feelings of deep reverence and wonderment, eager anticipation and inner confidence and joy. There were the freemen of the land, the Egyptians who looked on the activity of the Hebrews with haughty contempt although none dared to interfere. Stoically they went about their regular activities while inwardly their hearts were gripped with qualms of apprehension. The fear of Jehovah hung over Egypt, and it divided the land in two.

Gradually all activity began to cease among the Egyptians, and the lights were put out. They were determined not to show any sign of concern. As usual they retired, but how few were able to find sleep. Had they not heard of the warning of Moses, "Thus saith Jehovah, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt: and all the first born of Egypt shall die"? They had suffered so grievously already, could they doubt the ability of Jehovah to smite them again even unto all of the firstborn of the land?

It is hard for us to understand the importance of the firstborn child in those ancient days. Today, of course, parents love their firstborn but not a great deal more than those that follow. It is because our society is individualistic, while then it was almost completely centered in the family. The population of the world was much more sparse and the well-being of the individual was dependent upon the family to which he belonged. In these family units the firstborn child, especially if a son, took on the greatest importance. The parents looked upon the firstborn as the assurance that they would be cared for in their old age, their security and enduring strength, the one through whom their name would endure. He was named immediately as the heir. Each succeeding child soon learned that the oldest brother would be head of the family after the death of the father. In his strength they would

prosper, or in his weakness they would be weak. In that day the firstborn child was the sign of strength and promise. There could be no greater threat to Egypt than that all of its firstborn would die. It was exactly under that threat that night that every household in Egypt became silent.

Meanwhile in Goshen the activity continued. No one showed any intention of sleeping. As the night progressed the activities actually seemed to increase, or at least the feelings of the Israelites became more strongly charged with anticipation. All remained fully dressed as though preparing for a journey. All portable possessions were carefully being arranged and packed so that they might be carried away. With reverence but with evident haste each family gathered about the meal that centered in the flesh of the sacrificial lamb. Israel anticipated too, even more strongly than the Egyptians, the final visitation of Jehovah upon the land. In them the fear of dread had given way to the spiritual fear of reverent awe, filling their hearts with joy and hope. They had looked upon the shed blood of the lamb and believed the promise that was symbolized therein. At the sign of the blood, the angel of Jehovah would pass over them. Even more by the judgment of Egypt, they would be saved.

The hour was approaching midnight and Egypt was tossing in the sleepless silence of apprehension when suddenly as though at one moment there burst forth a great cry. There were the moans of men and the painful sobs of women, the wails of little children and even the bleat of animals in distress. Quickly every household was aroused to gather around the bedside of its firstborn and to gaze helplessly on as the strength and hope of every family wreathed on a bed of pain. Even the household of Pharaoh was not spared. With fear gripping his heart, the king hastened to the chamber of the young prince. There lay the child he had so carefully groomed with a father's love to sit upon his throne, groaning with pain. There lay the pride and hope of the nation. There lay the joy of a father's love. And what could Pharaoh do? He could send for the physicians of Egypt; he could send for the magicians and priests; but what were they against the terrible power of Israel's God? Pharaoh knew in his heart it was vain. What a fool Pharaoh had been. What good was the great nation he ruled? what good were his armies and riches? what good was his endless battle of pride with Jehovah if his own son must perish in the end? The angel of Jehovah had passed through the land. The pestilence had followed in his wake. All of Egypt stood helplessly by as all of its firstborn children breathed forth their last breath in pain and died.

A moment of silence and then the cries of pain from the dying were replaced with the wails of the mourners. There went up a great cry throughout all of Egypt. Seldomly has the world known such extreme and great despair. Natural love had been deprived of the object in which it rejoiced. Here a father, there a brother, and there a son had been loved and now was gone. Even the beasts of the field gazed dumbly on the carcasses of their dead. It was cause enough

for the great cry that went up. But there was even more. A great and strong nation had been brought to ruin. Egypt was renowned among the nations. Its armies were the strongest, its wealth was the richest, its learning the profoundest, its works the greatest of any civilization that had ever been. It had learned to hold itself proudly aloof among all people. And now it was ruined. In a matter of months the whole of the land of Egypt had been laid desolate by nine different plagues in succession. But that had not been the worst. After each one of them, they had been able to say like Ephraim in a later day, "The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stone, the sycomores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars" (Is. 9:10). But now the tenth plague had struck, and what were they to say? All of the firstborn of Egypt, the strength and hope of the nation was dead, smitten by the God of Israel. It was especially that which hurt. Had it been a mere chance happening of circumstances, they might have stoically endured it. Had it been another nation that had conquered them by reason of their greater might, they might have borne it. But now it was the God of the Hebrews whom they counted as mere servants. It was Jehovah against whom they were not able to raise so much as a sword. It was He whom they despised and hated above all others. It outraged the Egyptians' pride, even as they groaned for the death that surrounded them on every side and trembled for fear of their own lives. The cries that went up that night in Egypt formed perhaps the clearest figure this world shall ever see of the cries that shall go up eternally from the pit of fire that is called Hell.

In the palace Pharaoh felt the piercing pain of defeat more than anyone else. With his momentous pride, he had led the hateful rebellion against God. By each pronouncement of Jehovah, his heart had been made the harder until now before the dead body of his son even he could not deny the sovereign power of Israel's God. In utter terror and dismay, he had to bow. Only one wish remained in his heart, to be rid of his oppressor. In the desperation of terror, he sent the message to Moses, "Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve Jehovah, as ye have said. Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also."

The perfect faithfulness of Jehovah God was beyond doubt to every Israelite when they heard this message repeated. For years it had appeared as if deliverance from the tyranny of Egypt was utterly impossible. It had seemed even more so when under one plague after another Pharaoh still would not relent. But now even this most hardened of wicked men had been made to bow. There was no resisting of the power of their God. It was a warning to all men every where of the futility of resisting Jehovah God, but a warning that wicked men will never take, until they like Pharaoh are brought unto the pangs of Hell.

Israel was ready for Pharaoh's relenting command. Al-

ready they were wearing clothes suited for travel. They had eaten the flesh of the sacrificial lamb for nourishment to bear them forth in their journey. Their possessions were packed ready for travel. Bread without leaven had been baked. And, more important than anything else, they had seen and trusted in the promise of God typified in the shed blood of the lamb. In that faith they would go forth as conquerors. Quickly they gathered for the journey.

For the Egyptians looking on in terror, this all was not done quickly enough. Distrust with fear they could not wait for Israel to depart. All of their firstborn were already dead, and might not the pestilence soon destroy them all? They urged and pleaded with the Israelites to make haste, to be gone and not to wait. Hysterically they muttered to themselves, "We be all as dead men," over and over again. The fearful dread of Jehovah was upon them and with utter impatience they urged that Jehovah's will, which they had so long resisted, should now without delay be done. Israel suddenly found those who had ruled over them with cold-blooded tyranny, pleading with them through anxious tears. The Israelites, even as their God had commanded them, turned to their former taskmasters to demand payment for their labors in jewels of silver and gold. But even at this the Egyptians did not balk. With reckless abandonment they took all of their wealth and urged the Israelites on their way if only it would serve to hasten them. So after four hundred and thirty years Israel returned out of Egypt leaving a land smitten and spoiled behind them. In the name of their God they had conquered, and they traveled from Rameses to Succoth.

Yet in departing one more warning would God give to His people, "Sanctify unto me," He said, "all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine." In the very hour of victory, He would have no one of Israel forget to whom their victory belonged. Had it not been for the gracious promise of God, their firstborn too would have perished with the Egyptians', and they too would all have been as dead men. Their victory was not due to any excellence of their own but only to the sacrificial blood instituted by their God. They in their victory belonged unto Him. They must needs acknowledge this fact, and henceforth the strength and hope of their nation, all of the firstborn children, must be sanctified unto Him. Thus would they ever confess that they were not their own, they belonged to the faithful God who had saved them.

B.W.

From *News From Our Churches* —

Now that we have celebrated Pentecost let us unitedly look forward to the next event in the unfolding of the plan of our salvation — The Second Coming of our Lord upon the clouds of heaven, and let us walk in the atmosphere of the prayer of the Church, "Come Lord Jesus, come quickly."

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of I Timothy

(I Timothy 1:18, 19)

We now come to Paul's concluding exhortation in this section to Timothy. He will bind this exhortation to command "some" not to teach a different doctrine upon the heart of son, Timothy. There is extreme urgency in this word of the Apostle.

Let us listen to it.

The text itself reads as follows: "This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that by them thou mightest war a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander: whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme."

It is noteworthy that Paul calls Timothy here a "son." In verse 2 of this chapter he calls him "my own son in the faith," and in II Tim. 2:2 he calls him his "dearly beloved son." This, of course, refers to spiritual sonship of a teacher and pupil relationship. Paul is here speaking to an evangelist in his capacity of Apostle of Christ. In it we see at once also the relationship of Timothy as being under the apostolic authority of Paul. Paul and Timothy are not equals in office as are ministers in the church of Christ today as expressly "stipulated" in Article 84 of the *Church Order*: No Minister shall lord it over other Ministers, no Elder or Deacon over other Elders and Deacons! Timothy must give heed to him who is an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ!

Hence, the "charge" which Timothy receives from Paul is an official mandate. Paul gives his "this commandment" as a "charge." The term "charge committed" we should not overlook. It is really a term taken from the banking world. It means that Timothy is to regard it as a sacred "trust." He must keep it; none may take it from him. To it he must be faithful at all costs. It reminds us of the solemn word Paul recorded in II Tim. 4:1-3, where we read: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and kingdom: Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season: reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears; and they shall turn their ears from the truth, and shall be turned to fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry."

This is, indeed, a most solemn word of the apostle whereby he binds upon the heart of Timothy his bounden duty.

And the "trust" committed to Timothy is that he preach

the word of the Cross, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. He must preach the sovereignly free grace and mercy of God. This grace and mercy were exemplified in Paul in the highest degree.

To underscore the urgency of it Paul reminds Timothy of the time of his entrance into the ministry as an evangelist. Says he, "according to the prophecies which went before on thee." The construction here in the Greek is peculiarly Greek. The preposition "on (*epi* in Greek) thee" is that employed to express that "which one refers to in writing or speaks of" (Thayer). Thus in Mark 9:12 Jesus says: "... and how it is written *of the Son*, (*epi*) that he must suffer many things and be set at nought." Also in Romans 4:9 we read: "Cometh this blessedness upon the circumcision only or also upon the uncircumcision?" The point is that the blessedness of Abraham and of David in the forgiveness of sins is concerning (*epi*) the heirs. See also Heb. 7:13. Thus also here in this phrase under consideration in I Timothy 1:18. They are the prophecies which were spoken concerning Timothy. And they were spoken to and concerning Timothy in the past, at the very beginning of Timothy's ministry. No doubt at the occasion of the laying on of hands, at Timothy's ordination such words of instruction, direction and prediction of hope in Timothy were uttered. Paul has not forgotten the occasion. Nor, for that matter, may Timothy ever forget. He must perform his vows and make full proof of his ministry.

Timothy must conduct himself as a "man of God." Such he is called in I Tim. 6:12. There we read: "But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Jesus Christ . . . that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ . . ."

Paul here moves in the climate of Jude 3 where we read: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful to write unto you, and exhort you *that ye should contend for the faith* which was once delivered unto the saints."

Only when Timothy adheres to his "charge" which is "entrusted" to him from Paul will he be able to make full proof of his ministry. Wherefore Paul, taking cognizance of this fact, writes Timothy as he does, in order that Timothy may fight a good warfare. Emphatically Timothy must fight such a warfare "by them." Of course Paul refers to the entrusted commandment, the words of the Cross in all their implication.

It is imperative to notice that Paul speaks to Timothy of a "warfare" which must be waged. Paul knows nothing of this willy-nilly attitude of the enemies of the Cross, who, under the false pretense of being lovers of peace and of the truth, will not break a lance for the truth. **There are such.**

They are the tolerant people. They are not narrow minded; broadmindedness is their slogan. In the meantime they actually tolerate everything but the truth. Enemies of the Cross of Christ they are. They do not want a battle, for in this battle they will be slain by the Word, the sword of the Spirit. On the contrary, Paul tells Timothy to use the Word as the sword of the Spirit. He is called to the colors. He must deck himself not simply with a parading uniform, but he must have his arsenal full of the implements of the spiritual warfare.

Well then, "son Timothy," be prepared unto the warfare. Let not "some" get by by teaching a different doctrine in the name of true doctrine. And every son, Timothy, in the church of Jesus Christ, even in this very hour, maintain what the fathers confess in Question and Answer 85 of the Heidelberg Catechism, which Answer reads: "Thus when according to the command of Christ, those who under the name of Christians, maintain *doctrines* or *practices* inconsistent therewith, (so unter dem christlichen Namen unchristliche Lehre oder Wandel führen), and will not, after having often been brotherly admonished, renounce their errors and wicked course of life, are complained of to the church; and if they despise their admonition are by them forbidden the use of the Sacraments; whereby they are excluded from the Christian church, and by God himself from the kingdom of Christ . . ." Such is the spiritual warfare of the Church!

Only thus in the warfare will one "have" the "faith" and a "good conscience"!

Now it should be evident that when Paul speaks here of the "faith" he is speaking not merely of faith in a subjective sense. He also refers to the *faith* as to the body of truth which is believed.

It is very well possible to have the "faith" in the sense of the body of truth and not walk in godliness. However, it is not possible to walk in godliness and in a good conscience and deny the "faith." For what we confess in the "Twelve Articles of Faith" are necessary for a Christian to believe. These are briefly all that God has promised us in the holy gospel.

Such is the faith. When once any article of these is denied it is no longer possible to walk in a good conscience and fight a good, that is, honorable warfare. Hence, buy the truth and sell it not.

Only thus too will a man have a good conscience. Only thus will the "end" of the commandment be realized in him. For the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, good conscience and faith unfeigned.

There is an interesting question in the Heidelberg Catechism. It is this: "But why art thou called a Christian?" And in the answer we read the following noteworthy words: ". . . and also that with a free and good conscience I may fight against sin and Satan in this life; and afterwards reign with him eternally over all creatures."

This answer is indeed significant. However, when Paul

here speaks to Timothy about maintaining a "good conscience" he is referring not simply to Timothy's good conscience as a believer, but, I believe, first of all to Timothy's having a good conscience as a preacher. Paul refers to this in Acts 23:1, where Luke records the incident of Paul's addressing the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem. Says Paul, "earnestly beholding the council, Men and brethren, I have lived in a *good conscience* before God until this day." It ought to be quite evident that Paul here does not boast in a sinless life. He is too conscious that "he is sold under sin" and that the "good that he would do that he does not do; but that the evil that he would not do, that he does." See Rom. 7. Fact is, that Paul is speaking of his "good conscience" which is his having renounced Jewry and all its legalism and self-righteousness for the great task of serving Christ in the ministry. Herein he has been faithful. He has walked in a good conscience in all his labors as Apostle of Jesus Christ. He has saved himself and those who heard him.

Thus it ought also to be with Timothy. He must keep the "trust" committed to him. And he must make progress in so doing. This Paul admonished him in chapter 3:13-16: "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not that gift that is in thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."

To drive home this point he cites by way of contrast what happened to some, and, particularly, to Hymenaeus and Alexander. Timothy must learn and become wise from what happens to those who "cast away" this word of the Gospel.

D.V., we shall try to discuss that matter in a following contribution on this section from Scripture.

G.L.

IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory of the Hope Prot. Ref. Church hereby expresses our heartfelt sympathy with Deacon John Dykstra and his family in the death of their

INFANT DAUGHTER

"The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works. The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth." Ps. 145:17 and 18.

Rev. H. Hanco, President
Mr. D. Meulenberg, Clerk

IN MEMORIAM

The Mr. and Mrs. Society of Hope Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express its sincere sympathy to our fellow members, Mr. and Mrs. John J. Dykstra, in the loss of their

INFANT DAUGHTER

"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." Job 1:21.

Rev. H. Hanco, President
Mrs. D. Meulenberg, Secretary

AN EVALUATION OF THE MODERN EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

In the *Beacon Lights* magazine of November 1960 we defended the proposition that in preparing for the ministry, seminary should be attended before college. This was done on the basis of the presupposition that there is in the world really no Christian college; at least, not in the strict, Reformed sense of the term, and that therefore the instruction from such an institution lies primarily in inculcating certain facts, which in itself is insufficient, inasmuch as the facts of themselves do not declare the whole truth. Something in addition to the facts is needed. For the truth lies in the interpretation of the facts. Mere facts, by themselves, without an interpretation mean nothing. However, if given the wrong interpretation they are made to teach and represent a lie. For example: it is a fact that $2 \times 2 = 4$. Now, what is the interpretation of that fact? One may say that $2 \times 2 = 4$ because that is the way it is. It is because it is. Another may say, No, it is not necessarily true that what is ought to be, merely because it is. What is is what ought to be only if it can be shown to be the only thing that can be. Rather Deistic and fatalistic thought! It really means that $2 \times 2 = 4$ whether or not God exists. But we would say that this fact must be understood in the light of God's interpretation of it. Then we have the truth. This brings us to say that $2 \times 2 = 4$ because God created this fact that way, because God is the God of numbers, the God of all the mathematical sciences; He is the Holy Trinity, essentially One, yet also ultimately, eternally Three. He made this arithmetical fact what it is, and therefore that is the only way it can be!

By this illustration we mean to show that God is the Creator of all reality, except Himself, and has interpreted all reality, including Himself, and that this interpretation of all reality is found only in God's Word. What we are getting at is that knowledge of the facts may be imparted in so-called secular instruction, but Christian instruction must also impart knowledge of the truth, or interpretation of the facts. For the truth, and the truth only, makes the facts understandable, presents them as they are in relation to the Creator. Not the facts were objectively first in the mind of God, but the truth was before the facts, and gives meaning, interpretation, to the facts. The truth takes us back to and identifies itself with the eternal counsel of God. But the facts came into concrete existence with the creation, which creation is itself one of the most fundamental of facts. God created the whole universe, which remains an undeniable fact, as to its existence, to this day. But God also interpreted His own universe, and therefore to have the truth concerning the universe we must have God's interpretation of it. For He has interpreted all things which He has made, and so given meaning and purpose to them. Apart from His interpretation it is not possible to have the truth about any fact.

Because these are true principles of Reformed thinking we advocated that training in the Scriptures as the Word of God should come before, with and as a background to all

other training. For the truth should be conceived of as prior to, the ground for and the meaning of all reality. Hence, seminary before college, and for the above reasons. The knowledge of God is first. Even man's knowledge of God is more fundamental than man's knowledge of the universe. The latter depends upon the former. The latter has no meaning without the former. To know the facts and understand them, we must know the divinely given interpretation to those facts. And to have that interpretation we must always be reinterpretative of God's interpretation.

What we have set forth is a Reformed principle of education. The principle must stand. There may be practical problems which appear to contradict the principle. Nevertheless the principle is not thereby vitiated. It remains. Perhaps seminary need not come before college as long as Reformed principles of education are instilled before college is entered; and that is the case, to a degree, in the instruction of the Christian home, of the catechism classes and of the Christian schools. It would, to continue with the practical problem cited, be somewhat of an anticlimax to go from the theological and biblical language studies of seminary to begin four years of liberal arts study. It would be something of a let-down, for example, to leave the pursuit of Reformed theology to enter upon French 1 and Biology 1. Besides, the academic standards of the seminaries of today presuppose a college education. The average high school graduate is therefore not equipped to enter seminary directly from the twelfth grade. Furthermore, the nature of college work is such that it costs higher, and is more intricate and complex than seminary work. It would then be more practical to complete the more complicated task first.

The point is, in spite of problems, we must interpret all reality, or any part of the whole, according to God's interpretation in Scripture. But, according to Modernist principles of education, we should abandon the attempt to interpret the whole of reality for the simple reason that we can have no complete knowledge of the universe, because, being finite human beings, we cannot have absolute comprehension in knowledge. But actually we do not need absolute comprehension in knowledge. All we need is God's knowledge in finite, limited form. We need truth in limitation. We need not become God in order to have the truth. We simply need God's knowledge, according to His revelation and our capacity, as our basis and starting-point. With this in mind, we shall begin to evaluate some of the rudiments of the Modernist educational process, especially as propounded by the John Dewey philosophy (*Modern Library*, 1939), speaking on, "An Evaluation of the Modern Educational Process," and considering

- I. Self-Activity in Education
- II. Traditional vs. Progressive Education, and
- III. The Schools and Religion.

According to this philosophy, the ultimate educational ideal is the doctrine of learning by self activity. Pupil "action

done under external constraint or dictation . . . has no significance for the mind of him who performs it." Mere habitual action which has become "routine or mechanical," as well as action which the pupil performs because of outward constraint from parent or teacher is not action where an educative process is going on. For mere "routine action" is not necessarily intelligent performance; habitual action is not necessarily right intellectual habit.

To this we must remark that the ultimate educational ideal is not "self activity." Man is, at best, would-be autonomous, not actually so. For "In Him we live and are moved and have our being." We must rather say that the educational ideal is "The training of the child through the impartation of knowledge, the knowledge of God's revelation in creation as interpreted in the light of Scripture, so that the child may live in all the relationships of life as a citizen of the kingdom of heaven." By the impartation of knowledge is not meant the idea of pouring in, that is, learning by passive absorption. We would not have mere spoon feeding of the child so that he experiences no active participation in the educative process. We may therefore formally agree with Dewey when he says that educative training is development of curiosity, of suggestion, of habits of exploring and testing, and such development which creates sensitiveness to questions which press for answers, and love of inquiry into the puzzling and unknown. The training should arouse fit suggestions, and control their succession in a developing and accumulative order. Educative training makes increasingly clear the sense and force of every fact considered (p. 617). Therefore children should not be hushed up when they ask questions; nor should their investigative nature be regarded as a nuisance, nor their queries taken as too inconvenient to answer (p. 618). With this we concur, for the child is a thinking, willing and active being who absorbs education consciously, and actively participates in the educative process to which he has submitted.

You can see from the ultimate aim of this educational ideal that it centers in man and in man's self activity. There is no higher authority than man. The authoritarian principle is rejected in favor of the autonomy of man. An authority imposed from above, especially from the Triune God, is regarded as the worst straitjacket in which man could become trapped. The Reformed principle of authority is especially a hindrance when introduced into the educational process. Not that there is any difficulty in some antagonism of methods and results, or of some disparity between theory and practice. No, Dewey claims, it lies in uneducated habits of teachers who set up authorities in Israel. They themselves are not authorities, and they know they will not be recognized as such, "so they clothe themselves with some tradition as a mantle," and emphasize not so much what *they* say, but some lord who speaks through them, that is, some school of thought held to. Now it may be safely admitted that there are teachers who do not weed out their "un-educative habits," and so make their instruction more routine

than educative. Also their weakness may be that *they* set up authorities and array themselves with some tradition. Think of the Romanist principle of authority, which is the church, and the traditions of the church. For Romanist school teachers, the church and its body of traditions are of higher authority than the Word of God. For the church alone has the authority to say what the Word of God means. But we hold the Reformed principle of authority, which is that the Scripture is the source of authority, or rather God is the sole source of authority, and the Scripture is the only standard of that authority. The Scripture is a complete and self-sufficient revelation of God and His will for the whole universe of angels and men. It is to be believed on its own account, and interpreted in its own light, Scripture interpreting Scripture. The church is a source of authority only in so far as it proclaims Scripture and exhibits the knowledge of God. *Its* authority is only derivative, declarative and exhibitiv. But the Word of God is our authority for instructing in righteousness. He commands it. Otherwise we go forth without being sent, and labor without being called.

However, the Modernist criticism of our teaching on an authoritarian basis is that our teachers are like a carpenter who builds always and only the same kind of a house of one fixed design without variation. It is impossible to learn from such an instructor. His teaching causes his pupils to be emotionally suppressed and intellectually stunted. We cannot agree that this necessarily follows from the Reformed authoritarian principle. We cannot believe that anyone who believes the Christian doctrine of creation, or the doctrine of the Trinity, or the doctrine of the absolute sovereignty of God, and bases his instruction on that foundation is apt, *ipso facto*, to be stereotyped and unoriginal. He of all educators sees the vast possibilities for variation imbedded in God's star-studded heavens and everywhere among the myriad creatures of the world. The one so liable to be emotionally inadequate and inexpressive, so intellectually limited, is the one who does not take the Bible into account as the Word of God, and does not learn, think and teach according to that fundamental principle of Calvinism, the sovereignty of God!

In order to develop this ultimate educational ideal of "self activity," it is not to be confused with the principle of absolute freedom. By the way, Dewey does not care for absolutism of any kind. But to show his aversion to absolute free will, he refers to some schools of educational thought which regard themselves as well advanced, teaching that we should create an environment for the pupils in which they are surrounded with all the necessary materials, tools and appliances needed to learn and do. Then let these pupils "respond to these things according to their own desires." No suggestions of any kind are to be made to them, as that would be an infringement upon their freedom. Do not indicate any purpose or plan; do not imply what is to be done, as that would amount to an encroachment upon the pupils' "sacred intellectual individuality." Dewey rejects this method as stupid

(Continued on page 405)

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

THE TIME OF THE REFORMATION

VIEWS ON THE CHURCH

MATERIAL PRINCIPLE

(continued)

We will now proceed to conclude our presentation of the Romish doctrine of justification by works, as set forth in the Canons of the Council of Trent, in which articles that Church anathemizes all those who do not agree with its doctrine that man is justified also by works.

Canons XXIV-XXVI: "If any one saith, that the justice received is not preserved and also increased before God through good works; but that the said works are merely the fruits and signs of Justification obtained, but not a cause of the increase thereof: let him be anathema. . . . If any one saith, that in every good work the just sins venially at least, or — which is more intolerable still — mortally, and consequently deserves eternal punishments; and that for this cause only he is not damned, that God does not impute those works unto damnation: let him be anathema. . . . If any one saith, that the just ought not, for their good works done in God, to expect and hope for an eternal recompense from God, through his mercy and the merit of Jesus Christ, if so be that they persevere to the end in well doing and in keeping the divine commandments: let him be anathema."

Notice how the Romish Church maintains in these canons its doctrine of our being justified also by our good works. It anathemizes those who maintain that our justification is not increased before God by our good works. It also anathemizes those who maintain every good work we perform is corrupt and deserving of eternal punishment, and that the Lord does not impute those works unto our damnation and that we are therefore not damned. And it also maintains that they are cursed who deny that the righteous may expect and hope for an eternal recompense because of the good works they commit.

Canons XXX-XXXII: "If any one saith, that, after the grace of Justification has been received, to every penitent sinner the guilt is remitted, and the debt of eternal punishment is blotted out in such wise that there remains not any debt of temporal punishment to be discharged either in this world, or in the next in Purgatory, before the entrance to the kingdom of heaven can be opened (to him): let him be anathema. . . . If any one saith, that the justified sins when he performs works with a view to an eternal recompense: let him be anathema. . . . If any one saith, that the good works of one that is justified are in such manner the gifts of God, that they are not also the good merits of him that is justified;

or, that the said justified, by the good works which he performs through the grace of God and the merit of Jesus Christ, whose living member he is, does not truly merit increase of grace, eternal life, and the attainment of that eternal life — if so be, however, that he depart in grace — and also an increase of glory: let him be anathema."

The Roman Catholic doctrine of Justification really confounds justification with sanctification. The sinner is prepared for justification by prevenient grace, and this without any merit on his part. This prevenient grace leads the sinner to repentance, to a confidence and reliance on the grace of God in Christ, to the beginnings of a new life. So, Justification really consists in the infusion of new virtues after the pollution of sin has been removed in baptism. After the expulsion of indwelling sin, the forgiveness of sin or the removal of the guilt of sin necessarily follows. And after that the Christian advances from virtue to virtue, is able to perform meritorious works, and receives as a reward a greater measure of grace and a more perfect sanctification. The grace of justification can be lost, but can also be restored by the sacrament of penance.

Calvin's view of the relation between justification and works is set forth by the reformer in his Institutes of the Christian Religion, and we will quote certain passages from this work of the reformer of Geneva. In Book III, Chapter XI, XIII he writes: "But as many persons imagine righteousness to be composed of faith and works, let us also prove, before we proceed, that the righteousness of faith is so exceedingly different from that of works, that if one be established, the other must necessarily be subverted. The apostle says, 'I count all things but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.' Here we see a comparison of two opposites, and an implication that his own righteousness must be forsaken by him who wishes to obtain the righteousness of Christ. Wherefore, in another place, he states this to have been the cause of the ruin of the Jews, that, 'going about to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.' If, by establishing our own righteousness, we reject the righteousness of God, then, in order to obtain the latter, the former must doubtless be entirely renounced. He conveys the same sentiment when he asserts that 'boasting is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith.' Whence it follows, that as long as there remains the least particle of righteousness in our works, we retain some cause for boasting. But if faith excludes all boasting, the righteousness of works can by no means be associated with the righteousness of faith. To this purpose he speaks so clearly in the fourth chapter to the Romans, as to leave no room for cavil or evasion. 'If Abraham (says he) were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory.' He adds, 'but' he hath 'not' whereof to glory 'before God.' It follows, therefore, that he was not justified by works. Then he advances

another argument from two opposites. 'To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.' But righteousness is attributed to faith through grace. Therefore it is not from the merit of works. Adieu, therefore, to the fanciful notion of those who imagine a righteousness compounded of faith and works."

And in Book III, Chapter XI, XIX, he writes as follows: "The reader will now discover, with what justice the sophists of the present day cavil at our doctrine, when we say *that a man is justified by faith only*. That a man is justified *by faith*, they do not deny, because the Scripture so often declares it; but since it is nowhere expressly said to be by faith *only*, they cannot bear this addition to be made. But what reply will they give to these words of Paul where he contends that 'righteousness is not of faith unless it be gratuitous?' How can any thing gratuitous consist with works? And by what cavils will they elude what he asserts in another place, that in the gospel 'is the righteousness of God revealed?' If righteousness is revealed in the gospel, it is certainly not a mutilated and partial, but a complete and perfect one. The law, therefore, has no concern in it. And respecting this exclusive particle, *only*, they rest on an evasion which is not false, but glaringly ridiculous. For does not he most completely attribute every thing to faith alone, who denies every thing to works? What is the meaning of these expressions of Paul? 'Righteousness is manifested without the law,' 'justified freely by his grace,' 'justified without the deeds of the law.' Here they have an ingenious subterfuge, which, though it is not of their own invention, but borrowed from Origen and some of the ancients, is nevertheless very absurd. They pretend that the works excluded are the ceremonial works of the law, not the moral works. They have made such a proficiency by their perpetual disputations, that they have forgotten the first elements of logic. Do they suppose the apostle to have been insane, when he adduced these passages in proof of his doctrine? 'The man that doeth them shall live in them'; and 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' If they be in their sober senses, they will not assert that life was promised to the observers of ceremonies, and the curse denounced merely on the transgressors of them. If these places are to be understood of the moral law, it is beyond a doubt, that moral works likewise are excluded from the power to justify. To the same purpose are these arguments which he uses: 'For by the law is the knowledge of sin'; consequently not righteousness. 'Because the law worketh wrath,' therefore not righteousness, consequently righteousness is not a reward of works, but is gratuitously bestowed. Since we are justified by faith, boasting is excluded. If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the Scriptures hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. Let them idly pretend, if they dare, that these are applicable to ceremonies, not to morals; but even children

would explode such consummate impudence. We may therefore be assured, that when the power of justifying is denied to the law, the whole law is included."

Finally, very beautifully Calvin writes as follows, Book III, Chapter XI, XVI: "The Scripture, when speaking of the righteousness of faith, leads us to something very different. It teaches us, that being diverted from the contemplation of our own works, we should regard nothing but the mercy of God and the perfection of Christ. For it states this to be the order of justification; that from the beginning God deigns to embrace sinful man with his pure and gratuitous goodness, contemplating nothing in him to excite mercy, but his misery (for God beholds him utterly destitute of all good works); deriving from himself the motive for blessing him, that he may affect the sinner himself with a sense of his supreme goodness, who, loving all confidence in his own works, rests the whole of his salvation on the Divine mercy. This is the sentiment of faith, by which the sinner comes to the enjoyment of his salvation, when he knows from the doctrine of the gospel that he is reconciled to God; that having obtained remission of sins, he is justified by the intervention of the righteousness of Christ; and though regenerated by the Spirit of God, he thinks on everlasting righteousness reserved for him, not in the good works to which he devotes himself, but solely in the righteousness of Christ. When all these things shall have been particularly examined, they will afford a perspicuous explication of our opinion. They will, however, be better digested in a different order from that in which they have been proposed. But it is of little importance, provided they are so connected with each other, that we may have the whole subject rightly stated and well confirmed."

In the above passage the reformer of Geneva very beautifully sets forth his conviction with respect to the relation in which righteousness stands to faith. And it is well that we bear this in mind. The activity of faith must receive all stress and emphasis also in our Protestant Reformed preaching. This is Scriptural. If only we always bear in mind the Scriptural significance of faith, that it is exclusively a gift of God, always stands over against works in the Word of God. Faith never emphasizes what man can do but what he cannot do; faith never appeals to anything in man, but always the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. We are saved of grace and through faith. This is the only possible Divine way of salvation; it is the only conceivable way in which the living God can save the sinner and remain God and receive all praise and honour and glory.

H.V.

The holy God hath said,
All lands shall own My sway;
My people shall My glory share,
The heathen shall obey.

THE SOVEREIGNLY FREE GIFT OF FAITH

Salvation belongeth unto the Lord (Ps. 3:8).

It is important for the church to maintain this fundamental truth at all times, and especially in the face of all opposition. The precious truth of God's Word requires it, for "of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things" (Rom. 11:36). The honor of God's Name demands it. To maintain anything else is dishonoring to Him. For the God of all grace reveals Himself to His people as "the God of our salvation." And also our personal confidence and abiding assurance compel us to confess that we have experienced "the salvation of the Lord." "He only is my Rock and my Salvation; He is my Defence; I shall not be greatly moved" (Ps. 62:2).

The whole work of salvation and every part of it in each individual believer is a wonder of God. It is a work that only the Almighty God of all grace can accomplish. Only His work is genuine, all works of men are counterfeit. Only His work endures, all our "works" must crumble and fail. That also applies to our faith. It is true, that salvation is only by faith. As the recurring testimony of Scripture has it, "The just shall live by faith." But also that faith is a wonder of grace.

Faith is a gift of God.

For it is given unto us in behalf of Christ to believe on Him (Phil. 1:29).

Faith. What is it? We can best describe faith as the living bond that unites us to Christ. Just as the branches of the vines have an inner life-line that unites them to the root, so that they may draw their life and bear fruit from the root, so also the believer is united to Christ and lives out of Him by that living bond of faith. Or just as our homes are furnished with electrical power that comes to us from the power house through the power lines, so also our hearts are enlightened from that central Power-House, Christ Jesus, by the steady flow of life through the power line of faith.

Anyone can see that this is the plain teaching of the Scriptures.

1. Scripture always teaches us that God has prepared salvation for His people in Jesus Christ. The name Jesus means Savior, for He is come to save His people from their sins. He makes bold to say:

"I am the Bread of life."

"I am the Water of life."

"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

"I am the Resurrection and the Life."

Either He is the greatest impostor that ever lived, and those believing on Him are victims of the worst deception that has ever been perpetrated, or all that He says is true. And we have the Word of God to vouch for it that all that He says is true.

2. Scripture also teaches that Christ and His people are one. In John 15, Jesus uses the example of the vine and its branches. He is the true vine, and His people are the

branches which bear fruit only in Him. And Paul uses the example of a body, so that Christ is the Head and His people are the individual members of the body, which live and are active through the Head. And sometimes the figure of a Temple is used, in which Christ is the chief corner stone and His people are the individual stones that make up the structure. But whatever figure may be employed, the idea is always that Christ and His people are one. Therefore when Christ died, they died; when Christ arose, they arose; when He receives the blessings of salvation from the Father, they receive those blessings in Him and from Him.

3. Therefore Scripture also tells us, that we become partakers of Christ and all His benefits through that living bond of faith that God has established between Christ and us. We are engrafted into Christ by the Holy Spirit. This takes place at regeneration. And as a result, we live out of Christ. We are new creatures. Our stubborn will is broken and made submissive to the will of God. Our mind is enlightened, so that we know God as our God, the God of our salvation. We experience sorrow for sin that works repentance, and upon confession of sin we are also assured of forgiveness. We realize that Christ is our righteousness. And although sin still wars in our members, we are able to crucify the flesh and live a new and holy life before God. All this is performed in us by the Spirit of Christ through faith. As Scripture itself expresses it, we believe *into* Christ, for we become partakers of Christ and all His benefits through a living faith.

We can reach but one conclusion, namely, that faith is the gift of God. We do not believe first, in order to become partakers of Christ's benefits. But we are partakers, and therefore we can and do believe.

God furnishes the power of faith. Even in a newly born infant all the faculties are present at birth. Although he may not be aware of them, and certainly does not know how to use them, the faculties to see and hear and speak, the talents of artist or technician are already given to him. He does not first see, and then receive the eyes to see. But the eyes, which are indispensable to his seeing, are first given. In the spiritual child, the believer, the same holds true. God gives us the faculty of faith first, and thereby we come to conscious faith.

And God also furnishes the activity of faith. Even in our natural existence it is true that, "In Him we live and move and have our being." And the same thing holds true in our spiritual life. God brings us to conscious faith and strengthens that faith through His Word and by His Spirit. God creates knowledge of sin and sorrow for it, and we confess our sins. Christ calls us to Him, and, calling, draws us, so that we come. God assures us of forgiveness and we enjoy the blessedness of peace with God. God works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure, and therefore it is possible for us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Faith is the gift of God. "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9).

But even that does not express the full truth of Scripture.

For faith is a *free* gift of God, and that in a very real sense of the word. To maintain the truth of Scripture and the honor of God's Name, and to experience the blessed assurance of faith in our own lives, we must consistently confess with God's Word, that faith is the sovereignly free gift of God.

The question always arises: To whom does God grant His gift of faith? Does He grant it to those whom He deems most worthy of receiving it? Or does He grant it to those who show a willingness to receive it? In one word, does it, after all, depend on puny and sinful man whether or not he shall be saved? If that is the case, then God is not a sovereign God, but must depend upon our whims and our help. In that case, faith cannot be considered a free gift of God which excludes all boasting of men and gives God all the glory. No, even more, if that were the case, no one would be saved, for we are unwilling and unable to do anything toward our salvation. But what is conclusive is the fact that Scripture teaches throughout that God is sovereign, also in the salvation of His people. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18). Only as many as are ordained to eternal life believe (Acts 13:48).

God is the living God. He thinks as God. He wills and plans as God. He has His divine purpose unto His own glory. He carries out His counsel as God. Always "according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph. 1:11). We can express it in a few words by saying, God is the decreeing God.

Concerning that decree we must remember:

1. That it is a living decree. An architect makes a blue print of a house which he plans to build, but this is a mere lifeless plan on paper, which can be destroyed when the house is finished. God's decree is His living will, His sovereign good pleasure, which is always real and present before the face of God, and in which He always delights.

2. That decree is sovereign, even as God is sovereign. The Lord God declares throughout all history, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my good pleasure" (Is. 46:10).

3. It is an eternal decree. God's plan did not gradually take form and shape in the divine mind. Nor was it subject to revisions and improvements. The very thought is unworthy of God. God is eternal. And therefore His knowledge is eternal. And His will is likewise eternal. God knows, determines, and sees all things in an eternal present.

4. That counsel includes all things in history, even to the minutest detail. No architect who plans a house can work out the details in advance with more complete accuracy than God does in His sovereign good pleasure. He can say: "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me" (Isaiah 46:9).

5. It is also unchangeable. Since God's decree is eternal, and since it is all-comprehensive, it also follows that it is unchangeable. For who hath ever resisted His will (Rom. 9:19)?

6. And it is also good. God is good in all His ways and

in all His works. We cannot even question that, for He is the God of all grace in Christ Jesus. But that goodness is especially evident in the fact that God's counsel must serve to reveal the glory of His Name. That is sufficient reason for all that God does. Therefore God can say: "This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise" (Isaiah 46:21). And on the other hand, it is equally true, "For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout the earth." So that we must reach the same conclusion that Scripture reaches, "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."

All the Scriptures teach that the gift of faith is sovereignly free.

1. In the counsel of God, His Son, Jesus Christ, takes the central place. Christ is the Firstborn of God. He is the Firstborn from the dead, the Firstborn among many brethren, even the Firstborn of all creatures (Col. 1:14-20). God has appointed Him to be the Head of His Church, which is His Body. God has made Him the Bridegroom, and has given to Him the Church as His Bride. And as Head of His Church, He is Lord over all, for we shall live and reign with Him forever.

2. Moreover, God's people are saved solely in Christ. They are chosen in Christ, as so many members of His Body, or, if you will, as so many stones of His Temple. Just as in a body there are a certain number of members so also the elect form a complete unity. And just as in a body every member has its own place and purpose, so each elect is chosen unto his own function in the body of Christ. There is no arbitrariness in God.

But, you ask, how about the wicked who perish? The answer of Scripture is, that God is sovereign also in His reprobation. Election implies reprobation, so that God has determined to save His people through faith in Christ, and He also determines to destroy the wicked reprobate in their sins. Yet even so, these wicked serve for the salvation of the church, just as chaff serves for the ripening of the wheat, or as the scaffolding serves for the erection of a building. In spite of themselves, also the wicked must serve toward the glory of God.

3. And thus faith is the sovereignly free gift of God. To the unbelieving Jews Jesus says that they do not believe, *because* they are not of His sheep. But, on the other hand, He lays down His life for His sheep (John 10:15). Moreover, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27).

A cold doctrine, you say? A doctrine that causes people to become careless about their salvation? That is not what Scripture teaches us.

The Word of God speaks of the strong consolation of God's immutable counsel. See Hebrews 6:17, 18.

Christ assures us that this truth gives us certainty of our

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DECENCY and ORDER

Admission to the Lord's Table

"No one shall be admitted to the Lord's Supper except those who according to the usage of the church with which they unite themselves have made a confession of the Reformed religion, besides being reputed to be of a godly walk, without which those who come from other churches shall not be admitted."

Article 61, D.K.O.

Articles 61 through 64 of the Church Order deal with various matters of a church governmental nature that are related to the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The Church Order does not discuss doctrinal questions relating to this sacrament. For the treatment of these we must turn to our Confessions. Even the matters that are discussed here do not intend to cover every conceivable situation where a problem of a church governmental nature arises in connection with the sacrament. This may and frequently does happen and then a solution must be sought in the light of the principles set forth in these articles even though the particular situation is not directly covered.

The sixty-first article then concerns itself with the question of who may and who may not be admitted to the Lord's Supper. Article sixty-two deals with matters of the proper administration of the sacrament. The next article stipulates the frequency with which this sacrament is to be celebrated and the sixty-fourth article speaks of the necessary ecclesiastical supervision of the sacraments. To these matters we must direct our attention.

The most fundamental question of Article 61 concerns the matter of *open* or *closed* communion. By the former is meant that admission to the table of the Lord is left entirely to the individual. Anyone who desires may partake of the sacrament. There are no restrictions. One does not have to be a member of the particular church where the sacrament is being celebrated, and, in fact, does not have to be a member of any church at all. No one is coerced to partake but neither is anyone barred from this privilege. It is *open* to all, *closed* to no one. The one argument that is used in defense of this practice is that the Lord's Supper is not a Supper of any particular church but is the Supper of the *LORD* and, therefore, no one may be excluded as long as he, by an act of his own voluntary choice, decides that he wishes to partake. Virtually all of the present day modern churches operate on this principle. It is consistent with the prevalent heresies of a *Gospel for all, a Christ for all, a Salvation for all and a Heaven for all*.

For nearly four hundred years the Reformed Churches have stood opposed to this practice and have maintained the principle of *closed communion*. Already in 1568 the Convention of Wezel declared that no one shall be admitted to the

Lord's Table unless he first shall have made profession of faith and shall have submitted himself to the discipline of the church. This ruling was re-affirmed by the Synod of Dordrecht in 1578 in a slightly modified form and the Synod of Middelburg of 1581 rewrote it in the wording as we have it yet today in Article 61 of the Church Order. From this article it is evident that according to the Reformed position admission to the Table of the Lord is not free to all. It is not a matter of individual choice but rather, the sacraments are placed by Christ in the charge of the office-bearers of the church. These office-bearers must guard not only the purity of the Word that is preached but also the sanctity of the holy sacraments. Theirs is the task of keeping unworthy persons from desecrating the table of the Lord and if this high trust is neglected by allowing each individual to partake or not to partake as he sees fit, the wrath of God is invited upon the whole congregation (Lord's Day 30, Heidelberg Catechism). Only those may be admitted to the Supper who in confession and life are in accord with the doctrines of the Christian faith as maintained by the church. If one repudiates the confession of the church and maintains heresy, he must be refused the Lord's Supper. If one outwardly maintains the confession of the church but in his life conducts himself contrary to the principles of Christian living set forth in that confession, he too must be kept from the Table of the Lord until he shows amendment of life.

It is a cause of sorrow that many Reformed Churches in our day maintain this principle of *closed communion* only in theory. If it is asked, "What is the position of the church in regard to this question?" the answer will be given that the church is committed to the principle of closed communion. That, after all, is too clearly inscribed in the Reformed Confessions to be denied. But if the practice of the church is observed the glaring inconsistency between confession and practice becomes obvious. Members of the church who are freely admitted to the Table of the Lord may belong to the Lodge, Secret Societies, Worldly Organizations of every hue and participate in activities that our Reformed fathers would have condemned with no uncertain terms.

I have heard of ministers who, when confronted with this inconsistent and evil situation, being unable to justify it, merely argue on the basis of the utilitarian principle that discipline is no longer possible because if it were executed as it should be, from fifty to seventy-five percent of their congregations would leave and there would be no church left. These men are opportunists who use the church for self-advantage and care not for the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have heard of others who were confronted with proven reports that their young people frequented the theatre and whose reply was that these young folks could not be censured because that would be an infringement upon their Christian liberty. They are left to continue their evil walk and meanwhile allowed to freely partake of the Supper of the Lord. Some years ago I spoke with an elder who was lamenting these situations in his church. He had just given

up his job or rather it was taken from him because he had refused to become a member of a worldly labor union that was in control at the place he worked. I asked him why he was so inconsistent? How is it that you are not able to join with the members of that ungodly union at your place of work but that you can be one with other members of the same union at the Table of the Lord? His reply was, "Ya, dominee, that's right," but to this day he continues to walk in the same evil way. Two things are certain. First, the churches of Reformed persuasion are declining at an unbelievably rapid pace in our day. The principles of the Reformation have become virtually extinct. Secondly, "God is not mocked," and even as it is true of the individual, so it is true of the church that "As one sows they shall also reap, for he that soweth to his flesh shall reap of the flesh corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." This axiom of Holy Writ cannot be denied. It is found in Gal. 6:7, 8.

According to Scripture the practice of closed communion is the only acceptable one. The Lord's Supper symbolizes the fellowship of God and His people on the basis of the sacrifice and redemptive work of Christ Jesus. Only those who reveal that they are partakers of that redemption by living from the principles of obedience unto the Word of God have the right to that fellowship. This is the fundamental thought, expressed both positively and negatively, in Revelation 22:14 and 15, "Blessed are they that do his commandments (R.V. has 'that have washed their robes') that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." The latter have no place in the city of God. They have no right to the tree of life. They are to be barred from the Table of the Lord and the church that refuses to do this invokes the displeasure of God upon herself. This is to be determined, not by every individual for himself, but by the elders who are ordained by Christ Himself to "have oversight over the flock of God" (I Peter 5:2). The church that enforces this principle may expect to be shunned by those who seek the flesh and the things of the world in preference to Christ. Those will not be attracted into her fellowship. They will be given to understand the Biblical truth that it is impossible to serve God and Mammon and since this is what they attempt to do, they will seek affiliation with other churches that are more lenient and tolerant of worldliness. From without there will also be malicious calumniation hurled at the church but this is nothing new in her experience. The Lord Himself forewarned that "men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake." All of these things do not essentially harm the church but to allow the desecration of the sacraments and the corrupting of the Word of God (which always go together) are the things that spell the certain ruin of the church in this world.

Needless to say, the practice of closed communion is for those very reasons also most difficult to maintain. It is rela-

tively easy to appeal to man's religious consciousness and gather into the church persons of all sorts and give them free access to the privileges of believers. That's man's way of building the church but is not of the Lord Who has instituted order and discipline in order that His church and sacraments may be preserved according to the truth and in the highest possible purity. "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it" (Psalm 127:1). And again, "Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (I Cor. 3:12-15).

So our Church Order stipulates certain definite requirements which are to be met before one may be admitted to the Lord's Supper. Article 61 speaks of those requirements for baptized members of the church and for those who come from other churches. The latter may include those who are transferred as members from a sister congregation in the same denomination of churches or it may refer to those who come from other churches of a different denomination. The article itself does not specify which is meant.

The requirements for both are the same. First, they must make a confession of the Reformed religion and, secondly, they must be reputed to be of a godly walk. To these requirements we will have to direct attention the next time, D.V.

G.v.d.B.

THE SOVEREIGNLY FREE GIFT OF FAITH

(Continued from page 400)

own salvation. For "All that the Father giveth unto me shall come to me: and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). And again: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you."

Paul tells us that this confidence spurs us on to fight the battle of faith. For with him we say even triumphantly: "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." For nothing "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

In holy adoration the saints of all ages have confessed: "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts."

But most important of all is the solemn worship of faith: "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth."

C.H.

ALL AROUND US

DOUBLE STANDARD OF MORALS

In a recent article in a Catholic Action Weekly entitled *Our Sunday Visitor*, an editor by the name of Father Ginder speaks of the double standard of morals and truth in our modern world. He points out the fact that in effect our country has accepted a double standard of truth and of morals by which they measure our own deeds and the deeds of our enemies. He points out that what we condemn in our enemies we approve among ourselves. Or what we condemn in one man we approve in another.

This he demonstrates with various examples. He points out, in the first place, that all the facts of economics point to the truth that the disastrous give-away programs in which our government has engaged are sure to lead to bankruptcy. But, in spite of this, the government not only continues these programs, but increases them, each year pushing us closer to fiscal catastrophe. He speaks of economists who say that "our whole economy depends on the Give-away, that we have to go on making heavy machinery and trucks even if only to dump them into the ocean — else hard times will return."

From this illustration he turns to various other aspects of the cold war as fought by our country. He points out that the Central Intelligence Agency, which received most of the blame for the fiasco in Cuba, foments rebellions, topples governments, parachutes agents behind enemy lines and engages in all kinds of spy work. We are called to support this in the name of patriotism, although when other countries engage in the same practices, we call it subversion.

We speak of the evils of plotting against legally elected governments; but we are very reluctant to support legally elected governments unless they agree with us. If they do not, we often try every which way to bring another government to power.

Or consider the case of the Eichmann trials.

While Eichmann killed only Jews, Khrushchev killed just as many without bothering to make any racial distinction. The one used gas, the other used mass starvation. The one is being exhibited to the world in a glass cage, the other is being wine and dined in every capital of the world. Why? Evil for Eichmann, but not for Khrushchev?

The author goes on to show how, although on the one hand our leaders are intent on showing to us the evils of communistic Russia, in fact they are doing all they can to aid and abet the enemy in cultural exchanges, in promoting socialism in the country, in refusing to discredit those in our own midst who are obviously sympathetic to the cause of Communism.

There is much that is true in this brief article. The point is, a point which the author fails to mention, that there is an objective standard of truth and right in God and in His law. When this objective standard of truth and right is ignored and men make laws out of expediency or personal gain, the

country entrusted to them becomes hopelessly mired in the gross inconsistencies of which the author speaks. It is difficult to see how this country can in any way be called Christian when these principles are obviously ignored. And indeed, in the final analysis, should America ever be successful in its struggle with Communism on the basis of its own standard of right and with the means which this country has chosen to employ, the victory will have a very hollow ring, for we will have destroyed all our own freedoms in the process.

The irony is that the Roman Catholic Church itself has often followed such a double standard of morals. Consider its tenet that the end justifies the means which led to the butchering of thousands of people of God throughout the ages — rivers of the blood of the saints which can never be washed from the hands of that church.

AN EVANGELICAL'S VIEW OF PREDESTINATION

In a recent issue of *The Standard Bearer* we have had opportunity to discuss the position of evangelicals in the church world. We noticed at that time that evangelicals usually maintain the fundamental truths of Scripture such as the Virgin Birth, the Atonement of Christ, the Resurrection from the Dead, etc. But, while they maintain these fundamentals, they also are usually very Arminian with strong emphasis on the general offer of the gospel, the invitation to come to Christ, the universal love of God, the free will of man, etc.

In recent issues of *Christianity Today*, there has been a rather lengthy column devoted to "Basic Christian Doctrines" written by various evangelical theologians throughout the world. Starting with the doctrine of the Trinity, in eight articles this series has progressed to the doctrine of predestination. This article, appearing in the April 24 issue, and written by William Childs Robinson, Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Church Polity in Columbia Theological Seminary, is a graphic illustration of the fact that an evangelical committed to Arminianism cannot possibly maintain the doctrine of predestination. It is therefore of some importance in gaining an insight into the thought of evangelicalism.

By way of introducing the doctrine, the author says:

For Christian faith, predestination is a vision of the King in the glory of his grace, and a warning against transposing the revelation of the majesty of his mercy into any concatenated scheme of human logic. It proclaims the freeness of God's saving grace in Christ, without making of his will an arbitrary fatalism. The ways of him who predestines are past our tracing out, and the mystery thereof bids us worship where we cannot fathom.

After a few more general remarks concerning the views of Augustine and the use of the word "predestinate" in the Bible, the author turns to the subject proper.

In connection with his statement that "Predestination is the personal decision of the God who elects," the author quite correctly maintains that it is God alone Who elects; that this is true because God elects eternally; that God does this

for Himself and for His own name's sake; that God does this by electing a people.

He however seems to confuse election with providence when he says, somewhat impiously:

On the other hand, the sovereignty of God meant for Luther and Calvin God in action here and now, His hand at the helm even in the most violent storm. God has not gone fishing, or golfing, or to an Ethiopian banquet. He is not asleep. He is not otiose (being at leisure, useless, without function, H.H.). He is *activissimus* (most active, H.H.). We are not following the Reformers when we treat God as an absentee deity. Their God was the God of Elijah.

In the second point, entitled "Predestination is in Jesus Christ," he emphasizes that apart from Christ election is impossible. He writes:

According to Romans 8, we are predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son that He may be the firstborn among many brethren, and we know that God is for us by his not withholding His own Son. According to Ephesians 1:3, Christ is the ground and reason of the divine blessing, in 1:4 He is the meritorious cause of election, in verse 5 through His mediation our adoption is realized, and in verse 6 the grace of God is revealed and bestowed. Salvation is the act of the Holy God doing justice to His own righteousness at any cost to Himself. In Christ we have redemption through His blood — the forgiveness of sins through His giving of Himself for us.

In concluding this section the author writes:

When all is said and done, there remains the biblical picture of God who chooses, God who elects, God who predestinates in Christ and for His sake saves a great host that no man can number including the last, the least, and the lowest of those who take refuge under His wings; but He does not save those who continue to love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil, nor those for whom the preaching of the Gospel is a savor of death unto death, nor those who despise the riches of His goodness, longsuffering, and forbearance, and fail to consider that the goodness of God leads to repentance. When the cities of His day rejected Jesus, He rejoiced in the Father's sovereign discrimination and continued to sound forth His gracious invitation: "Come unto me, and find rest for your souls."

This is the only mention in the article of those who are not saved. And while the author therefore studiously avoids any use or mention of reprobation, he comes close here to speaking of conditional election and conditional reprobation.

The last section deals with "Predestination is the election of free grace." In this section the author strongly argues for the truth that grace is given freely by God to "helpless, undeserving, ill-deserving, hell-deserving sinners." He writes for example:

Grace is the heart and center of the Gospel. It is the expression of the electing love of God and the parent of faith. It issues in the inward work of the Holy Spirit illuminating our hearts to appropriate the love of God revealed in Christ dying for the ungodly. It is this love reaching out to forgive the guilty. It is not that we loved Him but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. It is the forgiveness which justifies the ungodly through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. It is the Father's welcome to the prodigal which gives him a place in the family of God by adoption and by regeneration.

While the author emphasizes therefore the gracious character of election, he says also on the other hand, "Thus grace is prevenient, it comes first, before any response by the sinner." This almost implies that grace is given to all men who hear the gospel in order that the response of the sinner may be his own and on the basis of which he may be saved or damned.

Reading this article, one comes to the definite conclusion that, on the one hand, the article is pretty good when it maintains the sovereign grace of God at crucial points. But, on the other hand, the article is vague and uncertain at these same crucial points because it leaves the possibility open for conditional predestination, for an offer of the gospel, for a universal love of God. It seems to be the tactic of the Remonstrants of the 16th century to speak the Reformed language while denying the Reformed truth. No doubt, the main reason for this vagueness and uncertainty is due to the fact that nowhere does the author maintain that a certain and definite number of people are elected by God with a certainty and finality about their election which cannot be destroyed. For if the author had maintained this, he would also have had to maintain the decree of sovereign and free reprobation which he nowhere mentions in the entire article. In neglecting this fundamental aspect of this important truth, the author simply is satisfied with a vague and indefinite election which could easily encompass the whole human race, but which is dependent upon man's acceptance of the gospel for its fulfillment.

It is precisely this vagueness and, as a matter of fact, denial of reprobation, which characterizes evangelicalism. And it is this denial which makes evangelicalism a travesty of the gospel of Jesus Christ. For, after all, predestination is the heart of the gospel. Without both election and reprobation one soon loses all the truths of Scripture.

THE EVOLUTION OF MAN

I have often wondered about the official position of the Roman Catholic Church with regard to the theory of evolutionism. It is evident, of course, that evolutionism, even in the Darwinian sense, is taught by Catholics throughout the world. But whether this was the official position of the church was another question.

This question was partially answered in a recent article in *Our Sunday Visitor* in an article entitled "The Evolution of Man." Already the sub-titles indicate what direction the article will take. They read: "What Doctrine of Evolution can Catholics Entertain?" and "The Origin of Man's Body is Open to Scientific Investigation; His Soul is not."

After discussing materialistic evolutionism and pantheistic evolutionism, the author refers to a papal encyclical of Pope Pius XII issued in 1950 in which the following points were made:

(1) The fact of the spiritual soul of man must be taken for granted. (2) Otherwise, free discussion of the problem is allowed. (3) However, discussions should be carried on by experts, with due regard for pros and cons, and with a will to submit to the Church. (4) No one should take the position that human evolution is a completely certain and proven fact, and that no difficulties in putting it together with Catholic belief still exist.

Then the author goes on to discuss the matter of the church's stand and its influence in the church as a whole. He writes:

Developments in science (newer and fuller evidence for human evolution) and development in theology (especially in

the study of Sacred Scriptures), have urged many Catholic theologians to modify their first reserve about human evolution.

Indeed, there are many Catholic scholars who are using the concept of evolution not only in a purely intellectual way, but also as a source of greater knowledge of God's universe and a source of greater love of God.

Evolution brings a dynamic element into our consideration of the universe. God, instead of immediately setting each creature into being and motion, started a great and complicated machinery going. This machinery produced plants, animals and man. But God did not set his machinery going, and then sit back, so to speak, with folded arms. No, each atom and animal, each galaxy and molecule, and man, are kept in being and enabled to act by the fact of God's co-operation.

Man, the highest product of evolution, is not simply appointed, as it were, to his position as representative of the universe before God. He grew out of the universe, and is cousin to it all, the inorganic, the organic, and (because he was given a spiritual soul) the angels. When Christ assumed human nature, therefore, He did not simply take on the nature of man as it was 2,000 years ago.

Christ assumed that human nature which was the result and the crown and the glory of millions of years of evolution. He also assumed a human nature which was destined to continue to evolve as long as it existed.

Christ took this human nature and raised it to the unbelievable heights of the supernatural — making man as near God Himself as was possible, with man remaining a creature. Christ, therefore, assumed and supernaturalized an evolution which included man as a biological being, a social being, and then a supernatural being. And Christ will gather all the fruits of this evolution and His own Redemption in the great harvest of man and the universe which He will present to God the Father on the Day of the last Judgment. Evolution, in sum, adds its testimony to the fact that we have been made worthy (although all unworthy ourselves) to cooperate with Christ in the fullness of the Spirit, and of the Mystical Body.

H. Hanko

AN EVALUATION OF THE MODERN EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

(Continued from page 396)

(p. 623). It is stupid because it is impossible. Pupils cannot start out on their own regardless of the experience of others. If they had the best stocked laboratory in the world, they would use it only casually, spasmodically, and the results would be fatiguing and discouraging (p. 624). According to this stupid principle of absolute freedom of the individual, the pupils actually should have no finished tools, but should start from "scratch," and learn to scratch out their own tools from sticks and stones. We agree. The idea is like that of pure Pelagianism gone crazy.

No, Dewey does not like thought suggested by the imposition of some alien standard, i.e., some extraneous authority, or some authoritarian principle, as that limits the intellectual horizon of the pupil to about eight degrees above his shoe-tops (p. 626)! Yet neither does he like the idea of absolute personal freedom. He does not believe there is such a thing, nor can be. He reasons this way: if the pupil on his own initiative is to suggest to himself what to do, where does he get his suggestion? According to this theory of self-rule, not from the teacher! Then whence? From something or somebody at home? from one on the street? from one of the more aggressive fellow-pupils? or perhaps from the school sexton? Then he would not be really free, and would not develop his

freedom. What shall we say to this? That it is impossible for a man to be strictly his own man. Absolute freedom is an abstraction, a figment. The railroad locomotive suddenly bursting out into absolute freedom thereby loses its freedom. It is truly free only while on the tracks. So true freedom for man exists when he conforms to the law of God. He loses his freedom when he goes off the straight track of God's law. In God's service is perfect freedom. Within the law is the perfect law of liberty. The outlaw is a slave!

Still, although certain external authority is rejected, Dewey would not have us believe that "all authority should be rejected, but rather that there is need to search for a more effective source of authority" (p.658). For him, that source of authority is to be found neither in the church, nor in God, nor in Scripture. Where then? He is not clear on this point. Perhaps in the rationalistic principle of authority? According to this, the human mind becomes the standard of all things. The idea is "Whatever does not conform to my 2 x 0 brain does not exist!" Man's thimble-brain stands in perfectly adequate judgment on all reality — history, science, religion, Christianity or you-name-it. Dewey, however, does not seem to want rationalism for his basic educative principle, for rationalism can be very imposing. He neither advocates absolute "free thought," nor thought according to an imposed standard. What then? He is somewhat vague: thought which considers *what* has been done in the past (history? experience? — RCH), *how* it has been done (methodology?), and thought which decides for itself *why* it should continue to be done, or *whether* it should (p. 627). Apply this line of thought to the fourth commandment. Then this divine good would be regarded as an evil; first, because it is established by the fixed standard of God's law, and then, also, after considering what has been done in the past it would be found that the world's great, the world's majority never observed the Lord's Day. That we should consider whether it should continue to be kept implies that man may set aside this injunction whenever he assumes it to be practical. According to this thought, it may at any time be regarded as a foregone conclusion that the Sabbath no longer should have a name and a place in our modern existence. To the Christian, this educative principle is destructive of all education. It seems that for Modernism, its principle is to have no principle.

R.C.H.

(To be continued)

Above the heavens, O God,
And over all the earth
Let men exalt Thy glorious Name
And tell Thy matchless worth.

Stretch forth Thy mighty hand
In answer to our prayer,
And let Thy own beloved ones
Thy great salvation share.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Report of Eastern Ladies' League

On the evening of April 20, 1961, the spring meeting of the Ladies' League of Protestant Reformed Churches was held at Southeast Protestant Reformed Church. The meeting began with the singing of our theme song, Psalter No. 374, and Holland Psalm 25. Our League president, Mrs. Dirk Jonker, read Proverbs 31:10-31 and led us in prayer. A trio from First Church Priscilla Society sang. Our president then introduced the speaker for the evening, Rev. Herman Hanko, who spoke on "The Women of the Bible" in part thus:

"One of the surprising facts of the Scripture is that it often goes into great length to describe certain women and their lives, names and duties. It is a mistake to minimize the importance of women in the church and in the affairs of the Kingdom of Heaven and in the affairs of the Covenant of God.

"I would take you with me down a brief trip into the centuries of time on the dusty roads of Israel, to stop for a moment at the homes of some of the women of Scripture to listen to them speak and to observe some characteristics which are common to them all, and which would define the principles of Christian women throughout the world. We begin in the Plains of Mamre where Abraham lived with Sarah, who in her old age, well beyond the time of child-bearing, was the mother of the Child of the Promise. We find Rebecca who was intent on seeing that Jacob, her favorite son, get the birthright blessing. We hear of Tamar, the harlot, who was more vitally interested in producing the seed of the Covenant than even Judah. To Egypt and Jochebed, the mother of Moses, who would dare to defy Pharaoh. We visit the Judges, at a time when the people had adopted the customs and forms of worship of the people of the land in which they were sojourning. They were drawn apart by bickering and jealousy and tended to be dissolved. It seems but a matter of time before the people of Israel would lose their place in history. At Mt. Ephraim, Deborah carried the word of the Lord in her day; gave Barak the courage to fight the hosts of Sisera. To Bethlehem and the Country of Moab, where we find Ruth, who declares that the God of Naomi must be her God and the people of Naomi must be her people. God would preserve his people in the Promised Land. Finally, of the family at Zorah, where we find Samson's father, a foolish man, who did not believe the word of the angel, but it was his wife who had faith to believe the messenger of God, that God would deliver them from the hands of the oppressor. To Rama, to the home of Elkanah and his two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. We listen to the jeers of Peninnah as she mocked Hannah. Hannah's husband could not understand her tears and longing saying, 'Am I not better to thee than ten sons?' We go with Hannah

to the temple and listen to her earnest and tear-filled cry to God as she cries out desperately for a son. We hear her song when the Lord gave her Samuel, which was an echo of Mary's song, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord.' We hear of Bathsheba, who helped to bring forth the promised line of Jesus Christ. It was Bathsheba who insisted on Solomon's right to sit upon the throne.

"Travelling to the Northern Kingdom, to the widow of Zarephath, who believed the word of the Lord, and Elijah was taken into her dwelling during the famine. There were among the women of Israel, those who had moral, spiritual courage and integrity. At Hebron, we see Elizabeth, cousin of Mary, whose heart filled with joy at the prospect of having a son, while her husband, Zachariah, sat in silence and unbelief. Then we go to Mary of Bethlehem and hear her song of rejoicing that she of low estate may become the mother of her Lord. So, in the New Testament Church, we find Lydia, Eunice, and Lois, women of great faith, who gathered each Sabbath to hear the Word of the Lord. These are but a few of the many illustrious women in the pages of Scripture who were filled with moral, spiritual courage and integrity.

"They all have one thing in common. Scripture makes mention of them in times of spiritual decline, when Israel as a nation was in apostasy, moral and spiritual degeneracy, which was primarily the responsibility of the men. Sometimes it was a matter of turning to idolatry, spiritual indifference, when the people had no time or interest in things spiritual and heavenly. During those times primarily, God makes mention of women whose names must be mentioned on the pages of Scripture, and whose interest is in the line of the Covenant of God. The homes of these simple women were the last lines of defense against worldly-mindedness and idolatry. For that reason their names have been recorded for the ages. That means that all of the emphasis for these women was on the home. In the earliest history of the patriarchs, the home was the only unit of society, at least in the line of the Covenant, it was a school, state, a place of employment, church. As the home goes, so goes society, because the home is the fundamental unit of society. When moral and spiritual values in the home disintegrate, society disintegrates. When the home is strong and vigorous, society is strong and vigorous and full of vitality and energy. The determining factor is always the home. The strength of the school is in the home. The home is the strength of the church, to a certain extent. Fathers are the head of the home, the prophet, the priest and the king in the home. The responsibility for the well-being for the home is, before God, the responsibility of the father. The strength of the home is still the mother's because, in the first place, the mother is the one who is at home when the father is not. Her place, God puts there, and God gives her her calling there. It is the mother who is completely adapted to the calling of instructing the children, the mother is equipped for that psychically, spiritually, intuitively. What the child learns at home will determine to a considerable ex-

tent what kind of a member he will be of the Church of Jesus Christ, because he is guided in that home at his mother's side. The home becomes the bulwark of the preservation of the truth of God's Covenant, and the mother becomes God's instrument to protect and maintain that truth in the hearts and minds of her children.

"What is the calling of women if we take our example from the saintly women of the Scripture? To bring forth the seed of the Covenant. God's promise is that you are given the privilege of bringing forth the Church, which He will regenerate, and to which He will give faith. You prepare the child in those crucial years of its life for what kind of a citizen it will be, parent, member of the Church. Wonderful privilege than which there is no higher calling in all of life. That is what struck us so forcibly about the mothers of Scripture. We live in times of moral and spiritual degeneracy. How important it is that our homes remain unstamped and unsullied by the times in which we live. We live beneath the shadow of the Cross. You do a work that abides through eternity, until eternity, when other works are destroyed. If sometimes you grow discouraged, weary, and downhearted, go a little while to the home of Ruth, listen again to the beautiful song of Hannah, and be inspired and thrilled with your calling, the central fact of which is, that you and I and all of us do our work with considerable imperfection. We wonder how it can be successful. Our homes are built in the shadow of the Cross of Calvary. Strong is the promise of our God. In that strength, you can once again make your homes the bastion of faith, the last line of defense, strong and faithful by the strength of the promises of God. May God grant that our homes are faithful homes, and may God grant that there are mothers who are faithful mothers."

During the singing of Psalter No. 215, a collection was taken for our Hope and Adams Street Protestant Reformed Schools. The minutes of our Fall Meeting were read and approved and the roll of our member Societies called, by our Secretary, Mrs. J. Kuiper. Miss Audrey Reitsma gave the Treasurer's report. Mrs. J. Oomkes of First Church Eunice Society then gave us a reading entitled "Life Through Death." The trio sang another number and our meeting was closed with prayer by Mrs. P. Decker, President of First Church Priscilla Society. Refreshments and a social hour were enjoyed by all in the basement. Mrs. H. C. Hoeksema was the organist for the evening.

Miss Ruth H. Bylsma, Reporter

Report of the Western Ladies' League

The Western Ladies' League met in Edgerton, Minnesota on April 21, 1961, with the ladies of Edgerton as our hostesses.

The meeting was opened by singing Psalter numbers 298, our theme song, and 92. Opening prayer was offered by Rev. J. Kortering. Our Scripture lesson, Luke 21:5-38, was read by our president, Mrs. W. Kooiker.

A business meeting was held in which minutes were read by our secretary, Mrs. D. Bleyenbergh, and a financial report was given by our treasurer, Mrs. J. Blankespoore. Also, our new vice-president, Mrs. B. Woudenberg, and treasurer, Mrs. C. Klein, were elected. Psalter numbers 7 and 88 were then sung while the collection was taken for the Reformed Witness Hour.

Our speaker, Rev. Lubbers, was introduced. He spoke on the topic, "Watchfulness for the Son of Man's Return," based on Luke 21:36, "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

The speaker divided the topic into these three parts: its implication, its discretion, and its incentive.

Watchfulness unto prayer means that we understand and long to see the things which must come to pass which are foretold by Christ to His Church. This watchfulness is manifested in praying. We must watch and pray that we may by His grace stand before the Son of Man at His coming. The prayer of the Church is, "Come, Lord Jesus, Yea come quickly."

As the Church sees the fulfillment of all these things towards the time of His coming she must use proper discretion or understanding of these things. The Church must understand: first, that all the birth pangs of the world really bring forth the birth of the coming of the Son of Man; secondly, that the Church must prayerfully carry on; and, thirdly, that there will be a time of great abomination, desolation for the Church when she will find it practically impossible to gather for public worship. Jesus gives the parable of the fig tree: when the leaves shoot forth, then we know that summer is nigh. In these times of great importance the Church looks about her and sees that summer or the time of the Son of Man's return is near.

Our incentive is that we, worthy by grace, may stand before the Son of Man crowned with His glory. This is that which motivates the Church to watch and pray for the Son of Man's return.

After the speech we were favored with a solo given by one of the Doon ladies entitled "Under the Care of My God." After this Rev. Kortering conducted the question hour. He answered questions on: the relation of the Christian to fine arts, Deuteronomy 33:13, and the mother's place in the family altar.

Our president thanked our speakers and all those who took part in the program.

A special number, a poem, was given by one of the Hull ladies.

We sang Psalter number 60 after which Rev. Lubbers closed with prayer.

Refreshments were served by the Edgerton ladies, our hostesses, during which we enjoyed a social hour.

Mrs. E. Van Den Top, Reporter

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

"All the saints salute thee . . ." PHIL. 4:21

May 20, 1961

Our Missionary now conducts Sunday morning services at Tripp, So. Dakota. The service is at 10:30, following a 9:30 Sunday School session for all ages. Rev. Lubbers also conducts mid-week services there on Wednesday evenings, continuing his series of sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism. The Missionary has also announced two Thursday evening services to be held in Scotland, S. Dak., on May 11 and 18, with the first two questions and answers of the Catechism as sermon material. Other activity in this field, sponsored by the Reformed Action Committee, is the distribution of pamphlets in the area which also includes Menno and Kaylor, So. Dakota.

The latest pamphlet, mentioned above, was entitled, "Every Tongue Shall Confess," wherein Rev. Kortering examined the idea of confessing "that Jesus is Lord" (Phil. 2:11) under the headings, "I believe—a personal confession," "We believe—the confession of the church," "The historical occasion for confessions," "The rightful place of confessions," and "The practical place of confessions." The treatise closed with the following paragraph: "When the Scripture lives in the hearts of believers, confessions are championed, loved, and studied. The church is strengthened for her calling in the world by their use. When this militant church will pass into the triumphant, the written confession will have served its purpose and our tongues will confess everlastingly that Jesus Christ is Lord."

In one of the Oak Lawn's bulletins we found this arresting announcement: "All the men and women of the congregation are invited by the Men's Society to meet at church tomorrow evening at 7:30. Rev. Vanden Berg will introduce the subject, 'Responsibility.' 'Forsake not the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is' (Heb. 10:25), but use this opportunity to spend an evening in Christian fellowship about the Word of God in the exercise of the communion of saints." Methinks the text reference is a point well taken because of those who think that some "assemblies" may be neglected with impunity.

From the Program Committee of the Reformed Witness Hour comes this contribution: "Rev. H. Hanko, pastor of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church, will be the speaker on the radio broadcasts to be heard the four Sundays in June. His sermons are based on texts found in the First Epistle of Peter. The first message is entitled, 'The Victory of Baptism,' to be followed by sermons concerning 'Jesus in Heaven,' 'Casting Our Cares Upon God,' and 'Resisting the Devil.' We urge you to listen to these inspiring radio messages. Written copies can be obtained by request. The mail-

ing address is, 'The Reformed Witness Hour, P.O. Box 8, Grand Rapids 1, Mich.'"

The Covenant Committee (members of Hope Church) report that during the past two months their mailing list increased by 60, making the total distribution of their May mailing to 420 copies. They have already mailed out their sixth pamphlet entitled, "The Sovereignty Of God And Sin" which is part of a series by Rev. H. Hanko on the general subject, "The Covenant With Adam." In their last news letter they quote from letters received from Lansing, Ill., Boaz, Ala., Havertown, Pa., and Smith Center, Kan. Hope's consistory studies all correspondence received by the Committee.

South Holland's consistory is considering holding evening services during July and August instead of afternoon services. It seems that the auditorium gets quite warm during summer afternoons, and the congregation has earlier signified their desire for this change. Before going ahead with the plan, the consistory gave opportunity to those who feel that it would work a hardship upon their families to present their objections at a May 17 consistory meeting.

It was in Hope's bulletin (April 30) that we discovered the first announcement of the annual church Sunday School picnic date—August 2! The second was in Oak Lawn's (May 12) which announced an invitation from the South Holland Church to join them on Memorial Day at Glenwood Woods in their annual picnic.

Did you use the envelope for your contribution to the Young People's Convention in Loveland?

Hudsonville has begun their Summer Sunday School with a class-arranging session May 7.

Did you know—that the Men's Chorus of First Church travelled to South Holland, May 19, to render a concert in the auditorium of the Calvary Reformed Church? and, *that* Rev. G. Vanden Berg, of Oak Lawn, lectured in Hudsonville May 19, the topic—"The Responsibility of Man"? and, *that* the Society for Secondary Protestant Reformed Education met Monday evening, May 15, at our Southwest Church in Grand Rapids?

Because of the interest shown in the subject of "Gog and Magog" in the discussions of the Oak Lawn's Men's Society, an opportunity was given all interested persons to hear a tape-recording of the Rev. M. Schipper's recent radio sermon on that topic. The recording was to be heard in the church on Sunday evening at 7:30.

May the unrest of the nations—wars and rumors of wars—which kindle interest in such subjects as The Last War by Gog and Magog, lead us into the contemplation of the sweet comfort tendered by our Lord as it is recorded for us in John 14:27, "*Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*"

. . . see you in church.

J.M.F.