And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus...  

And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. 

And their eyes were opened, and they knew him...  

—LUKE 24:13a, 30, 31a.
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Editorials . . .

Why Catechism?

If you were placed before the question why you attend Catechism you might answer quite readily, either, because I must, or, because I enjoy it, or, because I consider it very important.

It might be better to put the question this way: Why do we have Catechism?

And if that were a question in your Catechism book the answer would read something like this: To supply the religious, ecclesiastical and spiritual training of the Covenant youth of the Church.

I grant you, that is quite a mouthful.

Not everybody agrees that Catechetical instruction is necessary for the children and youth of the Church. There are those who raise the objection that the Catechism only serves to place a child in an ecclesiastical straight jacket. It hinders his thinking, warps his mind and makes him biased in his opinions. It implants doctrines of men that he can never entirely rid himself of all the rest of his life. It is better to simply teach the child to read the Bible and form his own opinion of the truth, and when he becomes of age he can decide for himself which denomination is closest to the truth according to his own convictions.

In answer to that it must be said that Scripture demands the instruction of the Covenant youth of the Church.

God says to Israel in Deut. 6:6, 7, “And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”

To which believing parents respond, Ps. 78:1, “we will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength, and His wonderful works that He hath done.”

Again there is that well-known passage in Prov. 22:6, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

And Jesus exhorts His disciples in Mark 10:14, “Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

While Paul instructs the fathers in Eph. 5:4, not to provoke their children to wrath, but to “bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

You will notice that Jesus gives as reason for suffering the little
children to come unto Him that "of such is the kingdom of heaven". Children are also included in God's Covenant, for God establishes His Covenant with believers and their seed in the line of generations. Children are born in the Church, receive the sign of baptism in the Church, are members of the Church, and as such must be instructed by the Church.

But, someone may object, are we not afraid of implanting false doctrines into the receptive minds of the children? The Catholic Church teaches its children also, filling their hearts and minds with a slavish fear for the church and with all kinds of heresies. That this is true cannot be denied. But that does not change the demand of Scripture. Nor does it prevent the true Church of Jesus Christ from instructing its children in the truth. The devil may be doing his utmost to sow the seed of the lie and to deceive many throughout all the ages. But he has never succeeded in destroying the Word of God. We know, too, that the Holy Spirit works within the Church from generation to generation and leads her in the truth. Led by the Spirit the Church has been able to express herself on fundamental truths of the Word of God, even over against heresies. That heritage which we possess in our confessions we cherish and pass on to the generations to come.

There can be no danger of implanting false doctrine as long as we hold to the truth of the Word of God. In childhood and youth is the time to learn and to gather up treasures for the years to come. In those years you must not only learn to read the Bible, but also how to read it and how to understand what you read. The Catechism furnishes you with your religious training from the Word of God.

But the Catechism also serves to instruct in the Word of God over against all kinds of heresies, which are lurking in every nook and corner. Scripture speaks of the winds of doctrine that blow from every direction, tossing to and fro those who are not firmly founded on the foundation of the Word of God. And in the same breath it speaks of the cunning craftiness of men who gamble with the souls of the unwarthy men and are lying in wait to deceive them. Arminianism, Pelagianism and modernism are but a few of the outstanding heresies of our day. The youth of the Church must be warned against them, learn to be on their guard against them, be able to distinguish their earmarks and hold themselves aloof from them. They must learn to distinguish the truth from the lie, the true Church from the false. That belongs to their ecclesiastical training.

But a mere outward knowledge of these things is not enough. The
Spirit also works in the heart of the Covenant seed of the Church, enlightening them and instructing them in the truth of the Word of God. That truth becomes part and parcel of their souls, their cherished heritage, their very bread of life. Spiritually they grow in grace through the instruction in the Word. Whereby they are spiritually fitted to confess their faith and take their places in the midst of the Church.

It is quite a mouthful at that. The Catechism serves to supply the religious, ecclesiastical and spiritual training of the Covenant youth of the Church. It is well worth remembering.

**The Movie**

Who started the fad of white skating shoes? Hollywood, in releasing a picture of the famous skater, Sonje Henie. Who introduced Venetian blinds and the one-hand telephone for common use? Who helped a certain well-known comic strip character to bring 40 percent increase in the sale of spinach? And who set the people to asking for a “coke”? Each time the answer is the same, Hollywood.

At least, those are the facts. according to the January issue of the Reader’s Digest, uncovered by C. Nelson Schrader who has investigated the effects of the movies on the public mind. The article entitled “Hollywood Handles Dynamite” goes on to say that these are only superficial symptoms of Hollywood’s power of suggestion. The movies even mold the nation’s thinking on all the major issues of the day and control its sentiments on politics and war. No less is Hollywood responsible for influencing the social relations and morals of the people of America. We read, “the movies lead and change the nation’s thought on politics, moral and social questions of great importance. Every week, eighty-five million Americans go to the movies. In the darkness of the theater, where they sit relaxed and give undivided attention to the flashing pictures, psychological conditions are perfect for putting ideas across to them.”

Any serious minded Christian will agree that this is a most convincing argument against theater attendance. Do we who hold God’s Word as the only, infallible and sure guide and rule of life want to subject ourselves to the subtle and even sinister influence of the movie? Will we allow our thinking to be molded by the philosophies of a world that lies in darkness?

No one can deny that very much of what is produced in Hollywood is definitely evil. The purpose of these pictures is primarily to entertain. They aim to grip the attention and to arouse the emotions,
to hold the audience under their spell and to sweep them along on a wave of suspense until the last scene has been enacted. Passion and lewdness, not always extolled, but sometimes even condemned, are openly played before the eager eyes of the enwrapped audience. Sin and corruption leave their taint upon those who have allowed themselves to be eyewitnesses.

But, so we are repeatedly informed. Hollywood is not nearly as bad as its reputation, and the lives and morals of the movie stars are nothing like their pictures might lead one to suspect. The newspapers inform us that just recently a minister of a Reformed Church of the East went to Hollywood to give aid in the making of a certain film (a shame to his office) and soon reached the conclusion that he had always been sadly misinformed and had had an entirely wrong notion about the whole movie business. But no one need go as far as Hollywood to judge about their code of morals. Witness their well-advertised "hit and miss" marriages, their repeated divorces and all that must necessarily go with it. They freely indulge in hero worship and give vent to every kind of emotion. Passion is exalted for love and even deified. Man is exalted for his ingenuity and strength even to a point where he is idolized. Indecencies of every sort are openly condoned. God is not in all their thoughts and they take de-

light in banishing Him from them.

Yet the cry goes up: how about the "good" plays? What is wrong with them? Can a contaminated well produce pure water? Can those who have an entirely corrupted standard of morals produce anything that is in harmony with God's Word? Can darkness instruct the children of light even in such matters as politics, social and moral questions? Only the blind are willing to follow blind leaders. Those who are pure of heart will refuse to be contaminated in any way by the polluted waters from an impure source. They will hate the workers of iniquity and abhor their works. By their fruits ye shall know them.

No doubt, those who patronize Hollywood are playing with dynamite.

MEMBER SOCIETIES!!

Next month we expect to publish a complete program for our next Convention. If you have any proposals to be presented at the Convention, kindly send them to our Secretary, Miss Helen Ezinga, 1050 Dunham St., S. E., Grand Rapids, Mich. If this material is to appear in our next issue it must be received on or before April 15. Please cooperate so that our report may be complete. A complete report will inform you as member what is to be discussed at the Convention. The Board.
Under this title one finds a brief article written by the Reverend Edwin H. Rian, a minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian denomination, in "The Banner" for the week of Friday, February 13th, 1942. Out of fairness to the writer we must emphasize, as he also does, the fact that this article is not written by the Reverend Mr. Rian in an official capacity as representative of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, but "simply as an individual who is keenly interested in a united testimony to the system of truth and world and life view contained in the Bible and expressed in such creeds as the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Heidelberg Catechism". Hence, the purpose of this contribution is to give expression to the writer's "hope that these ideas informally stated will fire the imagination of the readers and eventually lead to a cooperative effort on the part of truly Calvinistic churches so that a real impact can be made upon American culture".

The body of this article is devoted to the answering of four questions pertaining to the nature of the Federation itself, the membership of such a Federation, the projects this Federation could possibly undertake cooperatively, and a practical way for the bringing of such a Federation into existence. As to the nature of the proposed organization, it is suggested that "it would not be an organic union of churches". That means, for example, that "the Federation would not be a super-denomination since it would not perform ecclesiastical functions in the technical sense nor bind the separate churches". It also implies that each separate denomination maintains its own distinctiveness and independence, exercising "cooperative effort, based upon the Calvinistic confessions".

Mr. Rian mentions four Presbyterian and Reformed Church denominations, which, in his opinion, might form such an organization. They are the Christian Reformed Church, The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, and the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America, General Synod. These are suggested not as a complete list of denominations which could possibly enter, but because they "readily come to mind".

Three projects are mentioned as possible of realization by way of cooperative effort. The first is perhaps the most noteworthy. It is the familiar reminder that we should establish an "American Christian University, based upon
Calvinistic principles”. The writer believes that this project is a practical possibility upon the basis of such “cooperative effort” for the following reasons: first, “under the encouragement of a Federation and independent of all denominations with the board members and professors chosen from among the various Reformed groups” it would “make an appeal to students in every church as an American enterprise”, and second, it would “at the same time clearly state that the university's doctrinal stand is that of the Reformed Faith”. The second project suggested is the formation of a Reformed Christian Literature Association. “Such a society could encourage the publication of scholarly and popular expositions of the Word of God which are not being published today due to lack of funds and stimulus”. This society's function as far as the American world of culture is concerned is to rival the Tractarian movement conducted by various heretical groups. The third project the Federation might undertake is the sponsorship of a nation-wide radio broadcast. The reasons for this last suggestion are perfectly obvious.

Mr. Rian's article is not merely theoretical. It contains more than suggestion as to what should be done. Included is a concrete, practical plan for the launching of this Federation. “Let each General Assembly and Synod of the above-mentioned churches at least, appoint committees to consider and explore the possibilities of such a Federation and then report back to their respective churches in 1943”, he submits. It certainly goes without saying that every wide-awake young member of any of our churches should watch with interest the growth or death of this plea.

It is not easy, I find, to express one's opinion in respect to these things. We will be forgiven, I am sure, if we admit a bit of skepticism as far as the possibility of the realization of these things is concerned.

Nevertheless, these are worthy ideals. And who knows, but that the effort aroused will at least clarify the meaning of such terms as “Reformed” and “Calvinistic” when used by men of these denominations.

The Japanese Pavilion and Human Hypocrisy. . . .

The following story is quoted from the department entitled “The World Today”, prepared each week by the Rev. E. J. Tanis of Chicago, Illinois, for “The Banner”. It appeared in the issue for the week of Friday, January 9th, 1942, as an example of the deceitfulness of men.

“The Japanese building in the New York World’s Fair cost $250,
When the fair was closed it was decided that this beautiful building should remain standing. Perhaps it was left standing as a symbol of peace between Japan and America.

When Major LaGuardia accepted the building from the Japanese, in 1940, at the opening of the fair, the Japanese consul general made a speech including these felicitious words:

"In such a world of turmoil and unrest as we are confronted with these days, all the more precious are peace and goodwill among nations. May this beautiful pavilion and garden stand in this park forever as a monument of our sincere aspirations for peace and good will between our two great nations across the Pacific."

"Forever," said the Japanese speaker.

And in less than two years "peace and good will" made way for war and ill feeling.

"For we are but of yesterday and know nothing" Job 8:9. Therefore: "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help" Ps. 146."
the United Nations naval and air forces upon the invasion units of the Japanese at Java and New Guinea have inflicted heavy losses to the enemy and have slowed up their movement somewhat but they themselves have also suffered heavily in these attacks. The Japs are paying heavily on land, in the air, and on the sea but they are still advancing.

Political Efforts.

Is it at all possible to find some reason for, or learn some lesson from, these defeats? According to the cry of many correspondents on widely scattered fronts the reason is the same in all places, namely, that not enough help has come from America to each particular point. Although this might have been helpful to hold off for a longer time it would not accomplish the desired end. The reason lies more in the method that has been employed by the United Nations in their efforts to save all their possessions in the Pacific. This effort has been indicated by political rather than military considerations. Before the attack on Pearl Harbor, although we were aware of Japan’s aggressive attitude in its Asiatic policy, we made no attempt to plan a proper method of procedure with the other nations interested. When war did come there was a vague understanding that each one would defend their own possessions in the East Indies region; i.e. Britain would defend Hong Kong, Malaya, Singapore and Burma; the Dutch would defend their island empire, and we would defend our island possessions. There was no united effort to make war against Japan but a method which extended our communication lines to the nth degree and allowed inadequate forces to stand guard over each possession. Therefore in practically all places the scattered defenders have been outnumbered and overwhelmed.

What of India?

Other important issues are also arising in the Far East. One vital question of the day is, “What of India?” The leaders in India are again using the present plight of the British Empire to renew demands for independence. At present other voices are demanding that our own government apply pressure upon the British leaders to promise self-government to India.

At present this is very important for there is a need for much more man power on the United Nations front in the Far East and India with a population of three hundred and fifty million people would be of great help to supply some of this power. There are other subject peoples in various other possessions of the United Nations who would desire the same freedom. If the Democracies are fighting to save freedom for the peoples
of the world it might be very wise if they would start cleaning house at home and let the world know that that they are willing to give the same liberties to the subject peoples of their possessions as well.

Mighty changes are taking place in the world. As events shape themselves in the Far East it appears as though the peoples of the nations of the Yellow and Brown race are going to have a far more important place in the affairs of the World in the future than ever before. Regardless of how this present conflict ends this change is imminent.

As in the past, through conquest and strife, God has changed the order in World affairs so it appears now that another great change, or as some have expressed it “a rebirth of the people of the world is imminent”. This of course, is always through trial and tribulation. It is also through this way that God’s people and church have been founded, strengthened and purified.

PLAN NOW—

To attend the 4th Annual Convention of the Federation of Protestant Reformed Youth.

— Roosevelt Park Church —

Grand Rapids, Mich.

News From Roosevelt Park

Why that long face? Why that sigh? Is something wrong? What’s bothering you? What is on your mind that makes you feel so blue? Can I set your mind at ease? You have a question that you want answered? Of course I’ll answer it for you. What!! Is there going to be a Convention this summer? Of course!! there’s going to be a Convention.

But if there is going to be a Convention, how come you haven’t heard anything about it? Well, in this instance, no news is good news.

We have selected our theme for this year and it has to do with youth. What is always characteristic of youth—Of what is youthful? And that’s the theme of the 1942 Convention.

YOUTH-FULS

Make your plans now to hear more of these things of which youth is or should be full.

Plan to attend the 4th Annual Convention of the Protestant Reformed Young People’s Federation to be held this summer at Roosevelt Park.

Roosevelt Park
Young People’s Society.
James Howerzyl.
"What profusion is there in His work!"

"When trees blossom there is not a single breastpin, but a whole blossom-full of gems: and of leaves they have so many suits that they can throw them away to the winds all summer long. What unnumbered cathedrals has He reared in the forest shades, vast and grand, full of curious carvings, and haunt-ed evermore by tremulous music".

H. W. Beecher.

How obvious is that change from the barren winter condition of plant-life to that overwhelming grandeur and beauty of spring. The blossoming trees and unfolding leaves are heralds of this inspiring season. Once again the woodland carpet is revived to a refreshing green of various hues, adorned by the ornamental spring flowers. The delicate pink of the Spring Beauty, the vivid yellow of the Adders Tongue, the pure white of the Trillium, and the soft shades of the Violet all blend into
BEACON LIGHTS

one decorative pattern.

What were these hidden castles and where were these places of retreat which so effectively protected the seeds of new life? In a former article your attention was called to hibernation of the animals. But plants, too, must be sheltered from the prolonged cold and unfavorable conditions of winter. Let us examine the home of the miniature leaves and flowers. Often we do not realize that the commonplace "bud" is the secret abode of the delicate blossoms and the colorful verdure of spring.

It might be interesting to make a more detailed study of buds in general. First of all, we could ask the question, "What is a bud?" It is an undeveloped stem, leaf or flower. In warm regions we find naked buds, while in colder climates we observe scaly buds. The purpose of the scales is to protect the tender parts within from cold, mechanical injury, and to prevent it from drying out. To check the loss of moisture, the scales are coated with a secretion to make it water-proof. Warmth is provided by a cotton-like substance, which furnishes insulation.

Buds, classified according to structure, may be divided into three groups—the leaf bud, the flower bud, and the mixed bud. In reality, the leaf bud contains a miniature stem bearing a number of leaves. As it elongates, more leaves appear and it develops into a branch. If we open a flower bud we will find one or more unexpanded flowers. When examining the mixed bud we notice that it contains both flowers and leaves, as in the case of the apple, grape and the oak.

Buds are also classified on the basis of their position—terminal, lateral, and adventitious. The first as the name indicates, is found on the end of a twig or stem. Ordinarily, it is larger and more vigorous as is also evident from the fact that its shoot is longer and grows more rapidly. The lateral bud occurs on the side of the stem in the axils of the leaves. This type accounts for most of the foliage and flowers. In case of injury, as in pruning or drought, the terminal or lateral buds may be destroyed and new buds appear; these are called adventitious buds, which may arise anywhere on the stem (except at the end or in the leaf axils), on the roots, or sometimes even on the leaves. Thus the plant is insured of continued growth.

How are these buds arranged, you may ask? Have all plants, shrubs and trees the same arrangement, or do they differ? Again we notice the systematic order of the Creator, for all buds may be grouped into one of the three following arrangements—alternate, opposite, or whorled. By careful observation, we discover that all buds develop on small swellings of
the stem called "nodes". If one examines the twig of an apple, a peach, plum, or poplar tree, one will notice only one bud at a node, which illustrates the alternate type of arrangement. When two buds are present at a node the opposite type is exemplified, as in the case of the maple. The third arrangement, known as whorled, has three or more buds at a node, as in the catalpa tree.

What causes the buds to open in this season of the year? With the return of refreshing rains, and the warmth of early spring, the life of the plant is stimulated as the sap begins to flow. As the buds receive nourishment, they gradually begin to expand, breaking through the sealed scales of winter, producing the welcome signs of spring.

Oh, let us not be hidden within our wintry cell of sin, but let us blossom forth, stirred by the "life-giving power" which flows from the Eternal Fount!

"Let heaven and earth and sounding sea,
To Him glad tribute bring;
Let field and wood and all therein,
Before Jehovah sing."

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed—2 Timothy 2:15
"He is not here." Of course not!

"Why seek ye him that liveth among the dead?"

He is the Lord of Glory, the Resurrection and the Life!

And here is the grave! This "here" is the realm of the dead, the place of corruption. It is the place that proclaims unto us the wrath of God, and it is the visible manifestation of the pronounced curse "thou shalt surely die". This here is sheol, the place of utter desolation where no man sings God's praises, and where our bodies, those wonderful master-pieces of God's creation, return to corruption.

Indeed, He had been there. For He is Jesus, who had been crucified. As a lifeless corpse He had been taken from the cross, and by loving hands He had been laid in this new tomb. Of this these devout women, who now seek Him here had been witnesses, for they had carefully marked the spot where they had laid Him.

But it was impossible that He should be holden of death. Death had no power over Him. He died! Yes, but not as men die. He was not, and never could be, a victim of death, for He Himself was the
Life. He laid down His life. He died a Victor. He gave His life as a ransom for many. He was delivered because of our sins. He was wounded for our transgressions. But He who was delivered because of our sins, was raised because of our justification. His death was a victory and His cross was an acceptable atonement. Having made His soul an offering for sin, He prolonged His days. Death could not keep this prey, for He has the keys of death and of hell. He is the Resurrection and the Life!

Therefore the angels administered a mild rebuke to these seeking women. "Why seek ye Him that liveth among the dead?" Had He not told them that His cross was the way to victory, and that His death was the way to life? But they had forgotten His words, and therefore they had come seeking the living among the dead. Let us not judge these women too harshly. How often do we, who walk in the light of the glorious resurrection, seek the living among the dead. Let us not cleave to our departed dear ones, even though we know that they live.

"He is not here, for He is risen." The proof of it. "Come see the place where the Lord lay."

The tomb was empty and open for inspection. The stone, which had been placed there by loving hands to close the entrance to the tomb to protect it from beasts of prey, and had been sealed by the enemy for fear that His disciples might steal the body of their Lord, and had occupied the minds of the loving women because they feared that it would hinder them in accomplishing their pious purpose, had been rolled away by an angel, an ambassador from before the throne of God. No, this angel did not roll away the stone to open the tomb for the Prince of Life. He, who could throw off the shackles of death, and who could pass through bolted doors, had no need to have the stone rolled away. The seal and the watch were in vain. But the angel removed the stone to open the grave for inspection, to prove unto these devout women, and to the disciples, that the Lord was risen indeed. To have left it there after the grave was empty, would have implied that which was no longer true. A vacated and empty tomb needed no stone.

Hence the angel could extend to these seeking women the invitation "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." Not merely to show that the tomb was empty. This in itself would not have been an absolute evidence that the Lord was risen indeed. Enemies might have stolen the body as Mary Magdalene supposed, or His disciples might have removed it, as the story was spread by the guards. But the angel here invites them to see the place where the Lord lay. They could see where He had been. The
linen clothes, in which He had been wrapped, after the manner of the Jews, were lying in their original place, and still revealed the contour of the Lord's body which they had contained, and the napkin, that was about His head, was lying separately where the Lord's head had been. Thus we must understand these words of the angel, *Come see the place where the Lord lay.* This is also evident from the fact that when Mary Magdalene stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, she saw two angels in white sitting, "the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain." The inevitable conclusion was, that Jesus had come forth, not as a Lazarus all bound up in a shroud, but leaving the linen clothes behind, just as they had been wrapped around His body, He came forth as a victor over death. Even as the empty shell of the cocoon is mute evidence of the birth of the butterfly, so also this empty shroud was mute evidence to the women, and to the disciples, of Christ's resurrection. Even as the swaddling clothes had been a sign to the shepherds at His birth, so also these linen clothes were an unmistakeable sign of His glorious resurrection.

"He is not here, for He is risen. Come see the place where the Lord lay."

Blessed announcement of Jesus' absence! The joy of it!

The message of Christ's absence is a sad tiding to loving hearts. Where *He* is *not* there is sadness and disappointment. This is so evident from the words of Martha at the time of the death of Lazarus, "Lord if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." What fear, what disappointment this first message must have struck in the hearts of these loving disciples. "...ye seek Jesus which was crucified. *He is not here..." The failure to find the Lord's body in the tomb, in order that they might bestow upon it their last measure of devotion, was an added sorrow to the already sore oppressed hearts of these seeking and devoted women. And yet...this announcement of Jesus absence is not a cause of sorrow and disappointment, but of joy and gladness. It is an announcement of victory. "He is risen!"

It need not surprise us that Matthew relates that these women were filled with "fear and great joy". Indeed a seeming contradiction, and yet so real and so easily understood. The events had followed one another in such rapid succession that their hearts and minds were filled with amazement and awe. First the crushing blow of the crucifixion, then their hearts were filled with dread, when they saw that the stone was rolled away, and now the announcement of Jesus' absence "He is not here", followed immediately by the the
amazing words, "...for He is risen." Is it any wonder that the emotions of these dear women were an intermingling of fear and great joy.

Also for us this announcement of Jesus' absence is a source of great joy. For His absence _here_ is evidence of our justification. He was _here_, for He was delivered because of our sins. "He is not here", for He was raised because of our justification. Our justification is now an accomplished fact, and Christ's resurrection is the assurance of our glorious resurrection. His absence _here_ signifies His presence with God, that sin is atoned, and that we are redeemed. Because of His absence _here_, He is now present in our hearts, and He dwells in us and we in Him.

**THE CHURCH'S ONE FOUNDATION**

The Church's one foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord;
She is His new creation
By water and the word;
From Heaven He came and sought her
To be His holy bride;
With His own blood He bought her,
And for her life He died.

Elect from every nation,
Yet one o'er all the earth,
Her charter of salvation,
One Lord, one faith, one birth;
One holy name she blesses,
Partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses,
With every grace endued.
It has been said by Christ, and afterwards by His apostles, that false prophets would arise and would deceive many, that is, that many would follow them. One of these great false prophets was Mohammed, he was indeed the great prophet of the lie.

Mohammed was born about 569, in Mecca, Arabia. In early childhood he already showed that he possessed a keen mind and at an early date showed a religious bent of mind. At the age of 13 he visited the bazaars of Damascus where he came into contact with the various streams of religion which at that time criss-crossed through Eurasia. He despised polytheism (the worship of many gods) and desired a “religion” which had but one god instead of many. And no doubt, his active mind was much attracted to this subject.

During the fast of Ramadan, Mohammed is supposed to have spent a few weeks in a cave near Mecca for religious exercises. And here he is supposed to have seen a vision which from that moment on fired his mind to fanatical excesses. The angel Gabriel is supposed to have appeared to him and to have said to him, “There is but one God and Mohammed is his prophet”. Notice, by the way, that as true as the first part of the quotation is, so false is the last part. A mixture of truth and lie—ever antichrist’s most powerful weapon.

Mohammed now turned to the world as her great prophet. Moses and Jesus were great prophets, but Mohammed was the greatest of them all. He alone would and could bring them the knowledge of God (but, indeed, their god was Allah), so he pretended. After much labor he managed to convert his wife. At the end of three years of oratory and persuasion he had won but forty converts. Besides, the “guardians of the national idols” would not allow a one-god system. Persecution developed, and the fanatical prophet had to flee to Medina (the Hegira). Here, however, he was received as an accredited messenger from heaven. Mohammed was gaining success.

But thirsty for more success than oratory and persuasion could produce, he turned to the sword and decided to spread the faith by means of war. Early he had incorporated into the Koran (their man-made bible) that to whomever died on the battle-field, fighting for Mohammed, heaven’s doors would open wide. Yes, and in proportion to the number of ‘enemies’
the mohammedan soldier killed, his joy in heaven would increase.

Spurred on by such wicked and preposterous ideas, the armies of Mohammed soon took to the field, bent now on forcing the faith upon all nations and peoples, baptising them in their own blood if indeed they did not accept the new religion, otherwise baptising them in the name of the great Allah and his prophet.

In the meantime Mohammed died, but others arose to lead the inflamed armies. With the inverted half-moon on their banners, riding on Arabian steeds to speed them on, the Moslem hordes pressed first into Syria (which at one time was the center of Christianity). Nothing could hold them. Damascus fell. the walls of Jerusalem toppled. Antioch's power crumbled under their onslaughts and in a short time the hordes overran Mesopotamia, leaving behind them a crippled if not paralyzed Christianity.

From there the success-mad armies swept on into Persia, they soon conquered the religion of Zoroaster and sacked the Persian empire. Next their war steeds carried them over central Asia, headed now for another citadel of ancient religion, Egypt. After a year of offense and assault Alexandria fell and the mighty Egypt toppled with her. In due time Carthage wasrazed and North Africa succumbed to the emblem of the inverted moon.

They then turned to Constantinople. But here they failed most miserably. They turned again to the west. Thru treachery Spain fell into Moslem hands. Now the way was open for a direct attack upon the mainland of Europe and with that an attack upon Christianity in its new house. With the one tip of the inverted moon on the Gibraltar, the other touching the Bosphorus, they sought now to round its arch and overspread all Europe.

Northward they went, toward what is now Germany, France, Netherlands and finally England.

On their way through France they met the army of the Franks (Germans) under the leadership of Charles Martel. In a pitched battle they met at Tours and here the Moslem army was not only defeated but routed and was sent back to confinement on the shores of the Mediterranean. This marked the end of the Moslem march.

Almost the Dragon, the Beast and the False Prophet had destroyed the Woman fleeing in the desert, but God keeps watch. So far could the Moslem danger go and no further. His Moslem armies had done His bidding, and as an ax which has done its work, were cast away. But God's Church was kept safe. None can destroy her.

Eleven centuries have passed—it is still His Church, beloved in His Son, and He is the same God.
What Is Light?

It is very difficult to say what light is. According to a discarded theory it consists of the actual distribution of particles in every direction by the heavenly luminaries. Perhaps it consists of vibrations or ether waves. But we may say something about light: a. It is movement. Light travels at the rate of 186,000 miles per second. b. It is closely related to heat. c. It is the indispensable condition for all life. In absolute darkness, which would probably also be absolute zero, no life would be possible. In view of this we can understand why light was created first. d. It conditions all knowledge.

The Bible speaks of: a. Physical light, i.e. the light that was created on the first day. b. Of the light of the body, the eye, i.e. the sensation of light and the power to perceive the light and the whole visible world, the image of which is carried to our consciousness thru the eye. Matt. 6:22. c. Of “natural” or mental light, or the power to interpret the visible world and all our experience, the natural understanding even of God and of the difference between good and evil. John 9:41. Of this natural light man still has a remnant. See Canons III, IV, d. d. Of spiritual light, the true knowledge of
God, the knowledge of love; righteousness, holiness, in which one must walk to have fellowship with God. In this respect the natural man is wholly darkness. This light is only in Christ Jesus. It is the light of eternal life. John 8:12; 17:3; I John 1:7, etc.

Was the Light of the First Creation Day concentrated in some Center?

Yes, it is most probable that the light from the very first day of creation was concentrated in some center and not diffused through the universe. It is certain that from the first day there was the succession of day and night, of light and darkness. This means that the light must have radiated from some center, or God must have destroyed the light each evening of the first three days. This last is, however, very improbable, since God does not destroy the work He has once created. And, therefore, though it is, of course, very difficult for us to form any conception of the unfinished world of the first day, the change of day and night seems to indicate that the light was concentrated in some center.

We may establish in general that there certainly was motion in creation on and since the first day, for it was created with the light. But if it is correct that the light of the first day shone from some center, there must also have been the rotation of the earth in order to cause day and night.

It is striking that with respect to the creation of light we read “And God saw the light, that it was good”, while in all other instances we simply read: “And God saw that it was good”. God saw the light. Light must reflect on some object and return to the eye in order to be seen. The very fact, therefore, that God saw the light was proof that it served its purpose, and that, therefore, it was good.

What was Created on the fourth day?

On the fourth day God created: 1. “Lights in the firmament of heaven.” Whether the bodies themselves of the heavenly luminaries were also created on the fourth day, the text does not state. Yet it would seem most natural to assume that this is implied. If this is correct, then also the present movement of the sun, moon and stars with relation to the earth must have been created on the 4th day. 2. More specifically it is stated that God made: a. The two great lights, the greater (the sun) and the lesser (the moon). b. And the starts.

Are the heavenly Luminaries lights in themselves?
BEACON LIGHTS

It is evident that the heavenly luminaries are not lights in themselves but lightbearers. This is true not only of those lights that merely reflect the light of the sun, but also of the sun itself. This is evident from the fact that the light itself was created on the first day, so that it is an independent creation. On the fourth day the light of the first day was concentrated in some centers and reflected by others.

Comets, Sun and Stars.

Comets. The name means “long haired”. They are the pilgrims of the firmament, approach our sun, turn around it, then fly away into space again at a great speed. They are huge and very light bodies, and have gaseous tails millions of miles long. green, red, golden yellow or white.

The Sun is said to be 1,400,000 times the size of the earth, is enveloped by a light-ocean of molten metal. Sunspots are openings in this molten lava according to some. The power coming from the sun through its heat to our earth is said to be 217,316,000,000,000 horse-power.

That it is calculated by astronomers that the nearest star (outside of our solar system, and therefore, not including the planets) is about 25,000,000 miles distant from us. This gives a new meaning to such expressions in Scripture as: “For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.” Ps. 103:11.

That the Bible often speaks of stars in a figurative sense. In Job 38:7 the “morning stars” are most probably the angels. The seven stars are the seven angels of the churches (ministers). Rev. 1:20. The Saviour is called: “the star out of Jacob”. Num. 24:17; “the bright and morning star” Rev. 22:16. 2 Peter 1:19 speaks of “the morning star arising in our hearts”.

Scripture speaks of different kinds of stars. It mentions “falling stars”. Falling stars as we often see them are meteors, small bodies flying through space and drawn into our atmosphere. As they come into contact with our atmosphere they are lit up.

It mentions different constellations: Pleiades (the seven stars, “the seven sisters”, even though only six are visible to the naked eye). Arcturus, the Great Bear, or Plow, and Orion “with its flaming band.” Job 9:9; 38:31, 32; Amos 5:8; “Stars and constellations”, Isa. 13:10. “Mazzaroth” Job 38:32, same name occurs in II Kings 23:5, but there it is translated “planets”. Perhaps means constellations. Jude 13 speaks of “wandering stars” (figuratively, probably with reference to the comets).
The Sovereignty of God

We hear it said so often that God is a sovereign God; that God's sovereign counsel contains the destiny of all creatures: that the grace of God is sovereign elective grace. Yet, do we realize just what the word "sovereign" implies? Do we realize the extent of God's sovereignty? What is meant by God's sovereign counsel and His sovereign grace?

Before the world existed and started upon its course in the universe, before the sun even existed or any universe was conceived, God was—the Independent Being, Self-Existent and Self-Sufficient. He was dependent upon no creature, universe, world, nature, nor any thing for His existence. But He, of Himself, counselled and planned a universe and a world over which He would be absolute sovereign; and over which He could rule solely according to His good pleasure. Creatures who would bear His image as well as creatures who would be but dumb beasts, without rationality or soul, would be placed in a most beautiful creation reflecting the glory of its Creator—all this was worked out in the counsel of God before He created one iota of this universe in which we now live.

Then, the Word was spoken—and the creation appeared! God as omnipotent and omnipresent displayed His sovereign power in all of His creation, ruling and guiding the lives of all its organisms. Every little movement of every little creature is controlled by its sovereign Ruler, God.

This power and right of God whereby He rules and governs and disposes of all things and all creatures according to His own good pleasure, is the sovereignty of God. It can easily be seen by what right God assumes this power; for, He is the Supreme One, He has infinite superiority over anything that exists because He created it. "Out of nothingness Created He us" and now He sustains us in His providence for His own glory and good pleasure. We are entirely dependent upon Him. We are even dependent upon God's other creatures and His nature around us. God is independent, self-existent, and self-sufficient. It is out of this fact that God's sovereignty arises.

The term "sovereignty" implies "subordination". If a king is called a sovereign over a country, all his subjects are subordinate to him, and he exercises his power over them. Now what is subordinate to God's sovereignty? Of course, all things that He is ruler over, and that means all things that ever did exist and all that ever will exist, for He is creator of them all. So
too, we, His creatures, are in sub-

ordination to His will. It is out of 

this that the doctrine of predesti-

nation follows. There are many, 

many people who assert that it is 

terribly unjust of God to first 

create people and then finally to 

send them to Hell for not obeying 

Him; especially, they say, after He 

willed in His eternal sovereign will 

that we should sin and thus disobey 

Him. However, God is Sovereign 

and can do with His creatures 

whatever He pleases. A child who 

has carved a piece of wood into the 

shape of a ship and can claim that 

piece of wood as his own, can do 

with that ship whatever he wants 

to. He may throw that ship into 

the furnace or he may keep that 

same ship up in his room to be 

constantly by him. Again, if he 

carved two pieces of wood into 

ships, he may save the one and de-

stroy the other, or he may be en-

tirely justified if he destroys both 

of them. In a similar manner, God 

may dispose of His creations in 

any way that pleases Him. If He 

wished to exterminate the whole 

of His creation, every creature in 

it, and then make an entirely new 

creation. He would be entirely 

justified.

But God willed to bestow His 

sovereign grace upon some of His 

creatures and to save them from 

the destruction which is in store 

for others. This sovereign grace, 

as is indicated by its name, is be-
stowed only upon those whom God 

chooses. For no reason at all, hu-

manly speaking, God may choose 

to save one person and reject his 

brother. It is absolutely no single 

merit of our own that gains for 

us eternal life, but it is the fault 

of the rejected person when he is 

cast into eternal hell. For God 
as a sovereign God demands of us 

that we as His subjects and His 
creatures obey His commandments. 

Inasmuch as none are able to do 

so we all merit damnation. But 
as we have seen, God bestows His 

sovereign elective grace upon a 

few people (in comparison with all 

the creatures that ever lived and 
ever will live) whom He calls His 

children. In this respect election 

and reprobation are acts of God’s 

sovereignty.

The denial of God’s absolute sov-

ereignty is easily and often alleged 
especially by theologians today. 

Particularly in the matter of sal-

vation, many hold that man’s will 

plays a small part. If this were 

so, God would not be sovereign 

absolutely, which is the same as 

the denial of God. If God were not 

sovereign, he would not be God. 
The two terms are synonymous 
in their connotation. Also in every-
day life we often unconsciously de-

ny the absolute sovereignty of our 

God. When, for instance we speak 
of “a lucky escape” or “a lucky 
move”, we do not recognize the 

sovereign hand of God behind that 

“move” or “escape”.

—Contributed.
The Story

The parable speaks of a father who had two sons. The father ordered his sons to labor in the vineyard, “Go work today in my vineyard”. When he said this to the first son, the son rudely and emphatically said, “I will not”. However, afterward he was sorry for his refusal, and went to work. When the father came to the second son, this son said, “I go, sir”. His words were very obedient; and his use of the word “sir” betokened a language of respect and submission. But, although his words were very humble and obedient, his actions were the reverse, for he did not go to the work. The implication is that he did not repent of this hypocrisy.

The Meaning.

Christ’s purpose in telling this parable is evident from the explanation Jesus Himself gave. Vss. 31, 32, “Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that we might believe him.”

According to vss. 23-27, the chief priests and elders had come to Jesus with the question, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? Seemingly they seriously sought light in regard to Jesus’ authority (right) to cleanse the temple. Seemingly these rulers seek light; in actuality their purpose is to ensnare Christ. Jesus knows the heart and wishing to expose that they have no serious interest in their own question, counters with a question concerning John’s baptism. He asks them to declare whether John’s baptism was from
heaven, or of men. The rulers do not want to answer the question, and they do not: not because they cannot, but because either way they answer it they will get themselves into trouble. After all, their chief object is not truth and righteousness but self-maintenance. Utility guides them, although outwardly they seem very pious and sincere. Consequently they reply to Jesus' question with the wicked statement that they did not know whence John's baptism was. This was of course a lie; they did not want to express their true opinion.

To further expose the wickedness of these outwardly pious people Jesus told the parable and applied it when He said, "Verily, I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you".

The son that said, "I go, sir" but went not represents these rulers and priests, and all those that piously talk, but in their heart care not about God and His law. They are those who kill the prophets under the guise of doing it for God's sake. They talk about God's commandments, and teach the people to be very strict, but they themselves will not put out a finger to move the burdens they place on others. They want to appear pious before men, but in the meantime they rob the widows and orphans. They claim to obey God's law, but in actuality refuse to do it. They rejected John's preaching, and they reject the Christ.

The son that said, "I will not", but afterward repented and went, represents the publicans and harlots. The latter openly broke with all God's law, openly rejected it, openly lived their own lives of sin, and made no claim of piety. But when John came, they repented; they believed and did God's will, bringing forth fruits worthy of repentance.

Permanent Significance.

The two sons and their attitude toward their father's command also has permanent significance for the church today. There are those that make confession, attend the Lord's Supper, and wish to maintain their names on the rolls of the church, and who thereby say "I go, sir", but in actuality their yes is a veiled no. They do not wish to do God's will, they do not bring forth fruits of repentance. There are others who for a time in open defiance against God and heaven say "I will not", but who afterward repented and do God's will, bringing forth fruits of repentance. The latter go into the kingdom rather than the former.

As Christians our yes of confession must not be a veiled no, but an actual yes, a yes evident in our entire attitude and walk.

QUESTIONS:—In what sense does God command men to "Go work today in my vineyard?" May one answer yes to the
third question of the Baptism Form if he does not intend to send his children to the Christian School? Who are meant by the publicans?

Outline XXVI

THE WICKED HUSBANDMEN

2nd Week of April

For the parable read Lk. 20:9-19. The parable also appears in Matt. 21:33-45, ad in Mark 12:1-12.

The Story.

The parable speaks of a lord and his vineyard. The lord rented out his vineyard to husbandmen on shares, and then himself went to a far country. At the harvest season he sent a servant to receive his share of the fruit, but the husbandmen maltreated him and refused to give him the lord’s due. Again and again the lord sent servants, but each one was maltreated and sent away empty. Some of the servants were beaten, some stoned, some killed. At last the lord said, “I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him.” But the husbandmen said, “This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours”. So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. According to Matt. 21:40, Jesus at this point of the parable asked his audience, “When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto these husbandmen?” To this the audience answered, “He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.” (Matt. 21:41)

The Meaning.

The vineyard is the kingdom of God (Matt. 21:43), and the owner is the Triune God. The husbandmen to whom the vineyard is let represent the Jewish nation as a whole (Matt. 21:43), and especially the rulers (Matt. 21:45; Lk. 20:19). The servants sent to collect the rent represent the prophets God sent to Israel calling them to bear fruit of righteousness to the glory of God. Israel maltreated them and killed them, refusing to give heed to God’s messengers and going on in their wickedness and sin. The son and heir, of course, is the Christ, the Son of God in the flesh. Him Israel rejected and crucified, as the climax of all their wickedness. Thus they were ripe for God’s judgment, and God took away the kingdom from them and gave it to a nation that would bear fruit. Israel’s rejection is the way in which the kingdom is given to the Gentiles.

Three Important Matters.

There are three important points to be noted in connection with this parable.

First of all, undoubtedly, the parable implies that there is only one vineyard, one kingdom, which is taken from the Jews and given to others. By implication the error
of Premillenialism, according to which there are two peoples essentially distinct, two gifts (kingdom for the Jews and church for the Gentiles), is condemned. It is the same kingdom which is taken from the Jew that is given to the Gentiles. Scripture consistently teaches: one fold as there is one Shepherd, one olive-tree, one kingdom and one church.

Secondly, the parable teaches that the kingdom shall certainly be taken away from Israel as a nation, and that finally, because the vineyard is given to others. Never do the Jews, as a nation, receive it again.

Thirdly, the parable also makes plain that in the way of the wickedness of the husbandmen God lays the cornerstone. The Christ is rejected and crucified by sinful men, but God fulfills His purpose and thereby lays the headstone. Cf. Lk. 20:17, 18.

QUESTIONS:—What is the Premillenial view of the Jews and Gentiles of the kingdom and the church, and how does the parable condemn this view? Mention historical instances in which prophets were mistreated and even killed. Why should Christ be called the cornerstone? Does the parable allow room for an earthly restoration of the Jews as a nation? Does the fact that the kingdom was taken from the Jews as a nation imply that all Jews stand outside the kingdom in the New Dispensation? How do you interpret Lk. 20:18? What permanent practical value does this parable have for the church of the present day?

Outline XXVII

THE WEDDING FEAST

3rd Week of April

Read the parable as it is told in Matt. 22:1-14.

It should be borne in mind that this parable belongs with, and immediately followed upon, the previous two: the two sons and the wicked husbandmen. The parable of the two sons stresses that the publicans and sinners enter the kingdom in preference to the chief priests and elders. The wicked husbandmen emphasizes that the kingdom would be taken from the Jews and given to a people that brought forth fruit. The parable of the wedding feast (or the marriage of the king's son, as it may perhaps better be called) once more emphasizes that the kingdom would be taken from the Jews and given to the Gentiles, that the latter will favorably respond to the calling of God, and further that it is absolutely necessary to have the garment of righteousness to enter the kingdom.

The Call to the Feast.

The parable begins by stating that the kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son. He then sent forth servants to call them that were bidden, but they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them
which are bidden, Behold, I have
pre pared my dinner: my oxen and
my fatlings are killed, and all
things are ready: come unto the
marriage. But they all made light
of it, each went his own way, and
mistreated the servants sent to call
them, and even slew them. The
king was angry, and he sent forth
his armies and destroyed the mur-
derers and burned their city.

The marriage feast represents
as more frequently in Scripture
the salvation God has prepared in
Christ. Those called who refuse to
come to the feast are the Jews,
whose were the covenants and the
promises. The external call of
God as it came to them (and God
was realizing his salvation) they
despised. Each went his own way,
and when the supper was ready re-
fused to come. We should note
that the king was angry when the
call was refused and his messe-
gers (the prophets) were mal-
treated and killed, and sent his
armies to destroy the wicked men.
The external call is not an offer
which man is free to accept or to
reject, but a command which
brooks no refusal. To refuse the
king’s command is a crime which
must be punished. Undoubtedly,
the judgment executed by the king
is the judgment God executed upon
the Israeltish nation as it especi-
ally came upon them in the year
70 A.D., when the Roman armies
besieged Jerusalem and destroyed
it. When Israel clearly and defi-
nitely rejected the Christ and the
call to repent even after Pentecost,
its sin was filled and its place
ready to be taken away, as it was
in the year 70 A.D. Since that
day the temple has never been re-
built, and the Jewish nation’s place
has been taken away.

The Jews who rejected the call
of God clearly revealed themselves
unworthy of the feast to which
they were bidden.

According to vss. 9 and 10 the
servants were sent into the high-
ways to bid as many as they should
find. Undoubtedly, those in the
highways are the Gentiles. They
were gathered, so that there were
gathered in both bad and good.
Christ very likely here prophecies
of the ingathering of the Gentiles,
imitating however that in the
New Testament not only the truly
repentant will find a place in the
church but also “the bad”. The
man without a wedding garment
belongs to the latter.

QUESTIONS:—Why are the blessings
of salvation properly compared to a
wedding-feast? Does the fact that some
were bidden who did not come prove
that God earnestly willing the salvation
of all men? If not, prove your point.
In what sense were those that were bid-
den but refused to come not worthy?
Can any man be worthy; if so, in what
sense?

The Wedding Garment.

Jesus impresses the seriousness
of the call to the wedding-feast
still more when he tells of a man who entered the wedding chamber without a wedding garment. Authorities say that Oriental kings not only ordered those invited to come to their weddings but also supplied the wedding apparel for the guests. Not to have on such a wedding garment therefore implied refusal of the garments supplied by the king. It was an insinuation that one’s own garment was good enough at the king’s feast. At any rate when the king here reprimands the man who was at the wedding without the proper garment, the man was speechless. He was without excuse, guilty, and worthy to be cast out.

The wedding garment can only be the righteousness of Christ, the perfect righteousness without which none can stand in the presence of the Lord. The wicked ones that did not heed the command to come but went their own way were “not worthy”. But the fact that the others heeded the external call does not imply that they were in themselves worthy. Only the worthiness of Christ, the righteousness of the Saviour, gives us the right to enter into the kingdom. It is not enough to merely say yes to God’s call, one must actually possess the wedding garment.

The parable does not mean to teach that in the day of judgment there will be some who actually enter into the final realization of the blessedness of God’s people and are then cast out. Not at all, it does imply that there are some in the church visible who superficially seem to heed the call, but inwardly do not possess and do not care to put on the garment of righteousness.

Many Called: Few Chosen.

We should not fail to note the apparently strange conclusion of the parable, “For many are called, but few are chosen.” (vs. 14)

The calling referred to is, of course, the external call. This call is not a well meaning offer of salvation as though God earnestly wills the salvation of all to whom it comes, for “few are chosen”. It is, however, a demand and command which God has a right to make on every sinner, since no man has the right to continue in wickedness and sin. As far as the wicked that reject it are concerned, the response to the call brings out the wickedness of sin. The Jews that failed to enter the kingdom did so in the way of their own disobedience and sin. Also the man who lacked a wedding garment perishes on account of his sin. All this does not take away the fact that the deepest cause of the rejection of the gospel as well as of its acceptance, is the sovereign predestination of God.

This appendage brings out that although many despise and reject the gospel, God’s sovereign elective purposes do not fail. God reaches
His purpose, the chosen ones are saved. And their salvation finds its deepest cause in the sovereign grace of God—lest any man should glory.

QUESTIONS:—What is the wedding garment? Was the king unduly harsh with the man who appeared without a wedding garment? Can we know whether we possess the wedding garment? Why are many called that are not chosen? In what sense does God call them? Prove from vs. 14 that although many reject the external calling, God's purposes do not fail.

Outline XXVIII
THE TEN VIRGINS
4th Week of April

For the parable read Matt. 25: 1-13. To conserve space, and because the parable is so well-known, we shall not repeat the story itself. However, by all means be sure to reread it for yourself. The best part of any Bible lesson is the careful reading of the text.

In a sense the meaning of the parable of the ten virgins is very easy; in another sense most difficult.

The General Lesson.

As far the basic lesson of the story is concerned, there is not much difficulty. Expositors in general are quite well agreed about the main lesson.

The main lesson of the parable is stated by Christ in the concluding words, "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh" (vs. 13).

The "then" of vs. 1 suggests the connection between this parable and the preceding chapter. In chapter 24 the Saviour discourses on the second coming. He speaks of the judgment of Jerusalem and of the world in one breath, for the former is a type of the latter. The discourse especially concerns itself with the question of the precise time of Christ's coming. The Saviour emphasizes that the day and hour is not known, but there are signs of His coming. These signs are present in all history, but undoubtedly they will multiply just prior to Christ's return. Throughout history they are the forerunners and announcers of His impending coming, although they do not announce the precise time. The signs will speak more loudly as the second coming draws nearer, but the appearance itself shall nevertheless be unexpected and sudden. Many will go on as in the days of Noe, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage. Faithful servants should therefore take warning, and always be prepared to meet their Lord.

To illustrate and to emphasize this lesson of necessary watchfulness, the Lord spoke the parable of the ten virgins. For at the moment of Christ's coming, the kingdom of heaven shall be like
unto ten virgins, five of whom were unprepared, and five of whom were prepared. The "then" means at the time of Christ’s coming; at that moment the situation spoken of in the story will exist. Some will be prepared and waiting; others unprepared. “Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh”. Be prepared, always prepared! For those not prepared shall not enter into life eternal.

Various Elements.

The chief lesson of the parable is quite evident, and there is little difference of opinion as to it. When it comes to the various features and details of the parable there is much difference of opinion and little unanimity. Many questions arise: Why does the parable speak of virgins? What are the lamps? The vessels? The oil? Does the sleep have significance? Who are the sellers of oil, etc.? Calvin aptly remarks, “Some torment themselves in lamps, in vessels, in oil. Yet the real sum of the matter is, that active zeal for a brief period does not suffice, unless unflagging constancy be added.” There is much truth in this remark of Calvin’s.

We cannot, however, escape the problems, and should have a conception of the various features of the parable.

The Ten Virgins. To our mind the ten virgins represent the church as it historically exists in the world, especially just prior to the second coming. The five foolish virgins are church members as well as the five wise, and also seem to be looking for the coming of Christ. There are various answers to the question, Who are the five foolish virgins? The Premillenarian view of the parable is that the return of Christ spoken of is the rapture. The five foolish virgins are then those Christians who are not looking for Christ and will not be taken up into the air with Him, but will need to go through the great tribulation, after which they also shall be with Christ. Objections to this view are manifold: Scripture does not teach such a rapture separate from Christ’s final coming, the coming in the parable is final, and the exclusion from the supper is final—the foolish virgins never enter.

Over against this view we must subscribe to the view that conceives of the five wise virgins as the true believers and the five foolish as only nominal Christians. The foolish nominally belong to the church, nominally confess to be prepared; actually they are not.

The Oil.

Oil in Scripture generally represents the unction of the Spirit, Zech. 4. Some make an exception here and conceive of the oil as representing not the Spirit but
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simply preparedness. To my mind there is no need to depart from the usual meaning of oil as representing the Spirit and spiritual gifts. But the question at once arises. Did the foolish virgins ever possess the Spirit. Some insist that when you read "the lamps are gone out" this does not imply that they were once on but simply means that they were out. Of course, if that interpretation be followed, then they never possessed the Spirit in any sense. Others rightly pointing out that this interpretation is too forced, simply say that the parable teaches that one can really be a Christian at one time and later wholly turn away and fall from grace. That is, of course, plain Arminianism, which stands condemned in the light of Scripture as a whole. But how, then, can a Reformed man explain the five foolish virgins and the fact that their lamps were gone out, if the oil refers to the Spirit? I think this is well possible, in the sense in which Heb. 6:4-6 speaks of some that have tasted the good word of God and been partakers of the Spirit, and have fallen away. These foolish virgins represent such people that have heard the preaching, partaken in the sacraments, claimed to have part in Christ, and thus externally partaken in the spiritual gifts bestowed on the church, without being inwardly renewed in their hearts, and partakers of the regenerating and sanctifying grace of God.

The Sleep.

Also the sleep of the wise virgins as well as of the foolish has been a point of discussion. It cannot be denied that sleep sometimes stands for the very opposite of watchfulness in Scripture, that is has moral significance and means moral torpidity. Does the parable then mean to suggest that also the true church will have fallen asleep when Christ comes? Personally, we cannot believe it. As Noah was watching before the flood, so the elect will be faithful to the end. The sleep in the parable to our mind is a part of the drapery of the story, a necessary element to stress the lesson, but not to be spiritually interpreted as implying spiritual laxity of the true church prior to Christ's coming.

QUESTIONS:—What is the main lesson of the parable? In what sense should the church watch? Have there ever been attempts made to set the time of Christ's coming? If the church does not know when the Lord will return, does this mean that she knows nothing of the time of His coming? Why has God not revealed to us the precise time of Christ's return? Why does the parable speak of ten virgins; why of virgins? What do you take the oil to mean?

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