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MEDITATION

De Zuivere Godsdienst

De zuivere en onbevleete Godsdienst voor God en den Vader is deze: Weezen en weduwen bezoeken in hunne verdrukking, en zichzelf onbesmet bewaren van de wereld.

Jak. 1:27.

Zijt daders des Woords!

Zijt niet alleen hoorders!

En bedriegt u niet met allerlei valsche overleggingen, waartoe wij, ijdele menschen zoo lichtelijk verleid worden!

Meen niet al te lichtvaardiglijk, niet al te oppervlakkiglijk, niet al te gemakkelijk, dat gij godsdienstig zijt. Want de zuivere, onbevleete Godsdienst voor God en den Vader is deze, dat gij weezen en weduwen in hunne verdrukking bezoekt, en dat gij uzelf onbevlekt in het midden van de wereld, die in het booze ligt, bewaart.

En hoort dit Woord nu niet verkeerd.

Want wel moeten we niet slechts hoorders, maar ook daders des Woords zijn; maar het is dan toch ook zoo, dat we, eer we nog aan het doen van Gods Woord kunnen beginnen, we het moeten gehoord hebben. En juist omdat het Gods Woord is, is het zaak, dat we nauwkeurig letten op hetgeen Hij tot ons zegt.

Niet nauw hoorend, en niet nauwkeurig lettend op hetgeen het Woord ons door Jakobus hier zegt, zoudt ge u toch met valsche overleggingen kunnen bedriegen, zoudt ge een oordeeler des Woords inplaats van een hoorder kunnen worden, zoudt ge kunnen vergeten, dat we het hier niet met een woord van Jakobus, maar met het Woord Gods te doen hebben, en zoudt ge vermetel u het recht kunnen aanmatigen, om dit Woord het voorwerp te maken uwer critiek, en alzoo aan den klem er van uzelf onttrekken. En dat nog wel, ter-

wijl dit Woord u en mij zeer bepaald op het oog heeft, en zeer persoonlijk bedoelt te treffen.

Slechts in 't voorbijgaan lettend op dit Woord, zouden we onze leergodsdienst als maatstaf voor onze kritiek bij dit Woord kunnen aanleggen, en tot de vermetele conclusie komen, dat dit toch al te ondiep gesproken is, dat dit woord van Jakobus toch het eigenlijke wezen van den waren godsdienst niet raakt, dat zulk een godsdienst als Jakobus hier beschrijft de werkheiligheid in de hand werkt, en de zaligheid in de werken zoekt. Ge moogt, zoo zouden we, met valsche overleggingen ons bedriegende, en onze leer stellend tegenover dit Woord Gods, kunnen spreken, ge moogt den mensch maar niet aan het werk zetten, alsof het daar al goed mee was, en alsof iemand zijne zaligheid zou kunnen verdienen door wat op bezoek te gaan bij arme en verdrukke weduwen en weezen. We worden niet door de werken, maar door het geloof zalig. Het is niet door verdienste, maar loutere genade, alleen om de volkomene gehoorzaamheid van Christus, dat we de zaligheid beërven. . . .

Ja, er zijn nog meer bezwaren!

Al maar uit onze leer tegen dit scherpe Woord Gods redeneerend, zouden we het bezwaar kunnen opperen, dat Jakobus' definitie van den zuiveren en onbevleeten godsdienst toch niet opgaat, dat achter het *doen* toch eerst het *wezen* moet worden gezocht, en dat dit eigenlijke wezen van den waren godsdienst niet ligt in het bezoeken van weduwen en weezen, maar in den band des verbonds, dien God Zelf aanlegt in de wedergeboorte, en dien Hij ook aanhaalt en aantrekt, en door de trekking waarvan wij eerst waarlijk godsdienstig worden. Een mensch moet toch maar wedergeboren worden, eer hij het koninkrijk Gods kan zien, en het is niet alleen al te oppervlakkig, maar ook gevaarlijk, om te leeren, dat het al goed is, als hij maar de weezen en weduwen bezoekt. . . .

O, ijdel mensch!

Al maar door uit uwe leer redeneerend, maakt ge het uzelf onmogelijk zelfs om dit Woord te *hooren*, laat staan van het te doen!

Want immers, zoodra ge ophoudt met redeneeren, en, zooals het u past tegenover het Woord Gods, de houding aanneemt van een hoorder des Woords, om met zachtmoedigheid te ontvangen het Woord, dat in u geplant wordt, zult ge merken, dat Jakobus hier niet het zalig worden door de werken stelt tegenover de zaligheid door genade; noch ook bedoelt een omschrijving te geven van het *wezen* van den zuiveren en onbevleeten godsdienst; maar dat hij hier de zuivere *openbaring* van het wezen tegenover de valsche schijnopenbaring er van stelt, de echte vruchten tegenover de valsche beschrijft, het waarachtige dienen scherp stelt tegenover alle eigenwillige godsdienst.

O, zeker, uw leer is zuiver genoeg!

[Het *wezen* van den godsdienst ligt niet in het bezoeken van weduwen en weezen, noch ook in het afscheiden leven van de wereld, maar in den band des verbonds. Jakobus weet het ook wel.

Van nature zijn we niet godsdienstig, maar vijanden Gods.

We zijn afgeweken van den levenden God, hebben, wat ons betreft, den band des verbonds verbroken, die ons in vriendschap aan Hem verbond, en hebben een vriendschapsband aangelegd met den vorst der duisternis. We zijn schuldig en hebben geen recht om den levenden God te dienen. We zijn boos en verkeerd, verblind door de duisternis der zonde, vervuld met alle ongerechtigheid, en willen van den dienst Gods niet weten. We keeren ons van God af, en wandelen een iegelijk in zijne eigene wegen. Van godsdienst is bij den natuurlijken mensch geen sprake.

En nu worden we door genade weer vrienden Gods.

God handhaaft Zijn Verbond. En Hij legt den band des Verbonds weer aan in Christus Jezus. In Hem ontvangen we weer het recht om in Gods verbond in te gaan. En door Zijnen Geest en door middel van Zijn Woord legt Hij den band des verbonds weer in onze harten aan, haalt hem toe, trekt hem aan, en verandert Hij ons tot ware dienstknechten Gods.

Daarin ligt het wezen van den godsdienst.

En alleen waar dit wezen is, kan de openbaring er van zijn, kunnen de vruchten volgen.

En dit alles wordt ook in den brief van Jakobus niet voorbij gezien.

Of had hij er niet reeds aan herinnerd, dat God ons naar Zijnen wil gebaard heeft door het Woord der waarheid? Had hij ons niet reeds vermaand om met zachtmoedigheid te ontvangen het Woord, dat in ons geplant wordt, terwijl we afleggen alle vuiligheid en overvloed van boosheid? Had hij niet den waarachtigen hoorder en dader des Woords vergeleken bij den man, die inzielt in de volmaakte wet, en daarbij blijft?

Maar thans gaat het niet over de vraag naar het *wezen* van den godsdienst, maar over het waarachtige *dienen* van God en den Vader.

't Staat ook niet zoo, dat als iemand maar weduwen en weezen bezoekt, hij daardoor waarlijk godsdienstig is.

Maar heeft iemand waarlijk deel aan het wezen van den godsdienst, hij zal weduwen en weezen bezoeken in hunne verdrukking, en. . . .

Zichzelfen onbesmet bewaren van de wereld!

Zijt *daders* des Woords!

Maar dan ook: *daders des Woords!*

En bedrieg u niet door de valsche overleggingen van uwe eigenwilligheid!

Want ziet, ge kunt wel een dader zijn, zonder dat ge nog dader *des Woords* zijt.

Indien iemand dunkt, dat hij godsdienstig is. . . .

Ja, zoo iemand is wel een dader, maar niet des Woords.

Daar zijn godsdienstige daders, die luide roepen: Heere! Heere!, die in Zijnen naam profeteeren, vele duivelen uitwerpen, vele krachten doen, de wereld voor Christus meenen te veroveren; en waarvan de Heiland zegt, dat zij werkers der ongerechtigheid zijn, en dat Hij hen nooit gekend heeft. Ze worden in den dag der dagen uitworpen in de buitenste duisternis. Voor hen is er geen plaats in het koninkrijk der hemelen. Hun godsdienst is ijdel.

Ze zijn wel daders, maar geen daders *des Woords!*

Daar zijn andere godsdienstige daders, die getrouw hun "godsdienstplichten" waarnemen. Ze zijn als de Farizeeër, die niet was als andere menschen, die getrouw opging naar den tempel, zijn tienden betaalde, en op zijn tijd vastte, maar die nog nimmer verstaande had, dat barmhartigheid beter is dan offerande, noch ook ooit zijn verdoemelijkheid voor God had gekend en beleden. Deze menschen zijn godsdienstig vooral op Zondag. Ze gaan naar de kerk, ze missen nooit een preek, ze zingen en bidden voor het uiterlijke met de gemeente, en ze betalen hun kerkgeld. En daarin gaat hun godsdienst op. Voor de rest zijn ze ook vrienden der wereld, zoeken de dingen die beneden zijn, en weigeren om de smaadheid van Christus te dragen en te lijden om der gerechtigheid wil.

Dit zijn ook daders, maar geen daders *des Woords!*

Indien iemand dunkt, dat hij godsdienstig is. . . .

Daar zijn er, die godsdienstige daders zijn, doordat ze ijveren voor de waarheid en de zuivere belijdenis. Een helder en scherp inzicht hebben ze in de leer der vaders. Tegenover alle afwijken weten ze die leer te handhaven en te verdedigen. Grondig zijn ze onderwezen. En tot in bijzonderheden ijveren ze voor de zuiverheid der waarheid. Doch hierin gaat dan ook hun godsdienst op. Met de toepassing van hun schoone en zuivere belijdenis nemen ze het niet zoo nauw.

Liefde tot de broederen kennen en openbaren ze niet. Het welzijn van Sion zoeken ze niet. En in hun wandel in de wereld komt er van die zuivere belijdenis niets of niet veel tot openbaring.

Daders, ja, maar geen daders *des Woords!*

En het is tegenover alle dezulken, en meer anderen, die meenen, dat ze godsdienstig zijn, die daders zijn, maar geen daders *des Woords*, dat Gods Woord hier op zeer concrete wijze de waarachtige openbaring van het wezen van den godsdienst omschrijft: weduwen en weezen bezoeken in hunne verdrukking, en zichzelf onbesmet bewaren van de wereld!

Daarin ligt het geheim van de zuivere, onbevleete Godsdienst.

De Godsdienst in actie.

Het dienen van God en den Vader in deze tegenwoordige wereld.

En wie meent, dat hij godsdienstig is, toetse zich hieraan.

Zijt niet slechts hoorders, maar daders!

Maar dan: daders *des Woords!*

Altijd de antithese.

Weduwen en weezen in hunne verdrukking bezoeken. . . . en zichzelf onbesmet bewaren van de wereld.

Altijd naar den regel, dat wie een vriend der wereld wil zijn, een vijand Gods zal gesteld worden.

Hierin toch houden we Gods verbond in deze wereld, dat we den Heere onzen God liefhebben van ganscher harte, van ganscher ziele, van ganschen gemoede, en met alle krachten; dat we dus ook de broeders metterdaad liefhebben, want wie zijn broeder niet liefheeft, dien hij gezien heeft, hoe zal hij God liefhebben, dien hij niet gezien heeft; dat we de wereld verlaten, onze oude natuur dooden, en alzoo in een nieuw godzalig leven wandelen.

En het houden van dat verbond is de zuivere, onbevleete Godsdienst voor God en den Vader.

Voor menschen mag het anders zijn. Grootte dingen doen, duivelen uitwerpen, vele krachten doen, de heele wereld aan de voeten van Christus leggen,—dit alles mag meer naar den mensch zijn. Voor God, Die in Geest en in waarheid wil gediend worden, en Die niet van noode heeft van menschenhanden gediend te worden; Die de Vader is van alle Zijne uitverkorene kinderen, hen liefgehad heeft met eene eeuwige liefde, en Wiens leven en liefde in die kinderen tot openbaring moet komen,—voor Hem is het juist zoo: van Zijn partij zijn, Zijne liefde openbaren in de liefde tot Zijne zaak en tot de broederen, en geestelijk antithetisch leven in betrekking tot de wereld, dat is de zuivere, onbevleete Godsdienst.

En zoo toch bedoelt het dit Woord Gods in Jakobus.

Als het spreekt van weezen en weduwen bezoeken in hunne verdrukking, dan is het zeker niet de bedoeling, dat ge dit woord zoudt opvatten als een soort elfde gebod, dat ge slechts letterlijk hebt te volbrengen, om de positieve zijde van de zuivere, onbevleete Godsdienst in vervulling te brengen. Neen, maar dan noemt Jakobus, op de hem eigenaardige scherpe en zeer concrete wijze slechts een instantie van het liefhebben der broeders, en het kiezen en staan voor Gods zaak in deze wereld. Immers behooren die weezen en weduwen tot Gods Kerke in de wereld. Ze zijn in de verdrukking, in de *thlipsis*, een woord, dat in de Schrift gebruikt wordt voor de verdrukking, die Gods volk om Christus' wil in de wereld lijdt. En ze zijn de armsten onder de armen, de ellendigsten onder de ellendigen, de weerloosten onder de weerloozen: weezen en weduwen. Een natuurlijken beschermer hebben ze niet. Er is niemand, die het voor hen opneemt.

En gij bezoekt hen!

Let wel, ge zendt hen niet per post wat geld, om hen van het noodige te voorzien, en hun nood te lenigen; ge schrijft hun niet een vriendelijk briefje van deelneming, met verzoek om het toch vooral geheim te houden. Ge bezoekt hen. O, ja, ge bezoekt hen om te helpen en te troosten naar uw vermogen, maar ge doet het persoonlijk. Ge kiest hun deel. Ge zegt tot deze weerlooze schapen, die door de geweldigen dezer wereld verdrukt worden, dat hun God uw God is, dat zij uw volk zijn, dat ge met hen in hunne verdrukking gemeenschap wilt hebben. Ge neemt het op voor hen tegenover de geweldige en goddelooze wereld, die hen verdrukt, en met hen kiest ge, ook als het vuur der vervolging woedt, ook als het inhoudt, dat ge met hen smaadheid moet lijden om Christus' wil, voor de partij des levenden Gods.

Neen, dat is geen humanistische philanthropie; het is de openbaring van de liefde van Christus.

Het is het houden van uw deel van Gods verbond.

Het is de zuivere en onbevleete Godsdienst voor God en den Vader.

En in dit doen, deze these, deze positieve zijde van de zuivere en onbevleete Godsdienst voor God en den Vader, zit de antithese reeds in: het uzelf onbevleete bewaren van de wereld. Ge hebt in dat bezoeken van weezen en weduwen in hunne verdrukking immers partij gekozen vóór Gods volk, vóór Gods verdrukte kinderen, en daarmee voor Zijn verbond in de wereld, maar tegelijk ook tegen de wereld, den verdrukker van Gods volk.

Ge bewaart uzelf onbesmet van de wereld.

Midden in die wereld ligt uw leven. Dwars door die wereld leidt uw weg.

Doch in de wereld zijt ge niet van de wereld.

En straks ontvangt ge kroon des levens!

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EDITOR — Rev. H. Hoeksema

Contributing Editors:—Rev. G. M. Ophoff, Rev. G. Vos, Rev. R. Veldman, Rev. H. Veldman, Rev. H. De Wolf, Rev. B. Kok, Rev. J. D. De Jong, Rev. A. Petter, Rev. C. Hanko, Rev. L. Vermeer, Rev. G. Lubbers, Rev. M. Gritters, Rev. J. A. Heys, Rev. W. Hofman.

Communications relative to contents should be addressed to REV. H. HOEKSEMA, 1139 Franklin St., S. E., Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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EDITORIALS

Vitrolic Indeed!

One of the cheapest, most superficial, evillest, but nevertheless often very effective methods to brand a movement of a reformatory character in the church as false and of the evil one, is to concentrate all one's attention upon the leader of such a movement, vituperate his character and personality, ascribe the movement wholly to the powerful influence of that personality, and present all other participants in the movement as blindly following that strange, that ambitious, that impossible man.

This method has many advantages.

It simplifies the case immensely. In stead of collecting and carefully evaluating the historical data, the doctrinal implications, and the church-political transactions involved in the case, you can afford to limit yourself to the presentation of a simple syllogism: 1. The leader is no good; 2. The movement is wholly inspired by the evil leader; 3. The movement must be evil.

Moreover, if such a man happens to be condemned and cast out by the church, the latter, by fixing all the attention upon the impossible and evil personality of the leader, is at once justified. No matter what may be the doctrinal implications of the case, no matter whether this leader actually taught false doctrine worthy of deposition, no matter how many injustices the church may have committed in casting him out, the church is plainly justified in her act for the simple reason that the man is impossible.

The method has been and is frequently employed.

It is very easy to use. It almost suggests itself. Usually in any reformatory movement in the church there is a leader, called and ordained of God to blow the trumpet of Zion. Usually, always, such a leader, if he be a mere man, is a sinful man, whose faults of character should not be difficult to discover. How easy, then, to eliminate all his good traits, to accentuate the defects of such a leader, play them up, and picture him as a man who uses his position and influence in the church to satisfy his own boundless ambition, in order thus to condemn the whole movement inaugurated by him!

The method was used by the enemies against David, against the prophets, above all against Jesus Christ Himself; against the apostles; against Martin Luther, against John Calvin, and against all that were called of God to occupy an outstanding position in the church.

It is, I am sorry to say, this same method that is employed by Clarence Bouma in evaluating and

condemning the well-known schism in the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands.

In an editorial in the Calvin Forum, entitled "The Schism in the Netherlands," he launches an attack upon the person of Dr. Schilder, and attempts to explain the schism solely from the evil influence of the latter's personality.

I challenge anyone to find, in that editorial, even one item with reference to the facts, one historical datum, one reference to the doctrinal implications, or church-political principles and acts of the church involved in the case. And even in as far as the article speaks of Dr. Schilder's part in the controversy and schism, the article is repeatedly guilty of misrepresentation.

Bouma at once discovers "the key to the understanding of the Netherlands controversy of the last decade and the schism which has now come to cap it. . . in the strange man Klaas Schilder." This "strange man Klaas Schilder" has, according to Bouma, "stirred up discussions on issues which were of his own choosing and served his purpose these ten years or more." This "strange man" "attacked groups and individuals ever since he was established in the chair of Dogmatics at the Kampen Seminary." And this "strange man," "when at last it was clear that a break with the church was inevitable, and he would not submit to the authority of the highest judicatory, which had appointed him to his Seminary chair, chose his own issue in which to attack the church and its Synod." By choosing this issue, according to Bouma, "he could have displayed no more flagrant inconsistency—not to say duplicity." This Klaas Schilder is presented to the readers of Calvin Forum as "a brilliant but erratic person, a man with great capacity for work coupled with an insatiable ambition," who "developed a resentment against the controlling leadership of the church," who "considered himself the champion of Kampen" versus Amsterdam, who is "a sworn enemy of Kuyper and Hepp," and whose controversies became "increasingly vitrolitic." He is described by Bouma as "a highly gifted but erratic and damaging personality." Moreover, according to Bouma, when this "strange man Klaas Schilder" was finally "convinced that he was in the minority and that Synod meant business, he refused to respond to its summons. When Synod lays down a certain minimum of decisions by which he is to abide, he sets out to travel up and down the country to stir up disaffection and sets the church against the Synod." And even when, after the schism was accomplished, the Synod put forth efforts at reconciliation, these were "rendered impossible by the unpardonable attitude, utterances and actions" of this strange man Schilder, this erratic, damaging personality with his insatiable ambition.

There you have it.

The key to the understanding of the entire schism is this strange, erratic, ambitious, impossible, vitrolitic leader! Is not, then, such a movement plainly of the devil, and is not the synodical church at once and completely justified in all its decisions and actions?

Vitrolitic controversy? O, but indeed! A more refined illustration of it is difficult to find.

But how unworthy of a professor of Apologetics so to ignore the facts in the case, and so superficially to explain the schism in the Netherlands from his own impression and evaluation of the psychological makeup of Klaas Schilder!

For facts in the case, we refer the reader to former issues of our Standard Bearer. But just offhand, let me mention some facts which the editor of the Calvin Forum forgets in his effort to attribute the entire schism in the Netherlands Churches to the evil personality of Dr. Schilder.

1. The schism is not the work of one man, even though Schilder's influence cannot be denied. How to explain the part of Van Dijk of Groningen, Vonk of Schiedam, and above all of Greydanus? The latter's influence, even upon Dr. Schilder is well known. And it is a patent fact that Dr. Greydanus has done far more to attack the doctrinal decisions of 1942, as well as the church-political injustices committed by the Synod, than anyone else.

2. It is contrary to fact that Schilder chose his own issues. There is abundant proof for the fact that he was opposed to the action of the Synod of 1936 whereby the well-known "meeningsgeschillen" were picked up from the floor of the Synod and put into the category of official ecclesiastical differences.

3. That it was not Schilder, but Hepp who even before 1936 chose the issues, when, in his series of brochures "Dreigende Deformatie", he accused especially Vollenhoven and Schilder of heresies, is also a matter of history.

4. That Greydanus, Schilder and Vollenhoven refused to collaborate in the same committee, appointed to study and report on the doctrinal differences by the Synod of 1936, with Dr. Hepp when the latter continued to launch his attacks upon his fellow committee members, can be shown from the records.

5. That not only Schilder, but hundreds of others, officebearers and laymen, implored the Synod not to continue in their way, but to postpone action until after the war, is a simple fact.

6. That Schilder did not ignore the summons of Synod, but responded to them by letter to the very last, is also a matter of record.

7. That the schism was not chiefly caused by any definite doctrinal differences, but by the fact that the Synod plainly attempted to raise the theory of presumed regeneration to an ecclesiastical dogma, and to make this doctrine binding upon all as well as by the

fact that Synod presumed to be the "highest judiciary" in the church (as also Bouma erroneously calls it), is likewise a fact.

But why mention more?

As a proper evaluation and explanation of the schism in the Netherland Churches, the article of Clarence Bouma has no value.

It is as superficial as it is erroneous.

H. H.

Give Him A Hearing!

In an article under the caption "Schilder Representative" the editor of *The Banner* forewarns the churches against the coming of the Rev. D. van Dijk of Groningen, officially appointed by the Synod of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, maintaining Art. 31, to inform the churches here about the schism in the old country. There are several errors in that little article. First of all, the brother that is appointed by the Netherland Synod for this purpose is not A. J. Dijk, but D. van Dijk of Groningen, according to my recollection. Secondly, the brother does not come here as a "Schilder representative" but as an official delegate of the Liberated Churches. Thirdly, he is not a Schilder follower, but has already served the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands for years, and has his own, rather pronounced views on the covenant. Fourthly, the brother is not appointed to make propaganda for the new group, but to present the side of the Liberated Churches with reference to the schism, concerning which the Christian Reformed Church have been informed very onesidedly, as might have been expected. But the purpose of this little article is to warn the Christian Reformed churches to give this man no hearing. The editor writes:

"To permit the men who have caused the rupture in that Church to speak to our own congregations would be a slap in the face of our sister-Church which they have forsaken. Those of us who do not want to see an unnecessary doctrinal controversy transplanted to this country will not look with favor on any one who endeavors to make propaganda among us for an un-Reformed conception of the covenant of grace."

That settles it.

Very few ministers and congregations in the Christian Reformed Churches (Church, according to Kuiper) will have the courage to face the possibility of denominational wrath. This warning, together with a similar one that appeared in *De Wachter*, will probably close the doors to the Rev. van Dijk.

At the same time, Prof. Heyns is posthumously ejected from the Christian Reformed Churches by the

editor of *The Banner*. For the editor admits that the doctrine of the Liberated Churches, or rather of some of their leaders (the Churches have no officially adopted doctrine on this point) resembles the covenant conception of the late Professor Heyns. And he adds that this conception is un-Reformed.

Is there no one among the ministers of the Christian Reformed Churches who have sat for years at the feet of Prof. Heyns, and imbibed his covenant conception, and who have faithfully reproduced it in pulpit and catechism-room, who will take it up for him?

How sad!

The point of this article, however, is to point out that our churches are free from the ecclesiastical shackles of "sister-churches" that compel the Christian Reformed Churches to agree with their "sister" through thick and thin, and that render it impossible to give a man a hearing, that force us to condemn him before he has an opportunity to open his mouth.

The point of this article, moreover, is to emphasize that the Rev. D. van Dijk should have a hearing, and that if the Christian Reformed Churches close their doors to him, we should open ours to let him lecture as often as he desires.

It is well-known that we do not agree with the covenant conception of some of the leaders of the Liberated Churches.

But we are not afraid of contamination.

Let the man have a hearing!

The Christian Reformed Churches gave Barkey Wolf a hearing. And Barkey Wolf has not a Reformed hair on his head. But they refuse to hear the Rev. van Dijk, because of his un-Reformed views that resemble those of the late Prof. Heyns!

We gave Dr. Schilder a hearing when he was here.

We would even have given Barkey Wolf a hearing in our churches had he desired it.

Let us give the Rev. van Dijk a welcome, a home, and a hearing, if he wants it.

H. H.

CLASSIS WEST

will meet in regular session, the Lord willing, September 25, 1946 in the Protestant Reformed Church of Oskaloosa, Iowa, at 9:00 A. M. Delegates desiring lodging can contact Mr. G. Ryken, R. F. D. No. 6, Oskaloosa, Iowa. Since the Synod of 1946 again referred the report of the Psalter Committee to the Classes for further study, all delegates are urged to take your Acts of Synod 1945 with you.

Rev. C. Hanko,
Stated Clerk.

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

Part Two.
Of Man's Redemption

LORD'S DAY XX

2.
The Spirit Of Christ.

Besides teaching us that the Holy Ghost "is true and co-eternal God with the Father and the Son," the Catechism also places the following confession on the lips of the believing Christian: "that he is also given me, to make me by a true faith partaker of Christ and all His benefits, that He may comfort me and abide with me for ever."

In these words, our instructor speaks of the Holy Ghost as He is become the Spirit of Christ.

A distinction must be made between the Holy Ghost as such, as the third Person of the Holy Trinity, and that same Spirit as He is become the Spirit of Christ.

Just as, concerning the Person of the Son of God, the distinction must be made between the only Begotten as such, as the eternal Son, the second Person of the Trinity, and the incarnated Son, Jesus Christ, Who tabernacles with us in the human nature, so we must distinguish between the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ.

Even as the only begotten Son and Jesus Christ are the same Person, so the Holy Ghost and the Spirit of Christ are the same Person.

Again, just as the only begotten Son, the second Person in the Trinity, is the eternal Word, the Logos, through Whom all things are made, so the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of all creation, in Whom all things are made, giving life to all things.

But, once more, even as the only begotten Son, from before the foundation of the world is ordained to be the Mediator of salvation, the Head of the elect Church, and the Head over all things in the new creation, so the Holy Ghost, in God's eternal good pleasure is promised to Christ, ordained to be the Spirit of sanctification, that He might dwell in the Church and make us partakers of all the benefits of salvation.

And, finally, even as the eternal Son became Jesus Christ, our Lord and Redeemer, in the fulness of time, through His incarnation, His death and resurrection, and His exaltation at the right hand of God, so the Holy Ghost became the Spirit of Christ after His

exaltation, and as such came to dwell in the Church on the day of Pentecost.

This is the teaching of Holy Writ.

In John 7:39, we read: "But this he spake of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet (given); because that Jesus was not yet glorified."

The word *given* that occurs in our translation we put in parentheses, because it is a commentary rather than a translation, and, besides, it weakens the real force of these words. If it had been the meaning of the text, merely to express that the Holy Ghost was not yet given, it would have been easy to use the proper word for this in the original. But in the Greek text, the word *given* does not occur. The text reads: "The Holy Ghost was not yet, because that Jesus was not yet glorified."

This is very significant.

The meaning cannot be, of course, that the Holy Spirit as such, as the Spirit of God, did not yet exist, for He is very God, co-eternal with the Father and the Son. Nor can it mean that there were no operations of that Spirit of God at all, in creation and providence, or even with regard to the work of redemption; for all the works of God are of the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Ghost. But the sense is that the Holy Ghost as the Spirit of Christ, Who makes us partakers of the fulness of Christ, was not yet. This is evident from the context. On the last day of the feast of tabernacles, Jesus stood in the temple and loudly proclaimed Himself as the Fount of the water of life in the words: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." And He gave the promise: "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." However, all this could not be realized at that moment. The Fount of living water must first be opened. Jesus must first suffer and die, be raised to glory, and be exalted at the right hand of God. Moreover, He must receive the promise of the Spirit after His exaltation, and in that Spirit return unto His own, and dwell in His Church. Only through that Spirit that would be given, the Spirit of Christ, could His own come unto Him, and drink, and could the promise be fulfilled that "out of their belly should flow rivers of living water." Hence, it is added: "But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive." And as a further explanation it is said that "the Holy Ghost was not yet, because that Jesus was not yet glorified."

Just as, before the fulness of time and the incarnation, it could be said that Jesus Christ was not yet, so, before the exaltation of our Lord, it is said that the Holy Ghost was not yet.

This does not mean that the saints of the old dispensation were not saved even as we. For, although

Christ was not yet, the Son of God had been ordained the Mediator of His people in God's eternal counsel, and even before His incarnation operated and became revealed as such in the promise and through the shadows. And although the Spirit of Christ was not yet, the Holy Ghost had been eternally ordained to be the Spirit of redemption, and as such He operated in the prophets, and led the people through the shadows to the hope of reality that was to come. But the saints of the Old Testament, even with respect to the spiritual blessings of salvation which now are fully ours, were saved by hope. Even as we in the new dispensation still look forward to the final realization of the promise, and can but dimly apprehend the glory of the heavenly kingdom that is to come in the day of Christ, so the saints of the old dispensation were, indeed, saved, yet the reality of atonement and redemption, of justification and life, the fulness of the revelation of Jesus Christ and of the blessings of salvation in Him had not yet been realized. They could only dimly apprehend them through the shadows and by the promise of Him that was to come.

That we must distinguish between the Holy Ghost as such and the Spirit of the exalted Christ is taught also in other parts of Scripture.

Repeatedly, the Lord speaks of this Spirit in His final addresses to His disciples, spoken to comfort them concerning His departure from them through the cross and the resurrection, and preserved for us in chapters fourteen to sixteen of the gospel according to John.

Thus we read in John 14:15-17: "If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not; neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." Especially these last words are significant in this connection. Upon the prayer of Christ, the Father will send the Spirit to His disciples, and in this Spirit Christ Himself shall return to them. The Spirit, therefore, that will be given to the Church after the departure and exaltation of Christ is His Spirit, the Spirit of the exalted Lord, through Whom He Himself will dwell in His people, and abide with them for ever.

Again, in John 15:26 the Lord promises His disciples: "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me." In the sixteenth verse of chapter fourteen, the Lord had presented the sending forth of the Spirit as an act of the Father. (He would pray the Father, and upon the prayer of the Mediator the Father would send the Comforter unto them. Now,

however, He definitely declares that He will send the Spirit of truth unto them from the Father. Combine these two statements, and you understand that the Spirit is to be given to Christ as the Mediator and exalted Lord first, and from and through Him, as the Spirit of Christ, He is to be sent into the Church. The promise of the Spirit is to be fulfilled in Christ, and in that Spirit He will return to His own.

More clearly still this is set forth in John 16:7ff.: "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believed not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you." Note here that throughout the Spirit of God is presented as the Spirit of Christ. He cannot come unless Christ goes away, that is, through death into the glory of His resurrection and exaltation. This is impossible, first of all, because through His suffering and death, and perfect obedience, Christ must merit the promise of the Spirit; and, secondly, because only after His death and exaltation can He receive the Spirit, that as the exalted Christ He may return to and dwell in His own. Therefore, it is expedient that the Lord should go away. For "it is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing." John 6:63. And all the work of this Spirit proceeds from, and is concentrated in the Christ. This is true of His work in the world, that must be judged by Christ, and whose judgment is to be applied by this Spirit, for He shall convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. And this is equally true of His saving operation in the believers. He is the Spirit of truth. He serves the truth. He reveals the truth as it is in Christ. Of the truth He witnesses, but not in the sense that He ever speaks directly, without the Christ, Who is the truth and the life. On the contrary, what He hears, that is of Christ, He speaks. Christ He glorifies. Of Christ He receives the contents of His testimony, and of Christ He witnesses in the Church. He is the Spirit of Christ.

This condemns, let it be remarked in passing, at the same time all false mysticism, that is characterized by despising the Word of the gospel, as we have it in

the Holy Scriptures, as a "dead letter," and would live by "inner light," by direct testimony of the Holy Spirit in the heart apart from the Word. The Spirit speaks not of Himself. He takes it out of Christ. And this means that for us, Who have no other Christ than the One that is revealed to us in the Scriptures, the Spirit of Christ never witnesses without the revelation of Christ in the Bible. He takes it out of the Scriptures, and reveals it unto the Church.

Equally true, of course, it is, that without the Spirit the Scriptures are dead. There is no access to the Word of God, to the Christ of the Scriptures, except through or in the Spirit. In this sense, it certainly must be maintained that Christ must and does speak His own Word, and that through His Spirit. And again, this is true, whether the Word is a savor of life unto life, or a savor of death unto death. "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." Matt. 11:27. "And no man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." I Cor. 12:3. Hence, the apostle writes: "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory. Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. . . . But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." I Cor. 2:7ff. The Word is the contents, the Spirit is the life and power of the revelation of God. Spirit and Word are never separated. Thus it is regarding the revelation of Christ unto salvation. Through the Spirit of Christ the Word becomes a savor of life unto life. Nor does that Word, as we have it in the Scriptures, become a savor of death unto death by itself. Also this power is of the Spirit. For it is the Spirit that convicts the world of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment: *of sin, because they believe not on Him!* Thus Christ is and remains the sovereign Lord also in respect to His own Word. He reveals the Father unto whomsoever He will. And whom He will He hardens. No flesh dare glory in the presence of Jesus Who is the Lord!

The preacher must understand this, and, what is more, he must be willing to submit his own ministry to the sovereign will and purpose of the Lord of His Word, whether it be unto salvation or unto damnation. Never may he act, or leave the impression, that he has power over the Word of Christ, that by force of argu-

ment or power of persuasion, he can make the word he speaks, even though it be according to the Scriptures, either a savor of life, or a savor of death. He preaches the Word, the same gospel to all; but whether the effect will be unto salvation or condemnation depends not at all on Him, but on Christ Himself, Who makes His Word powerful through His Spirit.

In still other passages of Holy Writ, the Spirit is presented as the Spirit of Christ, and is even identified with Him. Thus in Romans 8:2ff.: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death": in the sphere of Christ the law of the Spirit dominates and operates, because the Spirit is Christ's, vs. 2. Of believers it is said: "But we are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his": the Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ, through Whom we belong to Christ. vs. 9. But again, when the Spirit of Christ dwells in us, Christ Himself, through that Spirit, makes His abode with us, for the apostle continues: "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness", vs. 10. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ, and through the indwelling Spirit Christ Himself dwells in us. By this Spirit our mortal bodies shall be quickened, vs. 11; through this Spirit we are empowered to mortify the deeds of the body; by the same Spirit the sons of God are led; He is the Spirit, not of bondage again to fear, but of adoption, so that by Him we cry: "Abba, Father," and He witnesses with our spirit that we are the sons of God. vss. 11-16. The Spirit of God, as the Spirit of Christ, in Whom Christ dwells in us, makes us partaker of Christ and all His benefits.

The identity of Christ and His Spirit is literally expressed in II Cor. 3:17: "Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty". The Lord here is Christ, and He is the Spirit, because it is by His Spirit that He dwells in His Church, and liberates us from the bondage of sin and the law, revealing Himself to us by His Word, so that "we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." vs. 18.

This, that the Spirit of God is become the Spirit of Christ, of the exalted Lord, and that, through this Spirit, Christ Himself came to dwell in His Church, to make her partaker of all the blessings of salvation He purchased for her by His perfect obedience even unto death, and to abide with her, and dwell in her for ever,—this is the meaning of Pentecost. Hence, as soon as this Spirit is poured out the apostles understand the mystery of Christ as in a flash, as they never had understood it before. And it is the Christ they preach on that day, Whom the Jews crucified,

Whom God hath raised up, and exalted at His right hand. And "therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which we now see and hear." Acts 2:33. The Spirit that was promised Christ in God's eternal counsel of redemption He received from the Father after His exaltation, and that Spirit He poured out into the Church, thus fulfilling His word: "I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you."

H. H.

THROUGH THE AGES

The Fundamental Principles Of Reformed Church Polity

We now pass on to the second principle, the divine origin of the authority of the ruling and teaching ministry. Authority, here, is the right to rule and to administer the word and the sacraments. This authority does not originate and inhere in the congregation to be delegated by the latter to the officebearers in the church; but it originates, does this authority, in God, its creative source, was given to Christ, who bestows it upon the servants of His choosing. Thus, as was said, the church is not a democracy. Its government is not of the people. The church institute is not a man's organization. The consistory is not an executive board, and its presiding officebearer is not the president of a men's society. A man's organization is erected by man's will; the position of its presiding officer is a creation of man; and the occupant of that position is placed there by man, and from man he receives whatever authority he is allowed to exercise. But the church is the product of God's redeeming grace. It is an erection of Christ. The offices in the church are His institutions. They who fill them are His selections. Servants of Christ are they, whom He calls and sends through His church. They rule by His authority. He qualifies them for the duties of the office to which they are called, by His Spirit. The church institute, in a word, is a wonder of grace; it is a spiritual heavenly entity, the kingdom of Christ, a holy brotherhood, chosen in Christ unto life everlasting before the foundation of the world. As to the rulers and teachers in the church, they rule, truly rule, only because and in so far they identify themselves with the word of Christ. In so far as they divorce themselves from that word to impose their

own will upon the flock of God, they set themselves up as lord and masters over God's heritage as usurpers of Christ's place, in the church, and are not shepherds of the flock but wolves in sheep's clothing. For it is the word of Christ that rules, admonishes, instructs, comforts, perfects, edifies, absolves the penitent, sanctifies, comforts and builds up. This is the power and the function of the word, as preached by Christ in the hearts of His people. Hence, it is sheer folly for a human preacher, a mere man, to say to the flock, "I absolve thee". There is only one who can tell God's people that they are forgiven so that they believe it, and that one is Christ. And He does so by sanctifying His word unto their hearts—the word as proclaimed by His servants. Hence, the human preacher of the word converts no man, however earnestly and even violently he may beseech, implore, beg, admonish and exhort, in the attempt to prevail upon his hearers to accept Jesus out of sympathy for Jesus.

As to the character of the authority of the ruling and teaching ministry, it is legal in distinction from ethical. In the state, legal authority, is the right and duty to govern by laws and policies, punish crime and protect them that do well. For that purpose God has invested the magistracy with the sword. In the church legal authority is the right and duty to preach the gospel and to excommunicate out of the Christian Church. This is the key-power or authority, that Christ gave to His church. But according to reformed church polity, this authority the church exercises only through the ruling and teaching ministry. Only this ministry may preach the gospel. Article 2 of the Church Order of Dordrecht, reads in part, "No one, though he be a professor of theology, elder, or deacon, shall be permitted to enter upon the ministry of the word and the sacraments without having been lawfully called thereunto." This is in thorough accord with the Scriptures. It requires but one brief passage to prove this. We have this from Paul's pen. "And he,"—the ascended Christ—gave some, apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ," Eph. 4:6. And then also this from the same apostle, "How shall they preach except they be sent." Rom. 10:15. In fine, the church institute is the only organization on the face of the earth that administers the word officially. There are other organizations and institutions, several of them, that take it upon themselves to instruct men out of the Scriptures. Societies are formed for the purpose of the study of the word. Our Christian schools give courses in Bible study. And certainly there must be an open Bible in every Christian home. But none of this labor is official preaching of the gospel. God will bless it, certainly, provided it is not labor done with a view to provide men with a

substitute for the preaching of the gospel by the church institute. If that be the aim, it is labor lost, no matter how sound the instruction or exposition, how devoted the instructor, how apt to learn the pupil. And the argument that the word remains the word whether proclaimed or explained to men, let us say by the Sunday school or by the church institute is, at bottom Pelagian, as it proceeds from an unwillingness to take cognizance of the fact that Christ is the preacher of the word and that, on this account, the word is a savor of life unto life and of death unto death. This being true, it follows that, if Christ expressly instituted the preaching of the word for the feeding of men's souls, it is folly to suppose that He will feed men's souls by a substitute of the preaching ministry. Bible instruction, exposition of the word, by agencies other than the church institute, Christ will bless but only as suppliments to the preaching of the gospel.

And this leads to the conclusion that there is no salvation apart from the church institute. Article 28 of the Belgic Confession reads in part, "We believe, since the holy congregation is an assembly of those who are saved, and that out of it there is no salvation, that no person of whatever state or condition he may be, ought to withdraw himself to live in separation from it." This Confession has reference to the body of Christ as it functions through the church institute, the ruling and teaching ministry, and it must be received as true doctrine. It is not the Romish teaching, that wholly identifies the church institute with a particular church or communion of churches, and contends, that men living in a separate state from this communion, whether it be false or true, are shut out from salvation. This, to be sure, is folly. But, that one must be joined to the sacred ministry—the church institute—that Christ instituted for the perfection and the edification of His body, is a solemn truth. And the reference here is not, of course, to a ministry that corrupts the word. That ministry must be deposed or forsaken. To quote the Confession once more, "We believe that we ought diligently and circumspectly to discern from the word of God which is the true church," that is, of which ministry it can actually be said, that the body of Christ functions through it, and, such is the implication, join ourselves to that ministry.

Let us now have regard to the third principle of Reformed Church Polity, the Priesthood of Believers. In speaking of the priesthood of all believers, we speak the language of the Scriptures. To quote one Scripture passage from the revelation of John, the first chapter, the fifth and sixth verses, "And from Jesus Christ who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten from the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood. And hath made us kings

and priests unto God and the Father; to him be the glory and dominion for ever, Amen." Having been made kings and priests unto their God, the common believers, too, have authority, that is, rights. And that particular right which is basic to all their rights, receives a statement at John's Gospel, chapter 1, the 12th verse, quote, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed in his name." This power, right, authority of God's people—the Greek here has *exousia*—is fundamental. Because God's people have this right, theirs is the right to confess the name of Christ, bear witness for the truth, and walk in those good works which God hath before ordained that they should walk in them. These rights they exercise in Christ, who realizes in them the fruits of His atonement. And also as members of the church institute, the believers have their rights. They initiate church discipline in the church, Matt. 18:13, 14, elect, under the supervision of the consistory their office bearers, raise their voice in protest if the teaching ministry corrupts the word, deposes this ministry, if it will not repent, and, if prevented therein by the carnal seed in the church, break with this ministry and erect the church institute elsewhere by choosing them a ministry, through which the body of Christ can so function, that it is perfected and edified. These are the rights of God's people as members of the church institute. And these rights they must be allowed to exercise without being penalized. And on their part, they must not allow themselves to be prevented in the exercise of these rights by the threats of the carnal seed in the church in power. But it is consoling to know that the exercise of these rights is not contingent on their will but on the will of Christ, the Lord over all things in the church. For it is He who gathers His church. There is then such a thing as the office of all believers.

The next principle of truth that calls for our attention, is that of the autonomy of the local congregation. That the local congregation is autonomous, means, that it is a self-governing organization, under Christ, in subjection to no legal power other than that of its own consistory. The autonomy of the local congregation implies, further, that all legal power in the church is concentrated in the consistory. And legal power, as was said, is key-power, the right to preach the gospel and to excommunicate out of the Christian church. Now also this principle of the autonomy of the local congregation is basic. For, if the local congregation is autonomous, if all legal power is concentrated in the consistory, if the consistory only and not also the Classis, has the key-power, it follows that the power, authority, to depose office bearers in the church, cannot be that of the classis. For, to depose office bearers is to exercise key-power. The leaders in the Christian Reformed Churches—churches also

organized on the basis of the Church Order of Dordrecht—are now insisting, and have been for some years back, that the Classis, too, has the key-power, which it exercises in the local congregation by deposing, if need be, its office bearers; and in 1924 the Classes Grand Rapids West and Grand Rapids East of these churches, went to deposing office bearers right and left, and claimed and still claim that the Church Order of Dordrecht sanctions that action.

There is then this question. Is the principle of the autonomy of the local church Reformed? It is Reformed. It is the plain teaching of the Church Order and of the Belgic Confession. Article 84 of the Church Order reads, “No church shall in any way lord it over other churches, no minister over other ministers, no elder or deacon over other elders and deacons.” And Article 31 of the Belgic Confession contains this clause, “As for the ministers of God’s Word, they have equally the same power and authority wheresoever they are, as they are all ministers of Christ, the only universal bishop, and the only head of the Church.” Now also this teaching of the legal parity of the office bearers in the church, our Reformed fathers took over from John Calvin. This reformer, as already has been said, insisted that there is legal parity between those whom the scriptures describe as bishops, presbyters, pastors, and teachers, that thus the one shall not set himself up as a legal power over the other, or some over others. Now it stands to reason, that if the office bearers in the churches—elders, pastors and teachers—are in a legal aspect, equals, each of the other, the classis, which is an assembly of elders and ministers, cannot set itself up as a legal power over the consistory, in that the latter, too, is a college of elders and ministers. And this is equivalent to saying, that the local congregation is autonomous, under Christ subjecting itself to no other legal power than that of its own consistory, whether that power be the pope or classis and synod, makes no essential difference.

The autonomy of the local congregation comes to the surface also in articles 15, 16, 17, 22, 27, 30, 33, and 36 of the Church Order of Dordrecht, in fact, in the totality of all its cardinal articles. For these articles sharply distinguish between the consistory on the one hand and the classis on the other, and assign, either directly or by implication, the key-power to the consistory only. Let us concentrate on just a few of these articles. Article 15 reads, “Likewise no one shall be permitted to preach or administer the sacraments in another church, thus handle the keys of the kingdom in that church, without the consent of the consistory of that church.” Thus, whether one shall exercise the key-power in a church is contingent not upon the consent or will of the classis but upon that of the consistory, which can only mean that not the

classis but the consistory has the key-power. Also article 16 of the Church Order sets forth an identical doctrine. The article reads, “The office of Minister is to continue in prayer and in the ministry of the word, to dispense the sacraments, to watch over the brethren, the elders and the deacons, as well as the congregation, and finally, with the elders, to exercise church discipline and see to it that everything is done decently and in good order.” This article, certainly, has reference to the consistory, not to the classis, and to the consistory it assigns the key-power. In agreement herewith the Church Order, in Article 36, is careful to refrain from saying that the classis has the same power over the consistory, that the consistory has over the flock. Let us quote this article, “The classis has the same jurisdiction over the consistory as the particular synod has over the classis and the general synod over the particular.” True, this article does say, that the classis has jurisdiction over the consistory, but it does not say, and this is the point, that this jurisdiction is the same as that of the consistory over the flock. In fine, according to the Church Order, the consistory and not the classis has the key-power. It means that the local congregation is an autonomous organization.

That the local congregation is an autonomous organization also follows from the truth and fact that the church institute does not extend beyond the local congregation in the sense that it broadens out into a classical and synodical church. The opposing view was that of the late Prof. Heyns, who for thirty years gave instruction in Church Polity in the seminary of the Christian Reformed Churches. His textbook contains the following paragraph. Quote, “There is a local church, there is a classical church, there is a synodical church. The consistory is the governing council of the local church, the classis of the classical church, and the synod of the synodical church, formed of the sum and total of all the churches in the denomination. The character of these three governing councils consistory, classis, and synod, does not differ essentially. Article 36 would not read as it does, were classis and synod not consistories.” In the sequence Heyns concludes that whereas classis is a consistory, it, too, has the key-power, which it exercises, if need be, in all the churches that delegate to the classical assembly. And elsewhere he presents the view, that the minister of the gospel receive, through ordination, the authority to administer the word and the sacraments in all the churches, and not merely in the church by which he was called. Heyns is consistent; but he also is very wrong. For, according to the Belgic Confession, Articles 31 and 32, a consistory is a ruling council, each and every member of which is chosen by lawful election of the church in which it functions. Hence, if the classis were a consistory,

each and every member of this assembly, should have to be chosen by lawful election of all the churches represented, in which case the churches in the limited area would form one large congregation. But the fact is that each minister and each elder is chosen by lawful election by that church only that delegated them to the classis meeting. The fact of the matter is that a classical consistory, according to the Confession, is a nonentity. The assembly is either a consistory and then it is not a classis; and if it is a classis, it is not a consistory.

Our Church Order, as well as the Belgic Confession limits the church institute to the local congregation. Article 15 of the Church Order reads, "No one shall be permitted, neglecting the Ministry of his church or being without a fixed charge, to preach indiscriminately without the consent and authority of classis or synod. If, now, as Heyns has it, all the churches are the church institute, with synod as the over all ruling council or consistory, the minister of the gospel indeed receives, through ordination, the authority to function in each and every church, but if so, this article is out of place, as it requires that no one shall be permitted to leave the ministry of *his* church to preach indiscriminately. And likewise Art. 7 of the Church Order. The article reads, "No one shall be called to the ministry of the Word without being stationed in a particular place." And Article 10 of the Church Order is a rule to the effect that "A minister once lawfully called, may not leave the congregation, with which he is connected, to accept a call elsewhere, without the consent of the consistory." If the Church Institute is the synodical church, inclusive of all the particular churches, and if the minister is pastor of them all, why should a church other than the one with which he is connected, have to call him, if it desires him as its pastor. It is plain that the attempt to fit the articles of Dord's Church Order into a hierarchical system of church government, is like trying to fit square pegs into round holes. It simply can't be done. These articles do not allow themselves to be explained at all on the basis of such a system. To nevertheless attempt it, is to reduce the totality of these articles to a collection of enigmas. Besides, it would have to be regarded nothing short of amazing, if our reformed fathers, after levelling to the ground conceptionally the Roman hierarchy, had turned away from their wreckage, to erect, alongside of it, an essentially identical structure for their own churches. The rehabilitators of hierarchy in reformed communions deny that their system is a return to Rome. They say that the classis, in their system, is not a higher but a broader assembly in relation to the consistories. But what may be the difference between a broader assembly with key-power over the consistories and a higher assembly with key-power over the

churches? There is not an atom of difference. To say that there is, is to juggle terms and play with words. But the conclusion at which we again have arrived is that, according to the Confession and the Church Order, the Church Institute is the local congregation, that, if so, it must of necessity, also on this account, be autonomous, and that, if autonomous, the power to depose office bearers is not that of the classis but of the local congregation.

G. M. O.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Ark of God in Dagon's Temple

Having called Samuel and revealed to him the doom of Eli's house, "the Lord appeared again in Shiloh," so we read, "for the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord. And the word of Samuel came to all Israel." As was explained, the word of Samuel that came to all Israel was not a command to the effect that Israel march to battle against the Philistines. But it was indicative of the fact that the Lord again was about to do great and terrible things, that, in other words, the salvation of the faithful was nigh. For Israel again had a prophet of God. After four hundred years of silence, the Lord again spake. There were again visions breaking through and spread abroad. And the true Israel rejoiced. Samuel was an answer to their cry, "There is no more any prophet: neither is there any among us that knoweth how long. O God, how long shall the adversary reproach?" The adversary was reproaching in those days. Israel was being oppressed by the Philistines. And the worship in the sanctuary was in charge of the wicked sons of Eli. And they were not being restrained. But Israel again had a prophet, Samuel, God's gift to His people, indicating that He was about to send salvation. Even by the mouth of two prophets—"the man of God" and Samuel—judgment had been pronounced on Eli's house. The promised salvation included certainly the lifting of the oppression of the Philistines. Hannah had made mention of this in her prayer of thanksgiving, "The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken in pieces; out of heaven he shall thunder upon them."

So were the faithful in Israel—God's believing people—again reassured, but not only they but the carnal Israel as well but without reason. They, too, concluded that salvation was nigh also for them and

that the Lord was for them. And though their hearts were far from God, their expectations ran high, so that they dared to risk war with the Philistines, thinking that the Lord would fight for them. Defeated in battle, they were amazed and asked, "Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us before our enemies?" Why had the Lord done that, they meant to say, after reviving our hopes by the gift of Samuel? What they were willingly ignorant of is that the presence of Samuel among them could only indicate that the Lord was about to send salvation to His people, the penitent in Israel and not to men such as they. They wanted deliverance without repentance. But the Lord smote them before their enemies. Still they would not be instructed. They took to them the ark of the covenant of Jehovah out of Shiloh and removed it among them that *it* might save them out of the hands of their enemies. They thought that it would save them as if by magic, it being the ark of the covenant, and in this lifeless thing they now put their trust, and said to it, "Thou art my God." Rather than forsake their sins, and turn to the living God, they put their trust in a religious symbol. We need not pause here to set forth the implications of the doing of these Israelites, as this has been done in a former article (The Standard Bearer of June 1, 1946). To be sure, these men of Israel knew better, for they were rational men. Their blindness was not intellectual but spiritual-moral. What they needed is not more instruction in the field of theology but a new heart to receive the instruction that already had been given. What they needed is a severe chastisement, a hard blow that, as blessed to their hearts by Christ's Spirit, would gender in them the will to put away their idols, including the ark of the covenant—of this object, too, they made an idol, for in it they trusted and believed that it would save them—cleanse themselves of their vain imaginings, think right of God, the knowledge of whom they were holding in unrighteousness, and serve the living God with all their hearts, repenting of their sins. That would be the only solution of their troubles. Hence, the Lord did not give them more instruction, but He dealt them that blow. The Philistines fought, "and Israel was smitten, and fled every man to his tent: and there was a very great slaughter; for their fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen."

As to the Philistines, the issue of the battle must have amazed them. The men of Israel had been vanquished even with the ark among them. That was proof enough to them that the Jehovah of the Hebrews was but another diety. However famed for His strength it now appeared that He was not the equal of their own god Dagon, who, they wanted to imagine, had given them the victory. And what a victory! Even the ark had been theirs for the taking. They liked to believe that they had captured God. And they were

grateful to Dagon for his assistance. He had served them well. With his cooperation they had conquered. Wanting to give Dagon his due, they brought the ark into his temple as an offering to their deity and set it near him, in order that by its position it might set forth for the Philistines the subjection of Israel's God to Dagon. How the Philistines taunt God! How vain the thing that they imagine! For they hold the ark because the Lord had delivered it into their hand, the reason being that He "greatly abhorred Israel" on account of their high places and graven images. Therefore "he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he had placed among men; and delivered his strength," and thus the ark, "into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand. He gave his people over to the sword; and was wroth with this inheritance. The fire consumed their young men; and their maidens were not given to marriage. Their priests fell by the sword and their widows made no lamentation," Ps. 78:58-64. In this language the psalmist commemorates by song those catastrophic events. He sets them forth, one and all, as God's works, which indeed they were, as the human agents through which He wrought—the apostate elders by whose direction the ark was removed to the camp; the Philistines by whose sword Israel's young men and priests were slain—were His creatures, living and moving and having their being in Him. Therefore the removal of the ark from its resting place in Shiloh was and could be God's forsaking the tabernacle at Shiloh and the slaying of Israel's young men and priests by swords wielded by human hands God's giving over His people to the sword and the capture of the ark His delivering this symbol into the hands of the adversary.

Yet in their willing ignorance the Philistines ascribe their military achievement to their own arm as strengthened by Dagon and thus interpret it as a triumphing of their god over Jehovah. This is the usual construction placed upon the doing of the Philistines according to which they removed the ark to the temple of their God and stationed it near his image. But their manner of dealing with the ark of the covenant can be explained otherwise. The heathen hero-worshipping Roman emperor Alexander Severus placed the busts of Abraham and Christ in his domestic chapel with those of the heathen gods Orpheus and Appolonius. May it not be that the Philistines assumed a similar attitude toward Jehovah, that they ascribed the victory they had achieved not to Dagon at all but instead to Israel's God, and that in removing His ark to Dagon's temple they were telling men that Jehovah, though inferior in power to Dagon, was nevertheless a god to be reckoned with, ranking even with their deity and therefore deserving of a place in his house next to his image. This view of their doing is contradicted by the sacred text, and by other

atrocities of theirs alluded to by the psalmist. There is the notice that the ark was taken (1 Sam 4:11) and the psalmist speaks of God's delivering His strength into captivity. Now a capture is a seizure, an act of taking by force or strategem, and thus implies a combat, a clash of opposing forces. Thus the language of the sacred text discovers to us the thoughts of the hearts of the Philistines as being that they and their god Dagon had emerged victorious from a war with Israel's God. What is more, having put to flight Israel's army, the Philistines, so we learn from Psalm 78, hastened to Shiloh, massacred its inhabitants, and slew God's priests, their aim being to destroy His service and memory from the face of the earth. It shows that they set Jehovah before them not as a hero to be worshipped but as a fallen and contemptible god worthy of their scorn. So did they treat God now that they thought that they had Him in their power. If ever a heathen people were worthy of doom, it was these Philistines at this juncture of their history. Such offences against the divine majesty, the insults such they they were heaping upon God's name, and the injuries such as they did His people, called for severest punishment. It was time for the Lord to act; and He did so. In the poetic language of the psalmist, He, "awakened as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine." This language implies that the Lord had been in a state of slumber. Yet He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is ever absolute action in mind and will and being, so that the thought conveyed is that the working of His strength was such as to effect the triumph of the enemy over Israel and the capture of the ark. That revelation of His power whereby Israel was protected and made to triumph over its foes momentarily ceased. And in that moment the enemy, as raised up and sustained by the Almighty, overcame Israel, and so willed to imagine, Israel's mighty God. Yet, how ever vain this imagining. It is true that, whereas the Lord had delivered His strength and glory into their hand, they now held captive the ark and thus, in a figurative sense, God Himself. For symbolically the ark of the covenant was the strength and glory of Jehovah. For its lid, as sprinkled with the blood of the atoning sacrifice, was in Israel the very seat of grace and mercy and saving power and thus of judgment for the adversary. Thus every salutary revelation of the might of the Lord was associated with the ark and took place in connection with it. The people of Israel passed through the Red Sea with the Ark of the covenant holding a position midway between the shores of the sea and in this position holding at bay the floods of water that threatened to engulf the people. In the mind of the people of Israel, the Ark and the Lord were inseparable. This explains their removing the ark to their camp in the war

with the Philistines. They expected a new demonstration of divine power in connection with it in their behalf. Their great error was their being willingly ignorant of the fact that they were ill-deserving on account of their apostacies, and that the Lord therefore was against them. A new revelation of divine power took place but only to work the triumph of the Philistines over Israel's army.

Such then were Israel's thoughts about the ark. Thus when Eli received tidings that the ark had passed into the hands of the Philistines, he was so shocked that he fell senseless to the ground; and the wife of Phinehas lamented in her dying moment that the glory of Israel had departed. And figuratively it had. The Lord had delivered his strength into the enemies hand, and in a sense was now a captive of the adversary. So he willed it. It was His doing. Nothing like this had even happened. It amazed and perplexed God's people and their hearts were troubled. The Lord had gone into captivity. Hence in Ps. 78, the capture of the ark and its being held by the adversary is presented as a prefiguration of God's delivering Christ into the hands of the wicked. And the question was, what would the Philistine now do with the ark of the Lord, now that He had delivered it into their hands. Fundamentally, it was a question what the Philistines would do with God. This is what they did with Him. Through the treatment that they afforded the ark, they heaped contempt upon Him when they set his ark in Dagon's temple.

G. M. O.

Our New Schedule

Besides the rubrics taken care of by the Revs. Ophoff, Vos, and undersigned, we propose the following schedule for the next volume of our Standard Bearer:

From Holy Writ, The Revs. H. Veldman and G. Lubbers, each six months.

In His fear, The Revs. M. Gritters and J. Heys, each six months.

Periscope, The Rev. W. Hoffman.

That we limit the number of contributors is no reflection at all on those that have contributed before, nor on any other, but is motivated, apart from the desire to avoid a clash with Concordia, by the belief that a man will do better work if he can write for a longer period on a certain subject, and that it will be conducive to more unity in the material offered.

H. H.

SION'S ZANGEN

Een Lied Der Ruste

(Psalm 92)

Een psalm, een lied op den sabbatdag.

Hoe eenvoudig, hoe lieflijk klinkt dat.

Ja, indien men dan al zingen zal, we zullen zekerlijk zingen op den dag wanneer we ingaan in de volmaakte werken Gods. Want dat is de idee van den sabbat. De sabbat is de kroon der dagen, door Israel's God geheiligd.

God heeft ook gerust van Zijn arbeid. Na zesdaagschen arbeid van het scheppen der dingen, heeft de Heere een dag apart gezet om in te gaan in Zijn volbracht werk. Om de dingen die Hij geschapen had te bezien en ervan te jubelen: Ziet! het is zeer goed.

En gij moogt dat God nadoen. Dat is Uw sabbatvieren.

Doch de schoonheid van dien eersten sabbat is gaan tanen.

We hebben gezondigd. En we mogen nu niet meer ingaan in dien sabbat. De Heere gaat een ander werk werken, een werk waarvan het eerste, het scheppingswerk, een symbool was.

De Heere gaat Zijn volk verlossen in Christus Jezus.

Een type van dien arbeid en van die rust vindt ge in de worsteling en het jagen om de ruste Kanaäns in te gaan onder Mozes en later Jozua.

God gaat Zijn volk verlossen.

Dat werk is een starre onmogelijkheid.

(Het kan immers niet? Daar hebt ge een vrage der eeuwige foltering der hel. De mensch die zijn hand tegen God opheft, kan niet, kan nooit meer naar den hemel. Het kan niet, eerst, want de mensch zal zich nooit bekeeren. Het kan niet, tweedens, want God is recht en heilig en waar.

En toch gaat God dat onmogelijke werk doen.

En waar hebt ge den reuzenarbeid van God in Jezus Christus.

Dat het een reuzenarbeid is kunt ge merken uit Efeze 1:19 en 20. Let toch op de woordenkeus van den Heiligen Geest: "en welke de uitnemende grootheid Zijner kracht zijn aan ons die gelooven, naar de werking der sterkte Zijner macht, die Hij gewrocht heeft in Christus, als Hij Hem uit de dooden heeft opgewekt en Hem gezet heeft tot Zijne rechterhand in den hemel."

Daar hebt ge het groote onmogelijke verlossingswerk.

Het heeft een groote werking der sterkte Zijner

macht genomen voor God DrieEenig om de wereld te scheppen. Dat kan zelfs een kind verstaan. Doch het heeft onnoemlijk veel meer kracht Gods genomen om de nieuwe wereld met al haar aancliffe te doen zakken en zinken op de eeuwige fundamente van Zijn onbegrijpelijke liefde in Christus Jezus. Want het fundament van het nieuwe Jeruzalem rust op het hartebloed van Jezus.

Wilt ge, de onmogelijke arbeid is het ophalen van Jezus uit den eeuwigen dood. De onmogelijke arbeid is om een eeuwigheid van toorn, vloek, verdoemenis te dragen, weg te dragen, en terug te komen met genezing in Zijn armen, met opvoering tot onbegrijpelijke schoonheid en heerlijkheid voor het in zichzelf schuldige en doemwaardige volk. Hij bracht mee gaven "tot der menschen troost." "Zelfs het wederhoorig kroost zal daarvan mogen deelen."

Kunt ge er bij?

Zingt er van, geliefden!

Dat is uw Sabbat.

En nog zijn er menschen die zich Christen noemen en toch niet gaarne naar Gods Huis gaan. Nog steeds moeten we commissies uitzenden naar trage kerk-gangers. Zingt toch, zingt toch van dien vreeselijken arbeid van Christus. Beter gezegd, zingt toch van dien vreeselijken arbeid van God.

Het is goed dat men den Heere love, en Uwen naam psalmzinge, o Allerhoogste!

Ja, want het loven van God en het psalmzingen van Zijn naam is de hemel, daarboven bij God.

Het is goed, dat men dat doet. Vraagt het aan Gods volk, dat liever in Gods Huis één dag verkeert, dan duizend dagen elders, in de tendelen der goddeloozen.

Het loven van God is, dat men het den Heere vertelt hoe groot, hoe heerlijk, hoe schoon Hij is. Vele psalmen zullen het U leeren: Hoe groot, hoe vreeselijk zijt Ge alom uit Uw verheven heiligdom: aanbidlijk Opperwezen!

"Dat men Uwe goedertierenheid verkondige in den morgenstond, en Uwe getrouwheid in de nachten! Op het tiensnarig instrument en op de luit, met een voorbedacht lied op de harp."

Gods goedertierenheid!

De zucht, verlangen, het hunkeren Gods om Zijn volk te zegenen. De hartstocht van God om Zijn volk in de ruimte te zetten bij de rivier Gods die vol waters is.

Wat is het? Wat hebben we er van gezien, gehoord, bemerkt?

Och arme! De heele wereld is er vol van. Als alles wat Jezus deed en sprak opgeschreven ware, zoude de geheele wereld dezelve woorden en daden niet kunnen bevatten. De goedertierenheid Gods is Jezus aan het kruis. Ge kunt de zucht Gods om U te zegenen meeten aan het kruis. En bij dat kruis

hoor ik God getuigen: Ik heb Mijn eenigen Zoon niet gespaard, doch heb Hem voor U allen overgegeven! Ik toon, bewijs Mijn liefde jegens U, Mijn kind, door in den Middelaar te sterven, te betalen, te voldoen voor alle Uwe zonden! Wie kan dat verstaan?

En Uwe getrouwheid in de nachten!

Die Zijn Woord gestand doet is de Getrouwe. En dat is God.

Van eeuwigheid heeft Hij het in Zichzelf gezegd: Ik heb Mijn volk lief en Ik zal ze zegenen tot in alle eeuwigheid.

En dat heeft God bewezen in de zending van Zijn Zoon in gelijkheid des zondigen vleesches, opdat Hij in dat vleesch voor de zonden van Zijn volk betalen zou.

Wij zondigen vooraleer wij van die wondere liefde hoorden. Doch God is getrouw. Hij kwam en voldeed aan het hoogste recht.

Wij zondigen nadat wij er van hoorden: in en met Petrus zullen we den Heere verloochen. Doch Hij is getrouw en gaat van uit de zaal van Annas naar die van Kajafas, Petrus voorbij, al biddende. God is trouw en wij zijn ontrouw. Petrus en wij weenen bitterlijk.

Wij zondigen elken dag temidden van de uitstorting van al de genade Gods. Doch God is getrouw. Hij kan Zichzelven niet verloochen. Hij geeft genade voor genade. En hier weidt mijn ziel met een verwonderend oog!

Zullen we dan niet in de nachten er van zingen?

In den morgenstond komt ons Zijne goedertierenheid voor. Asaf zegt, dat hij elken morgen zijn bestraffing vond. Soms heb ik wel eens gedacht, dat het zóó verstaan moet worden: 's morgens wordt men wakker en dan ziet men overal Gods wondere zegeningen: Hij stond bij ons bed al die uren van den nacht en deed ons hart kloppen, ons bloed loopen, ons lichaam rusten; o, gaat toch door, steeds door! En bij het zien van al die zorg, al die zegeningen en wonderen Gods, boog Asaf het oog en zuchtte: Wie ben ik? Is dat geen bestraffing?

Het beste is dat men zinge in den morgenstond. Zegt het al jubelende, dat Hij de wondere en de goeddoende God is.

Maar des nachts zingen we van de trouw. Dat gaat dieper.

De nacht vertelt me, dat ik een vuile zondaar ben. De nacht is bang en donker en jaagt mij de schrik op het lijf.

Maar Hij geeft psalmen in den nacht. Dan komt Hij en fluistert te midden van den donder der wet en de vloek van Gods geboden: Alles komt terecht: Ik zal U verlossen. Ik heb het Mijzelf beloofd van voor de grondlegging der wereld. En Mijn naam is de Getrouwe! Daarom, in dezen bangen en vreeselijken nacht, waar gij, Mijn kind, tranen stort van bangigheid en vreeze, in dezen nacht, moogt ge zingen van

Mijn trouw. Hoe staat het er ook weer? "Daar Zijn geheilgd volk van Zijnen trouw mag zingen."

Ja, Gods trouw is wonderlijk. Hoe steekt het af bij onze ontrouw. God zeide van eeuwigheid: Ik heb U lief! En nadat wij in de zonde vielen zegt Hij het nog: dat is Golgotha. Zoo zijn wij, arme mensen, niet. Wij veranderen. En schaamte kleurt ons aangezicht.

Maakt er maar muziek bij. Het tiensnarig instrument. Dat is de volle wil Gods. Tien is een rond getal. De muziek Gods zal het U vertellen in liefelijke akkoorden, dat God goed is en trouw. Maakt maar een voorbedacht lied. Dat heeft God ook gedaan. Alle liederen Gods zijn voorbedacht. Van voor de grondlegging der wereld. Jezus haalt psalmen aan die voorbedacht waren in het Oude Testament. Opdat alles rustig en kalm en zuiver gaan moge.

"Want Gij hebt mij verblijd, Heere, met Uwe daden; ik zal juichen over de werken Uwer handen!"

Hoe schoon gezongen! Doch ook: hoe weinig gezien in onze dagen.

Gods daden en de werken van Gods handen: waar zijn ze? Wie heeft oogen ervoor? God is uit het gezicht verlooren: hoe zal men dan Zijn daden en werken zien? Om Zijn werk en daden te zien, moet ge eerst God zien? Ziet ge God? Die vraag is eigenlijk gemakkelijk te beantwoorden. Want God is niet verre van ons. En Zijn daden zijn enkel majesteit.

Maar de mensch is van nature een hater Gods. En dan bedrijft hij moord in zijn hart en verstand. En dan zijn al zijn gedachten, dat er geen God is. En als men God niet meer ziet, dan ziet men Gods daden en Zijner handen werk ook niet meer. Die dingen zitten in een vast verband.

Is er dan toch oorlog, of een oogst of droogte of ellende en dood, dan is het geen werk Gods, doch dan is het Hitler of Roosevelt, of de zon, of de regen, of de koorts, of de vijand die vloekt. Doch men zegt niet met David: laat Simeï vloeken, want God heeft tot hem gezegd: Vloek David!

Maar wij zullen er van zingen, geliefden! We zien God. We zeggen met David: Ik stelde den Heere ten allen dage voor mij! Daarom zal ik niet wankelen! Neen, maar dan gaan we zingen van Zijn daden. Zingen? Ja, want al Zijn daden zijn goed en wijs en lieflijk. God heeft nog nooit wat gedaan dat niet aanbiddelijk schoon is. Zingt ge niet: 't Is trouw al wat Zijn hand beval?

Als we dan zien, dat al Gods daden en werken zich concentreeren rondom de verheerlijking Zijns Naams in Christus Jezus, in de verlossing en verheerlijking van de stad Gods, dan zeggen we: Gij, Heere, hebt mij verblijd! Daarom zal ik zingen en psalmzingen Uwen Naam!

Dit is alles Sabbatvieren.

“O Heere! hoe groot zijn Uwe werken, zeer diep zijn Uwe gedachten!”

De zanger daalt af tot op de fundamenten. Hij weet, dat achter al de daden Gods de gedachten Gods liggen. En de gedachten Gods zijn Zijn Raad.

Ja, die Raad: hoe wonderlijk is die Raad des Heeren (Heeren).

In dien raad is opgenomen alles en allen. Alles wat ge ziet is een ontrolling van dien raad des Heeren. En die gedachten Gods zijn eeuwig. Hij raakt nooit uitgedacht. De Raad Gods is van eeuwigheid, ja, maar ook van geslachte tot geslachte en tot in de eeuwigheid. Nooit is God zonder Zijn raad. En alles wat in den tijd geschiedt is reëel voor God in dien raad. En de dingen ziende in dien Raad, verlustigt de Heere zich in de dingen die Hij wilde en bij Zich had van eeuwigheid tot in eeuwigheid.

En die gedachten zijn diep. Dat zien we als die gedachten dingen worden en geschieden rondom ons. Nog steeds schreeuwt de stem van Jezus in de verten der lichtjaren. Nog steeds is die trilling van het brullen van Jezus in de ruimten. En die diepe dingen van het kruis van Jezus worden ons steeds klaar-der bij het leven van het Woord, het liefelijke Woord. En dat Woord bestudeerende zien we de duizelingwekkende diepten van Gods wondere gedachten des vredes in Christus Jezus.

Dat Hij Zich in dien Weg wilde verheerlijken. Door den dood van Jezus naar de verhooging van den Christus aan 's Vaders rechterhand. Om in dien Christus ons te laten zien hoe lieflijk de Godheid van God is. Opdat we met verwonderende oogen zouden inblikken in het Mysterie.

Zouden we dan onzen tijd er niet van nemen op den *rustdag*?

Zouden we dan niet naar de kerk gaan? Vervloekt is hij die het niet wil. En God zal verder vloeken. Wat!? Op zoo groote zaligheid geen acht nemen?

Gaat dan naar Gods Huis op den Sabbat, geliefden! Daar is het goed. Daar wordt het vette van Zijn Huis gesmaakt. Een volle beek van wellust maakt daar elk van liefde dronken.

Daar wordt ook de rust geschonken.

De rust is de hemel, is het hemelsche Kanaän, het nieuwe Jeruzalem.

De rust is de vrede Gods.

De rust is een lied in het hart, een melodie in de ziel, een zingen uit den treure, vanuit den diepen nacht.

De Sabbat is een voorsmaak van al het genot des hemels.

Daar staan, O Godstad, onze voeten! Jeruzalem: we beminnen U! Daar hooren we van God, van God dien we beminnen!

G. V.

IN HIS FEAR

Our Baptism Form (4)

Thus far the Baptism Form spoke of “God’s part” in the covenant in distinction from “our part”. In the next paragraph it considers “our part”, stating, “Whereas in all covenants there are contained two parts: therefore are we by God through baptism admonished of and obliged to a new obedience. . . .”, etc.

Emphatically the Form brings home to us that God establishes His own covenant with us and realizes it in us. The establishment and the realization are both of God. If baptism means anything at all, it means exactly that to us. Particularly infant baptism, administered in our earliest infancy, when we do not realize what it is all about, much less have any choice in the matter, emphasizes that God takes us into His covenant life solely according to His eternal good pleasure and only by the work of His sovereign grace. It is not of him who willeth, nor of him who runneth, but of God Who sheweth mercy.

The Form stresses this when it describes what God witnesses and seals to us in baptism. It states that God, the Father, witnesses and seals to us that He makes an eternal covenant with us, adopting us for His children and heirs. The Son seals that He washes us in His blood from all our sins, incorporating us into His fellowship and death. And the Holy Ghost assures us that He will dwell in us and sanctify us to be members of Christ, until we finally appear without spot or wrinkle in the assembly of the elect in life eternal.

We would make a very fundamental mistake if we would distinguish between the three persons of the Holy Trinity in such a way, that we ascribe separate works to each of the three persons. If we were to maintain that the peculiar work of the first person is to establish a covenant with us, that of the second person to atone and open the way for us to enter the covenant, and that of the Holy Ghost to realize that covenant by taking us into it, the result would be that we would deny the unity of the three persons and create three gods in the place of the One. We need but be reminded that God works all things as Father, Son and Holy Ghost. For all God’s works proceed from the Father, and are accomplished through the Son and in the Holy Ghost. Even the creation of the world was by the Father, through the Word, John 1:1, and in the Holy Ghost, Who moved upon the face of the waters. And of the creation of man we read that

the triune God said, "Let us make man in our image and after our likeness."

Therefore when the Form distinguishes between Father, Son and Holy Ghost, this can only be understood correctly if "the Father" is taken to refer to the complete Godhead, "the Son" referring to the Christ, and "the Holy Ghost" referring to the Spirit of Christ as He dwells in the Church. After all, it is the triune God Who establishes His covenant with us; it is Christ Who suffers and dies for us, shedding His atoning blood that we may be freed from all guilt; and it is the Holy Spirit as Spirit of Christ Who is poured out and dwells in us to apply to our hearts all the blessings of salvation which God has prepared for us in Christ.

All three persons, the full Godhead, is always engaged in that one glorious work of salvation, revealing Himself to us as the ever blessed God of our salvation.

But what is even more significant is the fact that it is all of God. God both establishes and realizes His own covenant in the believers and their seed.

The Baptism Form first leads us back to God's eternal election. Then it points us to Christ's work of salvation accomplished for His own on the cross. And finally shows us that God finishes His own work by the Holy Spirit Who dwells in us and completely sanctifies us unto perfection in heaven. All this belongs to the establishment of God's covenant. God, first of all, establishes His covenant with us from all eternity. Then He establishes it in time by the atonement of the cross. And finally He establishes it with us by His Spirit in our hearts. The realization of that established covenant is in heaven.

First of all, God the Father adopts us for His children and heirs. Sovereignly He determines to take a people into His covenant life to show forth His glory. In sovereign good pleasure He chooses His own, determining how many sons He shall take into His life, and who they shall be. According to His own purpose He adopts them to sons and makes them heirs of His own glorious life. It is the impenetrable and unfathomable wonder of grace that the Testator prepares His inheritance for the heirs of salvation, and that we and our seed are included in that divine Testament.

Secondly, "God the Son", as the Christ, prepares our salvation for us by His death and atonement on the cross. For we were dead in trespasses and sins, by nature children of wrath, even as others. But God, Who is rich in mercy, has atoned for us and quickened us from the dead in Christ. Eph. 2:3-6. Christ suffered, died and is risen as our Head, so that when He died, we died with Him; died to sin. And when He arose, we arose in newness of life. When He went to

glory, He went as our Forerunner, opening the new and living way into the heavenly sanctuary.

And finally, "God the Holy Ghost" dwells in us forever. Christ comes into our hearts in His Spirit to apply to us all the blessings of salvation which He has merited for us by His death and resurrection.

The former Prof. W. Heyns makes an exception exactly at this point. He states that all those covenant benefits of the Father and the Son, as mentioned above, are objectively realized, and are promised to all who are baptized. But the promise is conditional, contingent on our acceptance, which is "our part" in the covenant. We become conscious partakers of all those benefits only if we express a willingness to accept them and allow the Holy Ghost to dwell in us. When the Form declares that "the Holy Ghost assures us that He will dwell in us, Prof. Heyns interprets that to mean that He *"is willing to dwell in us."* (Gereformeerde Geloofsleer, page 133). This interpretation is so evidently imposed upon the Baptism Form that it needs no refutation for anyone who is basically Reformed. It deprives us of all the assurance that our baptism is intended to give us, assuring us of nothing more than the willingness of the Holy Spirit to dwell in us, if we care to have Him. This is the doctrine of the "free-will", pure and simple, applied to our baptism.

The idea of our Baptism Form is rather, that baptism assures of something that extends into the future. Baptism assures us that the Holy Spirit will abide with us forever. He is not merely willing, but He *will*. He enters into our hearts to change them from hearts of stone to hearts of flesh. Ezech. 11:19. He implants the life of the risen Lord, which becomes the new life-principle within us, ruling over us and blessing us. Rom. 8:2. And He dwells in us as in temples of God, I Cor. 6:19, abiding with us forever. John 14:16. In Him we are sealed unto the day of redemption. Eph. 4:30.

By the Holy Spirit we become conscious partakers of all the riches of Christ. He receives these blessings out of Christ and bestows them on us. Thus we receive the washing away of sins and the daily renewal of our lives. We are sanctified in Christ by the Spirit.

And He also prepares us for the salvation in glory, finishing the good work which God has begun for us from eternity, Phil. 1:6, until He can present us "without spot or wrinkle among the assembly of the elect in life eternal." Eph. 5:17. In that day the whole household of God will be complete, and we shall enjoy the blessedness of God's friendship in perfection as sons in His house.

All this baptism witnesses and seals to us. Therefore it is so entirely proper that we and our children receive this sign of God's covenant already in our

earliest infancy. It seals to the believer "God's part" in the covenant, that is, His eternal love and sovereign power whereby He proves Himself to be our God and the God of our seed forever. And at the same time it seals to us "our part" in the covenant, with all boasting excluded.

The question naturally forces itself upon us, if it is all of God, what is "our part" in the covenant?

We can heartily appreciate the fact that our Form speaks of "parts", and not of "parties". Even those who like to stress the fact that the covenant is unilateral in its establishment, will sometimes speak of parties, and thus make the covenant bi-lateral in its "realization". If the covenant is an agreement, it necessarily consists of two parties. And if the promise of God is considered to be conditional, depending on our acceptance, we again become a party in the covenant, and the covenant is no longer strictly God's.

But this is not according to Scripture, nor can it be inferred from the Form. We have had repeated occasion to note that it is God's covenant. It has its deepest cause and origin in Him. He has willed it, establishes it with whom He will, and also realizes it. In that covenant God promises to bless the heirs of salvation with all the blessings He has prepared for them in Christ. And this promise is His divine Word, His oath, sworn by Himself, which He seals in the sacrament of baptism. Therefore He also fulfills His promise Himself by establishing and realizing His covenant with His people.

"Our part" is certainly not this, that we add to the work of God or in any way cooperate with Him toward the realization of His covenant. That is contrary to the whole idea of the covenant in Scripture. But that is also impossible, for compared with God we are less than nothing. Yes, we are even dead in trespasses and sins, so that we cannot and will not do anything but oppose our salvation. It is all of God.

But from the work of God's grace in our hearts follows "our part", which is the *fruit* and *manifestation* of God's work of grace in us. God makes us conscious partakers of His covenant by the adoption to sons in our hearts. He gives us the adoption, and we are conscious of the fact that we are sons. He washes us, and we become sanctified, fit unto every good work. He takes us into His covenant life, and we enjoy the blessedness of His fellowship. Our part is always fruit of what God works in us. It is the deliverance from our present misery, revealing itself in gratitude. Lord's Day 32, Heid. Cat.

This is in perfect harmony with the thought of the Form itself, which teaches us that "the principle parts of the doctrine of holy baptism are these three:

First, a knowledge of our misery, so that we loathe and humble ourselves before God; secondly, a knowledge of our deliverance, the washing away of our sins whereby we are taken into God's covenant; and thirdly, a knowledge of our gratitude, as abiding within the covenant of God. Thus Scripture can admonish us, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Phil. 2:12, 13. And Jesus instructs us, "Abide in Me, and (because) I (abide) in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in Me." John 15:4.

That part the Baptism Form calls a "new obedience, namely, that we cleave to this one God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost; that we trust in Him with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our mind, and with all our strength; that we forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and holy life."

Even so, that part is still accomplished in the weakness of this body of sin. Against our will we still fall into sin, so that the complaint is forced from us, "What I will I do not, and what I do not will I do. O, miserable man that I am". If the realization of the covenant depended in any way on us, we would have just reason to despair daily for ourselves and our children. But God is merciful and ever faithful, and "baptism is a seal and undoubted testimony that we have an eternal covenant with God". Therefore, let us not despair, but put away that sin that so lightly besets us and put on holiness in the fear of God, as it behooves saints.

C. H.

IN MEMORIAM

On July 27, 1946, it pleased the Lord to take out of our family circle, after a lingering illness, our wife, mother and grandmother,

MRS. ANNIE KONING

at the age of 47 years.

We keenly feel our loss but we rest in the blessed assurance that the work of the Lord is perfect and that He doeth all things well. May her passing teach us all to number our days and apply our hearts unto wisdom.

Mr. Nick Koning
Mr. and Mrs. Ike Faber
Mr. and Mrs. Jake Koning
Bertha Mae
and three grandchildren.

FROM HOLY WRIT

The Convicting Office Of The Spirit

(With Respect To Sin)

The first point upon which the Holy Spirit will convict the world is with respect to sin.

In our attempt to make real to our minds what is meant by this convicting work we might be inclined to transfer this operation to the day of Christ's return and judgment of which the Bible so often speaks as the day when the secrets of men shall be revealed, as the day when every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess to God, and when every man shall give account of himself to God. (Rom. 2:16; 4:11, 12).

Yet this idea is rather definitely excluded by the closeness with which the promise is connected with the lives of the Apostles, and it is also not favored by the form of the expressing "when He is come", which especially our Dutch version separates the coming from the action following more than is necessary for it evidently means "and He coming", or "when He comes", He will convict, etc.

Now of the Spirit thus coming it is said "He will reprove the World". We have already suggested that this does not quite express the idea of the Saviour, especially to our modern ears. Reprove, to our ears, means "to rebuke openly", or "to censure". This, however, is not the meaning of the word in the Bible, nor does it harmonize with the possible meaning of the word in the two "because" clauses that follow. The meaning is rather the action of a teacher or authority whereby a truth hitherto not acknowledged, is so demonstrated to an unwilling conscience that the mind is compelled to yield to its power. So Trench (Synonyms, etc., p. 14), quoting Lampe with ardent approval. We are thus lead to render this word not by reprove, but by convict or convince, and of these the latter is undoubtedly more in accord with the passage which deals not so much with legal conviction as with moral persuasion, therefore, convince. He shall convince the world.

Now this convincing will be carried out from three viewpoints or in three phases, and first in order is the Convincing of sin.

The meaning of this expression is largely determined by the meaning of the "because" clause that follows. And as is so often the case, especially in the writings of the Apostle John, the word rendered because, may have various shades of meaning, indicating cause, or ground, or also content. Here, however, in

accordance with the two parallel clauses that follow, it cannot well indicate cause, and we are necessitated to take it as the ground of the conviction that is established.

Let us try to understand this.

Negatively speaking, it does not mean that because men do not believe in Jesus, that therefore they are lost, and this is the cause of their perdition, and that the Spirit tries to bring them to the conviction of this fatal negligence so that they may turn therefrom. We know that it is often taught that Christ has made atonement for all men and that thus all their sins are paid for. Consequently the only sin that can be fatal is the sin of not accepting Jesus. Logically speaking this must not really be a sin but only an unfortunate mistake, a fatal judgment of the mind.

I may quote a typical passage from Lenski on Matt. 25:43—"In the last analysis it is not sin as such at all that damns, whether great or small, many or few, commissions or omissions. For all sins can be pardoned and wiped away forever by grace. In the final analysis it is unbelief that damns, the unbelief that ever says no to grace, continues to say this no even in hell (Luke 16:30), and thus retains for itself also the guilt and damnation of all its other sins". This is not merely an attempted exegesis of this passage, but it is a doctrinal postulate with this writer and it occurs often. (See Rom. 5:18; I Peter 2:1).

But our text teaches that He will convince the world of sin, and then this is to be taken in its most general sense of not performing the will of God, or of being delinquent in relation to the demands and requirements of God.

This meaning in the text is plain from the words of the Saviour in the context, where He teaches that the hatred of the world against the Apostles (chap. 15:21) and against Himself (15:22-24) is nothing but a manifestation of their hatred against the Father Himself.

So it is often in the Bible. This one is set for a fall and a rising again of many in Israel and a sign that shall be spoken against that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed, Luke 2:34. Thus is also the teaching of the Saviour in John 3:17ff. God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world. . . . He that believeth not has already been condemned, because he has not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God. This, however, is the condemnation, that light has come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For he that does evil will not come to the light lest his deeds be convicted (also here the word "elenchthee").

In these several passages the sin which is referred to is the one great depravity of nature, and

the one great resultant alienation from God's holy will of righteousness. They hate the Father, their deeds are habitually evil and these deeds are in accord with the thoughts of their hearts.

So it is in our passage. The world is convicted here of its utter sinfulness, apart from this added sin of unbelief. It is totally depraved.

And now the ground upon which this conviction rests in the mind of that sinful and condemned world is that they do not believe in Christ. That is the undeniable proof before their own eyes that they are under the sentence of utter sinfulness. That removes every veil with which they might hide the fact that they are not really enemies of God and of all that is good in His creation and revelation. They even reject the All-glorious Son of His own bosom and that even when He comes as a messenger of divine mercy.

Thus it is not the rejection of Christ that brings men to perdition. This rejection really comes afterward and is only the proof of their inborn perversity and aversion to the highest good.

This unbelief, of course, manifests itself in various ways and degrees. There is a difference between failing to believe in Christ as the Babe of Bethlehem, and the humiliated son of Man preaching and laboring in Israel and again the resurrected Christ, and again the Christ returned and present in the mighty Spirit of Pentecost. But in whatever form this appears it is always unbelief in the revelation of the arm of the Lord, disobedience to the Messenger of the Covenant of the Lord of Hosts.

Now the question may arise: how shall we harmonize this with that statement that men will be judged by the law written or unwritten. Rom. 2:1ff.

There is undoubtedly this difference, that whereas the separate acts of men are judged by the law, so that every man shall be judged in accordance with his works as they are weighed, great and small, by the standard of the law, on the other hand the conviction established by the attitude toward the Christ will especially testify to the spiritual quality of those works as basically evil.

Hence it is not necessary to limit the application of this conviction only to those who have definitely made contact with Christ or the Gospel in the New Dispensation, but it can very well apply also to those who lived under the Old Testament form of revelation in which also the Christ was revealed, from the time of Cain and Abel to the very last.

And this proof of the quality of men's works can even apply to those who have never seen or heard of Christ, because they admittedly are of the same nature and stock as those are who have concretely historically rejected Him, because their deeds were evil. By

the example and test of their new dispensational representatives the entire race is proved to be in sin.

At this juncture the question may arise whether this interpretation is sustained at all by our experience. And since it is a fallible interpretation also experience may be used as a test. And then it does seem as though this conviction is not observed in the world, it does not appear that men are impressed to silence and consent by the testimony of the Christ.

However the experiential support for the interpretation that this is saving conviction instead of a non-saving conviction is at least not any stronger. It is not our experience either that men are brought to a saving conviction of their sin by reflecting that they do not and have not believed in the Christ of God, even though that interpretation often presents it so.

And yet it is exactly the revelation of the Christ in the Gospel that is adapted to work the conviction of sin.

There is surely no higher and clearer revelation of God than the historical revelation of Christ. There is no rock upon which unbelief, criticism, modernism, dashes itself more futilely, than upon the rock of Christ Resurrected as the testification of the validity of His Messianic claims.

Men may seem to have some pretense of questioning the Old Testament with its so-called primitive religion and ethics. They may seem to have an excuse to question the claims of the church amid her changes and instabilities. But all these attacks and denials are silenced when we come to the essence of the Scripture and the Church, so they are the proclamation and revelation of the Messiah of God, sinless, raised from the dead and exalted before the eyes of many unimpeachable witnesses. Any man who does not believe in this Christ, bears in his own conscience the conviction that he is sold in the power of sin and will not come to the light lest his life and deeds be reproved.

We must say a final word about the manner of this convincing work.

This is not an operation of the Spirit that has no content, but the content is provided by the Saviour through the Apostolic preaching, "He shall testify concerning Me. And you also shall testify, because you are with Me from the beginning (John 15:26). The relation here is such that the Spirit is the Source of the testimony, and they, the Apostles, testify as a consequence. But the content of the testimony is drawn from the material of their observation acquired while they heard and saw Him in His ministry.

But this Apostolic message is, of course, also the testimony of the Church. It is the testimony with which you and I are entrusted. And so we must be ever careful that we present no other message. There

may be no mistake about our message so that men do not become confronted with the Christ of the Scriptures. No message of human progress, or righteousness, or morality will serve this purpose. Men must be able to say that God has made this Jesus both Lord and Christ and then must be brought to say in their own conscience: "We will not have this man to reign over us".

A. P.

PERISCOPE

Neutral Labor Unions

The committee appointed by the Christian Reformed Synod of 1945 to formulate the grounds for the position taken by the Synod of 1943 in re the compatibility of Church-membership and membership in a so-called neutral labor union, gave the following report in *The Banner* of May 3:

To the Synod of 1946,
Esteemed Brethren:

The mandate of your committee is found on page 87 of the Acts of the Synod of 1945, and reads as follows:

"Synod appoint a committee to formulate the grounds for the position taken by the Synod of 1943 regarding the compatibility of church-membership and membership in the so-called neutral labor union."

The decision of the Synod of 1943 to which reference is made is found on page 102 of the Acts of that year and reads as follows:

"Church-membership and membership in a so-called neutral labor union are compatible as long as such union gives no constitutional warrant to sins, nor shows in its regular activities that it champions sin."

Regarding this synodical decision it is necessary, first of all, that it be rightly interpreted. Synod did *not* say: *that church-membership is compatible with membership in unions which reject Christ and cast aside the fundamental principles of justice contained in His Word*. What should be our attitude with respect to such unions or organizations (whether in the sphere of labor or any other sphere) has been set forth in the Report on Corporate Responsibility, whose conclusions were adopted by the Synod of 1945. See Acts of the Synod of 1945, art. 100. Compare

also the stand of our church with respect to secret, oath-bound organizations. What the Synod of 1943 *did* say was this: "church-membership and membership in a so-called neutral labor-union are compatible" And how does the Synod circumscribe the term "neutral labor union"? In these words: "a union which gives no constitutional warrant to sins, nor shows in its regular activities that it champions sin."

The Synod of 1943, in the same decision, also upheld and reaffirmed the position of the Synod of 1928 which added this touch to the description of a so-called neutral labor union; namely, that it is a union or organization whose definite aim "is not in conflict with the universal principles of justice contained in the Word of God." See Acts of the Synod of 1928, p. 91. The Synod of 1943, accordingly, stated that church-membership is compatible with membership in such a union.

Neither did the Synod of 1943 say: *that an individual can be neutral in his relation to Christ*. Synod did not in any sense deny the fact that a person is either *for* Christ or *against* him, and that this personal relationship to Christ must and will become evident in every sphere of life.

Summarizing, it has become evident that the Synod of 1943 reaffirmed the principle that church-membership is compatible with, that is, is capable of existing together with—membership in a so-called neutral labor union which, however, gives no constitutional warrant to sins, which does not show in its regular activities that it champions sin, and whose activities are not in conflict with the universal principles of justice contained in the Word of God.

The Synod of 1928, whose decisions in this matter were reaffirmed by the Synod of 1943, takes its point of departure in the fact that the believer, too, is a social being, dependent for many things on his fellow-men, many of whom are unbelievers. The believer is compelled to live with and work with unbelievers. A certain measure of cooperation is required. Thus, believer and unbeliever rise together in defence of their country. In the laboratory and in the sphere of medicine the two cooperate in seeking remedies against disease. There is no intrinsic, scriptural reason why similar cooperation would be forbidden in the sphere of business, labor, and industry, as long as such cooperation be based upon the universally valid principles of justice contained in the Word of God and stamped upon the conscience of man, Rom. 2:14, 15. Scripture forbids two extremes: on the one hand, worldliness; on the other, morbid separatism.

Now, in the light of the manner in which the Synod of 1943 and also previous Synods circumscribed the term "so-called neutral labor unions" when these

Synods affirmed that membership in such unions and membership in the church are compatible, your committee advises Synod to adopt the following recommendations:

A. Synod declare that the position adopted by the Synod of 1943 and by previous Synods; namely, that "church-membership and membership in so-called neutral labor unions are compatible" is based upon the following grounds:

1. Becoming a member of such a so-called neutral labor union does not as such constitute a sinful act, inasmuch as according to synod's circumscription such unions as here meant give no constitutional warrant to sins, and do not show in their regular activities that they champion sin or that they are in conflict with the universal principles of justice contained in the Word of God.

2. It follows that becoming a member of a so-called neutral labor union, as thus described, does not constitute a censurable act.

3. To adopt the principle, making it applicable to every case, that church-membership is incompatible with membership in labor-unions which give no constitutional warrant to sins and which do not show in their regular activities that they champion sin or that they are in conflict with the universal principles of justice contained in the Word of God would amount to dangerous separatism, which is condemned by Scripture, John 17:15, I Cor. 5:9-11. See the explanation of these passages in the Agenda of 1926, pp. 116, 117.

B. With respect to membership in organizations (in any sphere, including labor) which do give constitutional warrant to sin and/or show in their regular activities that they do champion sin, Synod call the attention of the church to the Report on Corporate Responsibility, whose conclusions were adopted by the Synod of 1945, and which gives adequate advice to consistories and classes with respect to this matter. See Acts of Synod of 1945, article 100. Note also the detailed exegesis of the Scripture passages upon which these conclusions are based, Agenda 1945, pp. 28-37.

C. Whereas it is undeniable that many organizations, in whatever sphere (whether labor, business, or professional) have assumed or tend to assume a character which excludes them from the class of so-called neutral unions, as circumscribed by the Synod of 1943, and places them in a class of organizations against which the Synod of 1945 has issued a warning, and whereas membership in such worldly unions or organizations entails moral and spiritual danger, Synod repeat the exhortation given in the Conclusion of the Report on Corporate Responsibility and adopted by the Synod of 1945; namely, that wherever feasible

our people "establish and promote definitely Christian organizations in the social sphere."

Respectfully submitted,

The Committee:

In our estimation and judgment of this report this committee has either been dishonest or they are blind leaders of the blind. According to the report of the committee *an individual cannot be neutral in his relation to Christ, and that* "the Synod of 1943 did not in *any sense* deny the fact that a person is either *for* Christ or *against* Him, and that this personal relationship to Christ must and will become evident in every sphere of life." If this be true of an individual it is equally true of an organization composed of a group of individuals. And yet, according to one of the committee members the committee took the position that it is possible, theoretically at least, that an organization can be neutral, that is neither *for* nor *against*. It describes such a "neutral" organization as "an organization that gives no expression in its Constitution concerning the recognition of God and His Word, *but does not take a stand in opposition to it either*, (I underscore, B. K.) and which in its activities does not violate Christian principles of justice and conduct." How dare such a committee say "Synod did not in *any sense* deny the fact that a person is either *for* Christ or *against* him". It is further reported that "when the question was asked in a meeting of the committee whether there is any known so-called neutral labor organization that can meet the requirements set by previous Synods for justifiable membership in them, *the unanimous opinion was that there is none.*" (See Banner of June 14). And I might add that if the committee had been honest they would have said, "and there never will be, *because it is both theoretically and practically impossible.*" And if it be true that there is no such so-called neutral labor organization that can meet the requirements set by the Synods of the Christian Reformed Churches for justifiable membership in them, then why do the Christian Reformed Churches not merely tolerate such union members, but also receive such members with open arms, when they come to them from our churches, because our churches have put them under censure.

No, I do not write these things in a spirit of bitterness. God knows how conscious I am of the tremendous problems that are facing God's people in the midst of the world. But may God save us from such blind leaders of the blind, and give us courageous leaders who dare openly proclaim that there is, and neither can be any concord between Christ and Belial, between the table of the Lord, and the table of the devil.

B. K.