

# THE STANDARD

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## MEDITATION

### Zalig Door Een Werkend Geloof

*Wat nuttigheid is het, mijne broeders! indien iemand zegt, dat hij het geloof heeft, en hij heeft de werken niet? kan dat geloof hem zalig maken? Indien er nu een broeder of zuster naakt zouden zijn, en gebrek zouden hebben aan dagelijksch voedsel; En iemand van u tot hen zou zeggen: Gaat henen in vrede, wordt warm, en wordt verzadigd; en gijlieden zoudt hun niet geven de nooddruf-tigheden des lichaams, wat nuttigheid is dat? Alzoo ook het geloof, indien het de werken niet heeft, is bij zichzelfen dood.*

*Jak. 2:14-17.*

Kan dat geloof u zalig maken?

Niet: kan *het* geloof, maar *dat* geloof u zalig maken?

Het geloof, dat gij zegt te bezitten, maar dat zich op geenerlei wijze openbaart in de werken, het dood geloof, zoo ge wilt, kan dat u zalig maken?

Neen, ook hier leert de Schrift niet, dat de zaligheid, in welken zin dan ook, uit de werken is.

Zeker, men heeft deze en dergelijke plaatsen wel zoo verklaard. Jakobus zou dan leeren, dat het toch maar op de werken, niet op het geloof, op de werken in tegenstelling met het geloof zelfs, aankomt. Het geloof alleen maakt den mensch niet rechtvaardig. Neen, hij wordt zalig, óf doordat hij uit zichzelfen de werken der wet volbrengt, óf door de werken, die uit het geloof voortkomen; maar in elk geval is het niet het geloof, maar zijn het de werken, die den grond onzer rechtvaardigheid voor God zijn.

Hoe zou in dat geval hetgeen Jakobus hier leert indruischen tegen heel de leer der Schrift!

En tevens tegen alle waarachtige ervaring der ge-

loovigen, die door den Geest en door het Woord ontdekt werden aan eigen boosheid en verdorvenheid, aan eigen schuld en doemwaardigheid voor God; en die door dienzelfden Geest en door datzelfde Woord geleerd hebben om hun hope der verlossing alleen in Jezus, als den eenigen grond hunner zaligheid te zoeken en te vinden!

Hij toch weet het, weet het omdat hij alzoo door God geleerd werd, dat er van de werken van den natuurlijken mensch, niets, maar dan ook volstrekt niets goeds te zeggen valt. Bij hem is niets anders dan een vuile bron van ongerechtigheden. In den weg der werken is er dus voor hem geene zaligheid, niets dan verdoemenis te verwachten. Hij weet ook, dat geen werken, hoe goed ook, hoe volmaakt en zonder zonde ze ook zouden zijn, bij den levenden God ooit iets zouden kunnen verdienen, de schuld der zonde nimmermeer zouden kunnen uitdelgen. En hij belijdt bovendien, dat ook zijne werken als vruchten des geloofs in dit leven toch nimmer volmaakt zijn voor God, met allerlei zonde en boosheid bezoedeld zijn, dat hij nog slechts een klein beginsel der nieuwe gehoorzaamheid heeft, en dat hij daarop nimmer de hope zijner zaligheid zou durven fundeeren.

Zoo leert het de Schrift overal.

En in den brief van Jakobus vindt ge het niet anders.

Immers stelt zich de Schrift ook hier niet tegenover degenen, die belijden, dat ze alleen door het geloof rechtvaardig zijn voor God, maar trekt zij de tegenstelling tusschen een dood en een werkend geloof.

Het eerste draagt geen vrucht, het tweede wordt juist door de vruchten gekend.

Het tweede is het waarachtig geloof, dat zalig maakt.

In het eerste schuilt geen kracht tot zaligheid.

Kan dat geloof u zalig maken?

*Dat* geloof?

O zeker, *het* geloof maakt zalig!

Want immers, al ons heil is in Christus alleen, en het geloof is de levensband aan dien rijken Christus.

In Christus is de volkomene voldoening voor al onze zonden, verzoening met God, vergeving der misdaden, eeuwige gerechtigheid, kindschap Gods, en eeuwig leven. In Hem is genade voor genade, de volkomene verlossing van zonde en dood, de volle bron van alle kennis en wijsheid, de gunste Gods en de gemeenschap der vriendschap met den Drieëenige. Want Hij is ons van God geworden wijsheid, en rechtvaardigheid, en heiligmaking, en verlossing.

Hij is dit alles als hoofd der zijnen, Hem van God gegeven vóór de grondlegging der wereld, gegeven ook in den tijd.

Hoofd der zijnen is Hij in rechtelijken zin, zoodat Zijne gerechtigheid hun wordt toegerekend uit ongehoudene genade; en zoodat alle heil, dat in Hem is, *hun* heil is. Ze hebben er voor God recht op, niet omdat ze ook maar in het allergeeringste zichzelf dat recht hebben waardig gemaakt; integendeel, in weerwil van het feit, dat ze het geheel en al verbeurd hebben, en dat ze het zich elken dag, ja, elk oogenblik opnieuw onwaardig maken; maar louter en alleen, omdat God het voor hen heeft beschikt, en Zijnen Zoon heeft gesteld tot een Hoofd van alle uitverkorenen. Hoofd der zijnen is Hij ook in organischen zin, zoodat het heil, dat in Hem is, hun slechts kan toekomen in geestelijke gemeenschap met Hem, Hij Zichzelf en al Zijne weldaden aan hen moet meedeelen, en zij uit Hem, maar dan ook uit Hem alleen, alles moeten trekken, wat tot hunne zaligheid van noode is.

Daarom is het, dat het geloof alleen, maar ook zeker zalig maakt.

Het ware geloof toch is de levensband in en aan dien Christus. Het is, onze ziele door Gods genade toegebrachte en ingewerkte geestelijke kracht, waardoor zij met al haar levensvezelen dien Christus aankleeft, hare levenswortelen in dien Christus, zooals Hij in de Heilige Schrift ons is geopenbaard, diep en vast inslaat, zoodat we ééne plante met Hem worden, Hem zijn ingelijfd, en nu al onze zaligheid alleen in Hem vinden en uit Hem trekken.

Van nature staan we in verband met den eersten Adam.

En in dat verband, uit rechtelijk oogpunt beschouwd, wordt zijne schuld de onze, en zijn we van het uur onzer ontvangenis af verdoemelijk voor God, kinderen des toorns; en uit organisch oogpunt bezien, brengt de gemeenschap met ons geslacht in dien eersten Adam ons niets dan verdorvenheid en dood.

Maar door het geloof staan we in levensgemeenschap met den tweeden mensch, den laatsten Adam, uit wien we ontvangen genade voor genade, gerechtigheid en leven.

O zeker, *het* geloof maakt zalig!

Maar *dat* geloof?

Het geloof, dat ge *zegt* te bezitten? Het geloof, dat geen werken heeft, en dood is?

Wat zou het u toch baten? Hoe zou het u toch zalig maken, daar het u niet in levensgemeenschap met den God uwer volkomene zaligheid in Christus stelt?

Dat geloof is dood!

Er zit geen werking in; het draagt geen vrucht!

O ja, er is zulk een dood geloof, ofschoon het met het waarachtig en zaligmakend geloof niets gemeen heeft, behalve de bloot verstandelijke aanvaarding van sommige waarheden. Ge gelooft, zoo schrijft Jakobus in het achttiende vers van ditzelfde hoofdstuk, dat God een eenig God is. Zal dat geloof u zalig maken? Immers neen; veeleer is het tegendeel waar: de duivelen gelooven het ook, en zij sidderen.

Zoo gelooft ge misschien vele dingen.

Misschien gelooft ge, dat God de wereld heeft geschapen, dat Hij de Heer is aller dingen, dat er zonde in de wereld is ingekomen, en dat ook gij zelf zondig zijt; misschien gelooft ge zelfs wel, dat Christus de Zaligmaker der wereld is, en nog veel meer.

Maar 't laat u overigens koud!

Wat zal het u al baten of ge al aan eene tafel u schikt, rijk voorzien van de heerlijkste spijzen, en ge ziet er naar, en ge stemt toe, dat de spijzen heerlijk zijn, en ook noodig tot onderhoud van uw aardse bestaan; maar ge roert ze met geen vinger aan, en ge weigert te eten en te drinken?

Wat baat het, of ge een doode paal in den grond steekt, al is de grond ook nog zoo vet, en al bemest ge dien paal ook elken dag? Zal die doode paal, waarin geen werking zit, straks uitbotten, en vruchten dragen?

Wat baat het, of op den helderen middag al een touw hangt aan den zolder in uwe woonkamer, en ge bevestigt aan het eind van het touw een lichtbolletje? Zal dat straks, als de nacht is ingevallen, uwe woonkamer kunnen verlichten?

En wat baat het u, of ge al aan den levenden God gelooft, en voor Hem slechts kunt sidderen?

Wat zaligheid zit er in een bloot verstandelijk toestemmen, dat ge zondig zijt, als het u niet in droefheid naar God op de knieën brengt, om uit te roepen: O God! wees mij zondaar genadig!

Of wat nuttigheid heeft het al, dat ge wel toestemt, dat de zaligheid in Christus is, maar ge hebt geen honger en dorst naar de gerechtigheid, en ge neemt nimmer uwe toevlucht tot Hem, om uit Hem te ontvangen genade voor genade?

Een geloof, dat u niet rechtvaardigt, niet heiligt, niet in beginsel verlost van de macht der ongerechtigheid, opdat ge Gode vruchten zoudt dragen, wat nuttigheid heeft dat?

Zal het u zalig maken?

*Dat geloof?*

*Het geloof is een werkend geloof.*

Het leeft en daarom draagt het vrucht.

Uit Christus, op Christus, door Christus en tot Christus werkt het ware geloof.

Het werkt *uit* Christus. Want Christus werkt door het geloof in ons, in heel ons bestaan, in hart en verstand en wil en al ons begeeren en verlangen. Of omgekeerd, en juist doordat Christus in ons werkt, het geloof werkt uit Christus.

Die werking des geloofs is eene werking van het diepe hart, van waaruit de uitgangen des levens zijn. En als het hart door het geloof uit Christus werkt, dan werkt het in eene richting, die de lijnrecht tegenovergestelde is van de richting der zonde. De laatste is die der vijandschap, en richt zich tegen God; de eerste is die der vriendschap, en gaat naar God uit, getrokken door den band des verbonds. Leven we door het geloof, dan leven we uit Christus het leven der vriendschap Gods. En als het beginsel der vriendschap Gods in het hart leeft, dan komt er in den zondaar eene diepe droefheid naar God, een vragen naar God, een honger en dorst naar de gerechtigheid, een hartelijk berouw over de zonde, verlangen naar vergeving en verlossing.

Het geloof werkt uit Christus.

Maar het richt zich ook op Christus. Het kent Hem, gaat naar Hem uit, zoekt Hem, eigent zich Hem en al Zijne weldaden toe, verlaat zich op Hem met lijf en ziel, voor tijd en eeuwigheid, en zich alzoo met een hartelijk vertrouwend op Hem zich latende zakken en zinken, werkt het den vrede met God, in het bewustzijn van de vergeving der zonden: den vrede, die alle verstand te boven gaat.

Uit Christus werkend, werpt zich het geloof op Christus.

En zoo werkt het door en tot Hem.

Ik leef door het geloof des Zoons van God, maar niet ik: Christus leeft in mij, en ik leef alleen door Hem. Zoo is het, en zoo blijft het. Geen oogenblik leeft de geloovige los van zijn Heiland. Zooals de wijnstok in de ranken leeft, zoo leeft Christus in ons, en zoo blijft ons geloof alleen door Hem werken.

Maar door Hem werkend, werkt het ook tot Hem.

Want door het geloof leeft Hij in ons, is Zijn wil ons willen, Zijn bedenken ons bedenken. Hij maakt ons gewillig en bereid Hem voortaan te leven. Zooals de wijnstok in de ranken leeft, en door de ranken vruchten voortbrengt, zoo draagt Christus door het geloof vruchten in ons. We zijn der wereld gekruisigd en de wereld ons, en wandelen als vrienden Gods in het midden der wereld tot prijs der heerlijkheid van Gods genade in den Geliefde.

O, 't is waar, dit alles blijft hier ten deele. Want we hebben nog slechts een klein beginsel der nieuwe gehoorzaamheid.

De werken des geloofs staan in het teeken van strijd, strijd met de wereld, maar ook met onszelven.

Maar toch, *het* geloof leeft, en daarom is er geen geloof, geen waarachtig geloof, dat geen vrucht draagt.

Maar *dat* geloof? Het geloof, dat zonder de werken is?

Hij werkt niet uit Christus, op Hem, en tot Hem. Wat nuttigheid is het? . . . .

*Dat geloof?*

Zal dat u zalig maken?

De tekst wil ons met een voorbeeld duidelijk maken, hoe ijdel en vruchteloos en onzalig zulk een geloof zonder de werken is. Let wel, dat dit de bedoeling is van het voorbeeld, en niet om aan te toonen, wat een dood geloof in onderscheiding van een levend geloof doet.

Het zeggen van iemand, dat hij het geloof heeft, terwijl zijn geloof zonder de werken blijft, is gelijk aan het doen van iemand, die zijnen naaste gebrek ziet lijden, hem verzekert van zijne hartelijke liefde en deelneming, hem het allerbeste toewenscht, hem inniglijk toebidt, dat hij spoedig uit zijn nood en ellende mag verlost worden, maar weigert hem in zijn nood te helpen. Zoo toch is het de bedoeling van het beeld. Een broeder of zuster heeft gebrek, is naakt, heeft geen dagelijksch brood. En gij zijt in staat om hem te helpen. En als ze bij u aankloppen, verzekert ge ze van uwe deelneming, en zegt: Gaat heen en wordt warm en verzadigd. Maar ge steekt geen hand uit om hen te helpen.

Wat nuttigheid is er in zulk betoon van liefde met het woord zonder de daad?

Kan het den naaste uit zijn nood verlossen, of hem troosten?

En wat nuttigheid heeft nu iemands dood geloof, zijn zeggen, dat hij gelooft, zijn verstandelijk toestemmen van de waarheid des geloofs, zonder dat zijn geloof uit en op en door en tot Christus werkt, en vruchten van gerechtigheid en leven voortbrengt?

Zal dat geloof hem zalig maken?

Het laat hem in zijne zonden, in zijnen dood. Geen sprankje van zaligheid komt er in zijne dorre ziele.

Maar *het* geloof maakt zalig!

Zalig in de blijdschap der vergeving, in de vrijheid der verlossing, in de goede conscientie, waarmee het strijdt, in den vrede met God, in de gemeenschap der vriendschap. . . .

In de hope op de volkomene verlossing!

Zalig voor eeuwig!

H. H.

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## EDITORIALS

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### Ecumenical Synodical Problems

Recently, there was assembled in Grand Rapids what was called the First Ecumenical Synod of Reformed Churches. The reader knows what is meant by a synod: it is the broadest gathering of a group of Reformed churches. The term *ecumenical* signifies universal, world-wide. So that, strictly speaking, an ecumenical synod is a synod that represents all the Reformed churches, over the whole world. This First Ecumenical Synod of Reformed Churches, however, represented only three groups of churches that profess the Reformed faith: the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, those of South Africa, and the Christian Reformed Church(es) of our country.

Some of the questions that were presented to this gathering for discussion will, no doubt, be of interest to our readers. We will, therefore, devote a little space to them in our paper.

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#### A SYNOD?

One of the first problems upon which the assembly deliberated was, whether or not it was really a synod. This was an important question, not merely, and not chiefly, because the newborn infant must have a proper name, but especially because of the closely related question of authority. What authority did this "ecumenical synod" have? This would not have been such a difficult question to answer if the gathering had proceeded from the basis of the proper, Reformed conception that a synod is never a body with highest authority over the churches it represents, but only their broadest representative gathering, whose decisions are never absolutely binding, except in as far as they are in harmony with the Word of God, and are accepted as such by the churches. It is a body of delegates, and delegates cannot possibly have authority over them that send them.

Such was the view of such men as Kuyper and Rutgers, and they never grew weary of warning the churches not to permit the major assemblies to assume the power of superior and supreme courts, and to encroach upon the autonomy of the local churches.

But the men assembled as the First Ecumenical Synod of Reformed Churches did not have this conception of a synod. According to them, a synod has real authority, and its decisions are binding upon all the churches they represent. It is a sort of supreme court, rather than a major assembly. With this deno-

tation of the name *synod* in their minds, they confronted the question: what is this present gathering to which we are delegated?

And so they faced a dilemma.

For they must either relinquish the name *synod*, and admit that their decisions could not have binding power for the churches, and this they did not like; or they must maintain the name, and with the name also the authority for which it stands in their circles, and thus become a sort of super supreme court, lording it even over the synods of their respective churches. And they felt that this was impossible.

The difficulty was all the more serious, because there was nothing by which the assembly could be guided. There is no established set of rules for such an assembly as an Ecumenical Reformed Synod: the Church Order does not mention such gatherings. And there are no precedents. There never was an Ecumenical Synod before in history. There were the ancient ecumenical councils, of course; but these actually represented the one catholic church over the whole world, and they could not serve as a prototype of a synod that was supposed to represent three distinct church-groups. And even the Synod of Dordrecht of 1618-19 could not serve as a precedent, for, although delegates from Reformed churches in other lands had been invited and were present, they only served in an advisory capacity, and the synod itself was strictly national.

What to do about this?

After a lively discussion, in the course of which different names were suggested, such as *convent*, *conference*, *council*, *assembly*, the following propositions were adopted.

"1. The present assembly bears the character of a Synod because it is a gathering of Churches which, through duly appointed delegates, convene to consider certain ecclesiastical matters in an ecclesiastical manner;

"2. The foundation of this Synod is the Holy Scriptures as interpreted by the Forms of Unity of the respective Churches which take part in this assembly; and the purpose for which it meets is in the main to seek that which is most conducive to the general edification of the participating Churches, and to give a united witness of the faith once for all delivered unto the saints.

"This purpose the participating Churches try to reach by expressing their unity in Christ, by strengthening one another in the faith, and by assisting one another to maintain soundness of doctrine and practices;

"3. In how far and in which case the decisions of this Synod are binding depends upon the instructions given to the delegates by their respective Churches;

"4. This Synod aims at being foundational and pre-

paratory, in order that the way may be paved for a larger and more ecumenical gathering."

The reader will notice that the answer to the question concerning the character and authority of the so-called first ecumenical synod is given in the first and third propositions.

The logic of the first proposition is somewhat difficult to follow. Even though the statement that the assembly in question was a regular representative of churches, convened to consider ecclesiastical matters in an ecclesiastical manner, which is, at least, debatable; it does not follow that it was a synod, and certainly not a supreme judicatory. The assembly, eager to retain the name *synod*, jumped at conclusions. The first proposition is guilty of begging the question.

Yet, although the assembly maintained the name, it did not dare to assume the authority of a synod. The third proposition, though its implication is not very clear and definite, evidently means that the authority of this first ecumenical synod was delegated, and determined by the respective synods represented by the different delegates.

In other words, although the assembly called itself a synod, it admitted at the same time that it was not a synod.

Virtually, the question was left unanswered.

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#### THE ACTION OF THE NETHERLAND SYNOD JUSTIFIABLE?

This question, too, was considered by the First Ecumenical Synod of Reformed Churches. The delegates from the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands were instructed by their Synod to present the matter to the assembly in Grand Rapids, and to decide on various phases of it. There developed a discussion as to whether it would be advisable to place this matter on the agenda of the ecumenical synod. Especially some of the brethren of the Christian Reformed Churches were afraid of the thing. Some expressed the fear that it might involve their churches into the same troubles they had in the Netherlands. They did not want to become involved. As prof. Berkhof expressed it: "The views condemned in the Netherlands are also present among us, if we decide on that phase there would be a danger." Others were convinced that it would be definitely contrary to the "mind of the Synod" of the Christian Reformed Churches to take up the matter. Others, however, were not so afraid. Also the delegates from South Africa were in favor of making some statement regarding the question. The result was that the matter was placed on the agenda of Synod. On the advice of two committees, Synod adopted the following conclusions:

"Synod informs the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands that in its judgment in case one is convinced that a Synod makes an unwarranted doctrinal pronouncement, he is not justified to bring about a rupture unless he has exhausted all the possibilities provided by the Church Order for procuring a revision and the Church insists on maintaining its position contrary to his conviction concerning the truth."

As to the doctrinal implications of the Netherland schism, the following declaration was adopted:

"Your Committee is of one mind, that the 'Declaration of 1946' is in conformity with the Scriptures and the Creeds. We recommend Synod to adopt this judgment as its own."

We cannot refrain from offering a few critical remarks on these acts of the assembly.

In the first place, in our judgment, it can hardly be considered an act of Synod at all, but only a "nice" gesture by a few delegates from two church groups respecting the decisions and actions of a third. Consider that the delegates from the Netherland Churches could not vote on the matter, unless they would become judges in their own case. It is not recorded that they refrained from voting, or that the Synod requested them to refrain; but I may well take for granted that they did not commit such an ethical error. But in that case, we have no decision of the Synod here at all, but only the expression of the delegates of two church groups concerning the acts of a third, a sister church.

Besides, the party that is, by implication, condemned by these conclusions of Synod, i.e., a delegation from the "Liberated Churches," was not present. *The Banner* informs us that, with respect to the second conclusion quoted above, "it was adopted without a dissenting vote. Practically no discussion preceded the decision." But, if one considers that no representation of the "Liberated Churches" were present to defend their side of the case; and that, moreover, the Committee that reported on the matter consisted of six members of Synod; and that the delegates from the Netherland Churches could not vote and certainly would not dissent, so that there were only very few left that could disagree and cast a dissenting vote; there is nothing wonderful or even worthy of mention in the remark of *The Banner*.

In the light of these facts, this particular act can hardly be given the weight of a decision by an *ecumenical synod*. It represents the opinion of a few men. It is a sort of a vote of confidence, a friendly gesture, no more.

Secondly, let us also note that in adopting these decisions, the Economical Synod assumed, after all, the authority of a synod. To motivate and justify its act of taking up the matter of the Netherlands controversy, synod decided to declare: "that it has authority to take up the case of 'Ecclesiastical Difficulties in

the Church of the Netherlands,' and as one of the grounds of this declaration the statement was adopted that "Synod should be an assembly to which doctrinal appeals may be addressed." It assumed, therefore, the position of a supreme court after all. That is the danger of adopting a name! When the assembly decided to call itself a synod, it was stipulated that it would assume no other authority than was delegated to them by their respective churches. The delegates were not at all instructed by their churches to take up the matter of the controversy in the Netherlands. In fact, "the mind of the Synod" of the Christian Reformed Churches was opposed to it! Yet, the assembly assumed the authority to express itself on the matter.

Let the Reformed Churches be warned!

Without having any voice in the matter, the Christian Reformed Churches are now on record as having taken a stand in opposition to the "Liberated Churches" of the Netherlands.

And by implication, they have now officially condemned Heyns!

H. H.

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## THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

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### An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

Part Two.

Of Man's Redemption

Lord's Day XXI

Q. 54. What believest thou concerning the 'holy catholic church' of Christ?

A. That the Son of God from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends, and preserves to himself by his Spirit and word, out of the whole human race, a church chosen to everlasting life, agreeing in true faith; and that I am and for ever shall remain, a living member thereof.

Q. 55. What do you understand by the communion of saints?

A. First, that all and every one, who believes, being members of Christ, are in common, partakers of him, and of all his riches and gifts; secondly, that every one must know it to be his duty, readily and cheerfully to employ his gifts, for the advantage and salvation of other members.

Q. 56. What believest thou concerning "the forgiveness of sins?"

A. That God, for the sake of Christ's satisfaction,

will no more remember my sins, neither my corrupt nature, against which I have to struggle all my life long; but will graciously impute to me the righteousness of Christ, that I may never be condemned before the tribunal of God.

## 1.

## The Idea Of The Church.

The text of the above translation is substantially correct.

It cannot be denied that our instructor, in the twenty-first Lord's Day, is rather liberal, in presenting to the preacher material for one sermon. Not only are all the three questions and answers it contains pregnant with meaning, and may the preacher find difficulty to do justice to the subject matter of the fifty-fourth question alone, in one sermon; but he may also meet with a difficult struggle to comprehend all the material offered here, under one theme. He will, no doubt, find it far more convenient and also more profitable to devote a sermon to each of these three questions and answers.

Question and answer fifty-four deal with the subject of the church.

And, as might be expected when so broad and important a subject is expounded in one brief answer, in fact, in a single sentence, every clause and phrase of it is loaded with significance.

It speaks of the idea of the church, as the gathering of the elect; of the Builder, or Gatherer, of the church: the Son of God; of the whole out of which this elect church is gathered: out of the whole human race, as it exists in time, from the beginning to the end of the world; of the agent and means whereby this church is gathered: the Spirit and the word; of the unity and catholicity of the church: agreeing in true faith; of the believer's personal assurance of his membership of the church: of which I am a member; and of the preservation of the church and its members: the Son of God defends and preserves the church, and I shall for ever remain a member thereof.

The church, let it be noted, is here considered as an object of faith. The Catechism is expounding the first part of the ninth article of the Apostolic Confession: "I believe an holy catholic church." This means, of course, "I believe that there is such a church, which is both holy and catholic." We believe *in* God the Father, *in* Jesus Christ, *in* the Holy Ghost, but we do not believe *in* the church, still less in any particular manifestation or institute of the church in the world. For to believe in someone means that we put all our confidence in him, and to place our trust in anyone or anything besides the triune God is idolatry. But we believe that the church exists, that she is gathered out of the whole world, and that she is holy and catholic, agreeing in true faith.

This implies that the essence, the attributes, and the calling of the church are not to be determined empirically, that is, by that which we observe of the church as she historically exists in the world throughout the ages, or philosophically, in the way of human contemplation, but from God's own revelation in the Scriptures. The church is not a human institution. Men do not bring her into existence. God alone determines her being, nature, purpose, and calling, even as He alone gathers and preserves her. Hence, it is from His Word alone that we can derive our knowledge concerning the church. And whatever men may postulate about her nature and calling that is contrary to the Word of God must be rejected. It is only on the basis of Scripture, through God's own revelation, that one can say: "I believe an holy catholic church."

The truth of this becomes apparent immediately, as soon as we compare the contents of the faith of the church and of the individual believer, as expressed in the ninth article of the *Apostolicum*, with the actually existing church in the world. According to our confession, the church is *catholic*. This word means universal, over the whole world. The Romish church claims the right to this epithet for itself alone, and in popular usage, even among Protestants, the term is frequently so applied. This, however, is not correct, and we should avoid this usage. In our confession the word *catholic* does not refer to the Romish church in distinction from the Protestant church, but designates the true church, as she exists in the whole world, and is one in faith. But the confession that the church is catholic, and, therefore, one in faith, cannot possibly be based on experience. For where does this unity and catholicity reveal itself in the world? Hopelessly, the church appears to be a house divided against itself. Especially since the time of the Reformation of the sixteenth century, the trend of the history of the church has been in the direction of constant secession and division. Confessions have been multiplied, and they often contradict one another on many essential points of the Christian faith. There seem to be many Christ's, many faiths, many baptisms, many hopes of our calling: the church is not one and catholic, but split up into many denominations and sects, all clamoring to be the true church. And the modern attempt to overcome this disruption, and to realize the manifestation of the unity and catholicity of the church of Christ here upon earth, by burying our differences, putting away our creeds, and establishing one catholic church at the expense of, rather than on the basis of the true faith, is worse than the division itself. Nevertheless, in spite of the division manifest in what is called church on earth, the believer maintains that the church is one and universal, agreeing in true faith. For "there is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith,

one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and in you all." The faith of the Church concerning itself is based on the Word of God.

The same contrast between the confession concerning the church and her appearance in the world exists with respect to her holiness. In the world the church never appears as a holy communion. Fact is that she is polluted with sin, and that, frequently, in her historical manifestation she appears more corrupt than the world out of which she is called. Strife and dissension, hatred and envy, bloody persecutions, the killing of the prophets, lust for power and filthy lucre,—these and many other corruptions mar her appearance. It is always in Jerusalem that Christ is killed. But in spite of this corrupt and defiled appearance of the church on earth, the believer, nevertheless, insists that she is holy. For he derives his knowledge of the church, not from experience, but from Holy Writ. And, according to Scripture, the church is a communion of saints, "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people"; in order that she "should shew forth the praises of him who hath called her (you) out of darkness into his marvellous light." I Pet. 2:9.

For an answer to the question: what is the church? we will, therefore, have to turn to the Word of God.

Scripture describes the church in various terms and by means of different figures, but they all refer to the church as one organic whole, the people of God in Christ, redeemed and called out of the world, living in fellowship with the triune God, through Christ, in the Spirit, and reflecting the glory of the grace of God in the Beloved. The name for church in the Old Testament is *Kahal*, which simply means gathering or congregation, and is especially applied to Israel as the people of God. Israel is the congregation of Jehovah, Num. 16:3; 20:4; or the congregation of God, Neh. 13:1; the congregation of Israel, Deut. 31:30; or, simply, the congregation, Ex. 16:3; Lev. 4:13. A similar word, *ekklesia*, is used in the New Testament, which also denotes a gathering of people, though it denotes the additional idea of being called out. Our word *church* is of a somewhat uncertain origin, but is probably derived from *kuriakon*, meaning *the house of the Lord*, and is used to denote the building as well as the congregation that gathers there for worship. The Scriptural name for church, therefore, presents her as a gathering, an assembly, called out of the world for the purpose of representing God's cause, of worshipping, serving, and glorifying Him.

Of significance are the more or less figurative descriptions of the Church, which the Bible offers. There is, first of all, the well-known term "body of Christ," which, perhaps, more than any other term offers us a rather concise and comprehensive denotation of the

idea of the church. She is the spiritual body of Christ, that is, the body of which Christ is the head and believers are members. For God has revealed His exceeding great power in that He raised Christ from the dead, set Him at His own right hand in heavenly places, and put all things under His feet, "and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Eph. 1:20-23. And again, in that marvellously profound and beautiful passage, Col. 1:15-20, Christ is described as the firstborn of every creature, and that, too, as the first begotten of the dead, by Whom, and unto Who, all things are created, "and he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence." And the same term to denote the church is found in the twenty-fourth verse of this same chapter: "who now rejoice in my suffering for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church." Again, in I Cor. 12:12, 13, the apostle writes: As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit."

The church, therefore, is the body of Christ.

In harmony with this idea, the Bible uses similar figures to describe the idea of the church. She is compared, by our Lord, to the vine and its branches: Christ is the vine, believers are the branches. And even as the branches live out of the vine, so believers have their life in Christ, and only when they abide in Him can they bear fruit. John 15:1-5. In the well-known eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans, the church of all ages is compared to an olive tree, on which branches are grafted in that represent the elect from Jews and Gentiles.

From a slightly different viewpoint, the church is presented as the temple of God, the city of God, the new Jerusalem, or mount Zion. Thus the apostle writes in I Cor. 3:16, 17: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." And in II Cor. 6:16-18: "What agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Believers are called the household of God, "built upon

the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone; in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple of the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God in the Spirit." Eph. 2:19-22. And "Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." Gal. 4:26. Believers of the new dispensation, therefore, are said to have come "unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect. Heb. 12:22, 23.

From the above passages, to which many more might be added, may be deduced with regard to the idea of the church, first, that she is not a mere multitude of people, but a harmonious whole, a unity, dominated by, and expressing one idea: the glory of God in Christ; secondly, that it is not a society, that comes into existence by men banding together to realize a common purpose, but a living, spiritual organism developing from and dominated by a common principle of life, the life of Christ; and, thirdly, that her nature and scope are not at all determined by the will of her members, but by the will of Christ her head.

Let us look at each of these elements a little more closely.

We must constantly bear in mind that we are not discussing the church as she appears on earth, but as she is revealed in Scripture, and is an object of our faith. Even though the church is in the world, and becomes manifest on earth as the gathering of believers and her children, through the institute, and through the confession and walk of believers, yet, the church is a spiritual organism, and as such essentially invisible. Moreover, on earth we never see more than the manifestation of a very small part of the church, as she is being gathered throughout the ages, from generation to generation. Ideally, however, the church is the body of Christ as she exists eternally in the counsel of God, and of which all the elect are members, those that have already gone on into glory, those that are still in the world, and those that must as yet be gathered from future generations; the whole church, as once she shall be presented to the Father without spot or wrinkle, to dwell in the tabernacle of God for ever.

That church is a unity, a harmonious whole, consisting of a definite number of parts or members, each of which occupies its own place, and serves its own purpose in that whole. The church is not a mere crowd of redeemed people, consisting of an arbitrary number of individuals, to which one may add, or which may be diminished without changing its essential idea.

From a pile of one thousand bricks, you may remove one third or one half, or you may add as many as you like, and the result remains the same: you still have a pile of bricks. But this is not the case with a temple, or any other edifice. A temple is not a pile of building material, wood and steel, brick and mortar, but it is a well ordered, beautiful, harmonious whole, representing one dominating idea, and serving a common purpose. Each individual part, each stone and rafter, each pillar and beam, each door and window, and each ornament fits into its own place, and serves its own purpose; and together they express the idea of the building. The same is true of the members of a body. The human body is not an arbitrary number of members, but a complete and perfect unity, a well organized whole, and every member derives its significance from the fact that it occupies its own place in the whole, and serves its purpose in the body. This is also true with respect to the church of God. It is a spiritual temple, the dwellingplace of God with men. It is a well organized body, the body of which Christ is the head and all the elect are members. It does, therefore, not consist of an arbitrary number of individual believers, without any connection or organization, but is a well organized, harmonious whole. The number of individual members that must constitute this whole is no more determined by the members themselves, or by the will of men, than the number of stones that constitute the masonry of a beautiful temple is determined by the stones or by the will of the dealer in building material. The whole and its parts, as well as the place each part must occupy, and the purpose each part must serve in the spiritual temple which is the church of Christ, are determined by the Architect before the world was. The church is a people, not a mere number of redeemed; it is a nation, not a multitude; it is a royal priesthood, not an arbitrary number of priests. And the purpose of this harmonious whole is that it may be a dwellingplace of the living God, in which God, through Christ, and in the Spirit, exercises fellowship, the fellowship of friendship, with His people, they taste that the Lord is good, and reflect His glorious grace, shewing forth the virtues of Him that called them out of darkness into His marvellous light!

This is the implication of the words of our Lord in John 6:37: "all that (not: all *those*, but all *that*) the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

And thus we understand that the Catechism touches the heart of the matter, when, in the fifty-fourth answer it speaks of the church as the gathering of the elect: "the Son of God. . . gathers, defends, and preserves to himself. . . a church chosen to everlasting life."

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## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

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### The Ark Of God Delivered

The Ark had fallen into the hands of the Philistines. In the language of the Psalmist, the Lord had delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemies' hand. And the question was what the Philistines would do with God. By the treatment that they afforded God's Ark and His people, they heaped contempt upon His name. The Ark they brought into Dagon's temple as an offering to him by whose assistance they imagined that they had achieved the victory; and they set the Ark near Dagon's image, in order that by this position it might set forth for all the Philistines the subjection of Jehovah to Dagon. Thus it is plain that all their thoughts were that Jehovah was an impotent and fallen deity, worthy of their scorn. But this is not all. Having put to flight Israel's armies, they had hastened to Shiloh, massacred its inhabitants and slain God's priests and this as fired by the vile ambition to destroy His service and memory from the face of the earth. So did the Philistines deal with Jehovah, now that they thought that He was in their power. As was stated, if ever a heathen people were worthy of doom, it was these Philistines at this juncture in their history. Such offences against the divine majesty, the insults such as they were heaping upon God's name called for severest punishment. It was time for God to act.

The Lord must now bring forth His Ark not apart from but through the agency of the Philistines and thus in the way of their being made to know and confess that Israel's God is the Lord and that Dagon is vanity. Further the Philistines must be judged and the punishment meted out to them must be commensurate with their offence with them justifying God by confessing that His strokes are doubly deserved. If these purposes were to be achieved, the Lord must multiply His signs and wonders in the land of the Philistines, harden the Philistines, while at the same time binding His plagues upon their hearts.

The Lord first laid His hand upon Dagon and spared the Philistines. Early in the morning the men of Ashdod went to the temple to learn how their deity had fared during the watches of the night in the presence of the Ark of God. That they feared the worst is indicated by their being on hand at that early hour. Thus they were not too surprised at discovering that Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the Ark of the Lord. The conclusion was inescapable that the only solution of the plight of their idol was Jehovah, His unseen hand casting his image

to the ground. Dagon had not lost his equilibrium and fallen by his own weight. For, if so, how was it to be explained that the image had remained standing thru all the years of the past. Nor could the fall of Dagon have been the work of a human. What Philistine would want to harm Dagon! And as for the possibility of some Hebrew having committed the foul deed, that was far too remote. There were no Hebrews living in Ashdod. The position of Dagon as he lay on the earth was also revealing. He was fallen upon his face to the earth before the Ark. In a word, the testimony that the Lord had done it was conclusive; and the Philistines—the men of Ashdod—with this testimony in their hearts as put there by the Lord, were rationally convinced though unwillingly and to their great dismay,—convinced were they that Jehovah is the Lord and that Dagon is vanity. For the doing of God—it was a miracle that He performed—uttered just this speech. Yet the men of Ashdod, holding the truth in unrighteousness, took Dagon and set him in his place again to be worshipped and adored by them; for the Lord hardened their hearts.

But the following day at the same early hour they returned to the temple of their deity; and saw that he was again fallen on his face to the ground before the Ark of God, but this time with disgraceful damage to his image. The head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold. Only the stump of Dagon—the fish-stump, if he was a maritime deity—remained to him. Also the speech that rose from this doing of God was clear and unmistakeable. It set forth Dagon and the entire coalition of anti-Christian powers represented by him, as prostrate before Christ, beaten and destroyed by the rod of His mouth and by the breath of His lips. It revealed to the Philistines, did this doing of the Lord, the supremacy of Israel's God over all the not-gods of the heathen, definitely over Dagon, the vanity of the worship of these gods and the foolishness of trusting in them. And the Philistines—the men of Ashdod—understood as instructed by the Lord; for they were rational men, and what was known of God through His treatment of their idol was revealed in them. Understand did they that He with whom they had to do was Israel's mighty God and that therefore the thing for them to do was to turn from their decapitated idol with its cut-off palms, serve, honor, and obey this God, and release their hold on His Ark.

But the Philistines would not hearken; they would not be wise, as it was the purpose of God to destroy them. Though the nothingness of Dagon had been fully exposed, and though it had been clearly demonstrated unto them that the Jehovah of the Hebrews was *the* God, they persisted in cleaving with their hearts to Dagon and to do him homage. Even the threshold where Dagon's image had fallen came to be regarded

by them as ground too sacred for their feet to tread. "Neither the priests of Dagon, nor any that came into Dagon's house, tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod unto this day."

As the Philistines were unwilling to be instructed by the voice of God as it had come to them through His dealings with their idol, He now laid His hand upon them. He smote Ashdod and the coasts thereof with a sore disease. The text in the English version makes mention of emerods (an obsolete form for hemorrhoids), a word denoting a painful swelling formed by the dilatation of a vein at the anus, hence piles. But the Hebrew text has *ophelim*, singular, *ophel* from the verb *aphal* to swell up, to be tumid. Hence an ophal is a hill; but the word is used as the designation also of a tumor and in general of any swelling appearing on the body of men and beasts. Further on in the narrative it is stated that the men of Gath. . . had ophelim—tumors or boils—in their secret parts. But the Hebrew text reads, "that the men of Gath had *ophelim* breaking out on them". It may also be therefore that the divine visitation consisted in the Philistines being smitten with boils from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head. The affliction was exceptionally grievous and deadly in its affect, what ever its nature may have been. The sacred text plainly brings this out. So at verse 12 (of chapter 5), where the statement occurs, "And the men that died not were smitten with the emerods: and the cry of the city went up to heaven." There is a suggestion here and elsewhere of two distinct plagues and even of three. The thought conveyed seems to be that the wrath of God so operated as to effect the speedy death of many either immediately or by a plague not mentioned in the text and that all the rest were tormented by the plague of emerods. So, too, at verse 6, "But the hand of the Lord was heavy upon them of Ashdod, and *he destroyed them and smote them with emerods*, even Ashdod and the coasts thereof." Here, too, the text plainly distinguishes between a divine working consisting in the Lord's destroying them and that working of His according to which he smote the survivors with emerods. The text suggests that the hand of the Lord was heavy upon the Philistines in still another way: It wasted their land, that is, the produce of the field, by mice. That there was such a land-plague is indicated by the after mention of the trespass offering of the five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines. The most prominent character of the field-mouse, especially in southern countries, is its greediness in eating and rapid increase. At times these animals, so it is related, multiply with rapidity and suddenness, ravage the fields far and near, and produce famine and pestilential diseases among the inhabitants of the land. But the land-plague that was visited upon the Philistines was

a wonder of grace; its purpose was the deliverance of the Ark through judgment; and the same must be said of the plagues that accompanied it. These plagues with all their attending misery and destruction, belong in the category of the ten plagues of Egypt and this by virtue of identity of purpose, of the foe to be overcome, of the God to be vindicated, of the interests to be promoted, and the people to be saved. The Egypt of the oppression reappeared in the Philistines, and the Pharaoh of that Egypt in the Philistine lords. They were one by common aim and purpose, by a common haughty pride, rebellion, utter contempt of the Lord and His people, and persistent and determined opposition to God's will. As the Egyptians, so the Philistines, they persisted to the end in hardening their hearts, and accordingly their plagues grew in severity. This, too, is plainly indicated in the text. Verse 6 is a statement to the effect that the hand of the Lord was heavy upon them of Ashdod and that He destroyed them and smote them with emerods. But in Ekron according to verses 11 and 12, "there was a deadly destruction throughout the city" so that "the cry of the city went up to heaven."

The men of Ashdod, to return now to these men, said, "The Ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us: for his hand is sore upon us and upon Dagon our god. Thus they openly declare that the severe humiliation of Dagon had indeed been the work of the Lord. Of this they had been rationally convinced all along. But holding the truth in unrighteousness, they had refused to admit it either to themselves or to one another. But they concluded that they could ill afford to prolong their silence, now that they perceived that the scope of the working of divine wrath had been so widened as to include also them. Their very lives were now at stake. And what was dearer to them than life. Something had to be done about the Ark or soon all would be dead men. So they reasoned among themselves, for they were afraid now, though harder of heart than ever as is indicated by their reaction to the Lord's dealing with them and Dagon. They sent and gathered all the lords of the Philistines unto them, and said, What shall we do with the Ark of the God of Israel? Why should they have asked that? They well knew what they should do with the Ark of Israel's God. They knew that they should reverently return it to its place. And they knew, too, that the hand of Israel's God was heavy upon them because they obstinately refused to do just that. Implicit in this knowledge was the rational conviction that the plagues that rioted among them were the revelation of the wrath of Israel's God. Yet in the same breath that they gave expression to this conviction, they asked, "What shall we do with the Ark of Israel's God?" This amazing obstinacy on the part of the Philistines can be explained. They wanted to imagine that their

capture of the Ark formed the undoubted testimony that they had emerged victorious from a warfare with Israel's mighty God and that therefore His people—the people of Israel—were theirs now and forever for them to enslave and exploit, persecute and kill as they might choose, with Jehovah standing helplessly by, unable to do anything about it at all. Their sending away the Ark to its place would be for those proud men to admit that they were bowing before a will—the will of Israel's God—that no man can resist and live. In a word, their sending away the Ark would be a concession on their part that all their imaginings were absurdly vain, that thus it was still true that Jehovah is *the* God of all the earth; that, being God, all creatures, definitely the Philistines, are so in His hand that without His will they cannot so much as move; that, this being true, they had not overcome Jehovah but had been overcome by Him, and that therefore their recent victories on the battle-field were, rightly considered, no victories at all by at bottom catastrophic defeats.

So the Philistines, now that the Lord had shifted His attack from Dagon to themselves, were in a state of great perplexity of their own creation, to be sure. On account of reasons cited above, they refused to send away the Ark to its place. On the other hand, they well knew that, as persisting in holding the Ark, they were all dead men. This then was their problem: how could they persist in holding the Ark of God, without being crushed by His power. It can also be stated thus: how could they make good their claim that they had conquered God, without perishing by His hand. That was their problem precisely; and for that problem—it was one of their own creation—they could find no solution, as there was none. But they were not yet ready to admit defeat. For the Lord was hardening their hearts. Perhaps the Philistine lords knew the way out of their quandary. They had hope. "So they sent and gathered all the lords of the Philistines unto them, and said, What shall we do with the Ark of the God of Israel?" And verily, these lords had the answer, so they wanted to imagine. They said to the men of Ashdod, "Let the Ark of the God of Israel be carried about to Gath." But that, they well knew, was not the way out of their troubles. As confessing that Jehovah is the God, and as humbling themselves under His hand, they must release their hold on the Ark, and instead of carrying it about to Gath, send it away to its place. Certainly the revelation of God's wrath was not limited to the city of Ashdod. Jehovah was the God of all the earth, with a power almighty and everywhere present. Yet, so the lords of the Philistines gave answer. For they were as obstinate as were the men of Ashdod; as vain in their imaginations; as unwilling to send the Ark to its place, and thus as determined to hold it captive.

And so they did. They let the Ark be carried about to Gath and thus chose death for the men of Gath, did these Philistine lords. Yet it must not be supposed that this was admitted either by these lords or by the Gathites. Especially these lords were stouthearted men. And they had to be for they were the leaders among their people. In times of national stress they must scoff at fear and by their word reassure the fearful, strengthen the weak, uphold the faltering and inspire all to deeds of daring. And so they did also in the present crisis. And the sacred text plainly indicates their reasonings. They said, now to the men of Gath, whither the Ark had been carried about, "It was not the hand of God that smote us—the men of Ashdod—it was chance that had happened unto us." The reasoning is thoroughly atheistic. As far as the earth and its fulness is concerned, God is not. Hence the plague that had rioted among the men of Ashdod could have had nothing to do with God and with the presence of the Ark among them, and the treatment they had afforded it. There was no connection whatever. The plague had just happened, and, according to the law of averages, would not happen again, at least for a long time. Hence the Gathites had nothing to worry about, now that the Ark was being carried about to their city. Such was the thrust of the reasoning of these Philistine lords. And it seems that their words took effect, that the Gathites were reassured. For we do not read that they objected to having the Ark in their midst.

Yet despite their atheistic boasting, these Philistine lords were anything but at ease. The testimony of God in their hearts that they were in the grip of the Almighty was too clear and strong. But they were hard-hearted men—were these lords. So, holding the truth in unrighteousness, they had resolved to put the matter to a test, and thus persisted in tempting and contempting God. This is largely the explanation of their having ordered the removal of the Ark to Gath. The Gathites, they insisted, would be none the worse for having the Ark in their midst, and so the fear of their countrymen—which fear they also shared but without admitting it; for they were stout-hearted men—that the men of Ashdod had been smitten by God, would be proved groundless.

G. M. O.

— ATTENTION —

*Theological School Committee*

A very important meeting of the Theological School Committee will be held the evening of October 9 in the Fuller Ave. Church,

Rev. J. A. Heys, Sec'y.

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## THROUGH THE AGES

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### Frederick II, and The Papacy

Under the above title *Through The Ages* the undersigned placed a series of articles on the subject of *The Rise and Decline of the Papacy*. In this article a return is made to that subject. Before continuing our story, it may be well to get our bearings. As was stated, in the apostolic churches, there was legal parity of those whom the Scriptures describe as bishops, presbyters, pastors, and teachers. But at the close of the second century we find the local congregation, including the ministers and the elders and the deacons, ruled by a new dignitary, who alone bore the title of Bishop. In the first period he had jurisdiction only over the local consistory. This new power was the germ of the papacy and is known in history as the monarchical or hierarchical bishop, and the government by such bishops was given the name of "Episcopate" from the Greek "Epi-skopeoo" meaning to *oversee*. In the first period the monarchical bishops had jurisdiction each over his own flock only. But in process of time, the authority of each was extended over several churches. What is more, in course of time, they fell into differing ranks according to the ecclesiastical and political importance of their several seats of authority. On the lowest level stood the bishops of the country churches, who had jurisdiction over all the churches located in their respective districts. The next highest rank was occupied by the city bishops. Among the later towered the bishops of the chief cities of the civil provinces of the Roman empire. In the East they were called metropolitans—from the Greek, *metra mother* and *polis city*, hence *mother city*—in the West *Arch-bishops*. They had jurisdiction over the bishops of the provinces. Upon them devolved the care of the churches of the whole provinces. Above the metropolitans stood the five bishops called patriarchs. They were the bishops of the four great capitals of the Roman empire—Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, and Constantinople, to which was added the bishop of Jerusalem. The joint rule of these five extended over the whole Christian church. This was the episcopate in its completed form—a form which it attained by the fourth century. It may be compared to a body with five heads.

But soon the idea was conceived that the patriarch or bishop of Rome enjoyed a universal jurisdiction over the whole Christian church, laity and clergy alike, including the other four patriarchs. But this is not all. In process of time, the bishop of Rome, who took the name of pope, laid claim to a jurisdiction over all

the kingdoms of the earth as well. As has been explained in previous articles, according to the prevailing opinion in those ages, church and state form the one Christian commonwealth. As time went on, the popes insisted with growing emphasis that in this commonwealth the bishops of Rome, thus the pope, is the supreme judicial power. In the language of Innocent III, he, the pope, is entrusted not only with the dominion of the church, but also with the rule over the whole world. He is at once king and priest. All things in heaven and on earth and in hell are subject to Christ. So are they all to the pope. He can depose princes and absolve subjects from their oath of allegiance. He may enforce submission by placing the whole nation under the interdict. Princes have authority in separate lands; the pope over all lands. All kings are his vassals and receive their domains from him as a grant. Such were the claims of the popes. But, needless to say, with these claims of the papacy, the kings and emperors of Christendom were ill agreed. According to them, the pope is subject to the emperor, not the emperor to the pope. The result was that each—emperor and pope—strove to subject the other to himself, or to free himself from the yoke of the other, when the other would momentarily prevail. It is this struggle between emperor and pope for world dominion that forms largely the history of the church of the Middle Ages.

The last pope with which we were occupied is Innocent III, 1198—1216. This pope, as we have seen, went far in making good the papal claims to world dominion. Under Innocent III the papacy reached the height of its worldly power. His first act was to subjugate Rome to his authority. He made himself the all-controlling power in the kingdom of Sicily. The Italian cities swore allegiance to him. He dictated the imperial succession in Germany. Here the emperor and his rivals sought his favor and strove to surpass one another in their concessions to him. By the interdict he humbled Philip Augustus of France, when the latter tried to impose restriction upon the clergy in his domain. John of England received an identical treatment and was even compelled to acknowledge his kingdom a fief or gift of the papacy and agree to pay a tax to the pope of a thousand marks annually. The rulers of Spain, Norway, and Hungary, the princes of Poland, Dalmatia, and even of Bulgaria, bent in lowly submission to his decrees.

That Innocent went so far in realizing the preposterous and anti-Scriptural claims of the papacy, can be explained. Firstly, circumstances favored him. There was not one able ruler in all his patriarchate to oppose him. All of them, as was stated, were weak and unstable or servile men, nonentities, eager to kiss the pope's toe for a crown, and fearful of his thunderings. Secondly, this Innocent was great in his shrewd-

ness as worldly politician, and thoroughly unscrupulous in the choice of the means for realizing his ambition. In pushing his claims for world dominion he made full use of those two mighty weapons at his disposal, the key-power (excommunication and the interdict) and the sword power. This latter he exercised not directly but through the agency of the temporal rulers favorable to him. Like all the popes, he was a warmonger in his lust for power.

But scarcely was Innocent (III) in the grave when Frederick II of the Hohenstaufen line began to oppose the world pretensions of the papacy. The result was a gigantic struggle between the two that filled the period 1216—1250—a struggle that ended in the destruction of the Hohenstaufen line and in the complete humiliation of the empire, and thus in the temporary victory of the papacy in Germany and Italy. Frederick II was the grandson of Frederick Barbarossa, and the son of Henry VI, who had added Sicily to his domains by his marriage with Constance the Norman princess, who gave to Frederick the warm blood of the south. When but two years old the Romans made him their king, and when his father died a year later he became king of Sicily. Soon after the mother died, and Frederick, then a boy in his fourth year, passed under the care of Innocent III. Due to the influence of the pope he was chosen to the German throne in his eighteenth year. When Innocent died Frederick was not yet twenty.

Frederick was remarkable for the beauty of his person. The expression of his countenance was noble, intelligent and benevolent. He was highly educated and a patron of art and learning. He was versed in Greek, Latin, German, French, and Arabic. The university of Naples was one of his founding. He was a humanist and as such a forerunner of the Renaissance. He wrote poetry and cultivated astrology. Historians are extravagant in their praise of him. One says that "in mere genius, in mere accomplishments, Frederick was surely the greatest prince that ever wore a crown." Another sees in him "one of the greatest personages in history." A third avers that "with all his faults he was one of the most complete and gifted character of his century." Dante put him in hell. Priestly chroniclers had much to say of his cruelty and immorality. Certain it is that he was legally married four times and that he kept a harem. Caring little for German soil—he was an Italian by birth—he held his court at Palermo in Sicily, which he called the "Happy City". As to whether the man was a Christian or an infidel, opinions among historians differ. According to Neander, Frederick denied religion. Pope Gregory IX charged him with making Christ an imposter. But some leave the question of his faith an open one, while others hold that he was a sincere Catholic.

When Frederick was crowned in 1212, he vowed to engage the Turks in war for the liberation of Jerusalem. Honorius III (1216-1227), the successor of Innocent III, urged him to keep his vow, but he delayed during the entire pontificate of this pope, and even engaged in repeated wars with the states of the Church in Northern Italy. This doing signaled the commencement of his struggle with the papacy for the possession of its dominions in Italy. Should he succeed, the temporal power of the papacy would be limited to a small and uncertain area at best. Gregory IX (1227-1241), the successor of Honorius, was a vigorous and brave pope, famed for his eloquence and thoroughly at home in canon law. He insisted that Frederick fulfill his vow made at his coronation in 1215 and again in 1220. Frederick bestirred himself but within three days after setting off to sea, he gave up the expedition, asserting that he had been driven back by an epidemic. But the pope was furious. Frederick had supplied the pope with a pretext for pronouncing against him sentence of excommunication. The sentence was read in the church at Anagni, and the clergy extinguished their lighted tapers in token of the emperor's going out in darkness. The pope justified his action on the ground of Frederick's breaking his oath, casting aside all fear of God, and having no respect for Jesus Christ. In 1228 the sentence was repeated and all the places where the emperor might be were placed under the interdict. In the same year Frederick actually went forth to war with the Turks. In reply the pope excommunicated him for the third time. Notwithstanding the expedition was successful. Entering Jerusalem as a conqueror, Frederick crowned himself king. Yet on his return from his expedition to Europe he was excommunicated a fourth time. It shows that the real interest of the pope lay not in seeing Jerusalem delivered from the Turks—this had now been accomplished—but in keeping Frederick under the ban of the papacy in order to ruin him politically and socially; for Frederick had plainly resolved to establish his sovereignty in Italy. This fourth excommunication was followed by an attempt on the part of the pope to destroy Frederick with his pen. He likened the emperor to the beast in the Book of Revelation which "rose out of the sea full of words of blasphemy and had the feet of a bear and the mouth of a lion, and like a leopard in all its parts, opens its mouth in blasphemies against God's name, His dwelling place, and the saints in heaven." He called Frederick "the son of lies, heaping falsehood on falsehood, robber, blasphemer, a wolf in sheep's clothing, the dragon emitting waters of persecution from his mouth like a river". Frederick in turn likened the pope to "the rider on the red horse who destroyed peace on the earth." And what were these two fighting about? Verily for the earth, the pope as well as Frederick.

Gregory died in 1241 at a great age—died in fighting for the earth, for the retention of the states of the church in Italy to which Frederick was laying claim.

(To be Continued)

G. M. O.

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## SION'S ZANGEN

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### Een Lied Der Ruste

(Psalm 92; Derde Deel)

Deze psalm moet bij uitstek gezongen worden op den rustdag: het is een lied der ruste. Het eerste gedeelte van den psalm bezingt de grootheid en de lieflijkheid Gods. De laatste akkoorden zullen getuigen van Gods werk in Zijn volk; God is glorieus en de heerlijkheid Gods wordt ook gereflecteerd in Zijn volk.

Het oog en het oor van Gods volk zijn open, zoodat ze niet bedrogen worden door het goddelooze volk, dat hen omringt. Hoort het maar: “En mijn oog zal mijne verspieters aanschouwen, mijne ooren zullen het hooren aangaande de boosdoeners die tegen mij opstaan.”

De goddeloozen, die de kerk omringen worden hier gekenmerkt als “verspieters”. Het is een woord, dat ons de goddeloozen teekent als valsche menschen. Ze omringen Gods volk en bespieden hen. Ze wachten gieriglijk of misschien het arme kind Gods zichzelf bloot zal geven voor hunne aanvallen. Maar er is geen groot gevaar: Gods volk ziet ze en weet met welke goddelooze motieven zij bezield zijn. Ergens staat er geschreven, dat Gods volk zich wachten en voorzichtiglijk handelen zolang de goddeloozen hem omringen. Voorts hoort dat volk de boosdoeners die altijd tegen hem opstaan. De gedachte komt op: waarom doet dat volk toch zoo vreemd. Vooraleer ze beginnen met hun vuile werk hebben ze den strijd al verloren. Want God strijdt immers voor hen? En die strijd voor Gods volk begint al hierin, dat zij al de plannen van de goddeloozen kennen. Dat zegt de dichter hier. Mijne ooren hooren immers de boosdoeners?

Niettegenstaande al die verspieters en die boosdoeners zal het toch altijd goed gaan met Gods volk, want—“De rechtvaardige zal groeien als een palmboom, hij zal wassen als een vederboom op Libanon.”

De palmboom wordt in de woestijn gevonden. Het beeld gaat op, want de aarde waar Gods volk verkeert is een ware woestenij voor hen. En toch gaat alles wel. Ze groeien. Dat bewijst ook hun naam. Zij zijn rechtvaardigen. Neen, niet in zichzelf. In zichzelf, van nature is Gods volk ook onrechtvaardig, juist zoals

de goddeloozen. Ze zijn rechtvaardig, eerst, in Christus. Ze worden gerekend als rechtvaardigen. En die toerekening is van eeuwigheid. Nooit heeft God zonde gezien in Zijn volk. Van alle eeuwigheid zijn ze in Jezus Christus gerekend. En wat die Christus doen zou voor hen, is hun van alle eeuwigheid toegerekend. Tweedens, zijn zij rechtvaardig in het diepst van hun bestaan. In hun diepe hart zijn ze rechtvaardig. Rechtvaardigheid is die deugd, waardoor we in al ons willen steeds in harmonie zijn met het hoogste goed. En dat hoogste Goed is God. Welnu, volgens Gods Woord staat het vast dat Gods volk in hun diepste hart altijd Gods geboden doen. Johannes zegt immers, dat wie uit God geboren is niet zondigt? Hij verstout zich zelfs en zegt, dat hij niet zondigen *kan*. Want Gods zaad blijft in hem. Straks zullen we de bewijzen daarvan ook zien in het verband.

Nu dan, de Christen groeit in de woestijn als een palmboom. Een palmboom is schoon onder de boomen des wouds. Recht omhoog, statig, met schoone bladen die met aanvallige buigingen zich verheffen. Ook zal Gods volk wassen als de cedarboom van Libanon. Ook de cedar boomen zijn mooi en aanvallig onder de boomen. De palm en de cedar onder de boomen zijn waardige beelden van het volk des Heeren.

En nu komt de toepassing van die beelden. “Die in het Huis des Heeren geplant zijn, dien zal gegeven worden te groeien in de voorhoven onzes Gods.”

Wat ligt hier veel in!

Het Huis des Heeren! Wat is het?

Het Huis des Heeren is eerst de Tempel of de tabernakel. Het is de plaats waar Jehovah Zijn volk ontmoet. In het Heilige der heiligen woonde God tusschen de cherubim, boven het verzoendeksel van de arke des verbonds. En éénmaal des jaars kwam Gods volk in hun Hoogepriester voor het aangezicht van God om met Hem gemeenschap te oefenen. Evenwel, moest die priester komen met onschuldig bloed van het offerdier. In het heiligdom woonde God ook met Zijn volk. Daar waren de toonbrooden die telkens getuigden van het feit, dat God Zijn volk spijzigde. En de kandelaar vertelde, dat door den Heilige Geest het volk van God het licht der wereld was.

Al die dingen zijn vervuld in Christus. In Hem komen alle lijnen tezamen. Hij is Jehovah die Zijn volk bemint, doch Hij is ook de vertegenwoordiger van het volk. Hij is de gerechte God die voldoening eischt, doch Hij is ook de priester die Zich Gode offert. Hij is God te prijzen tot in alle eeuwigheid, die een verterend vuur is voor de goddeloozen, doch Hij is ook de Gever van het bloed, dat beter dingen spreekt dan het bloed van Abel.

Hij is het Huis zelf. Want in Hem ontmoeten God en mensch elkaar. Daarom is Zijn naam Immanuel, God met ons.

Die in het Huis des Heeren geplant zijn, beteekent

dan ook: Die in Christus Jezus geplant zijn! Want zoo is het. Wij Christenen zijn in Christus Jezus geplant. Wij waren in Hem van eeuwigheid. Doch we worden ook Hem ingeplant in den tijd. En die inplanting is de wedergeboorte. Van dat punt des tijds af aan leven we uit Christus.

Welnu, die Hem zoo ingeplant zijn, dien wordt gegeven om te groeien in de voorhoven Gods. Waar God woont, daar mogen wij groeien. Is het niet verrukkelijk schoon? God wandelt in de voorhoven van Zijn eeuwig Huis. En wij mogen daar groeien. En zoo zal God ons eeuwiglijk aanschouwen en zullen we wandelen voor Zijn lieflijk aangezicht.

Let er nu op, dat alle werkwoorden hier passief zijn. Gij wordt *geplant!* Schreeuwt het uit tegenover de Pelagianen! Ons wordt *gegeven* te groeien! Brult het in de ooren van de vrije wil drijvers! Er is niemand die zich op kan dringen aan den Almachtige. Wat zeg ik? Er is niemand die het ook maar wil. Er is niemand die het aandurft om nabij-God-te-zijn! We zijn allen bang van God van nature. De god van den vrije-wil drijver is een afgod.

En waarom? Hier zijn veel antwoorden. Ik zal ze niet allen geven. Ik geef U het belangrijkste antwoord: God wordt verheerlijkt in Zijn Eigen werk *alleen!*

Maar wat beteekent het nu om te *groeien* in de voorhoven Gods?

Het eerste gedeelte van den psalm is daarop het antwoord. (Het is het loven van God. Het is het psalmzingen van Gods volk. Het is het verblijd zijn in den Heere. Het is het muziekmaken voor Zijn aangezicht.

Vers 15 en 16 zullen er ook van spreken. Hier zijn ze: "In den grijzen ouderdom zullen zij nog vruchten dragen; zij zullen vet en groen zijn, om te verkondigen dat de Heere recht is: Hij is mijn rotssteen, en in Hem is geen onrecht!"

Het eigenaardige van Gods volk is, dat zij met den ouderdom al beter worden. Dat is ook het eigenaardige van den palmboom. Een oude palmboom geeft het beste en het meeste in zijn ouderdom. Ik denk, dat dit ook een van de redenen is waarom Gods volk vergeleken wordt bij een palmboom.

Dit zit zoo: een kind Gods heeft de eeuwigheid, de eeuwige jeugd in de ziel. Zoo zult ge er ook iets van zien, dat als zij oud zijn, ze tevens vet en groen zijn. Als ge iemand wilt ontmoeten die ervaren is in de Schrift en ervaren in de genade, dan moet ge bij de ouden zijn. Ik weet wel, dat er uitzonderingen zijn. Doch dat is de wet in Gods koninkrijk. Aan het begin verkondigt een rossig gekleurde hemel, dat we verlost zijn in Christus Jezus. Bij het einde, als de haren grijs worden en het lichaam zich buigt naar het graf, dan stamelt de grijsaard van den lof des Heeren. Hij is vet en groen.

Bij het einde, nabij het graf, als de dagen onzes levens weinige meer zijn, dan putten we ons uit om vooral te getuigen van de gerechtigheid Gods. De tekst zegt, dat die oude man al maar getuigt, "dat de Heere recht is!" Waarom toch? Omdat de mensch van nature al maar het tegenovergestelde zegt. En omdat die oude man God zoo innig liefheeft. Ziedaar de twee redenen.

Wilt ge de geloofsbelijdenis hooren, de persoonlijke geloofsbelijdenis van een zeer oude man? Luistert! "Hij is mijn Rotssteen! En in Hem is geen onrecht!" Het is als de hemel zoo schoon.

Hij is mijn Rotssteen!

Zijn naam is Jehovah. De Onveranderlijke. Ik kan mij op Hem verlaten voor tijd en eeuwigheid. Alle mijne eigen rotsen zijn weg. God nam ze weg, een voor een. Ik ben nu oud en ik vertrouw op Hem alleen.

En in Hem is geen onrecht.

Ik ben nooit beschaamd uitgekomen. Hij bedroog mij nooit. Het is zelfs godslasterlijk om het te bedenken.

Mijn God is recht. Het is de hemel op aarde om het te mogen getuigen.

Geliefde lezer, ik heb getracht om iets te schrijven over een sabbatslied. Ik zal eindigen met een diepe vraag: Is het U een genot om God te verdedigen? Om door goed gerucht en kwaad gerucht van harte met Hem te wandelen? Hem blindelings te volgen?

Wie daar volmondig het ja op kan geven wordt bedoeld in dezen psalm.

Zij loven God ten allen tijde.

G. V.

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## IN HIS FEAR

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### Godly Instruction

*Introduction:*

#### JOB'S CASE.

Job, amid his sufferings desired above all one thing, namely, that he might either find a talisman (lawyer) to plead his cause with God, or that he himself might appear before God to set his arguments in order before His face. More than once we hear him lamenting: "O that I might find Him", and again, "O that one would hear me, my desire is that the Almighty would answer me"; and again, "O that one might plead for a man with God as a man pleadeth with his neighbor". It is evident that Job desires to

get into the Court House, bring his arguments there, and, being justified over against his three friends, at least have the satisfaction of seeing the truth vindicated before he died of this awful disease. Withal, however, notice that Job would like to talk with God as a man pleadeth with his neighbor.

Job's cause is indeed a righteous one. The three friends were wrong when they argued that his disease came upon him for some certain sin to which he cleaved. They accused him falsely when they mention certain sins by name and concluded that Job must have indulged in such sins. They were wrong. God Himself testifies that Job is a righteous man, that is, he is not guilty of the sins that were mentioned. Job himself is SO convinced of his integrity in this matter that he cries out that: until he die he will not let loose of his righteousness. Neither does God ever demand that he let loose of it.

So Job wants to carry his cause into God's presence and he desires that the Judge of heaven and earth should vindicate him before his wife, the three friends, the devil and all.

#### AN ATTITUDE.

Job intimated more than once that he could desire to argue with God about all that had taken place. "O that I could find Him", he exclaims. He looked for God everywhere, before him, behind him, above him, everywhere, but he could not find God. In the meantime the disease was consuming him, his friends seemed to be triumphing. . . . O that he could get his arguments before God ere it is too late.

If he cannot find God, would then that He would appear. Job would welcome His appearance, he would rejoice and be glad. He wants to talk with God.

As a neighbor talketh with his neighbor, that way Job would like to talk with God.

But God does not appear.

And Job grew more and more impatient.

Have you never, dear reader, felt a desire in your heart to argue with God? To talk with Him as a neighbor talks to a neighbor? A desire to see Him, that He would make His appearance so that you could arrange your arguments before His face? If your cause is a just one and you are convinced that your cause is just, haven't you ever felt the desire rising in your heart that God would come to vindicate truth over against unrighteousness?

There is present with Job a certain frame of mind, a mental attitude wherein he places God in the "neighborly" plane, on the man-to-man plane, on the "seeing" plane instead of faith's plane. Job revered God with extreme awe for he loved his God, but he wanted to "talk to God" and on that point Job has to be careful, and Job no doubt had to learn these things through his sufferings.

#### A COURSE OF INSTRUCTION.

It is while Job is in that frame of mind that God does suddenly appear to His servant Job. The Lord answered Job out of a whirlwind, we read.

The first thing, as it were, God says to him is, "Job, you don't talk WITH me, *I talk TO YOU*". Not the plane of neighbor to neighbor, but the plane of Sovereign and dependent. God is not someone on a communicable level, surely He is not one to whom we can run with arguments as if God needed light, correction or instruction. God is not a utilities concern or head of a public service, but God is God. Job was a saint who lived in the very early morning of the Day of God's Revelation, and the very suffering of Job must impress him and all who read this Book with the eternal fact that God is God, and this fact must become more and more emphatic as revelation goes on.

One might expect the book of Job to end with an oration by God declaring the relation between time and eternity, between the righteous and the wicked, the now and the then, but nothing of the kind takes place.

God is God.

And man is man.

Dust.

Dust must not talk. God talks and man listens.

When therefore God begins to talk to Job we find God asking him a hundred questions. And the first thing we find is that Job falls upon his face and says, "BEHOLD, I AM VILE", and at once he follows this with "I will lay my hands upon my mouth". But God continues to talk to Job. In a little while we hear Job saying, "Declare thou unto me" and finally he concludes with these well-known words, "I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes". Job is now a long ways away from the man-to-man frame of mind, no more does he think in terms of "neighborly conversations" and arguments. Job is on his face. He found himself an ash-heap and the longer God talked the more he buried himself in the ashes.

That is the proper attitude for the creature to assume toward the Being called God. No other attitude befits the reverence which belongs to God.

God must be acknowledged as the Infinite, the Sovereign, the wholly other, the Independent.

Man as the finite, the dependent, dust.

God must be seen as in heaven, robed in majesty and glory, thousands of holy angels forming His train. Man in the dust, hiding among the ashes.

Even our Lord Jesus Christ realized it His task to humble Himself into the lowest hell, knew it His calling to become utterly nothing before God, and He succeeded in becoming a worm and no man. At that point He was exalted above the highest heavens.

In Christ there is fulfilled what is faintly exhibited in the course of Job's instruction, and although the Book of Job ends with a thousand questions, with no answers, Golgotha afterwhile supplies the answer.

But to return to the point.

God the Infinite . . . man the finite.

#### GOD'S METHOD OF INSTRUCTION.

It is important to notice now what means the Lord used to lead Job to that proper attitude of humility before Him. Noteworthy it is to see along which way the Lord moved to gender in Job that frame of mind which is so acceptable to Him.

God as it were sets Job on a chair and lets creation pass before his eyes. God calls upon the mighty works of His hands to bring Job to the acknowledgement of God's sovereignty and man's finiteness.

God sometimes lets His mighty acts in history, such as the Exodus, the travels through the desert, the crossing of the Jordan, the conquest of Canaan, etc., pass in review before His people, to amaze and assure and humble them. But in this instance God calls upon the very elements of creation to impress His servant with His majesty and greatness.

(To be Continued)

M. G.

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## Our Baptism Form (6)

Thus far we have treated the expository part of our Baptism Form, discussing first the sacrament of baptism, and secondly the necessity of infant baptism. This brings us to the actual ritual, which deals with the administration of baptism to our covenant seed.

The Form reaches the conclusion: "Since then baptism is come in the place of circumcision, therefore infants are to be baptized as heirs of the kingdom of God and of His covenant. And parents are in duty bound further to instruct their children herein, when they shall arrive to years of discretion."

You will have noticed that it is said indiscriminately of all the children of believing parents that they must be baptized as heirs of the kingdom of God and of His covenant. Later the Form speaks of "our children", without any further distinction, as conceived and born in sin, "yet *sanctified in Christ*." And in the prayer of thanksgiving we thank and praise God that He has forgiven us and our children all our sins and received us as members of Christ and adopted us to be His children; all of which is confirmed by baptism.

Here we again meet the ever-recurring problem, How is it possible for the church to speak so indis-

criminatingly of all her children, knowing that not every one is an heir of the kingdom of God and of His covenant, since all are not saved? Or the question could be put in this form, On what basis must all the children born in the scope of the covenant be baptized, even though all are not saved? And that raises the related question, What is the purpose and the effect of baptism on those who receive the sacrament?

There is by no means unanimity in the Reformed circles on the answer to these questions. Especially during the past fifty years this matter has aroused much discussion and disagreement, and today it has stirred up new interest by the recent split that took place in the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands.

Especially two outstanding views should be mentioned in passing. There is the view of Dr. A. Kuyper, which bases the baptism of infants on a *presupposed regeneration*. According to this view, all the elect are regenerated at birth, and are baptized as already "sanctified in Christ". Now in order to baptize all children born in the scope of the covenant, we must assume that this is true of each child that is baptized, even though we know that this is not always the case. Each child must be considered regenerated and sanctified in Christ, also as far as its covenant training is concerned, until, as it grows up, the opposite appears. Our main objection to this view is that we are baptizing on an assumption, and one that we know is not always true. We are shutting our eyes to the reality, and assuming ground for baptism. Nor does our Baptism Form speak as if it were merely assuming something, but is very positive throughout. It states that "holy baptism witnesseth and sealet unto us the washing away of our sins." And that this includes our children is plain, for it definitely adds that "infants are to be baptized as heirs of the kingdom of God and of His covenant." Again it says of those same children, that they are conceived and born in sin, yet that "they are sanctified in Christ, and therefore as members of His church ought to be baptized." And in that same positive tone, denying every presumption, it gives thanks to God that "Thou hast forgiven us and our children all our sins through the blood of Thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, and received us through thy Holy Spirit as members of Thine only begotten Son, and adopted us to be Thy children, and sealed and confirmed the same unto us by holy baptism."

Then there is the view of the late Prof. W. Heyns, which is plainly an attempt to apply the "free will" error to the sacrament of baptism. According to this view, God establishes His covenant with all who are baptized in the church. The covenant consists of a promise that God has established an eternal covenant of grace with them, has redeemed them and sanctified them in Christ, and is willing to dwell in them by His

Spirit to bless them forever. This promise comes to all who are baptized. But it is conditional, contingent upon their acceptance. The promise comes to all, but only those who accept it in faith, and thereby fulfill their "part" or obligation in the covenant, are actually saved. Those who reject the promise are covenant breakers, and are therefore cast out.

This latter view is being defended in the Netherlands by the Schilder group, de Gereformeerde Kerken onderhoudende Art. 31 K.O. It is difficult to understand that these Liberated Churches do not see the implications of the free will error in this view, and that they should imagine that they can escape it. (For a more complete analysis of these different views be sure to read or reread the editorials appearing in the Standard Bearer during the past year, from October 15, 1945 to April 1, 1946.)

It must surely be maintained that God's promises are never conditional, but are always yea and amen in Him. They can never be contingent upon God's own fulfillment, for in that case the condition falls away, since all that God promises He will surely do. Nor can God's promises be contingent upon the acceptance of man, for then they can never be realized. The latter is exactly the Pelagian error that has been introduced into the covenant doctrine by Prof. Heyns. As we had occasion to notice in the past, this view is also in conflict with the Baptism Form itself. The Form very clearly states that "God's part" in the covenant is that He accomplishes all from beginning to end, both in the establishment and realization of His covenant. It is all of God, that no flesh may glory. "God the Father witnesseth and sealeth unto us, that He doth make an eternal covenant of grace with us. . . . The Son sealeth unto us, that He doth wash us in His blood from all our sins. . . . The Holy Ghost assures us, that He *will* (not 'is willing to' if we will but allow Him; but positively will in the future) dwell in us, and sanctify us to be members of Christ." Therefore the Form states definitely that our children are conceived and born in sin, yet are sanctified in Christ. This can only mean that by nature they are dead in trespasses and sin, but that God in His infinite mercy delivers them from the power and dominion of sin with an inner cleansing of the heart, even as it is signified by baptism. Therefore we can also thank God that He has forgiven us and our children all our sins, received us as members of His Son, adopted us to be His children, and sealed and confirmed the same to us and our children by holy baptism. Every condition simply disappears. The good work which God has begun He will also surely finish.

Overagainst both of these views our Protestant Reformed Churches hold what may be called the "organic view", as developed in recent years by the Rev. H.

Hoeksema. To summarize this very briefly, I would present the following.

1. It is an established fact, according to the Scripture, that God gathers His church in the line of continued generations throughout the history of this present world. This is evident, since God establishes His covenant in the line of generations. Gen. 17:7, "And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee *in their generations*, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." This is also plain from the figure of the vine and the olive tree. John 15:1-6; Rom. 11:17-21.

2. Therefore there is always a twofold seed within the scope of God's covenant. There is a natural seed as well as a spiritual seed; chaff as well as wheat; carnal Israel as well as spiritual Israel. Though only the elect are included *in the covenant*, all for a time are under the covenant. This idea is on the foreground in the parable of the tares, where both the wheat and the tares grow up together in one field until the harvest, when the wheat is gathered into glory, but the tares are burned. Matth. 13:24-30, 37-43. This same idea is found in the parable of the draw-net. The net sweeps through the sea of this world, wherever God sends it, gathering everything that comes before it, both good and bad, which remain together in the net until the final separation in the day of judgment. Matth. 13:47-50. Thus we also read in I Cor. 10:1-5, "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and the Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness." See also Rom. 9:3-16.

3. According to the will and purpose of God, all must be baptized. This was true of circumcision in the old dispensation, for Esau was circumcized as well as Jacob. And this is likewise true of baptism in the new dispensation. All who are within the scope of the covenant must bear its mark, elect and reprobate alike. Which accounts for it that they receive the mark already in their infancy.

4. This baptism, as also the preaching of the Word and the celebration of the Lord's Supper, has a twofold effect. It serves as a savor of life unto life for those who believe, but as a savor of death unto death for those who despise that which is holy. II Cor. 2:14, 15; I Cor. 11:29; Heb. 6:1-8.

From this follows that baptism is of tremendous significance, not only for the child that is baptized, nor only for the parents who present their children

for baptism, but also for the whole church which administers the sacrament to her covenant seed.

It has significance for the child, because God lays this mark of distinction upon his forehead already in his earliest infancy, which will always distinguish him from anyone born outside of the scope of the covenant. This mark takes on added significance as the child grows up. Either he will appropriate unto himself that sign of the covenant by a living faith, worked in his heart by the Holy Spirit, and will realize that it is God's sovereign grace that has chosen him from eternity, saved him by the cross, and taken him into the family of the redeemed since his earliest infancy. Or, on the other hand, he will despise the holy things, as Esau did, and will bring greater condemnation upon himself, justifying God in His judgment.

It is also rich in significance for the parents, because it assures them that God gathers His church in the line of generations. Although we bring forth a natural seed, sold under sin, God takes out of our children the heirs of the world to come. God assures us that He will be our God and the God of our seed after us, so that His church will never perish from the earth until the end of time. And believing parents may rejoice that they in their small way are instrumental toward the ingathering of God's church and the coming of His kingdom.

And it also has significance for the church. After all, it is the church who baptizes her covenant seed. Upon her rests the obligation and the privilege to lay the mark of the covenant upon the children God gives her. Each time baptism is administered the believers are reminded of the promises and blessings of God, unto the strengthening of their faith. Each time they are made conscious of their responsibility within the covenant, and spurred on to the new obedience. Each time the sacrament condemns all unfaithfulness and calls us to renew our vows before our God in the midst of His church.

Baptism, like the preaching of the Word, is a power of God unto salvation unto all who believe, for it is a means of grace.

C. H.

— ATTENTION —

*Ministers — Classis East*

Due to the Conference with the Reformed Church in the U. S. the Board has decided to postpone the October Conference of Eastern Ministers. The next meeting will be held at the time of the January Classis.

Rev. W. Hofman, Sec'y.

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## FROM HOLY WRIT

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James 1:1: — "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting."

*The Author of the Epistle.*

The author of this epistle directed to the twelve tribes in the Dispersion is undoubtedly James, the brother of our Lord Jesus Christ as according to the flesh. The Scriptures speak of more than one James. In the list of the apostle, according to Matth. 10, Mark 3, Luke 6, and Acts 1:13, we read of two who bear this name: James, the son of Zebedee, and James, the son of Alphaeus. Neither of these two James can be considered to have written this epistle. James, the son of Zebedee, commonly called James the Greater or the Elder, was slain with the sword by King Herod, according to Acts 12. Because of the early date of this Herodian murder James, the son of Zebedee, could not have written this epistle. Of James, the son of Alphaeus, we read nothing in the Scriptures except that he appears in the list of the apostles. Against the claim that he may have been the author one may object that the writer of this epistle does not address himself to the church of God as an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. This claim to the apostleship appears in the great majority of the epistles; and in those epistles where, e.g., the apostle Paul does not present himself to his readers as an apostle (see Phil. 1:1, I Thess. 1:1, II Thess. 11) the epistles themselves clearly establish the apostleship of the author. Fact is, then, it is exactly because this writer is not an apostle that he does not address himself as an apostle. We may conclude, therefore, that the writer of James cannot refer to one of the apostle. This leaves but one possibility: James, the brother of Christ. Of this James we read that, at an early period in the Acts of the Apostles, he appears as the head of the church at Jerusalem (see Acts 12:17, 15:13 f.f., 21:18). Paul calls him the brother of the Lord in Gal. 1:19 and in Gal. 2:9 the apostle reckons him among the pillars of the church. Moreover, he is the brother of the writer of the epistle of Jude, and, according to the narrative of Josephus, suffered martyrdom about the year 63. It is true that the writer of the epistle of James does not address himself as the brother of Christ. To this we will call attention later. Only, what bearing could his relationship of flesh and blood to the Christ possibly have on the writing of an infallible epistle to the church of the living God? In fact, it is exactly because this relationship of flesh and blood has no significance whatsoever that the holy writer refrains

from introducing himself as such to his readers. Time and space forbid us to elaborate on this particular subject. We may safely conclude that James, the brother of Christ according to the flesh, head of the church at Jerusalem, is the writer of the epistle.

#### *The Addressees.*

This epistle is addressed to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad. We read literally of the "12 tribes which are in the Dispersion". It is evident, in the first place, that the writer of this epistle is writing to Jews. The expression "12 tribes" clearly indicates that James is addressing Jews. Besides, there are expressions in the epistle which also lead us to this conclusion. We read of Job, of Elijah, of the early and latter rain—these references were familiar to the Jews. Secondly, however, it is evident that the holy writer is not writing merely to Jews, but to Christian Jews. This is established throughout the epistle. Does not James introduce himself to his readers, not as a Jew, but as a "servant of the Lord Jesus Christ"? Does he not repeatedly address them as "his beloved brethren" Clearly, therefore, the author designates himself as a Christian and his readers as his beloved brethren. And in several places in the epistle he distinctly affirms that they stand with him on the same ground of faith. In chapter 1:18 he declares that God has begotten them by the word of truth; in chap. 2:1 he reminds them of their faith of the Lord Jesus Christ of glory; in chap. 2:7 he speaks of the goodly name (that is, the name of Jesus Christ which was invoked upon them; in chap. 5:7 he exhorts them to patience, pointing out to them the nearness of the coming of the Lord; and in chap. 2:16 f.f., he evidently supposes that they had one and the same faith with himself. James is therefore addressing Christian Jews. It is for this reason that he addresses these Christian Jews as the "twelve tribes". The expression "12 tribes" was commonly used to designate the Israel of God of the Old Dispensation. The fact that James addresses the Christian Jews as the "twelve tribes" indicates that, to him, they are the true Israel of God. Thirdly, the writer is addressing the "twelve tribes in the Dispersion". It is evident, also from the original text, that "Dispersion" is a proper name. As such it was expressive of a locality outside of Jerusalem. The Christian Jews lived in that locality because they had been driven into it by persecutions. For this reason our translation reads "scattered about". The original word "Dispersion" has been translated "scattered about". To understand this we need but be reminded of the persecution of the Church by Saul, according to Acts 9.

This church of God, the Christian Jews in the Dispersion, is a picture of the church of God throughout the ages. Throughout the ages God's cause, although

in the world, is not of the world. And yet we must assume our place in the midst of that world, shewing forth the praises of Him Who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. To that church Jesus speaks. And it is only as that church that we can hear and receive his word. Whosoever would be a friend of the world finds nothing in this epistle which can be of any comfort to him. James' addressees are a very particular group of people. They are the friends of God in the midst of an adulterous world. They alone are comforted and admonished and exhorted by this holy writer.

#### *The Address.*

James introduces himself to his readers in this epistle as a "servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." First of all, the names of "God" and "Lord Jesus Christ" must not be understood as coordinate, so that the holy writer would be a servant equally of both, of God and of Christ. The meaning of this expression can be interpreted as follows: James, a servant of God through the Lord Jesus Christ. It is true, of course, that Jesus Christ, being Immanuel, is God in the flesh. However, he does not refer to the Lord Jesus Christ according to His Divine nature. He has already mentioned God, and when he speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ he is referring to the Christ according to the human nature. The relationship in which Christ stands to us, and in which we, through Christ, stand to God immediately suggests that James is a servant of God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice, in this connection, the often recurring triple appellation of the Saviour. James speaks of Him as the Lord Jesus Christ. These names are Christ's most common names in Holy Writ, often appear together although not always in the same order. Jesus is He because He is the revelation of Jehovah as the God of our salvation. Jesus means: Jehovah saves. Christ Jesus is He as He saves us as our Chief Prophet, Only High Priest, and Eternal King. And our Lord Jesus Christ is He because, having saved us as Christ Jesus, He is become our Lord Who has bought us with His own precious blood, to Whom we owe allegiance, and Who preserves and protects us unto the end.

Secondly, James calls himself a *servant* of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. The word "servant" means literally "slave". It is well that we retain this original meaning. The word is used in the Scriptures, as in Eph. 6:6, with reference to the people of God in general. The same thought is expressed by our Heidelberg Catechism in the first Lord's Day where we read that we are not our own but belong unto our faithful Saviour Jesus Christ. The child of God delights in calling himself the slave of God and of Christ Jesus. By nature we imagine ourselves to be our own masters, the captains of our own lives and destiny, having re-

fused in Paradise to be the servants of God. Now, however, we are the slaves (servants) of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. The expression "servants (slaves) of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" does not merely mean that we serve God and the Lord Jesus Christ, but that we are His slaves, slaves of God through the Lord Jesus Christ. This implies three things. It signifies that God bought us through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence, we belong unto God. It also implies that we, belonging unto God and the Lord Jesus Christ, must serve them. A slave does not his own will but that of his master. The same applies to the Christian. And, finally, to be a slave of God, through Jesus Christ, implies that He is fully responsible for our welfare and will protect and fully care for us. We understand that to be such a slave of God through the Lord Jesus Christ is expressive of the highest freedom and of everlasting life—then we again move about freely in the sphere to which we, by virtue of our creation, are adapted, to wit, the service and fellowship of the living God.

The word "slave" is also used in the Scriptures, however, with reference to the holy writers of the Word of God (see, besides our text, Rom. 1:1, Gal. 1:10, Phil. 1:1, Titus 1:1, II Pet. 1:1). James is a servant of God and of Christ, indeed, in the same sense in which this applies to all the people of God. But he is such also in a particular sense of the word as a writer of Holy Writ. He does not introduce himself as the brother of Christ according to the flesh. This would be of no significance. Bond of flesh and blood are of no significance in the Kingdom of God. But he is a slave of God and of Christ Jesus. This means, especially in this text, that he will not write his own will, but only the will of God, revealed unto him through the Spirit of Christ Jesus, his Lord—he is completely in the service of God through Christ.

Thirdly, we notice the greeting. This word was used commonly as a salutation, a greeting, at the beginning of letters (see, e.g. Acts 15:23). It is derived from a word which means "to rejoice, be glad". As such it was a greeting to the addressee of a letter, wishing him joy and peace. Only, we must understand that James here is greeting the church as the servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence, the text conveys to us, not James' personal greeting, but the greeting of God, through James, unto His church. We have here the inspired record of God's salutation to His people, God's greeting of peace and joy, which He bestows upon us, which is therefore always upon us, and which salutation of peace and joy we can also consciously experience in the prayerful reading of and instruction, also applied by the Holy Spirit, in the Divine Scriptures.

H. V.

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## PERISCOPE

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### *A Different Aalders . . . .*

Most of our readers will remember Dr. G. Ch. Aalders, professor in the Free University of Amsterdam, in connection with the letter, which he wrote to inform and enlighten the American public, concerning the controversy in the Netherlands, and which appeared in the August 1945 issue of the "Missionary Monthly". At that time, as you recall, he severely criticized and condemned Dr. K. Schilder, and others, and blamed them for the breach in the Churches of the Netherlands. In that letter, among other things, he wrote as follows: "Perhaps you have not as yet heard of the great trouble which is caused in our churches by Dr. Schilder and a number of his friends . . . . The General Synod of Sneek, . . . . came at last to a decision . . . . extremely moderate, condemned merely a few rather extreme opinions, but made a firm stand in defense of Reformed Theology . . . . avoided every declinatory utterance regarding the ideas of Schilder. The result was that this decision received the approval of our people, which gave great satisfaction . . . . Schilder was not satisfied . . . . they caused much noise and some churches refused to acknowledge the decision of Synod . . . . the result was that Synod avowed the complete legality of the decision in question . . . . Synod investigated the remonstrances accurately but could not come to any other result but that the Synod of 1905 was right. . . . He (Schilder—W.H.) was rebuked but he refused to admit that he was mistaken. And thus Synod, after having shown an almost incomprehensible patience was finally obliged to suspend him as professor and emeritus-minister . . . . I write you so soon that I might enlighten you and tell you how things are in reality . . . . The fathers of the Separation would turn themselves over in their graves, if they could hear how the pupils of Schilder fight against 1905 . . . . But nevertheless, the schism in our churches is lamentable, and those who began this opposition will never be able to excuse their attitude. It is a great sin against God and the heavenly King of the Church."

This same Dr. Aalders (or is he the same?) was a delegate from the Gereformeerde Kerken to the Ecumenical Synod held recently in Grand Rapids. We would like to quote a portion of the report of the proceedings as it was contained in the "Banner" of September 6, 1946: "The matters suggested for the Agenda by the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands concerned chiefly the recent difficulties which led to a schism. Should these be discussed? . . . . In this connection Prof. Aalders made a rather long speech,

in substance as follows: 'We can see from the Agenda that the Churches of the Netherlands have not wished to lay many points on the table of Synod. But our Synod (Note that: the SYNOD i.e. the Synod of the Geref. Kerken—W.H.) has deliberately instructed us to place before you our ecclesiastical difficulties—not because we want you to enter into every detail. You have been preserved from the trouble which has deeply moved our Church. We do not want you to become entangled in it. But Synod felt that it would greatly profit us if this Ecumenical Synod, of a rather limited kind, could give us some advice. *Have we acted rightly or wrongly?* (Italics ours—W.H.). A decision was made in 1905. It was accepted and taken over by the Christian Reformed Church. It had brought peaceful and fraternal intercourse among us. Unfortunately enough, the old question was resurrected and a gravamen was brought in against the decision of 1905. We had to consider it. Now we put before you the question: Are there reasons based on Scripture and the Confession to justify us in our judgment of the gravamen? . . . our Synod has instructed us to put the question . . . .'

Perhaps, now you see the reason for the heading of this article. When we read this report our minds immediately returned to the letter of Dr. Aalders of a year ago and several questions popped up: Is this a different Aalders? If not, what happened to all his conviction and certainty of a year ago? What a strange time to ask 'Are we right or wrong', after the deed has been done and the opponent defeated and condemned. And that the SYNOD, which perpetrated the deed, should now ask for proof from Scripture and the Confessions, didn't they have these? And if they did not, how could they ever do such a thing? Is it, perhaps, that Dr. Aalders and his Churches did not expect the results that followed? Were they merely trying to get rid of someone and did their fire-cracker turn out to be a bomb? What are the answers to these and many others question? Undoubtedly, time will tell. In the meantime we look forward with renewed eagerness to hear the OTHER SIDE; and look forward with interest to the approaching visit of the Rev. Van Dijk, official delegate of the Liberated Churches.

*Decision . . . .*

In connection with what we have written above it might also be interesting to note the decision of the Ecumenical Synod. We quote from the "Banner" of September 13, 1946:

"On Tuesday morning of the second week the Ecumenical Synod was ready for the consideration of two Committee reports. Report number two, dealing with Synod's Agenda, was read by Dr. Jacob T. Hoogstra. The following decisions regarding the "Ecclesiastical Difficulties in the Church of the Netherlands" were adopted:

I. Synod declares that it has the authority to take up the case of "Ecclesiastical Difficulties in the Church of the Netherlands" since:

A. Synods may assist member-churches of the Ecumenical Synod in their difficulties when requested to do so—a principle already embodied in the principles which the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands and the Christian Reformed Church have laid down in inter-church correspondence,

B. No review of concrete disciplinary cases is requested of us;

C. Synod should be an assembly to which doctrinal appeals may be addressed.

II. Concerning the question from the Netherlands: 'Even if the Synod of the Reformed Churches might not be right would this justify a rupture in the Church; the following advice was adopted: Synod informs the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, that in its judgment, in case one is convinced that a Synod makes an unwarranted doctrinal pronouncement, he is not justified to bring about a rupture unless he has exhausted all the possibilities provided by the Church Order for procuring a revision and the Church insists on maintaining its position contrary to his conviction concerning the truth.

III. Concerning the question of Synod's evaluation of the declaration which the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands formulated in regard to the Covenant of grace and baptism, Synod decided to appoint a special committee to investigate whether the Declaration of 1946 is in conformity with the Scriptures and the Confessions and to report to this Synod. (Here follow the names of committee members and advisors—W.H.).

In a later session a Committee presented the following recommendation regarding the matter. It was adopted without a dissenting vote. Practically no discussion preceded the decision, the delegates having had the opportunity to study the Declaration beforehand and apparently agreeing with it. The decision is as follows: (This was preceded by heading and introductory remarks concerning method of study and arriving at decision; if interested consult Banner referred to above—W.H.).

'Your Committee is of one mind, that the 'Declaration of 1946' is in conformity with the Scriptures and the Creeds. We recommend Synod to adopt this judgment as its own.'

W. H.

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#### FIRST ECUMENICAL SYNOD

"The first Ecumenical Synod of Reformed Churches" met in Grand Rapids, Michigan during the middle

lands, *Die Gereformeerde Kerken* of South Africa, and the *Christian Reformed Church* of North America. Seventeen delegates were present: four from the Netherlands, three from South Africa, and ten from the Christian Reformed Church. They were as follows: from the Netherlands, Dr. G. Charles Aalders, Dr. Gerrit C. Berkhouwer, both professors at the Free University of Amsterdam, Dr. Jacob Hoek, pastor at The Hague, and elders Mr. Abraham Warnaar; from the churches of South Africa, Prof. Dr. Stephanus Du Toit, Dr. P. J. S. Klerk, and elder Dr. H. G. Stoker; from the Christian Reformed Church, Prof. L. Berkhof, Prof. D. H. Kromminga, Rev. E. F. J. Van Halsema, Rev. I. Van Dellen, Dr. Jacob T. Hoogstra, Dr. Herman Kuiper, and the elders Dr. Edwin Y. Monsma, Dr. Lambert Flokstra, Mr. Gerrit Buist, and Mr. Frank Keegstra.

The undersigned and a few more of our ministers took advantage of the opportunity to attend the opening session of this body, and a few of the succeeding sessions. Time did not permit us to attend all the sessions although we would have deemed it profitable if we could have. It was a rather impressive gathering to see together delegates from Reformed Churches in three different continents gathered together to discuss matters pertaining to the welfare of God's Church in the midst of this world. I can well understand that in an ever shrinking world, with its ever increasing complex problems, that there is a desire on the part of Reformed Churches to seek closer fellowship with one another. However I have purposely placed the heading of this article "First Ecumenical Synod of Reformed Churches" in parenthesis, for I do not believe that this gathering could be properly so-called. It was but the gathering of a select group of Reformed churches, while others were ignored. If it was to be an Ecumenical (world-wide) gathering of Reformed Churches it certainly should have included such denominations as the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken*, and "*De Vrijgemaakte Kerken Onderhoudende Art. 31*" of the Netherlands, the *Reformed Churches of America*, the *Reformed Churches of the U. S.* also our own *Protestant Reformed Churches*, the *Hungarian Reformed Churches*, the *Orthodox Presbyterian Churches*, and others. Certainly there are differences between these various Reformed denominations, but we should be willing to discuss these differences upon the basis of the Word of God and our Reformed Standards. I agree with the remarks of the president of this gathering, made in his opening statement, "It was often felt, not only here, but also in the Netherlands and in South Africa, that an even closer contact was highly desirable, since it might lead to a better understanding and appreciation of each other, and since it would enable us to discuss common problems together, and to work together toward the solution of difficult prob-

and latter part of the month of August. It's delegates represented *De Gereformeerde Kerken* of the Netherlands. Thus our sense of oneness would also be expressed, and greater unity might be promoted in our confessional life, and in our Calvinistic action." If these purposes could be reached upon the basis of the Word of God and our Reformed Standards it would be a cause of rejoicing indeed.

At the first session there was considerable difference of opinion as to the *authority* of an Ecumenical Synod. Some were of the opinion that such a body should have merely strong moral authority, others that it should have binding legal authority. If the latter opinion should prevail then such gatherings would surely lead to Roman Catholic Hierarchy.

It was interesting to note that the South African churches requested that the matter of 'Common Grace' should be placed upon the Agenda. Evidently the brethren there are not satisfied with the decisions in re this matter made by the Christian Reformed Church, and by the Gereformeerde Kerken. It appears from the report of the Banner, however, that the "Synod" did not see fit to give this matter a place upon its Agenda.

B. K.

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— ATTENTION —

Classis East will meet in regular session D. V., Wednesday, October 9 at 9 o'clock A.M., at Fuller Ave. Church.

D. Jonker, Stated Clerk.

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IN MEMORIAM

The English Men's Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, hereby wishes to express its heartfelt sympathy to our fellow-member, Mr. A. Wychers and family, in the loss of their wife and mother

MRS. GERTRUDE WYCHERS

May the God of all grace comfort the brother and children in this their bereavement, by the assurance that she has gone to her Lord and Saviour.

The English Men's Society

James Kok, Pres.

Otto Vander Woude, Sec'y.