CHAPTER IV

THE PASTORATE IN PHILADELPHIA

Dr. J. H. A. Bomberger was called twice to the pastorate of the "Old Race Street Church," situated on Race Street below Fourth, in the City of Philadelphia. In July, 1852, it was the desire of the congregation that he assume the pastorate as the successor of the Rev. Joseph F. Berg, D.D., who entered the ministry of the Dutch Reformed Church in Philadelphia. Two influences set to work to cause Dr. Bomberger, upon reflection, to decline the call. The affairs in the Old First Church were not left in a harmonious state by Dr. Berg, and Dr. Bomberger's church in Easton, Pa., entered their unanimous and insistent opposition to his departure. So the invitation was declined. The Rev. Samuel H. Reid succeeded Dr. Berg as the regular pastor of the church, and served the charge until February 22, 1854, when he resigned on account of ill health. Whereupon Dr. Bomberger was again elected, and a committee from the Official Board waited upon him in Easton, and pressed their claims most urgently. On this occasion the committee was successful, for Dr. Bomberger accepted the call and began his pastorate September 1, 1854.

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In his letter of acceptance he gives expression to his tender feelings for those whom he is about to leave, as well as his fond hopes for the prosperity of the Kingdom in the new relationship which they together are about to assume.

"You will readily believe," he writes, "that it has cost me great inward conflict to yield to the conviction that it is the will of the Lord that I should change my sphere of labor. It involves the breaking up of the pleasant relations which have existed for the past nine years between myself and this esteemed and affectionate people, and the sundering of ties which each year seems to have been rendering more tender and strong. It is natural and proper also that I should feel reluctant to involve the interests of my present congregation, with which my own feelings have become so closely identified, in the perplexity and peril incident to a change of pastors. But as the circumstances under which your call comes to me clothe it with peculiar force, and as the present condition of my congregation here does not so strongly discourage the contemplated change, the will of the Chief Shepherd seems to be so clearly indicated that I feel constrained to acquiesce.

"This transaction is one which involves both parties in responsibilities of immense magnitude. Let it be our mutual endeavor to realize every day more deeply the weight of those responsibilities, and acquaint ourselves more fully with their nature and demands. Above all, Brethren, let me solicit your fervent prayers that if I am spared to enter upon the duties of my holy office in your midst, I may come to you filled with the Spirit and clothed with the grace of Him from whom I have received my
commission and without whose help and blessing all human efforts must prove unavailing.”

A few years later he wrote to his daughters who were visiting in Easton:

“Now I fear you will only begin to realize how pleasant a home we left in removing from Easton, and be tempted to regret the change. Certainly if I had merely consulted my own tastes and inclinations, I never would have exchanged a residence in Easton for one here. But I believe I did right in the circumstances.”

Thus it is evident that Dr. Bomberger came to Philadelphia only in response to the clear and unmistakable call of the Lord. Viewed in the light of subsequent events this proved undoubtedly true.

With his family he removed to Philadelphia in August, 1854, and located at 723 Wood Street, then one of the most refined sections of the city. Bishops Reinke and DeSchweinitz of the Moravian Church, and a number of prominent families resided in the same block and were intimates of the Bomberger family.

It was a happy day for the Old First Church when Dr. Bomberger stepped into its pulpit as pastor; a day that augured well for the future and promised to bring the old church that which it stood so greatly in need of at the time, viz., dignity, influence and renewed prestige. It meant much for the Reformed people of Philadelphia and the entire east-
ern section of our church that he who was destined to become a great prophet and leader should assume the spokesmanship in one of the denomination's most prominent pulpits. Some of Dr. Bomberger's co-laborers in the City of Philadelphia were men of national and international fame. In the Presbyterian Church were such men as the Rev. Albert Barnes, whose notes and commentaries on the Scriptures are the handbooks of preachers in many lands; the Rev. Henry A. Boardman, D.D., famous as a defender of the faith; the Rev. W. W. Barr, a Scotchman with all the characteristics of the preachers of his fatherland raised to the nth power; and the Rev. John Chambers, D.D., one of the most powerful and widely known preachers of his time, and a most intimate associate of Dr. Bomberger. In the Protestant Episcopal Church were men like America's own beloved Phillips Brooks, and the Rev. Dudley A. Tyng. The Reformed churches, with the exception of the Church of the Apostles, on Franklin Street above Green, which later disbanded, were all German. Adolph Rohn was the pastor at Salem Church; Frederick A. Fridell at Bethlehem, and Charles Bonekemper at Zion's Church. The Rev. Joseph A. Seiss, D.D., occupied the pulpit of St. John's Lutheran Church, one block from the First Church. The Rev. Joseph F. Berg, D.D., was pastor of the Second Dutch Reformed Church. In this distinguished company of co-laborers Dr. Bomberger found himself, and was soon to share honors with
them. We are, however, reluctant to record that because of a lack of confidence in, and general suspicion of, the Reformed Church as a denomination in that particular period, it was a hard and trying road over which the church had to journey before it arrived at that place where it was accorded equal respect and was received with kindly fraternal regard into the fellowship of churches.

The pastor of First Church assumed a task that called forth all the mental acumen, spiritual vigor and large-heartedness that were native to the great man called to the charge. In his anniversary sermon on, "Five Years at the Old Race Street Church," preached on January 8, 1860, Dr. Bomberger took occasion to remind his people rather carefully and judiciously of the peculiar difficulties which beset the congregation before he came. "I will endeavor," he said, "to combine kindness with frankness in making this statement. And this is the more easy to do as I am consciously free from all bitterness of feeling which the great wrongs inflicted at the time in question may have excited. For, whatever I may have been made to suffer individually was so insignificant in itself, and especially in comparison with the injustice which I felt was done to our church and her position, that it was not deserving of one day's notice." In order that we may understand the situation referred to in the paragraph just quoted it is necessary for us to look briefly into some events that took place in the pastorate of one of Dr. Bomberger's
predecessors. The Rev. Joseph F. Berg, D.D. was called from his professorship in Marshall College, Mercersburg, Pa., to become the pastor of First Church in 1837, and remained until 1852. He was a wonderfully gifted man, and his efforts were blessed by the Divine Spirit from the very beginning of his pastorate in Philadelphia. Under his leadership the affairs of the congregation prospered beyond the fondest expectations of the people. But Dr. Berg was, if anything, an intense and ardent Protestant. He is known to have accepted the challenge of infidels to public debate, and not only did he vanquish his opponents, but in several cases subsequently converted them to the Christian faith. He also delivered a series of lectures in opposition to Roman Catholicism which drew vast crowds of auditors. It is hardly to be wondered at, therefore, that a man of Dr. Berg's views and temperament should become involved in a controversy with Dr. John W. Nevin, of Mercersburg, on the doctrinal issues underlying the subject of liturgical worship. The time came when Dr. Berg believed that the German Reformed Church was on the road to Rome, and found it no longer compatible with his own theological views to remain in that church. He resigned the pastorate of the First Church to accept a call from the Second Dutch Reformed Church of Philadelphia, in March, 1852. Some there were who were so greatly attached to Dr. Berg that they accompanied him into his new parish. Not only was the congregation as
such affected, but the Sunday School as well, which was almost depleted of both scholars and teachers. About twenty scholars remained in the school, and only three teachers continued at their post. Indications pointed strongly to the fact that Dr. Berg encouraged this exodus from the old church, which caused the Official Board to pass an action in April of that year severely rebuking the course of their former pastor.

The Rev. Samuel H. Reid followed Dr. Berg with a brief pastorate of but eighteen months, and though his ministry was energetic and his congregation revived somewhat, his labors were interrupted by ill health.

The Berg affair had called the attention of all the Christian forces of the city not only to the Old Race Street Church and her vicissitudes, but also to the great controversy about to engage the denomination itself. As is usually the case in such matters, those who viewed the situation from the outside received a wholly unjustifiable and prejudicial impression. Grave suspicions as to the fidelity and orthodoxy of the German Reformed Church were cherished by people generally. When a certain pastor recommended "The Imitation of Christ," by Thos. A’Kempis, as an excellent book for devotional reading, this supposed evidence of instability was caught up by an ignorant reporter of one of the city papers, and cited as another indication of the Romanizing tendencies of the German Reformed
Church. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church and the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church refused to continue fraternal relations with the German Reformed.

The effect of such grossly exaggerated and entirely unwarranted opinions upon the mind of the Christian public may well be imagined. For a time the Old Race Street congregation felt the full force of ecclesiastical ostracism. When in 1860 Dr. Bomberger recited these events he stated that the congregation stood alone, subject to mistrust and aversion. "There was none who cared to defend us against evil speaking or to silence the tongue of defamation. Happily for us, not a single defection from our ministerial ranks to Rome has occurred during all this period of enforced obloquy." Unhappily for the church and Dr. Bomberger they were soon forced to witness a change in regard to this latter statement.

In addition to these trials which had come upon the church there was another serious handicap to the work of the Reformed Church in Philadelphia, due principally to the sin of omission. There was little or no attempt on the part of the denomination toward church extension in the city. The Reformed Church lost ground and suffered materially from this neglect of our fathers. Other denominations extended their boundaries on all sides so that their progress kept pace with the growth of the city. This condition, as Dr. Bomberger himself demon-
strated later, was brought about by a lack of an enterprising missionary spirit on the part of the clergy, rather than indifference in the rank and file of the people themselves. When, therefore, Dr. Bomberger took up the burden, he was brought face to face with a serious condition of affairs. The church was reduced numerically, so that but a small band of worshippers numbering about one hundred and twenty souls remained. The Sunday School existed on the tiniest thread of life. Prejudices had been awakened in the community against the Reformed Church, and the church had lost time and ground by its proverbial conservatism and lack of missionary enterprise.

Dr. Bomberger's introductory sermon was a masterly discourse setting forth the privileges and obligations of the Christian ministry, and in every sense of the word was the key to his future course in his new field of labor. It was afterward, in 1856, with slight modification, preached before the Alumni Association of the Theological Seminary. This sermon is extremely significant and suggestive for our own day, and is an excellent example of the unique exegetical ability and practical adaptability of all the preacher's sermons. His topic was, "Our Position," text, I Thess. 3:4, "But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God which trieth our hearts."

The passage presents four distinct and yet inti-
mately connected points for consideration:

I. "The authority to preach the gospel is derived from God. This is one of the fundamental principles of the Christian Church. As the gospel itself is of Divine origin, and the Church, its great depository and channel, is a Divine foundation, so all the proper arrangements and offices of the Church must be according to Divine direction and appointment. We must, therefore, reject as a profane error the opinion that any man is at full liberty, upon his own authority, to assume the functions of the gospel ministry who may set his fancy that way; and that other profane error that the gospel ministry is a mere profession, to be successively supplied precisely as other professions are filled. What can sustain a minister of the gospel, when he is bowed down in spirit under the oppressive responsibilities of his office, more powerfully than the conviction that he did not run after the office, but that the office laid hands on him, and by a moral impressment constrained him to enter the service,—joined to the assurance that He, who thus laid him under necessity to preach the gospel, will not fail to furnish all needful grace for the discharge of the responsibilities imposed upon him? It is not easy to conceive how a reflecting and conscientious man having numerous other openings for pious service before him, should volunteer to assume the responsibilities of the gospel ministry excepting under the influence of an irresistible conviction of duty combined with a direct call of God through His Church.

II. "The great business of the gospel ministry is to guard and promote the interests of the Church. All selfish considerations must yield to the profound concern for the success of the Redeemer’s Kingdom.
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and the salvation of souls committed to his care. It may require untiring effort, watchfulness, and prayer, to keep down pride and covetousness and ambition. We must notice one peril against which, in these days, the gospel minister needs to exercise special caution. I mean, of course, that of mistaking and substituting his own fancies, or the plausible and popular opinions of the age, for the gospel. A chief and almost exclusive part of the duty of the ministry of our day has come to consist in preaching, and in such preaching as will entertain audiences whose tastes have not been formed in the school of Calvary. Who can tell how many vain speculations have been and are now put forth in the name of Christ, and baptized with the sacred cognomen, Bible Christianity? But we are put in trust with the gospel, and must deliver messages which it puts upon our lips, and administer the ordinances which it commits to our hands. It is the gospel in which we are to glory, not in our fine-spun theories of theology and piety. It is the gospel which is the power of God unto salvation, not human wit and eloquence.

III. “In doing this the gospel minister must remember that his great aim should be not to please men, but God. Of course those to whom he may be sent will desire to be pleased by one who occupies so influential a position, and whose opinion therefore may be turned to such capital account. It is easy to perceive into how strong a temptation, for the minister of the gospel, Satan and a weak heart may convert circumstances like these. Let true doctrine be preached whether it secure favor or draw down displeasure and reproach upon our heads. Let true worship be maintained, and the ordinances of Christ’s appointment be advocated and administered in His own sense of them, whether men will honor
or despise them. We are not responsible for the character of the gospel doctrines or the nature of gospel institutions, nor for effects, but merely for their sincere defense and faithful administration.

IV. "Finally in discharge of our ministerial office we must be true to those principles to which we pledged fidelity when we assumed its duties. Our assumption of office implied a declaration of our faith in that form of Christianity which characterizes the Evangelical Protestant Church, and a pledge to devote our energies to its prosperity. When we avow ourselves to be fully and cordially committed to Protestantism we mean, of course, old-fashioned, genuine, well-tried Protestantism as that which may be distinctly ascertained from the acknowledged standards and symbolical books of the Evangelical Protestant Church. No man has a right to require us to adopt his private misconceptions and perversions of the truth. This is also implied in our particular position as ministers, that we are sincerely attached to the German Reformed Church, and to those peculiarities which distinguish her from other branches of the Evangelical Catholic Church. It is not to a mere name that we cling, but to the principles of which the name is an index. We cannot be fairly charged with bigotry in doing this. The love of home does not exclude sympathy with those who live outside the home circle, but is the deepest root and purest fountain of such sympathy. No man can love others whose heart is a stranger to the beatings of filial affection. We are not German Presbyterians, as we are sometimes called. There would be far more propriety in the Presbyterian Church calling itself English Reformed. God has assigned to us our particular position, and we have a right to hold it, subject only to His Will. If others, weary of the
beaten track, prefer trying new paths let them do so, but we claim the privilege of going forward in the old line of march. And surely for this we should not be reviled as innovators. It is better to be called by hard names than to deserve them. If we only take care to be right, and then do right, and thus have our ways, please the Lord, He will not only heal all estrangements, but make even our enemies to be at peace with us."

This sermon, augmented by the fine personality of the preacher, his unalterable conviction, and his characteristic fearlessness, gave evidence to the people of the "Old Race Street Church" that a new day was dawning for them and their beloved Zion, and that their leader was a true prophet of God. These words have no strange sound in our ears today. They are apropos to our time. All that they promised and more was to find fulfillment in the fifteen years to follow.

The church building was the third structure erected in the history of the congregation. It was a plain rectangular building, erected in 1837. The auditorium on the second floor had sittings for almost a thousand persons. The Sunday School, which was organized in 1806, held its sessions in well-equipped quarters on the first floor.

Dr. Bomberger set about in a determined, quiet way to build up the broken walls of Zion. A canvass of the neighborhood was made, and a lively interest in all departments of the work was inspired. His unique ability as a preacher soon attracted great
numbers to the house of God, and frequently the large auditorium was filled with worshippers. The Sunday School, with its twenty scholars and three teachers, took on new life. Men and women of ability and the mind to work came to the support of the pastor, and their efforts soon brought great changes to pass.

An interesting feature of parish work was the parochial school maintained in connection with the church. This was a small endowed school the sessions of which were held in a large room adjoining the Sunday School rooms. Sufficient funds had been set apart from time to time in the form of an endowment permitting the payment of the salary of the teacher and the supply of the pupils with books, pencils, pens, paper and other necessary articles for school work free of charge. Since our efficient public school system had not yet been inaugurated, many children took advantage of the opportunity offered from year to year. The school was established and conducted solely for the benefit of the children of the congregation. All the children of parents who were regular pew-holders in the church were eligible for admittance. The School Regulations were drawn up by the Rev. John Conrad Steiner in 1760.

Concerning the teacher, it is required that, "he must be qualified in reading, writing, arithmetic and singing. He must be one who takes a lively interest in, and helps to build up the Christian Church, a lover of the Word of God and diligent in
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its use among the children. He must set a good example before the children and avoid exhibitions of anger. He is not to show partiality among the children, but he must receive them lovingly and without distinction. He must be judicious, and adapt himself to the various dispositions and gifts of the children. He must exercise patience, love and gentleness, that he may win their hearts and work with blessing among them. He shall have power to correct and punish children, though with moderation and forbearance, without animosity, passion or anger. He shall at all times open and close his school with a hearty prayer to God for His grace and blessing. He shall train the children to pray, and exhort them to continue in the practice. If time will permit he should sing with them and instruct them in the art of singing. All who are able to do so should learn the catechism by heart, and this shall be strictly followed until they are able to recite all the questions and answers. In the absence of the minister, or in case of sickness or inability to preach, the schoolmaster will read some verses of scripture, etc., to the edification of the congregation.”

The first yearly salary paid the schoolmaster amounted to £8.

This school became a very unique feature of the church’s life, and while no more than forty pupils were enrolled at any one time, nevertheless, men and women who afterwards became the pillars of the church received their early instruction in the parochial school. In 1865 the pastor’s oldest daughter, Miss Mary A. Bomberger, became the teacher, at a salary of $360 a year.
From time to time the sermons of Dr. Bomberger made such a profound impression and created such a lively interest that a demand was made for their publication in permanent form. This was notably true of his introductory sermon, of his sermon on "The Atlantic Telegraph and Its Religious Aspects," preached in 1858, of his anniversary sermon on "Five Years in Old Race Street Church," and of a number of others. It will be recalled that in 1858 the first Atlantic cable was laid and enjoyed a brief success of four weeks. In celebration of this marvellous achievement Dr. Bomberger preached a sermon on the significant text, Psalm 104: 4, "Who maketh his angels spirits, His ministers a flaming fire." Here is laid down the proposition that "All the elements and agencies of nature are under the sovereign control of Jesus Christ, the great Head of the Church, and He employs them continually in subserviency to the advancement and ultimate triumph of His Cause." This is developed under three heads, viz., "The Atlantic Cable in Its True Character, in Its Practical Uses, and in Its Moral Lessons."

In the sermon preached on the occasion of his fifth anniversary as their pastor he brings before the people very concisely and fully the account of the progress made in that period. After making a statement of the condition of affairs when he arrived, to which we have already alluded, he proceeds to recount the changes wrought by their united efforts since that time.
Concerning the numerical increase he states: "Two hundred and eleven new members have been added to our communion. This is encouraging in consideration of the fact that it has resulted from God's blessing upon the ordinary means of grace. No new schemes for swelling our membership have been devised. On the contrary I have been more averse than many of my brethren thought wise, to the use of any of those artifices which I regret to say are sometimes employed by churches for the purpose of drawing full houses and gaining notoriety. It has been my constant aim and conscientious endeavor to avoid unprofitable discussions of exciting themes, and to discard pulpit controversies."

The Sunday School had increased from twenty scholars to over three hundred. In 1859 Miss C. Arnold, the teacher of the primary school, reported one hundred and forty scholars in her department alone. The regular sessions of the Sunday School were held before morning worship, while there was a school conducted in the afternoon for Germans who desired to be taught the Scriptures in the English language. In addition to these, the main school had under its care a mission school on Noble Street near Ridge Avenue, in which there were about fifty scholars.

The attendance at the services had greatly increased. While many families had removed from the district adjacent to the church, and occasioned many vacancies, new families were brought in. The pastor says: "Not only have these vacancies been supplied, but the church has succeeded besides in having many
more gather in to share the means of grace provided in accordance with Divine appointment."

Concerning the Wednesday Evening lectures he says: "For the last three years the attendance has been remarkably encouraging. Indeed I have never seen an ordinary week-day evening service so full. I hope this interest may never flag. Rather let it become necessary for us to provide more ample accommodations for the service than our room at present affords."

Then, "The Lord has enabled us to outlive the temporary effects of contumely, and restored to us that Christian confidence in the community which for a season had been withheld. No one now points to our spiritual house as a breeding place of popish errors, or discards us as disguised friends of the enemies of Evangelical truth. Whoever may have cared a few years ago whether we perished or not, and whoever may have secretly hoped that such a catastrophe might befall us, now that the Lord is evidently with us, we have many friends. In five years' preaching it has certainly been discovered whether we preach the truth as it is in Jesus or not. And to the best of my knowledge, my preaching is not one whit more evangelical than that of my brethren throughout the Church. I have not labored to suit my dialect in this respect to this particular locality. And in these five years those who have listened with candor and attention must have perceived that my aim was, however imperfectly reached, to declare the whole counsel of God, for the edification of saints and the salvation of sinners. And this course has been so far blessed that we enjoy the confidence of our brethren in full measure."
Thus we see that an eminently successful work was accomplished in those years which brought honor to the pastor from his own people and recognition from the Christian public at large. The congregation gave evidence of esteem and appreciation in a number of ways, among which was a substantial increase in the pastor's salary.

Alas for the old church, and for every church in the land, the Civil War interrupted the progress of the work very seriously. The First Church for a time was literally depleted of her young men, many of whom were leaders in the work and could be illly spared. While most of these men enlisted for a short term of service, yet the general depression incident to the war had its serious effects upon the work of the congregation. In line with the general plans of retrenchment, Dr. Bomberger appeared before his Official Board and requested a reduction in his salary. His desire in the matter was acceded to, and his salary was accordingly reduced $500 per year. It appears that this was a concerted move on the part of most clergymen in Philadelphia at that time.

On November 21, 1860, the angel of death visited the home of Dr. Bomberger and called away to her eternal home the mistress of the manse, leaving the oldest daughter, Mary, who was then eighteen years of age, to become the mistress of the home and care for four children younger than herself. During the summer of 1861, Dr. Bomberger suffered a protracted illness due to overwork. He was required to
take a vacation lasting several months, but returned to his work greatly refreshed, and plunged into the innumerable tasks of those busy and serious times. He made daily visits to a hospital which was constantly filled with wounded soldiers returned from the front. There he carried cheer, good council and very frequently the necessities of life for those in need. The church building became a veritable beehive of activity. Thither men and women came to bring articles of clothing, make bandages, and prepare baskets and boxes to be sent off to the boys in the army. Dr. Bomberger became actively interested in the celebrated Christian Commission, and on several occasions took time to visit the boys of his church at the front. When General Lee and his army threatened their invasion of Pennsylvania, he accompanied a body of men from Philadelphia to Harrisburg, that they might assist in trench building and help protect the capital city from possible destruction. During the entire course of the war Dr. Bomberger never brought the issues involved into any of his pulpit discourses, except in a general way, when on several occasions he deplored the necessity of war at all, and asserted that all shedding of blood, with its consequent sorrow and hardship; all the destruction of property and staggering loss of money might have been averted if the government of the United States would have proposed to free the slaves by redeeming them for gold, and the South would have been willing to accept such a plan for settling
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the great issue of slavery for all time. When almost immediately upon the close of the war, and the celebration of the hard-earned victory for the Union arms, the nation's chief was stricken down by the hand of an assassin, no citizen could have expressed more sincere sorrow and regret than Dr. Bomberger. He called his Official Board in special session, and together they decided that the church building should be draped in black.

During the dark and uncertain days of the war, and a few days after President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation became effective, one of the most important events in the history of the Reformed Church took place in the Old Race Street Church. It was an event which for the time being overshadowed everything else for the church. This was the Tercentenary celebration of the Heidelberg Catechism. This event took the form of a great general convention participated in by all the synods of the church. The convention assembled on January 17, 1863, and adjourned after having sessions morning, afternoon and evening for six days. It was fitting that this celebration should take place in this particular church, which could even at that time look back upon one hundred and thirty-six years of continuous existence, and which had taken such a prominent part in denominational affairs in our land, and whose Sunday School, established in 1806, was the first Bible School in the German Reformed Church. Great preparations were made by the church at
large for this event. As early as 1859 a set of resolutions was offered by Dr. Philip Schaff at the annual meeting of Mercersburg Classis, held in Huntingdon. From that time forth synods and classes throughout the church made full and complete preparations, so that when the time for that great occasion actually arrived the whole church was on the *qui vive*. It was a large and interesting assembly composed of three hundred ministers and laymen prominent in the church. All these were handsomely entertained by the congregation, whose guests they were. Dr. John W. Nevin and nine other brethren were guests in Dr. Bomberger’s home. The church was beautifully decorated with laurel wreaths and festoons, and presented quite a gala aspect. On one side of the pulpit, encircled with a wreath was the date 1563, and on the other 1863. The whole occasion marked an epoch in the history of the church. When the convention organized for business the Rev. John W. Nevin, D.D., of Lancaster, was chosen president, together with seventeen vice-presidents. Written addresses were contributed by Dr. C. Ullman, formerly Professor of Church History in the University of Heidelberg; Dr. C. B. Hundeshagen, Professor in Heidelberg; Dr. Herzog, Professor at Erlangen; Dr. J. P. Lange, of Bonn; Dr. Ebrard, of Heidelberg, and Dr. G. D. J. Schotel, of Leyden, Holland. Addresses were delivered in person by Dr. B. S. Schneck, Prof. T. C. Porter, Dr. Henry Harbaugh, Dr. S. R. Fisher, Rev. Prof. Theo. Appel, Rev. Thos.
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Dr. Bomberger delivered a most interesting and instructive address on "The Fortunes of the Heidelberg Catechism in the United States." In this address he endeavored to answer the following questions which the topic suggested, viz., "What fortunes attended the Catechism when nearly a century after its first publication it entered upon a new career in this country?" "How did it endure transplantation from the parent vineyard to the richer mould of cleared forests and reclaimed valleys on the great and almost unknown continent of the west?" "Did the change improve it or hurt it; drive unnaturally forward or unhappily retard its growth?" "Has it been gathering greater inward strength and yielding even better fruits than in its native land?" These questions, which indicated the scope and bearing of the subject assigned, were treated by Dr. Bomberger in a way that evidenced literary ability, broad general knowledge, historical research and earnest piety, to the edification and delight of all his hearers. It was one of the strongest and most pertinent addresses on the program. Toward the conclusion of his address he gave utterance to these significant words of admonition and warning:

"It is a mistake," he said, "to feel secure in the belief that our symbol has now escaped all shoals
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and rocks, and is sailing on a fair open sea, wholly free from perils. As surely as the Catechism had to encounter dangers in that part of its course already traversed, so surely may we expect others to spring up in the future. It has escaped the whirlpool of unchurchliness; are we quite certain it will not strike against the rock of churchism? It has gone through the shallow waters of a rationalistic delusion of the sacraments; is it beyond the reach of harm from a superstitious over-exaltation of them? It has been rescued from Puritan perversions; should we not be jealous of other possible subversions of its great Evangelical doctrines? To the cherishing of such devout jealousy we may feel the more encouraged by the interesting occasion on which we are here assembled. This occasion is a monument of praise to God for the grace bestowed upon us as a Church through the Catechism. It is, therefore, also at the same time a solemn declaration of the Church’s undiminished—nay, increased—regard for this old symbol of her faith in its proper Reformed sense. Woe be to the presumptuous hand that dares to disturb those old and tried foundations! And thrice woe to any who may impiously attempt to defile the foundation from which these three centuries the Church has been drawing the waters of life!”

As the hour of adjournment drew near and the moment of parting was almost at hand—a parting which forbade the hope of ever meeting on earth again under like circumstances—it was a great privilege for Dr. Bomberger to announce to the assembly what he chose to call “the first fruits of the tercentenary.” He said he had just received a letter from the Rev. Samuel Helfenstein, D.D., sending his
Christian greetings and regretting that he had been prevented from attending by the infirmities of age, but that he sent two bonds for $500 each to be held in trust by the Race Street congregation, the interest of the one to be given annually to the Widows' Fund, that of the other to the cause of beneficiary education. He also had the pleasure of announcing the receipt of two letters from two members of the congregation, who wished their names kept secret, containing donations of $1,000 each to special objects.

The Old Race Street congregation, though not exceedingly large in numerical strength, had come to be a wealthy corporation. During the course of a century and more, many faithful and loyal members of the church who passed on into the ranks of the Church Triumphant remembered their spiritual mother in their last will and testament. In some instances the congregation came into possession of real estate or money representing large sums. In this period from 1854 to 1870 the congregation had an income from city property, from coal land in Luzerne County, and from other investments, which was almost sufficient to maintain the congregation irrespective of the contributions of the people themselves. In addition to this the church counted among its membership a number of men and women of considerable wealth. It was not unusual to hear this congregation styled "the gold mine of the Reformed Church."

Notwithstanding these extraordinary conditions,
financially, the benevolences of the congregation were merely normal. Paltry sums were given on occasion to general causes, and whenever a deficit occurred in the running expenses of the Sunday School or any other department of the church, the Official Board merely instructed the treasurer to put his hand in the money bag, and extract an amount suitable to the needs required. There was scarcely ever a thought of allowing the people the privilege of directly contributing to causes that should have been near to their heart. The old pew rent system was in vogue, the most desirable pews renting for $20.00 per annum, and those least desirable for about $8.00. These pews accommodated five persons, thereby making the contribution of the pew holders to be from $4.00 to $1.60 for each person. Four per cent. commission was allowed the officer whose business it was to collect the pew rents, and in fact every one who rendered any special service to the congregation expected to be paid for it. Dr. Bomberger set to work to change this situation, and learned to his great delight that his people were with him in this matter. Apparently they were waiting for a leader to show them the way into larger fields of service for the Kingdom. The pastor, together with John Wiest, Charles Santee and Gilbert Lentz, were constituted a committee on benevolence. This committee soon inaugurated a plan of systematic giving, which for thoroughness and efficiency equalled any systematic plan of our day. During those strenuous and trying
days of the Civil War the benevolences amounted to between three and four thousand dollars a year. The budget plan for the raising of funds to meet the regular congregational expenses was also introduced. At the close of each year a statement was prepared showing the probable income for the year and the probable expenses. Dr. Bomberger and his aids finally succeeded in bringing the finances of the church to that point where the living members, those who were members of the Church Militant, and not those who were members of the Church Triumphant, actually paid out of their own pockets the amount necessary for the maintenance of their work.

This condition naturally gave the congregation the incentive to enter into a real forward movement looking toward the extension of the Reformed Church into other portions of the city. Calls for aid came from all parts of the Reformed Zion, both German and English. These appeals invariably brought forth some response from the old mother church, so that we discover no less than six church enterprises assisted financially in sums ranging from $300 to $24,000. In this splendid work Dr. Bomberger was the prime mover. He was an ardent advocate of church extension. A careful and impartial view of the entire situation concerning the progress of the Reformed Church in the city will lead us to discern that it was mainly through Dr. Bomberger's initiative, his encouragement and commanding influence, and because of his unselfish devotion to the
larger interests of the Kingdom, that the Reformed Church in Philadelphia is what it is today. He had men of splendid ability and magnanimous spirit to assist him in this great work.

It was apparent to Dr. Bomberger and his associates that the growth of the city would soon make necessary the establishment of Reformed Churches in many new localities, if the church was not to lose a large number of her members. In 1858 a lot was purchased on Green Street below Sixteenth by First Church, and the following year seventeen members of the First Church met in a hall at Broad and Spring Garden Streets. This was considered the northwest section of the city at that time, and presented a splendid field for a new congregation. The Race Street congregation was hardly strong enough, numerically, to send out many branches and survive herself, but every encouragement and help was given this new enterprise. Not only was the ground purchased, but plans and specifications for the proposed new building were prepared by the Official Board, and arrangements made for gathering the funds to finance the erection of the building. Some unproductive property belonging to the church was sold and the proceeds devoted to the new building. In the fall of 1859 the new congregation was formally organized and took the name of Christ Evangelical Reformed Church. The congregation held its first meeting in the basement of the new building on January 2, 1861. The entire structure was finally
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completed and dedicated in 1865. In nine years the pastor of Christ Church reported two hundred and seventy-seven members, with property valued at $100,000. The pastors of this congregation have been Rev. S. H. Giesy, D.D., Rev. Joseph H. Dubbs, Rev. Geo. H. Johnston, Rev. James Crawford, D.D., and the present pastor, Rev. Eugene L. McLean.

The old mother congregation not only gave thousands of dollars for the establishment of this new work, but was also called upon to pass over into it a corps of men and women who were to become the backbone of Christ Church for years to come.

A few years later another branch was put forth and fostered which was destined in the course of time to become the largest Reformed Church in the City of Philadelphia, and one of the most influential in the whole denomination. This church was to be established in territory to the north of the Old Race Street Church. A few persons met in a lodge hall at Fourth and George Streets in 1867. An organization was effected, and the new congregation took the name of Trinity Reformed Church. They purchased a lot of ground on Seventh Street near Oxford, and began the erection of their church edifice in 1869. In the same year the officers of the new Trinity Church, who knew well the affairs of the mother church, pressed their suit for a large gift of money in order to assist them in their building. A valuable lot at Seventeenth and Cherry Streets was in possession of First Church, and many overtures came
from the new Trinity Church urging the sale of this property and the conveying of the proceeds for Trinity's needs. These overtures finally prevailed; the ground was sold, and the proceeds, amounting to over $18,000, were contributed to the new work. Their new building was completed in 1870. The pastors of this congregation have been Rev. D. E. Klopp, D.D., Rev. Charles H. Coon, D.D., and the present pastor, Rev. James M. S. Isenberg, D.D.

In 1868 another congregation came into existence in still another part of the city. Heidelberg Reformed Church was organized by persons who came out of Christ Church. But it appears that the majority of the charter members of Heidelberg were originally members of the Old First Church.

Thus do we get some idea of the way Dr. Bomberger led his people out to do wonderfully large things for the Kingdom in the city. No other church in the denomination has such a record of achievement. Intensely loyal to the Reformed Church himself, Dr. Bomberger succeeded in implanting a like spirit into the hearts of his people, which made them anxious and zealous not only to conserve for the Reformed Church the energy it already possessed, but to possess new fields and gain new conquests for our beloved Zion. The foundations of church extension were deeply laid under Dr. Bomberger, and more was accomplished in this direction during his sixteen years' residence in Philadelphia than in all the previous one hundred and forty-three years of
the church's activity. It is not too much to state that most of the English congregations of the Reformed Church in Philadelphia in our time owe their existence at least in some degree to the tremendous impetus given to church extension by the Old Race Street congregation between the years 1854 and 1870.

The type of service in vogue was what we have come to know as the "free service." This was always maintained, from the beginning of the First Church to the present day. So fearful was the congregation at times lest the high church or liturgical tendencies should creep into their worship that they often discussed the advisability of repeating together the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed. Indeed the sentiment on occasions was so strongly against all forms or formalism that there were periods when the congregation had absolutely no part in the service except the singing of hymns. For more than a century the congregation adhered to the old custom, brought over from the home of the Reformation by the church fathers, of partaking of the Holy Communion while seated about tables prepared for that purpose. Long tables were placed in the spacious aisles of the church, the members sitting upon benches placed along the tables, and all partaking of the Lord's Supper at the same time. This custom was changed under Dr. Bomberger. The people expressed their preference of coming forward in
groups to the chancel rail.*

Certainly it was not the hand of fate, but the omniscient hand of the Almighty, which directed Dr. Bomberger to Philadelphia. He who was destined to become the great defender of Protestant principles and practices as promulgated by the Reformed Church was placed in a prominent pulpit and among sympathetic and like-minded people that he might be given the prestige and support which he was finally to need as the Joshua of the Reformed host. The storm which was about to break over the Reformed Zion was brewing when Dr. Bomberger came to Philadelphia. The denomination was to receive the full force of its fury during the years that this great leader was laboring in the pastorate of the church which always had stood where he stood in relation to our Reformed faith. When finally the greater part of the church looked to him as their defender and spokesman, he assumed those additional labors, and responsibilities, which were thrust upon him, with great zeal, and gave himself in body, soul

* It is said that the worthy dominie was led to press for a change of this time-honored custom because of the impor-tunities of the female members of the congregation, who contended that they were greatly hampered for room in moving about with ease and grace from their narrow pew to their places at the tables. We can only imagine what a difficult task confronted the aforesaid ladies, who were required, if they would conform to the dictates of Dame Fashion, to come to the house of God arrayed in hoop skirts that usually measured four yards around the bottom.
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and property to the cause. Only because the Almighty had endowed him with a splendid physique as well as with admirable mental acumen was he able to shoulder the duties which were his. At classis, at synod, at General Synod, he became a dominant figure. His desk was flooded with invitations and overtures from those of his brethren who desired him to take part in important and prominent events all over the church. He was diligent and faithful to his own flock, but at the same time he was anxious to heed the calls to those places where he might do good. Consequently he traveled much. Many of his sermons and addresses were written while traveling on the trains. When night came on he would take advantage of his privilege of securing a candle from the conductor that he might continue to write for a little while longer. There was scarcely a locality in the eastern section of the Reformed Zion which had not heard his voice. The trend of events inevitably brought him to the front. The confines and limitations of the ordinary pastorate prevented Dr. Bomberger from meeting the exigencies of the situation resulting from the great liturgical controversy.

Only one plan of action under the circumstances remained for him: that he should become the prime mover in a wider plan which should have for its aim the conservation and perpetuation of those principles and practices which actuated the founders of the Reformed Church, which had found favor among
millions of adherents over the world. The mother which gave them birth must not be allowed to abandon them.

On December 9, 1869, Dr. Bomberger resigned his pastorate. In presenting his formal resignation he wrote: "You will believe me that in taking this step I am filled with no ordinary emotions. It has been my privilege to sustain my present pastoral relations for nearly sixteen years. The connection, so sacred in itself, has been made so prevailingly pleasant to me by the general kindness and many special proofs of Christian regard and personal esteem which I have experienced from the Brethren of the Board and the Congregation at large. The period during which I have been permitted to stand thus related to you all and to serve you in the Lord has not only been a comparatively long one, but covers what in many respects has been the most eventful period of my life."

The Official Board of the congregation passed the following action:

"WHEREAS, Our beloved pastor, Rev. J. H. A. Bomberger, D.D., in view of entering upon his duties as the President of Ursinus College, has signified to us his desire that the pastoral relation between him and the Race Street Reformed Church be dissolved;

"Resolved, That we reluctantly consent to unite with him in an application to Classis for such dissolution.

"Resolved, That in parting with our pastor we do unanimously concur in testifying to the ability
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and faithfulness with which he has performed his labors among us, the purity of his life as a minister and man of God, our cordial approval of his efforts to maintain and defend the Gospel of Christ, and our entire satisfaction with him as a pastor.

"Resolved, That in leaving us he shall take with him to his new field of labor our earnest prayers that he may exert a powerful influence for good among the youth of our land, and that the great Head of the Church may make him an honored instrument for advancing and extending Christianity with original apostolic purity and simplicity."

These are significant words, and would seem to indicate that Dr. Bomberger had succeeded admirably in inculcating into the hearts of his people of the Old First Church the spirit of service and worship for which he himself stood and in behalf of which he was to give the remaining years of his life with unrelenting vigor.

EDGAR R. APPENZELLER.