

# THE STANDARD

*Beauregard*

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

VOLUME XXIII

January 1, 1947 — Grand Rapids, Mich.

NUMBER 7

## MEDITATION

### In Hope Van Het Nieuwe

...zoodat er niets nieuws is onder de zon.

*Pred. 1:9.*

*Ziet, Ik maak alle dingen nieuw.*

*Openb. 21:5.*

Niets nieuws. . . thans, hier, in het heden.

Alles nieuw. . . straks, dáár, in de toekomst.

En staande ergens daar tusschenin, in de spanning van het tegenwoordige "Niets nieuws" en het toekomstige "alles nieuw", of liever, staande nog in het oude, maar met het verlangend en verwachtend oog gericht op het nieuwe, is het mogelijk, dat we het, overigens vrij conventionele, "een gezegend nieuwjaar" op de lippen nemen.

Louter op het standpunt van het "onderzonsche," van het tegenwoordige, van het *diesseitige*, is de nieuwjaarswensch ijdel.

Immers, er is niets nieuws onder de zon.

Ook op den eersten dag des jaars is er niets nieuws, geen enkelen nieuwen dag, niet één nieuw moment, kunnen we verwachten. Wat het nieuwe jaar zal brengen, dat kunt ge uit het jaar, dat pas voorbij ging, wat de algemeene lijnen betreft, met volkomen zekerheid lezen. Hier hebt ge het program: "Het eene geslacht gaat, en het andere geslacht komt; maar de aarde staat in der eeuwigheid. Ook rijst de zon op, en de zon gaat onder, en zij hijgt naar hare plaats, waar zij oprees. Zij gaat naar het zuiden, en zij gaat om naar het noorden; de wind gaat steeds omgaande, en de wind keert weder tot zijne omgangen. Al de beken gaan in de zee; nogtans wordt de zee niet vol; naar de plaats, waar de beken heengaan, derwaarts gaande keeren zij weder. Al deze dingen worden zoo moede, dat het niemand zou kunnen uitspreken; het oog wordt niet verzadigd met zien, en het oor wordt niet vervuld van hooren. . .

Zoo was het in 't jaar, dat voorbij vloog.

En dat is het programma voor het jaar, dat we pas begonnen.

Want: "Hetgeen er geweest is, hetzelfde zal er zijn, en hetgeen er gedaan is, datzelfde zal er gedaan worden; zoodat er niets nieuws is onder de zon."

O, er is een *ander* jaar gekomen! Doch een *nieuw* jaar is het niet. Het eenigste, dat noodig is om het te onderscheiden van het vorige jaar, en van alle andere jaren in het verleden, is dat ge van nu aan een kalender aan den wand hangt, en uwe rekeningen, kwitanties, cheques, en brieven dateert, met het getal negentien honderd en zeven en veertig.

Meer niet.

Want wel kwam er een ander jaar, doch ook dat andere jaar is reeds oud van het begin, en zal zich aan den vicieuzen kringloop van het oude niet kunnen ontworstelen.

En die kringloop wordt gekenmerkt door het "Ijdelheid der ijdelheden, het is al ijdelheid."

Hoe hartelijk en welgemeend ge ook op den eersten dag van een ander jaar elkander veel "heil en zegen" moogt toewenschen en toebidden, reeds van tevoren staat het vast, dat, zoolang ge louter staat op het standpunt van het tegenwoordige, het nimmer nieuwe, al uw wenschen en bidden ijdel zal blijken. Nieuws is er niet, ook geen werkelijk nieuw jaar. Het oude is ijdelheid der ijdelheden, waarin geen werkelijk heil en geluk te verwachten, te zoeken of te vinden is.

Noch ook is er, op het standpunt van het nieuwe, plaats voor zulk een heilwensch.

Want, ten eerste, het nieuwe is nog niet. Het is *hier* niet, hier, waar wij zijn en ons bewegen, en leven, en elkander op den eersten dag des jaar ontmoeten, om elkander een gezegend nieuwjaar toe te wenschen. Het is *hier* niet, hier, onder de zon, waar zich het nieuwe jaar bevindt, en waar wij op zijn stroom worden voortgedragen. Het nieuwe is beslist *jenseitig*, het ligt aan den anderen kant, het wordt niet gezien, het is eeuwig. Ge kunt daar nog niet staan. En, ten tweeden, stond ge daar wel, dan zoudt ge het heil van uwe medeburgers

in dat eeuwig koninkrijk nimmer meer afmeten naar de mate van onze wentelende jaren. . . .

Dáár is 't werkelijk nieuwe.

Maar dat werkelijk nieuwe is niet tijdelijk en voorbijgaand, maar eeuwig en blijvend!

Doch daar tusschenin, nog staande in het oude, maar met uw blik op het nieuwe, nog wandelend in de ijdelheid, maar ziende op hetgeen buiten den ijdel en viciëuzen kringloop ligt, nog altijd midden in den dood liggend, maar in hope uw blik richtend op het eeuwige leven, zegt ge, en is uw zeggen niet ijdel in den Heere: "Veel heil en zegen in het nieuwe jaar!"

Dan toch bedoelt ge, dat het oude ook nu reeds, ook in het *andere* jaar, dat ge negentien honderd zeven en veertig noemt, door het nieuwe mag worden beheerscht; en dat het nieuwe ook thans reeds het oude mag vervullen!

Er is niets nieuws onder de zon.

Ziet, Ik maak alle dingen nieuw!

Daar tusschen in, in de spanning van die twee. . . .

Veel heil en zegen!

---

Niet nieuws!

Zoo verzekert ons de Prediker.

En in en door die Prediker sprak ook de Geest van Christus.

Haal daarom niet uw schouders op over de zwartgalligheid van een door al te donkeren bril zienden filosoof, die geen oog heeft voor den geweldigen evolutiedrang en vooruitgang der wereld, en voor het vele nieuwe, dat telkens weer, dat vooral in de laatste decennien aan het licht wordt gebracht.

Och, hij wist het ook wel, deze, door den Geest van Christus sprekende wijsgeer.

Ge kunt hem gerust wijzen op de geweldige ontdekkingen der moderne wetenschap op alle gebied, op de vele uitvindingen, waardoor de machtige mensch hoe langer zoo meer de verborgenste krachten der schepping aan zich onderwerpt en in zijn dienst stelt. Ge kunt hem meenemen naar de moderne fabrieken, waar reuzenmachines dag en nacht zwoegen en razen, om voor den mensch te produceeren, wat eene eeuw geleden nog ondenkbaar en onmogelijk werd geacht. Noodig hem gerust uit om uwe wel ingerichte moderne woning te bezoeken en te inspecteeren, laat hem maar spreken over uwe telephoon, en stel hem door uwe radio in verbinding met de uiterste einden der aarde. Toon hem uwe zeepaleizen, uwe prachtige sneltreinen, uwe luchtschepen, uwe onderzeesche booten, uwe kanonnen, tanks, snelgeschut, atomische bommen; uwe hospitalen met hun operatiekamers, uwe hel verlichte straten, theaters, bioscopen, winkels, wolkenkrabbers, scholen, universiteiten. En neem hem vooral ook mee voor een rit in uwe nieuwe auto, en jaag hem met vliegende

vaart door uwe velden en moderne boerderijen, ook al weer bewerkt door uwe moderne machines. . . .

En vraag hem dan, of hij ooit zooiets eerder gezien heeft, of de wereld dan toch niet met groote schreden is vooruit gegaan, en of hij het nog bestaat om te zeggen, dat er niets nieuws is onder de zon.

En, o, ge zoudt hem ongetwijfeld bewondering afdwingen.

Maar deze, door Goddelijk licht bestraalde, wijze zou desniettemin volhouden, dat het alles ijdelheid der ijdelheden is, dat ge met alle uwe uitvindingen toch aan den viciëuzen cirkel niet zijt ontkomen, dat wezenlijk dit alles er ook reeds geweest is, en dat het u nimmer gelukken zal, om iets voort te brengen, dat werkelijk nieuw is. Ge hebt, zoo zou hij volhouden, wel nieuwe vormen geschapen, maar wezenlijk hebt ge niets veranderd. Ge reist wel sneller, ge brengt wel meer tot stand, ge leeft wel gemakkelijker, en ook meer gespannen, ge verwoest en vermoordt wel meer, op groter schaal ook in korter tijd dan vroeger. Er is wel betrekkelijk verschil, zoo zou hij toestemmen, tusschen de walmende vlaswiek en uw electrisch licht, tusschen de oude haardstee en uwe centrale verwarming, tusschen de vroegere zeilboot en uw modern stoomschip, tusschen ossenwagen en automobiel. Ge hebt meer contact met de einden der aarde. Doch ofschoon ge het tempo van uw aardsche bestaan versneld hebt, het is nog hetzelfde bestaan. Het oude is niet voorbij gegaan, het nieuwe is niet aan het licht gebracht. . . .

Er is niets nieuws onder de zon!

Of is het dan niet waar, dat ook de moderne wereld, met al hare machtsontwikkeling, wetenschap, en uitvindingen, nog altijd midden in den dood ligt? Drukt niet altijd nog Gods vloek tonnenzwaar op alle aardsche bestaan? En is niet alle menschelijke cultuur doelloos en ijdel? Is door de versnelling van het levenstempo niet ook de ontwikkeling der zonde, van de lust des vleesch, en de lust der oogen, en de grootheid des levens, toegenomen? Maakt het wel wezenlijk verschil of ge in een koets dan wel in een auto grafwaarts wordt gedragen? En wil het snelle levenstempo niet zeggen, dat de wereld met vliegende vaart haar einde tegemoet raast?

We leven *meer*, en ook *sneller*; we lijden meer, en ook sneller; we sterven meer en ook sneller. . . .

Doch er is niets nieuws onder de zon.

Nog altijd is ons bestaan bedorven door de zonde, nog altijd is het zwaar belast met Gods toorn en vloek, nog altijd is het van alle zijden omringd door den dood, nog altijd is het gekenmerkt door den doelloozen rondgang in den viciëuzen cirkel der ijdelheid.

Of is het ook niet het getuigenis van des menschen bewustzijn zelf, dat hij het nieuwe niet heeft gegrepen, en dat zijne hope ijdel is en altijd weer vergaat?

Jaar in jaar uit jaagt hij naar het nieuwe. Het oude bevredigt niet. Op de toekomst stelt hij zijne ver-

wachting. En als die toekomst tegenwoordige tijd ge worden is, ziet hij uit naar een nieuwe toekomst, omdat het in de toekomst te grijpen nieuwe toch oud bleek, toen het gegrepen was.

Al deze dingen worden zoo moede. . . .

Ijdelheid der ijdelheden.

Het is al ijdelheid!

Ziet, Ik maak alle dingen nieuw!

Zoo spreekt Hij, Die op den troon zit!

Zoo opent Hij het gezicht op de toekomst, die werkelijk toekomst is, de toekomst van het waarachtig nieuwe!

De toekomst van de nieuwe wereld, van den nieuwen hemel en de nieuwe aarde, waarin gerechtigheid woont. Het is de wereld, die in al haar nieuwen glans van heerlijkheid zal geopenbaard worden, als het oude zal zijn voorbij gegaan, en de vorige dingen niet meer gedacht zullen worden.

In die wereld zal de zonde nimmermeer heerschen, zal het voor eeuwig uit zijn met de lust des vleesches, en de lust der oogen, en de grootheid des levens. In die wereld zal de vloek zijn opgeheven, nooit meer het leven belasten en drukken. Daar zal de dood niet meer zijn, noch rouw of gekrijt. Daar zal Hij, Die op den troon zit alle tranen van de oogen afwisschen. In die wereld zal de tabernakel Gods bij de menschen zijn, en Hij zal onder hen en met hen wandelen, en hun God zijn; en zij zullen Zijne zonen en dochteren genaamd worden. Daar zullen ze den God hunner volkomene zaligheid aangezicht tot aangezicht zien in Zijne hemelsche openbaring, Hem dienen dag en nacht, en alle dingen Hem wijden, wandelend voor Zijn aangezicht in het eeuwige licht.

Die wereld is de wereld der opstanding uit de dooden!

Zij ligt aan den anderen kant, achter de *parousia*, de waarachtige en eenige toekomst: de toekomst van onzen Heere Jezus Christus.

Ze is de wereld van het onverderfelijke, het onsterfelijke, het onbevlekkelijke, het eeuwige leven! Ze ligt buiten den vicieuzen cirkel der ijdelheid. Ze is volkomen nieuw, nieuw ook in vergelijking met de wereld van het eerste paradijs. Ze staat op de hoogte van het hemelsche. Want zij is de wereld van den tweeden Mensch, van den laatsten Adam, de wereld van de Eerstgeborene aller creatuur, van de Eerstgeborene uit de dooden. De eerste Adam is geworden tot eene levende ziel, de laatste Adam tot eenen levendmakenden geest. De eerste mensch is uit de aarde, aardsch; de tweede Mensch is de Heere uit den hemel.

Ziet, Ik maak alle dingen nieuw!

Centraal is deze nieuwe wereld ook reeds gerealiseerd.

Ze werd verwerkelijkt, toen Hij, Die op den troon zit, Zijn eeniggeboren Zoon in de wereld inbracht, op-

dat Hij het vleesch en bloed der kinderen zou aannemen, in ons leven zou ingaan, en. . . . in onzen dood. Hare grondslagen werden gelegd, toen deze Zoon in het vleesch neerdaalde in de benedenste deelen der aarde, en met onze zonden op Zijn machtige schouderen inging in de diepte van onzen dood onder den vloekenden toorn Gods, en gehoorzaam werd tot den dood, ja, den dood des kruises. Ze werd aan het licht gebracht door de opstanding van dien Zoon in het vleesch uit de dooden, en door Zijn opgang in de hoogte, om te zitten aan de rechterhand des Vaders, bekleed met alle macht in hemel en op aarde. . . .

En ze werd ook verwerkelijkt in ons.

O, neen, het oude is nog niet voorbij gegaan. Nog altijd liggen we midden in den dood, en we bewegen ons, in het vleesch, nog altijd met alle dingen in den cirkelgang van het oude.

En toch: "het oude is voorbij gegaan; ziet, het is alles nieuw geworden."

Want: "zoo iemand in Christus is, die is een nieuw schepsel."

Hij, de Zoon het vleesch, Die onder ons getabernakeld heeft in gelijkheid des zondigen vleesches, Die stierf en uit de dooden opstond, de tweede Mensch, de laatste Adam, de Heere uit den hemel, het begin der nieuwe schepping,—Hij ging wel heen, zonder nog alle dingen nieuw te maken. Maar Hij kwam toch reeds weer, in den Geest. En door dien Geest woont Hij in ons, schept Hij in ons het beginsel van Zijn eigen opstandingsleven, roept Hij ons door Zijn Woord uit de duisternis tot Zijn wonderbaar licht, en draagt Hij alzo op de vleugelen van Zijn Woord, het heilig Evangelie, de nieuwe wereld in onze harten in.

We zijn in hope zalig geworden!

Nog ons bewegend temidden van het oude, dragen we het nieuwe in ons hart; nog met de bewegingen der zonde in onze leden, hongeren en dorsten we naar de volkomene openbaring van de gerechtigheid, die we in beginsel bezitten; nog midden in den dood liggend, zijn we toch uit de dooden opgestaan, en strekken we ons naar de volmaakte openbaring van het eeuwige leven; nog altijd rondgaande met den cirkelgang van het ijdele oude, stellen we toch onze leden in dienst van het nieuwe tot verheerlijking Gods; nog altijd uit de aarde aardsch, zijn we toch met Christus gezet in den hemel.

Dat is de spanning!

De spanning der hope, die nooit beschaamt!

En in die spanning ontmoeten we elkander aan den ingang van het nieuwe jaar met den wensch op de lippen, en is ze niet ijdel: heil en zegen!

Vervulle temidden van het oude het nieuwe uwe harten!

Beheersche het nieuwe uw oude leven!

Ziet, Ik maak alle dingen nieuw!

Halleluja!

Amen!

H. H.

## *The Standard Bearer*

Semi-Monthly, except Monthly in July and August

Published By

The Reformed Free Publishing Association

1463 Ardmore St., S. E.

EDITOR: — Rev. H. Hoeksema.

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

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

Communications relative to subscription should be addressed to MR. GERRIT PIPE, 1463 Ardmore St., S. E., Grand Rapids, Michigan. All Announcements, and Obituaries must be sent to the above address and will not be placed unless the regular fee of \$1.00 accompanies the notice.

(Subscription Price \$2.50 per year)

Entered as Second Class Mail at Grand Rapids, Michigan.

### — CONTENTS —

#### MEDITATION:—

IN HOPE VAN HET NIEUWE .....	145
Rev. H. Hoeksema.	

#### EDITORIALS:—

THREE POINTS AND FOUR .....	148
EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM .....	150
Rev. H. Hoeksema.	
THE KING OF SAMUEL'S WITNESS .....	153
QUESTIONS ON CHURCH POLITY .....	157
Rev. G. M. Ophoff.	
KOM, O GOD DER WRAKEN! .....	159
Rev. G. Vos.	
IN HIS FEAR .....	160
Rev. J. A. Heys.	
FROM HOLY WRIT .....	162
Rev. H. Veldman.	
PERISCOPE .....	164
Rev. W. Hofman.	
THE TENSION OF THE CHURCH .....	166
Rev. H. Veldman.	

## EDITORIALS

### Three Points And Four

The third purpose of the remnants and the natural light left to man after the fall is, according to the declarations of the Synod of Utrecht, that possibilities given in the original creation may still be developed.

This particular item in the declarations concerning "common grace" is peculiar to the decisions of Utrecht only; it is not found in the Three Points of Kalamazoo 1924.

No grounds are offered, either from Scripture or from the Confessions, on which this doctrinal declaration is supposed to rest. Nor is the declaration itself theologically conceived. It is rather philosophical. It certainly does not consider the present world and its "possibilities" in the light of the whole of God's revealed counsel of predestination with relation to all things. Its viewpoint is too limited in scope. It simply looks at this world and its development as a thing that has significance in itself.

We see in this declaration a weak version of the main element and purpose of Dr. Kuyper's theory of "common grace" as expounded in the three volumes of his work "De Gemeene Gratie"; and an attempt to raise this theory to a church dogma.

Briefly, this philosophy of Kuyper may be summarized as follows:

1. There is an original creation ordinance, that is, an ordinance or purpose of God with the cosmos, as it would have developed apart from the fall, and without the entrance of sin into the world. Creation, as it originally came forth from the hands of God, is an organism. It was complete, but it must still develop. In it were many hidden powers and treasures that must be brought to light. And it was man's calling to have dominion over all things, to cultivate the earth, and thus to develop and bring to light the glory and riches of its still hidden "possibilities". In doing so, he would be God's servant, and enhance and proclaim the glory of his Creator.

2. Sin struck a breach in creation. It was Satan's purpose to thwart the original creation ordinance and purpose of God, to destroy His work, and thus to deprive God of the glory of His name. And this purpose would certainly have been attained, the world would have turned into a chaos, and the hidden powers of creation would never have been revealed, if God had not intervened. It is not quite clear just what would have become of man and the world, unless God had intervened; but he makes it quite clear that all development would have been absolutely impossible.

3. However, God frustrates this purpose of the devil, and intervenes by His common grace. In creation the operation of the curse is restrained, so that it does not return to a chaotic state. Man is given an antidote, so that he vomits out, in part at least, the poison of sin, and God's warning or prediction that he would die is not fulfilled. Remnants of goodness, of his original powers, and of natural light are left to him, so that he may still cultivate the earth. And God makes a covenant of friendship with him, with sinful mankind as such, in virtue of which he becomes, as far as his present life and development of the world is concerned, of God's party over against the devil and his host. This is the covenant with Noah. And thus man, in alliance with God over against the devil, serves the purpose of showing forth the glory of God, by bringing to light the hidden treasures and possibilities of God's creation. Thus God's original creation ordinance is realized in the culture of the world. Thus Kuyper ascribes to a totally depraved sinner the power and ability to live a relatively good life in the world, and to serve the glory of God. And thus he finds a place for the Christian in the broad "sphere" of worldly culture.

Thus Kuyper instructs us.

And this theory has been more or less consciously or unconsciously adopted and, in some form or other, repeated, until it is hailed as the very basis and quintessence of true Calvinism. And under its pernicious influence a type of Calvinism has been developed which, though it boasts of the sole right to the name Calvinism, is difficult to distinguish from modern philosophy.

Now, we do not claim that the Synod of Utrecht, in its brief declaration on this matter, adopted this theory of Kuyper in all its implications. But it is very evident that the theologians of Utrecht had it in mind when they declared that one of the purposes of the remnants and natural light left to man after the fall is that possibilities given in the original creation may still be developed.

One may well wonder how many of the members of the churches that were represented by the Synod of Utrecht are capable of grasping the implications of this declaration, and of judging for themselves whether this be indeed the teaching of Holy Writ, and in line with the Reformed Confessions.

We dare say that there are not many such members in the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands.

But if this is the case, declarations of this kind should not be raised to the status of an official ecclesiastical dogma, and be made binding upon all the members.

When Kuyper himself was still living, his very name cast a spell over the Reformed people of the old country. What he presented, whether by the written or spoken word, as Reformed truth, was generally

accepted without question. An appeal to Kuyper was virtually as valid as an appeal to the Word of God. To contradict him was almost considered sacrilege. But Kuyper died, and the magic charm of his personal influence was dispelled. In late years, he has been more or less freely criticized. And Reformed people began to realize that it was quite proper and necessary to sift his teachings, and to judge them in the light of the Word of God and of the Reformed Confessions. His peculiar theories were never raised to the value of confessional standards.

The tendency blindly to follow a great person is bad enough. Yet, one always retains the liberty to criticize him. Officially this cannot be denied to any member of the Church.

But to adopt certain theories, that do not live in the consciousness of the members, officially, as ecclesiastical dogma's, is far worse. They are binding. The members are liable to submit to them passively, confident that the Church, as represented by its broadest gathering, makes no errors. And the result is that, within the Church that adopted such theories, it becomes an ecclesiastical offense to criticize such officially adopted theories. And if they are errors, a whole Church is led in the wrong direction.

And that the brief declaration by the Synod of Utrecht we are now discussing is an error, especially when it is considered in its true implications, we have no doubt.

The Reformed Churches of the Netherlands should recant it.

I state this on the following grounds:

1. It is dualistic. It carries a dualistic element even into the counsel of God, as if, in His eternal purpose, God originally conceived of a world that would develop without the fall, while, according to another part of His counsel He made provision for the salvation of the world in case of the fall. Both parts of this counsel are, according to this theory, actually realized, the former through common, the latter through special grace. This is contrary to Scripture, which teaches us that God's counsel is one, that all His works are known unto Him from the beginning, and that Christ, as the Head of the Church is the firstborn of every creature, by Whom and unto Whom all things were created. Moreover, this theory presents the powers of darkness as operating dualistically in opposition to God, so that they actually mar the work of God and, for a time, thwart His purpose, and God must take counter measures to overcome them. But this, too, is contrary to Holy Writ. God's counsel always stands, and He performs all His good pleasure. Even though it is the purpose of Satan to oppose God, in actual fact he only accomplishes the counsel of the Most High. Moreover, the power of death and of the curse on creation is not to be conceived as operating



independently, so that God must restrain them, but they are of God. Hence, through creation, the fall, sin, death, and the curse, God's one and only counsel is realized, nor was it ever actually opposed or frustrated, even momentarily.

2. If by the realization of the possibilities of the original creation is meant the development of the world in its paradisaical state, the theory utterly ignores the effect of the curse upon creation. That effect is so great that we cannot even conceive of the world in its original virgin perfection and beauty. Just try to imagine a world without death and suffering and destruction, and you will draw the conclusion that such a world must be radically different from the world we know. The creature is in the bondage of corruption. It is made subject to vanity. "Vanity of vanities" characterizes all its existence and activity. Creation runs in a vicious circle. There is nothing new under the sun. Nothing is really accomplished. No end is attained. And even though it is certainly true that the essential relation of man to the world is not changed through the fall, and that he still reflects a small remnant of his original dominion, the "culture" of the world is hopeless. It groans under the burden of the curse. Death encompasses it on every side. It can never attain to a real goal. If we may speak of original creation possibilities, they are certainly not realized through common grace and by modern culture.

3. The theory, when accepted in all its implication abridges the gap between the Church and the world, destroys the antithesis, and creates a common "sphere" in which the children of light and those of darkness can cooperate and associate unto a common end: the sphere of culture. And the result is that believers put on an unequal yoke with the unbeliever, and that the Church is swallowed up by the world. The truth of this is evident in the life of those that profess Christ everywhere, in the old country certainly no less than here.

We must, therefore, not consider this present world as a relatively good interim, in which original creation possibilities are realized, and in the sphere of which even the natural man is able to do much good through the influence of common grace. Rather must we understand that it is the stage, on which God's purpose of election and reprobation is carried out. And on this stage we behold the antithetical development of sin and grace, according to the counsel of the Most High. The end of this development, that must be and surely will be attained, is not a perfect exhibition of original creation possibilities, but the ripened fruit of the root sin of Adam, and of the grace in Christ. When this shall have been attained, the end will come, and the fashion of this world shall pass away, to be replaced by the new creation in which righteousness shall dwell.

H. H.

## THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

### An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

Part Two.

Of Man's Redemption

Lord's Day XXI

4.

Assurance Of Membership (cont.)

For proper self-examination leads to repentance. Its fruit is never morbid doubt or unbelief, but a walk in sanctification and the assurance that we are, indeed, members of the Church, living members of the body of Christ.

And the assurance of *present* membership is, at the same time, the certainty of *abiding, eternal* membership. The latter is inherent in the former. The two cannot be separated. Even as calling and election are inseparable, so the assurance of the one is never without the assurance of the other. By walking in the way in which the believer may be and is assured of his calling, he is also assured of his eternal election.

Hence, the Catechism correctly places the confession on the lips of the believer: "that I am, *and for ever shall remain*, a living member thereof."

The subjective assurance of which the Catechism here speaks, has its ground in the truth of the certain preservation and perseverance of the saints. If it were objectively possible that the believer in Christ could ever finally and completely apostatize, and fall from grace, the assurance of eternal membership of the true Church would, of course, be impossible. But the Word of God teaches that "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance," Rom. 11:29; and that believers are certainly preserved unto the final salvation by the power of God, so that they can never fall from the grace, and finally perish. I Pet. 1:4, 5. For those whom God foreknew, and ordained to be conformed according to the image of His Son, He also called, and justified, and glorified. Rom. 8:29, 30. Nothing, neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, can possibly separate believers from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Rom. 8:38, 39. Nor is there any power that can separate them from the love of Christ, whether it be tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword. In all these things the saints in Christ are more than conquerors. Rom. 8:35-37. Christ came, not to do His will, but the will of the

Father that sent Him; and this is the will of the Father, that of all He hath given Him, He should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. John 6:38, 39. His sheep certainly hear His voice, and He knows them, and they follow Him; and He gives them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man ever pluck them out of His hand. The Father Who gave Him the sheep is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of His Father's hand. He and the Father are one. John 10:27-30. God, Who began the good work in His people, will perform and perfect it, until the day of Jesus Christ. Phil. 1:6.

The deepest source and ground of this truth of the certain perseverance of the saints is the truth of sovereign election.

We need not be surprised that those that deny the absolute sovereignty of election, and insist that the appropriation of salvation is, in final analysis, a matter of man's own free will and choice, cannot accept the truth that the believer is surely and infallibly preserved unto the final salvation, and that he can never completely and ultimately fall from grace. In their system of the truth concerning salvation, man is always first, and is the determining factor to the very end. They speak of election, to be sure, but it is an election in which God was motivated and determined by what He foresaw in men. He foreknew who would believe in Christ, and these He chose unto salvation. They speak of Christ's atoning sacrifice, but the death of Christ is not really a sure and definite payment and blotting out of the guilt of sin, but rather an opportunity, a chance for all men to have their sins obliterated and to be reconciled to God. Whether the death of Christ is efficacious unto forgiveness and righteousness depends upon the will and determination of man. They do, indeed, admit, and often emphasize that a man must be saved, reborn and called, by grace, but in bestowing this grace upon any man, God must needs wait for the consent of the sinner: man must will to be saved before God can begin to operate in him by His Spirit and grace. And thus it remains until the very end. It is the grace of God that must preserve the believer in this world, and without the preserving grace of God he cannot persevere even for a moment; but whether or not God will bestow this grace of preservation on the saints, depends, in last analysis, on their own will and attitude. Always man is first. God helps those that help themselves!

According to the Reformed faith, however, God is strictly sovereign in the matter of salvation.

He is always first.

He chose His people unto salvation, not on the ground of a humanly conceived foreknowledge of the determinations and works of men, but sovereignly, with absolute freedom, independently of the will and

choice of man. The gifts of grace, forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life, are not merited by the death of Christ for all men conditionally, but for the elect unconditionally and certainly. The intercession of Christ in heaven is not a doubtful prayer for an indefinite number of men, but a very sure plea, on the basis of His own obedience unto death, for all the elect. He prays not for the world, but for those whom the Father gave Him out of the world. John 17:9. The gifts of grace are bestowed upon the sinner, not because he is willing to receive them, but efficaciously, and in spite of the fact that, of himself, he would never be willing even to ask for them. In the matter of salvation, God is always first. And the gifts of grace are but the outflow of the sovereign election of the God of our salvation.

Hence, the Reformed believer, on the basis of Holy Writ, believes the certain preservation and perseverance of the saints.

Because election is sovereign and unchangeable, because the death of Christ cannot be in vain, because the intercession of Christ cannot fail, and because the gifts of the Spirit and of grace are sovereignly and efficaciously bestowed upon the elect in Christ; therefore, the elect can never fall from grace, and perish.

It is true that also the Arminian appeals to Scripture to sustain his contention that there is a falling away of the saints, so that one who first truly believed in Christ may apostatize and perish. And it may not be superfluous to consider some of these passages from Holy Writ.

They point out that the Bible frequently exhorts believers to be faithful and to persevere unto the end; and warns against the danger of final apostacy. And they conclude from these admonitions and warnings that the possibility of falling away from grace is very real. Scripture exhorts the saints to be faithful unto death, and then they have the promise of the crown of life. Rev. 2:10. The promise of final victory is for him that overcomes, and keeps the works of Christ unto the end. Rev. 2:26. The believer is admonished to hold fast that which he has, that no man take his crown. Rev. 3:11. All the dreadful examples of unbelief and rebellion of the people of God of the old dispensation are held before the believers of the new dispensation, with the warning: "let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." I Cor. 10:12. We must give very earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip, (Heb. 2:1; and take heed, lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God, Heb. 3:12; and exhort one another daily, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, Heb. 3:13; and with the example of carnal Israel before us, who could not enter in because of unbelief, we must labor to enter into the rest of God, lest any man fall after

the same example of unbelief, Heb. 4:11. These and many other warnings and admonitions plainly prove, according to the Arminian, that there is a falling away from grace. For what sense would there be in warning against a danger that does not exist?

However, to conclude from such warnings and exhortations that there is a possibility of final apostacy for the believer in Christ, is certainly fallacious. What they do prove is, first, that, on the part of the believer, the tendency to apostatize is always present, and that, therefore, he must give earnest heed to the Word of God warning him against it, and exhorting him to be faithful, and to fight the good fight. For the believer has but a small beginning of the new obedience, the motions of sin are ever active in his members, and the powers of darkness, the devil and the world, constantly tempt him to sin. There is room, therefore, for the exhortation to watch and pray, lest he fall into temptation. And, secondly, these admonitions and warnings prove that God preserves His saints in the world, by His Spirit and grace, *but also through His Word*. God's grace never destroys man's rational and moral nature. That He infallibly preserves His people in the midst of this world does not make them mere passive objects in His almighty hand. It does not mean that they ride to heaven as in a Pullman, and go to sleep in their berth until they arrive at their heavenly destination. On the contrary, the rule is always: "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure." Phil. 2:12, 13. They have a battle to fight, the battle of faith. They are called to bear the cross. It is given them of grace, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer with Him. And because God treats them as His rational and moral children, who are called to represent the cause of the Son of God in the midst of a hostile world, He addresses them through His Word, by exhortations, warnings, admonitions, threats, and promises, to encourage and comfort them, to rebuke them when they go backsliding, and to strengthen them to the battle. But this does not alter the fact that the power of His grace surely preserves them to the end. Even though, if they will not be taught otherwise, he lets them go in their own way sometimes, and leads them into temptations, so that they fall into sin, he will not abandon them altogether, but surely cause them to repent and to return in the way of His covenant. They are preserved in the power of God. No one can pluck them out of His hand.

The opponents of the doctrine of the certain perseverance of the saints also point to concrete examples of final apostacy in the Scriptures. The Bible speaks of Hymenaeus and Philetus, "who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some," II Tim.

2:17, 18; and of Demas, who loved this present world, II Tim. 4:10; while the apostle Peter speaks of false teachers, "who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them," II Pet. 2:1. But with respect to all such examples, it should be sufficient to remind ourselves of the words of John: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." I John 2:19. It is quite impossible, of course, that one belong to the manifestation of the Church in the world, without having the grace of the Lord Jesus in his heart. Fact is that there is always carnal seed in the Church on earth. And when they apostatize from the faith they once confessed, they cannot be pointed out as illustrations of the falling away of the true believers. Their apostacy is merely external. They never were living members of the body of Christ.

Then, too, it must be remembered that, what is not possible with regard to individual believers, viz., that they finally apostatize from the faith, is certainly possible and frequently observed in the line of generations. If we apply this truth to such passages of Scripture as John 15:2, where the Lord speaks of branches in Him that bear no fruit, and are taken away, we will have no difficulty to understand them, without falling into the error of the view that there is a falling away from grace. According to the organic idea that God gathers His Church in the line of continued generations, the branches in the vine are not merely the individual believers, but they and their children. But in the generations of the people of God all are not Israel that are of Israel. The result is that, out of them, generations develop that are alienated from the grace of Christ. They become dead branches that bear no fruit, and that are taken away. Thus can be understood, without having recourse to the theory of a falling away from grace, that whole churches, that once were faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ, have become utterly modern. The light that, a few generations back, shone brightly on the candlestick, has been completely extinguished. In the generations of believers, the salt may lose its savor and become good for nothing but to be trampled under foot of men.

Finally, we must still call attention to those passages of Scripture that, according to the Arminian interpretation are alleged to teach directly and indubitably that there is a final falling away from grace. I have in mind such passages as Heb. 6:4-8; 10:26-31. Especially the first of these texts would seem to favor rather strongly the Arminian view. We may do well, therefore, to give it a little closer scrutiny.

We read there: "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and



have tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify unto themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned."

To be sure, the men of whom the Scripture speaks here lived very close to the kingdom of God, and under the influence of its blessed fellowship. They tasted of the heavenly gift, that is, of the riches of salvation in Christ; they were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, that is, they were the recipients of some of the gifts which the Spirit of Christ bestowed and still bestows upon the Church of Christ, whether we understand by these those special gifts with which the early Church was endowed, such as the gift of tongues, of healing, of prophecy, or the general gifts of teaching, comforting, the ministry of the Word, and the like. Moreover, they tasted of the good Word of God, that is, they knew and understood it, and realized its blessedness to an extent; and they tasted the powers of the world to come: they had some experience of the beauty and blessedness of the promises of God in their final realization, and understood their power unto a life of sanctification in the midst of the world. They not only apprehended all these spiritual realities of the kingdom of heaven, but somehow they tasted them, and recognized their goodness, their beauty and blessedness. These men lived in very close proximity to the kingdom of God. They were men of high standing in the Church, leaders and examples, men of power and influence in the flock of the great Shepherd.

Yet, let us not overlook the fact that in this entire, rather elaborate description, there is not one word that speaks of, or even suggests the grace of God unto salvation. The text does not ascribe to these men the new birth, or faith in Christ, or the love of God and of the brethren, nor the grace of sanctification. In fact, whatever is said of these men, may well be found in natural men, quite devoid of the grace of regeneration and of true faith in Christ. It is quite possible for the natural man to have a clear intellectual understanding of the things of the kingdom God, and even to have a natural taste for their beauty, blessedness, and power. And the natural man surely can partake of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, even so that he is able to instruct others in the Word of God. Judas Iscariot, for three years, lived in close contact with the Saviour, heard His Word, saw His works, was endowed, together with the rest of the twelve disciples, with power to preach that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils.

Matt. 10:5-8. Can it be that he never tasted of the goodness and power of the kingdom of God? Yet, he was a devil, and never tasted of the true grace of God.

Thus it is, no doubt, with the men described in the sixth chapter of the Hebrews.

And because such men live in close proximity to the kingdom of heaven, yet have not the new life and the love of God in their hearts, they sooner or later fall away, and reveal themselves as reprobates, that can never again be brought to repentance. Outwardly they repented once; they will never do it again. Enemies of the cross of Christ they become, crucifying the Son of God afresh.

According to the figure that is used at the end of this passage from the Hebrews, they are the seed of thorns and thistles, that sprout and grow up under the influence of the abundant and frequent rain, the same rain that causes the same field to bring forth the good grain.

There is no falling away of the saints. Once a believer is always a believer.

Hence, inherent in the assurance that one is a living member of the Church of Christ is the other assurance that he will remain a true member of the body of Christ forever.

The Christian may, indeed, confess, with the Catechism, that he is, and forever shall remain, a living member of the Church.

H. H.

---

---

## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

---

---

### The King Of Samuel's Witness



The execution of the command that a king be set over the people had to be preceded by a solemn protest, "Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit protest solemnly against them (Hebrew, "Thou shalt certainly witness against them,") and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them,—the *manner* of the king, that is, his customary way of acting, normal behaviour, what he will do as king in the throne. This is what he will do. He will take their sons for himself, for his chariots and horsemen, to cultivate his fields, and manufacture his implements of war. He will take their daughters to work in his kitchens as confectionaries, cooks and bakers. He will take the best of their fields, and vineyards, and oliveyards and give them to his servants. He will take their men-servants, and their maid-servants, and their finest young men, and their asses to do his work. And

he will take the tenth of their seed, and their vineyards, and give to his officers and to his servants. And he will take the tenth of their sheep: and they shall be his bondmen. And they will cry out in that day because of their king, which they will have chosen them; and the Lord will not hear them in that day. Such will be the forbidden practises of the king of Samuel's witness. He will behave as though he were the people's lord.

It is plain that the king of Samuel's witness is a tyrant, who usurps the Lord's place in the Israelitish commonwealth. Firstly, he takes the people's sons and daughters *for himself*. He might not do that. The nation belonged to Jehovah, He being its redeemer God, Lord, and King invisible. The king of Samuel's witness takes the best of the peoples' vineyards, oliveyards, and fields and gives them to his servants. This, too, was a forbidden practice. Jehovah being Israel's absolute Lord, all the people's possessions—their fields, vineyards, oliveyards, asses and sheep—belonged exclusively to Him, were held by the people as a permanent inheritance and trust—trust, for they were but stewards in God's house—and therefore could not lawfully be appropriated by Israel's kings. The wicked king Ahab was destroyed on account of his having appropriated by violence the inheritance of Naboth. The king of Samuel's witness takes the tenth of the people's sheep. But the tenths belonged not to Israel's kings but to Jehovah, He being their Lord. The king of Samuel's witness is a usurper indeed. Besides, he is a cruel king. His yoke is so grievous that the people of Israel cry out. Being a usurper, he is godless and therefore cruel. He enslaves his subjects, makes them his bondmen. "And ye shall be his bondmen," reads the text.

The sole right of Israel's kings was to rule the nation in the capacity of Jehovah's vicars according to His law, the promulgation of which had taken place at Mt. Sinai. These kings were no legislators with the right to impose upon the nation their own will as embodied in a code of laws of their own making. Israel's sole legislator was Jehovah. Accordingly, Israel's king, when he sat upon the throne of his kingdom, had to make him a copy of the law—Jehovah's law—in a book out of that which was before the priests the Levites: and this copy had to be with him, and he had to read therein all the days of his life: that he might learn to fear the Lord, and keep all the words of the law and those statutes, to do them, that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, Deut. 17:18-20. And he might not multiply wives unto himself, that his heart turn not away: neither might he greatly multiply silver and gold (verse 17). Such was Moses admonition to the kings of Israel.

Israel's kings had so to rule that the kingship in Israel reflected the glories of Israel's King Invisible.

They had so to rule that as kings they preindicated Christ in His kingdom at the right hand of God. Hence, their reigns had to be characterized by strictest justice. They had to be saviours of the nation and shepherds of Israel as the Lord's servants. Be it imperfectly, for they were but sinful men, David was that kind of king and likewise Solomon in his glory. They did not enslave God's people and rob them of their inheritances as does the king of Samuel's witness. With the full consent of Araunah, David bought at a price the threshing floor of this subject of his and there he built an altar and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings that the plague might be stayed, II Sam. 24:21ff. The text at Chron. 27:26-31 indicates that David had large possessions in lands. However these lands formed not a confiscated property of dispossessed Israelites, but they were possessions that David had lawfully acquired in his wars with the heathen nations, as is evident from their location in the maritime plain. And these lands he had cultivated not by Israelites but by the strangers that were in the land of Canaan, who labored as the tillers of the king's fields under the supervision of overseers chosen from among the people of Israel. Solomon, too, employed the strangers that were in the land of Israel for all his heavy work, II Chron. 8:9. At II Chron. 2:17 the number of these strangers is given as 153,000—Hittites, Amorites, Perizites, Hevites, and Jebusites, all dwelling in the land of Israel and bondmen of Solomon. "But of the children of Israel did Solomon make no bondmen, but they were all men of war and his servants (not bondmen pressed into service), and his princes, and his captains and rulers of his chariots, and his horsemen," I Kings 9:22. As subjects of David and Solomon, the people of Israel were free and happy. "Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking, and making merry . . ." and they "dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his figtree, from Dan to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon," I Kings 4:20, 25.

Yet in a purely formal sense, David and Solomon were that king of Solomon's witness. Like that king, David and Solomon, and of course all the kings in Israel, had to be obeyed. Like that king but unlike the Judges in Israel of the preceding period—and we should not fail to observe this—they, the kings in Israel, had also to be served, waited on and supported. For they were kings. All the heavy work connected with the building of the temple and of Solomon's palaces and cities was done by the strangers, it is true. But Solomon's captains and overseers, whose number was large, and the soldiers of his standing army, and most of his skilled workmen were Israelites; and likewise the personnel of his magnificent court, no doubt—the chief bakers and cooks and confectionaries that worked in his kitchens. What is more, the people of

Israel had also to contribute to the support of his unusually large household, as is indicated by the text at I Kings 4:7-20. Verse 7 reads, "And Solomon had twelve officers over all Israel, which provided victuals for the king and his household: each man in his month in a year made provisions." But much of these victuals came from peoples that had been rendered tributary by David, as is indicated by the text at I Kings 4:22-24. Here the statement of the amount of Solomon's provisions for one day is followed by the notice, "For he had dominion over all the region on this side of the river." It is certain therefore that, as long as Solomon's heart was right with God, the yoke that he laid upon the nation was not heavier than it with ease could bear. Yet it was a new yoke that the nation in the period preceding, during the reign of the judges, had not to bear. But the people of Israel had asked for that yoke. They had insisted that Samuel make them a king to judge them like the nations. And when the throne in Israel was occupied by wicked kings that yoke was crushingly heavy like the yoke of the king of Samuel's witness. But even Israel's God-fearing kings brought the nation no little grief. In their carnal moments they fell into gross sins and the punishment meted out to them involved the whole nation. For the satisfaction of his lust David took to himself Bathsheba and thereupon had her husband killed in battle in order that the sin might not become known. David's punishment grievously effected the nation. It was torn by a civil war. It deserved that stroke however. In repudiating David and in following after the godless Absalom, the nation once more rejected Christ. At another time, as blown up with pride, David had the people counted. In punishment of his sin the Lord sent a pestilence upon the people and there died 70,000 men. But the text at II Samuel 24 reveals that the nation deserved also this stroke. Like the king of Samuel's witness Solomon multiplied unto himself horses and chariots. But that equestrian might was a forbidden thing in Israel. Like that king in Samuel's witness Solomon multiplied unto himself wives and concubines even to the number of one thousand. Many of those women were heathen princesses for whose gods he built high places in the very sight of Jerusalem. In punishment of this atrocious sin the Lord stirred him up adversaries. They did him much mischief. Israel became an object of abhorrence to the nations, I Kings 2:25. It can only mean that one after the other of the kings over which Solomon reigned withheld their tribute. To offset the loss, the burdens of the people of Israel would have to be increased. It is a good conjecture therefore that as the troubles of Solomon multiplied he became more and more despotic and his yoke insufferable. No sooner was he dead than the people petitioned Rehoboam to make the greivous burden of his father lighter. Yet the purely

historical evidence contained in the book of kings—all the days of Solomon the people "were eating and drinking and making merry"—should caution us against giving too much credence to the complaint of the people that Solomon's yoke was greivous. The tribe who led in that revolt was proud and jealous Ephraim. In all likelihood it was glad that conditions were such as would allow it to complain, as it was in the need of a pretext for breaking away, not, to be sure, from the kingship—having rejected Rehoboam they chose as their king Jehoboam—but from the house of David and so from Christ. But how abjectly foolish had been the people's wanting to exchange Jehovah for human kings! The best of these kings were but sinful men who in their carnal moments exhibited more than a mere formal resemblance to that king of Samuel's protest.

Yet these God-fearing kings, despite their lapses, were not properly, to be sure, that king of Samuel's witness. As has been said, David and Solomon did not rob Israelites of their inheritances and take God's people for themselves, making bondmen of them. Properly the king of Samuel's witness are all the kings that ruled the ten tribes, none of whom feared God, and all the wicked kings of Judah. In the discourses of the prophets one over and over comes upon statements indicating that during the reign of some of these kings the common people in Israel were oppressed in every way. The princes ate up the vineyards; the spoil of the poor was in their houses. They beat God's people to pieces, and grinded the faces of the poor, Isa. 3:14, 15. The poor were cast out of their houses, Isa. 58:7. Shallum, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, was accused of the prophet of building his house in unrighteousness. He used his neighbour's service without wages, and gave him not for his work. He did not judgment and justice, but his heart and eyes were for his covetousness, for shedding of innocent blood, for oppression, and for violence, to do it, Jer. 22:11-17. The righteous were sold for silver and the poor for a pair of shoes. The poor were crushed and the needy were tread upon. Their wheat was taken from them, Amos 2:6; 4:1; 5:11, 12. Men of power, the princes, the heads of the people, the godless kings, devised iniquity, worked evil upon their beds, and when the morning was light, they practiced it. They coveted fields and took them by violence, and also houses. They joined house to house, layed field to field (houses and fields that had been taken by violence) till there was no place, that they might be placed alone in the earth. So did they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his hiretage, Isa. 5:8; Micah 2:2. They "seized the inheritance which I have caused my people Israel to inherit," Jer. 12:14. The heads of the people, "the princes of the house of Jacob" abhorred judgment, perverted all equity, "built up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity, and judged for re-

ward. The priests taught for hire and the prophets divined for money, Micah 3:11. The good man perished out of the earth: and there was none upright among men: they all lay in wait for blood; they hunted every man his brother with a net. They did evil with both hands earnestly. The prince and the judge asked for a reward, and the great man uttered the mischief of his soul. The best of them was like a brier, the most upright was sharper than a thorn hedge, Micah 7:1-4.

The sum and total of these quotations set forth a doing on the part of the men of power in Israel—men of power: kings, princes, corrupt priests and false prophets—the wickedness of which is truly amazing. When this doing was actual the land of Israel was easily the most wicked spot on all the earth. We have to do here with a condition of things that prevailed nowhere else at that time, at least not on that scale. The likes of those men of power was nowhere else to be found. As compared with the period in which this terrifying wickedness rioted, the times of the judges, when every man did that which was right in his own eyes in that there was no king in Israel, were tranquil times. If there be such a thing—but there is no such thing—as a common grace staying through its operations in men's hearts the development of sin in men and nations, the reprobated Israel was completely devoid of it.

When was this astonishing wickedness actual? During the reigns of which kings? This can easily be determined. The prophetic activity of the prophets from whose discourses the above-cited sentences were taken, took place during the reigns of the following kings: Isaiah—Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah; Jeremiah—Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah, kings of Judah; Amos—Uzziah, king of Judah and Jeroboam II, king of Israel. Uzziah king of Judah, was contemporary of Jeroboam II, Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, kings of Israel of the ten tribes. It was during the reign of these five kings that the ten tribes and particularly Samaria was that house of wickedness that the prophets Amos and Hosea describe it to be in their discourses. Immoralities, crimes and vices of every description were practiced openly by these kings, and the princes and the heads of the nation, Hosea 4:1, 2, 6ff., 13 18; 6:8, 9; 7:1-7; 10:4, 9, 12ff. The people were robbed of their inheritances and driven into actual slavery, 11:6, 7; 3:10. The women urged their husbands to greater cruelties, 4:1. The courts in the land were notoriously corrupt, 5:7, 10, 12; 6:12. The dispossessed poor could get no hearing. Justice was bought at a price, 5:7, 10; 6:12. And the leaders in crime and vice were the heads of the people, 6:1-6. Those who raised their voices in protest against the wrong were despised and persecuted, 5:10; 7:10-13. These same conditions prevailed in Judah and parti-

cularly in Jerusalem especially during the reign of that monster of iniquity, king Ahaz.

The command of God to Samuel was that he shew the people the manner, doings, of the king that would rule over them. Samuel did so; and it was verily a prophecy to which he gave utterance on that occasion, a word put into his heart by the Lord. And this is what he saw and heard in his prophetic vision:—his people plundered, enslaved, and killed, by the king that they would choose them. That would be the wrath of God revealed over their great sin. They were rejecting Christ. He heard also the cry of the people in that day. What he saw and heard he told them. Let us grasp the awful implication of their reply. It is verily this: "Let it be as thou sayest. God's anger consume us and our children. His curse pursue us through the years. But do as we bid thee. Set over us a king." Such was the tenor of their speech, for they believed not. It was a cry not unlike that which they uttered some centuries later, when Christ stood before them in the flesh:—His blood be upon us and our children. And their choosing that king of Samuel's witness in rejection of Jehovah was not unlike the choice they made when Christ stood before them in the flesh:—They chose Barabbas and cried for Christ's crucifixion.

The Lord hearkened unto the voice of the people in all that they said unto Him. He set over them a king. And Samuel's prophecy went into fulfillment through all the years and especially during the reigns of those wicked kings that occupied the throne in the days of Hosea, Amos, Micah, and the other prophets of that century. That king of Samuel's witness sat only in Israel's throne. The likes of him was nowhere else to be found; for that king was Ahaz and Shallum and his spiritual kin. Then did the people cry. And among those who cried in that day were also God's elect, the oppressed people, the poor in the land, the dispossessed, the enslaved, the widows and the orphans who put their trust in the Lord and cried day and night unto Him in their distress. And He heard their cry. He sent them deliverance in that day even through some of those wicked kings, the king of Samuel's witness. The very tyranny of that king worked for their good. It drove them into the arms of Christ.

In that terrible day the Lord gave unto the poor and the oppressed in the land, who put their trust in Him, also a promise by the mouth of His prophet,—the promise of the King, the rod out of the stem of Jesse, Jesus Christ, upon whom the Spirit of the Lord shall rest. . . . and shall make him quick of understanding in the fear of the Lord: and shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor and argue with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod

of his mouth and with the breath of his lips shall he slay te wicked," Isa. 11:1-5.

Thus the King will save the poor in the land, God's poor, the eternal objects of His love. They trust in God. By nature, apart from grace, they, too, reject the Lord, for in themselves they are dead in sin like the others. But therefore God gave them David; therefore He gave them the King, the Christ; they must be saved unto Him.

G. M. O.

## Questions on Church Polity

A brother, resident in Sioux Center, Iowa, writes as follows: (he writes in the Holland language. The undersigned takes the liberty to translate the writing):

- 1) Art. 36 (of the Church Order of Dordrecht), The Classis has the same jurisdiction over the Consistory as the Particular Synod has over the Classis and the General Synod over the Particular".

What is the character of this jurisdiction? The brother asks.

- 2) Art. 68, "The Ministers shall on Sunday, *ordinarily in the afternoon*, explain briefly the sum of Christian doctrine comprehended in the Heidelberg Catechism." The brother underscores "ordinarily in the afternoon" and asks, "Is that a purposeless insertion?"
- 3) Art. 79, "When Ministers of the Divine Word, Elders or Deacons, have committed any public, gross sin, which is a disgrace to the church, or worthy of punishment by the authorities, the Elders and Deacons shall immediately by preceding sentence of the Consistory thereof and of the nearest Church, be suspended or expelled from their office. . . ." Question of the brother,
  - a) "What remains here of the "autonomie" of the local Church?

The brother quotes the rest of the article which reads; "but the ministers shall only be suspended. Whether these shall be entirely deposed from office, shall be subject to the judgment of the Classis."

- b) His question, "Who deposes a minister of the Word, the Classis or the Consistory?"

### REPLY

Answering these questions (the one put in connection with Art. 68 excepted), requires that we have a clear understanding of the proposition that the local church is autonomous. That the local church is autonomous means:

- 1) That it is a self-governing organization, under Christ subject to no legal power other than that of its own consistory. In the church of Christ legal power or authority is the right, and solely the right to officially preach the Gospel, discipline with the Scriptures, and excommunicate out of the Christian church again with the Scriptures. This is key-power,—a power that was given by Christ to His church.
- 2) That all legal power is concentrated in the consistory and thus not also in Classis (Synod).
- 3) That for each consistory the sphere of the exercise of the legal power is its own congregation only, that is, the body of believers by which it was chosen. It cannot be otherwise, if the local congregation—each congregation—is autonomous.

In the light of these sentences, it is plain how the brother's questions are to be answered.

Answer to question *b* under 3: If there is need of such action, not the Classis but each consistory deposes its own minister only. For 1) to depose office bearers is to exercise key-power (legal authority; 2) all key-power is concentrated in the local consistory. Hence, the Classis cannot exercise this power, as it does not have it. Therefore it cannot depose office bearers.

Answer to question *a* under 3: Art. 79 does not militate against the doctrine of the autonomy of the local church; for the sentence of the neighboring church, consistory, is not mandatory but purely advisory. It means that the other consistory may refuse to adopt and execute the sentence; it may reject it. This is its right, being, as it is, autonomous. Were the sentence mandatory, the advice-seeking consistory would be *compelled* to act according to it, or allow itself to be deposed and excommunicated by the neighboring consistory. Thus, were the sentence mandatory, one consistory would be lording it over another and thereby destroying its autonomy. Now such lordship of one consistory (church) over another, Art. 84 of our Church Order strictly forbids. "No church," so this article reads, "shall in any way lord it over other churches, no Minister over other Ministers, no Elder over other Elders or Deacons. All that the neighboring Consistory may do, can do, in the event its sentence is not adopted and executed is to appeal the case to Classis. And the Classis renders judgment. But Classical decisions are likewise purely advisory and not mandatory. It means that the consistory may reject also classical decisions. This again is its right, being as it is autonomous. Were the classical decision mandatory, the consistory would be *compelled* to submit to it or allow itself to be deposed now by the classis. Thus, were the classical decision mandatory, the classis would be lording it over the consistory and thereby destroying its autonomy. But this, too, is contrary



to Art. 84 of the Church Order: For it stands to reason that a *number* of neighboring churches may no more lord it over a consistory than may the *one* neighboring church. And what is Classis other than an assembly of delegates of a number of local autonomous churches? Certainly the Classis is not a consistory vested with key-power over the local consistory. The church institute is always local. It does not broaden out into a classical and synodical church with the Synod as the over-all consistory. Anyone not laboring under a bias and thus capable of correctly interpreting the articles of our Church Order and of our Three Forms of Unity will perceive and readily admit that such a view is glaringly and severely anti-Reformed.

Thus all that the Classis can do in case its decisions are being rejected by consistories is to refuse to receive their delegates on its classical meetings and thereby sever the denominational tie between it and the aggrieved consistories. This the Classis may do. This is its right,—a right implicit in the very purpose of a number of churches federating on the basis of our Church Order. Certainly the consistory is autonomous. It is free to reject classical decisions, also decisions fixing classical assessments, without finding itself under the necessity of being penalized on the account by deposition by the Classis. However, the autonomy of the local congregation does not imply that the consistory can persistently reject the decisions of the major assemblies with retention of its right to a place in the church formation.

Finally, the consistory can also abuse its autonomy; and this is a sin. The consistory commits this sin if it rejects the decisions of the major assemblies, including, of course, the decisions fixing classical assessments, without being able to prove even to its own satisfaction that they conflict with the Word of God and the articles of the Church Order. Art. 31 of the Church Order therefore requires that the Consistory allow itself to be bound by classical and synodical decisions unless they can be proved to conflict with the Word of God. This article, too, can easily be defended with the Scriptures.

Herewith has been answered also the brother's question under 1). The jurisdiction that the Classis has over the consistory can be only that kind of oversight that a Classis, organized on the basis of our Church Order, may take over the consistory. It is not an oversight that involves Classis in the exercise of legal or key-power over the consistory. For, as has been shown, all key-power is concentrated in the consistory. Hence Art. 36 does not state that the Classis has the same jurisdiction over the consistory, that the consistory has over the congregation. What then is the character of this oversight of Classis over consistory? It is *advisory* in contradistinction to *mandatory*. If the character of this oversight or jurisdiction were *man-*

*datory* Classis would have the right to demand that its decisions be obeyed on pain of deposition of the recalcitrant consistory. But this right cannot be that of Classis in that it has not the key-power. Hence the character of the oversight of Classis over consistory must necessarily be advisory. What this means has been fully explained. We must consider that it is always a question to whom the key-power was given, to the consistory alone or to consistory and the Classis.

Rightly considered, the question is whether the key-power was given to consistory *or* Classis. For it stands to reason that both Classis and consistory cannot have this power. There cannot, under Christ, be two judicial powers in the church handling the keys of the Kingdom of heaven, Classis and consistory. For either will have to submit to the other. The one that submits has not the key-power, except in name. It is plain that the doctrine according to which Classical decisions are mandatory, implying that Classis also has key-power, is, verily a terrible philosophy,—terrible in that it is destructive, conceptionally, of the church, the local congregation, as an autonomous organization, vester with the power to discipline the disorderly and excommunicate out of the christian church the wicked.

Question under 2) I do not understand. As was stated, the brother underscored "ordinarily in the afternoon". In recent times Reformed churches in North America revised this article 68, and the revisers eliminated the phrase "ordinarily in the afternoon". The Protestant Reformed churches have the revised article. Now certainly there was no need of retaining this phrase. The issue with our Reformed fathers was not that the sum of Christian doctrine comprehended in the Heidelberg Catechism be explained on Sunday only *in the afternoon* and thus not in the morning or evening instead, but the issue with them was that this doctrine be explained on Sunday. And this is also the sole issue with us. Whether this be done in the morning, afternoon, or evening makes absolutely no difference certainly, as long as this doctrine be explained on Sunday. And this is the sole requirement of the revised article 68. And as our churches organized also on the basis of this article, all are in duty bound to do as this article requires. And this they do and very willingly. For the Heidelberg Catechism is a treasured composition in our communion of churches.

G. M. O.

---

#### CLASSIS EAST

will meet in regular session, the Lord willing, Wednesday, January 8, 1947, at 9 o'clock A.M., at Fuller Avenue.

D. Jonker, S. C.

## SION'S ZANGEN

### Kom, O God Der Wraken!

(Psalm 94; Derde Deel)

De laatste maal zagen we, dat de Heere zijn volk leert uit de wet; en dat zij daarom welgelukzalig zijn.

Die welgelukzaligheid wordt verder verklaard in het volgende vers.

“... om hem rust te geven van de kwade dagen, totdat de kuil voor de goddelooze gegraven wordt.”

Hier openen zich vreeselijke perspectieven! Hier denk ik aan de verschrikkelijkste dingen! Neen, lezer, ik overdrijf niet! Het gaat hier over de eeuwige smart in de hel! Het gaat hier over de poel die brandt van vuur en sulfur.

Ja, en ook gaat het hier over de heerlijkste dingen die ge U denken kunt. Want het gaat hier ook over de Rust die er voor Gods volk overblijft.

Laat ons het verband zien.

We hebben tweemaal geschreven over dezen psalm en het is goed dat we de hoofdgedachte voor onzen aandacht houden. En die hoofdgedachte is, dat de Christus Gods, en daarom ook de Kerk, tot God schreeuwen om te komen met de openbaring van Zijn wraken!

En nu onderwijst de Heilige Geest ons hier ook, dat het toch altijd wel gaat met Gods Kind, dat is, Christus, en met Zijne broederen, de Kerk. Zij zijn welgelukzalig, ook al is het dat ze getuchtigd worden. Want gedurende al die tuchting wordt hij onderwezen uit Zijn wet. En we zagen, dat dit beteekent, dat Gods kind geleerd wordt lief te hebben.

En het einde voor hem is Rust.

Ook al is het, dat hij voor tijd en wijle in de put moet vallen die goddeloozen voor hem groeven.

Rust voor Gods volk is dit: ze mogen ingaan en bewonderen het volbrachte werk van den DrieEenigen God op Golgotha in Christus Jezus den Heere! In verrukking gaan we naar God staren, daar op den troon. En ge zult in het midden van dien troon een Lam zien, staande als geslacht. Dat, dat is het wat U zal doen rusten in den hemel, daarboven bij God! Het is de hemel van den hemel.

En waar zal de goddelooze en zondaar verschijnen?

We beven als we beginnen om zijn lot te beschrijven.

Hier op aarde hield hij zich onledig om kuilen te graven voor Gods volk, opdat die er in mochten vallen en luide kermen om genade.

Wie is er die hier niet denkt aan twee kuilen en twee menschen?

De eene mensch is Jozef.

Ook hij kwam in de kuil terecht. En hij had het

werkelijk niet verdiend. Hij was de beste van de dertien kinderen Jakobs. Hij vreesde God van zijn jeugd af aan. Hij was een verstandige, wijze en oprechte jongeling. Doch de patriarchen waren nijdig op hem en wierpen hem in de put. En later lezen we dat hij geschreeuwd heeft om genade. Doch ze stopten de ooren dicht en lieten hem schreien, snikken, klagen.

En de andere Mensch is Jezus. Hij is de zeer bijzondere mensch. Hij is mensch, doch ook God.

En Hij kwam ook in een put terecht. Doch ge moogt nu Jozef gerust vergeten. Zijn put is niet die van Dathan. Zijn put is de vreeselijke poel van den eeuwigen dood. Nooit heeft iemand geklaagd, geschreid en geweend zooals Jezus. De put werd voor Hem gegraven en Hij moest er in. En Hij is er gewillig ingesprongen. Maar Zijn lijden was verschrikkelijk.

Zijn leed is verschrikkelijker dan er ooit iemand lijden zal. Zelfs Satan zal nooit lijden zooals Messias.

Doch er kwam een einde aan het eeuwige lijden van Jezus hellesmart. Hij mocht de put uit. Hij is opgestaan van de dooden; en Hij is ingegaan in Zijn rust.

Doch de goddeloozen die Zijn put hielpen graven? Siddert ge nog niet?

Die put is de tweede dood.

Het is de eeuwige hel. Met de “smart die zij lijden in de vlam!”

En daarom komt er nooit een einde aan. “Hier blijf ik tot in eeuwigheid; hier hoor ik slangen schuiflen!”

“Want de Heere zal Zijn volk niet begeven, en Hij zal Zijn erve niet verlaten.”

Het is mooi, dat het hier staat. Want soms zou men juist denken, dat God Zijn volk vergeten en verlaten heeft. Christus dacht het ook: Mijn God, Mijn God, waarom hebt Gij Mij verlaten?

Het is mooi, dat het hier staat, want nu kunnen we er vertroosting uit putten, als het water aan de lippen komt, als we gevoelen om bij de pakken neer te gaan zitten, als we haast zouden wanhopen aan God.

Neen, God vergeet ons niet en verlaat ons niet.

En weet ge waarom niet? Omdat wij Zijn Eigen zaak zijn. Als God Zijn volk zou verlaten, zou God Zijn Eigen zaal verlaten, en dat kan niet. Wij zijn immers Zijn erve: de tekst zegt dat. Wij zijn Zijn eigendom. Hij heeft ons gezien en gewild in de stille eeuwigheid; Hij heeft ons ten aanzijn geroepen uit den geestelijken dood door wedergeboorte en bekeering; Hij heeft ons vooruit gezien in de eeuwige heerlijkheid rondom Christus Jezus. Hij heeft het alles gewild om Zijn lof en prijs; en daarom kan Hij ons nooit begeven of verlaten. Wat een troest!

“Want het oordeel zal wederkeeren tot de gerechtigheid, en alle oprechten van hart zullen hetzelfde na volgen.”

Die eerste uitdrukking, dat, namelijk, het oordeel zal wederkeeren tot de gerechtigheid, wordt veelmaal

gebezigd in Gods Woord. En het beteekent dat de schijnbare toestand van ongerechtigheid in haar tegen-deel zal veranderen. Want tegenwoordig schijnt het alsof de ongerechtigheid overwint. Men zondigt tegen God en mensch en overwint. Men vertrapt Gods Wet en Zijn volk, en God dondert niet van den hemel in Zijn rechtvaardig oordeel. Asaf had moeite met die zaak. Totdat hij in Gods heilighdommen inging en op hun einde merkte.

Welnu, dit eerste gedeelte van dit vers beteekent, dat het niet altoos zoo zal blijven. Er komt een einde aan. Het oordeel zal wederkeeren tot gerechtigheid. Dat wil eenvoudig zeggen, dat Gods rechtvaardig oordeel geopenbaard zal worden. En dan zullen we zien, dat het kleinste vergrijp aan God en aan Gods volk rechtvaardige vergelding zal geschieden.

Welnu, Gods volk gelooft dat nu al. Alle oprechte van hart zullen het navolgen. Dat wil zeggen, dat zij leven uit dat beginsel van Gods gerechtigheid. Voor Gods volk is het alle dagen Oordeelsdag! Daaruit kunt ge ook weten of ge een kind van God zijt. Het kind van God houdt afrekening met zijn God alle dagen. Hij is de oprechte. Oprecht wil zeggen, dat ge subjectief en objectief gelijk zijt. Uw binnenste leven en uw uitwendige openbaring zijn voor God gelijk. Ge wandelt met Hem; en ge rekent met Zijn oordeel, Zijn rechtvaardige oordeel.

“Wie zal voor mij staan tegen de boosdoeners, wie zal zich voor mij stellen tegen de werkers der ongerechtigheid?”

Ja, die woorden hebben een bekende klank.

Het is de bange vraag van al Gods volk geweest van alle tijden.

Want zoo zeker als ge een kind van God zijt, zoo zeker zullen de boosdoeners zich tegen U keeren en de werkers der ongerechtigheid U benauwen. Zoo spoedig als het goddelooze volk ruikt dat ge een kind van God, en daarom een lover van Zijn deugden zijt, zoo gauw zullen ze U vervolgen. En dat doen ze omdat ze God haten. Ze zijn van de partij des duivels en ze doen zijn wil. En het is openbaar, wat de wil van Satan is: hij is de tegenstander en de belager van God van den beginne.

En juist daarom kunt ge er op rekenen, dat de Heere Uw schild en zwaard wordt. Want zoo gaat het. Luistert maar: “Ten ware dat de Heere mij eene hulp geweest ware, mijne ziel had bijna in de stilte gewoond. Als ik zeide: Mijn voet wankelt, ondersteunde mij, o Heere! Uwe goedertierenheid.”

God ondersteunt en beveiligt Zijn volk. En dat doet Hij door Zijne goedertierenheid.

Wat mag die kracht en deugd zijn?

De goedertierenheid Gods is die deugd van den DrieEenigen God, waardoor alles in Zijn Goddelijke Wezen Hem drinkt om Zijn volk goed te doen en te beladen met weldaden. In 't Engelsch klinkt het zoo

mooi: loving kindness! En dat doet Hij. Als het donker wordt voor de ziel van Gods volk dan komt en bezoekt Hij hen met Zijn Geest en genade. Dan fluistert Hij hen in 't zieleoor, dat alles wel is, dat alle dingen medewerken ten goede dengenen die God lief hebben. Dan veegt Hij hun tranen af en mogen zij het moede hoofd opheffen en voorwaarts gaan op het pad, dat hen uiteindelijk naar boven zal brengen, waar nooit geen tranen meer zullen vloeien.

Wat zal het zijn, als we die goedertierenheid Gods in haar volle heerlijkheid zullen zien en ervaren daarboven bij God!

G. V.

---

---

## IN HIS FEAR

---

---

### MAY WE HELP TRAIN YOUR CHILD?

*Who asks this question?* Your pastor never asks you the above question in singular form. He may not ask whether he may help train your child in the fear of the Lord. It is his God-given calling to do so, and he may not even give you the opportunity to answer this question. He may not leave the impression with you that you as a covenant parent have the right at all to refuse to allow him to help you train your child in the fear of the Lord. He must rather admonish you and remind you that it is your God-given calling and duty to send your children to him in catechism and to bring them with you to the services upon the Lord's Day. He is failing in his calling to instruct you in the fear of the Lord if he fails to demand your child's faithful church and catechetical attendance.

Nor is the above question to be found in the mouth of the school teacher. Not only is she hired by you for the purpose of finishing the work you with your limited time and abilities cannot complete, but the State sees to it that she need not beg for a class of pupils to train. Education up to various ages is compulsory in every state in the union, if I am not misinformed.

There is, however, another sphere wherein the above question, “May we help train your child?” is asked. It is asked by those who are not officially hired, called or ordained to the training of God's covenant youth in His fear but who nevertheless desire to do this and find joy in doing so. It is the Sunday School teacher who asks this question. He is not called by God to this work in the sense that officially through the church institute God demands this work of him. He has therefore no right to demand that you allow him to help you train your child in the fear of the Lord. But he may ask you to give him the privilege of teaching your child God's fear.

There is still another way in which we are instructed in His fear which is not official and yet which is valuable and blessed by God. We are thinking of the societies in the organism of the church wherein the Word of God is studied and our spiritual knowledge is advanced. We might even add a third way, namely: such means as the Standard Bearer and other religious papers and books which are not the official proclamation of the truth and yet help to train us in the fear of the Lord. However, in this and the five subsequent installments to appear in this rubric, "In His Fear" we intend to write on these first two means of training in the fear of the Lord which though unofficial are valuable and very really serve the purpose of working in us the fear of the Lord. In recent essays in this rubric "In His Fear", both by the undersigned and others, the home, the school, and the church instruction in the fear of the Lord has been treated. We have deemed it fitting therefore now to explore this other realm of training and instruction wherein in an unofficial capacity the man of God is led into the fear of the Lord deeper and more deeply. We begin in this installment then to consider the Sunday School. And it is the Sunday School teacher we have in mind when we ask the question, "May we help train your child?" He may not ask you that personally by a visit to your home. But he does ask this question in a general way every time his class meets on the Lord's Day.

*The Propriety of this question.* Among reformed churches the Sunday School has had a rather fluctuating career. At first it was very generally frowned upon and refused a place in the church life of its members. There are still today churches who do frown upon it and forbid its introduction. There are also good reasons of the fear which has prompted such a stand, for in many churches today the Sunday School has been raised even above the level of the official preaching of the Word of God by His ordained servants. Of course, even if the Sunday School teacher is an ordained Minister of the Word, His instruction here in the Sunday School class is still not to be classed with the official proclamation of the truth before the congregation in the presence of the consistory. Be that as it may, recently I heard someone state over the radio that the future of the church depends upon the Sunday School today. Against this dangerous notion the church should stand guard. But that does not condemn the movement as such. Simply because some misuse the Sunday School and exalt it above the office that Christ has instituted and through which He exercises the keys of the kingdom of heaven it does not mean that there can be no good in the Sunday School. We believe that it should be given a place and then be supervised carefully by the consistory. We believe that the consistory may allow the Sunday School teacher to ask by the conducting of his class each

Lord's Day, "May we train your child?" If the Sunday School presently displaces the official training in the preaching of the Word and catechetical instruction, it is not due to the fact that the Sunday School itself is so sinful but that the consistory has not performed its work of supervision as it should have been done.

There is indeed today that other side of this fluctuating career of the Sunday School in reformed churches that its place in the church is far too great. It has assumed more than it has the right to enjoy. It forgets that it must ask the question, "May we help train your child", and instead it demands the child or even introduces carnal entertainments and practices to get your child to come.

To condemn the Sunday School simply because it is unofficial instruction in the fear of the Lord we certainly should not do, and that we do is very inconsistent. Which parent who refuses to send his child to Sunday School simply because it is not official instruction deprives his child of reading any christian story books? They are by no means official means to instruct us in the fear of the Lord. And what then of the children's Bible story books written by laymen? They are not official means of instruction in God's fear either. We give these to our children as gifts. But let us be consistent.

There is another argument which is far more weighty, which however does not condemn the Sunday School and show that it is wrong to allow Sunday Schools to exist in our churches but rather shows us that if not properly supervised it can become dangerous and even sinful. The argument is that having a Sunday School threatens to displace the catechism class, as we suggested above. Parents do sometimes have the opinion that if they send their child to Sunday School they need not send them to catechism. The reason for the choice of Sunday School over catechism is usually then simply convenience. On Sunday they are at church, and during the week the great distance involved to take them to catechism (this is true especially in rural districts) makes it far more convenient for them to wait after the morning service for their children while they attend Sunday School than to make a special trip during the week. Such parents must be enlightened by the consistory. They must be made to see the difference between the Sunday School which is only a society in the organism of the church while the catechetical instruction belongs to the official work of the institute of the church. It is the duty of the consistory to see to it that such a lifting up of the Sunday School over catechetical instruction does not take place. That we believe belongs to the task of the consistory in its work of supervising the Sunday School. It must keep it where it belongs. That too is supervision.

By supervision of the Sunday School we emphatic-

ally do not mean that the Sunday School should be made an organ of the consistory to be its official means of instructing the covenant youth upon the Sabbath and that the consistory appoint men and women to perform this work for it. That would indeed be a dangerous thing to do. Then you would tempt the parent to send his child to one or the other and not to both. And as we stated above, the Sunday School would receive first choice if only for convenience sake, or perhaps because the Sunday School gives a Christmas program and the catechism class does not. Parents like to see their children take part in a program and perhaps get a box of candy or a book of some kind for learning their lessons well. The catechism class does not do this and should not. Of course, if the Sunday School becomes an organ of the consistory, the consistory would have to eliminate these present practices. But the fact remains that the parents would not see the need of two ways in which the consistory provides instruction for the youth of the congregation one on the Lord's Day and one during the week. The Sunday School should remain a society wherein the children receive instruction in addition to which they receive in the home, in school, catechism and in the church on the Sabbath.

The supervision of the Sunday School by the consistory however should be such (1) that the consistory passes judgment upon the spiritual qualifications of those who wish to teach. The consistory should supply the Sunday School with a list of names of those whom it deems to be strong in faith and well founded in the truth. Or else the Sunday School should submit a list of names, and the consistory should pass judgment upon this list. The consistory at any rate must see to it that men and women who understand the truth and do not have leanings toward any form of the lie are on the teaching staff. It may not allow arminianism or any false doctrine to be taught the children. (2) The consistory ought to visit the Sunday School periodically and also the Sunday School teachers' meetings, if they are held. One cannot be too careful in this respect. In Men's Societies and Ladies' Societies it is somewhat different. There you have many opinions expressed, and a conclusion is reached after the discussion. The child in Sunday School receives one explanation. It must be the right one. (3) As stated above, the consistory must constantly be alert and keep the Sunday School in its rightful place as a society.

The value of the Sunday School when conducted along these lines, as also it is in our churches, lies especially herein that it trains our children in the memorization of passages of Scripture. Each week the child learns a new "Golden Text" or "Memory Verse" as they are called and likewise another stanza of a song of praise to God. This is very valuable

training for the children and something they simply do not get in catechism on the same scale. Even if they did, a few more texts memorized and stored away in the mind are always valuable. Besides, in the Sunday School a lesson is taught in connection with that particular text. One cannot overestimate the value of such committing of God's Word to memory. And the Sunday School should have a place in our church life if it serves this purpose. Most of us will admit that it was in Sunday School where we learned our Dutch Psalms, our Psalter songs and various verses from Scripture.

*Your Answer.* Thus your answer to the Sunday School teacher's question should be an emphatic, "Yes, you may help me train my child." And you ought to live up to that answer too and send your child every week with his memory work firmly established in his mind. Remember that the Sunday School teacher only asks whether he may *help* you train your child. You must co-operate with him. He will arrange the series of verses for memorization. He will listen to the recital of these verses, and he will explain the Bible story that is connected with that verse. You must send your child well prepared. And by doing so you tell the Sunday School teacher that you desire his help.

J. A. H.

---



---

## FROM HOLY WRIT

---



---

James 1:9-11: — "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways."

Another thought which is clearly implied in verse 9 is the treatment of the poor and lowly brother by the rich. This appears already from the word "lowly" which refers to the utter lack of consideration of the poor by the rich. This is also evident from the general exhortation of the text. Not only are the lowly brethren exhorted to rejoice. But the rich are told that they will be made low. The church is therefore comforted by the anticipation of the humiliation of the rich. This latter thought can only be understood in the light of the rich man's oppression of the poor. And finally the rest of the epistle, particularly chapters 2 and 5, establish this affliction of the lowly brethren by the ungodly rich.



The abuse of the poor by the rich is a common evil. It occurs in the midst of the world, amongst the children of the world. The poor are always despised, are used merely as a stepping-stone towards riches. For the rest, they are shunned. For the world is earthy and carnal. They are not only of the earth, but they also seek the earth. If one does not possess the things of this world he is considered as possessing nothing. To obtain this world's fleeting riches is the highest ideal. And unto that end the rich will always subdue and subject the poor. The struggle between the rich and the poor, those that have and that have not, has been raging throughout the ages. It was known in the days of James, and it has ever been in this world.

However, James does not refer in this text to general conditions. He is addressing the church of the living God. If it be true that the rich oppresses the poor even in a general sense in the midst of the world, this is doubly true with respect to the rich's attitude toward the lowly brother. It is true, of course, that the ungodly rich loves himself and hates his neighbor whoever that neighbor may be. How intense his hatred then must be toward the poor, the lowly people of God! Their very poverty is a testimony unto him that they seek the things which are above, the things he hates! When persecuted and oppressed they do not oppose him but put their trust in the Lord. They do not resort to force and violence but merely continue to testify against his sin and avariciousness. And the result is that the rich treats the lowly brother shamefully. He will use him as long as he can serve his selfish interests. For the rest, the lowly brother is ridiculed and mocked, his faith is derided; yea, the ungodly will kill him if he continues to stand in his way.

This is not all. The situation becomes worse when these tragic conditions are also permitted within the church of God. This is possible. We must bear in mind that James is addressing these words unto the church of God as she reveals herself in the midst of the world. And in the second chapter our attention is directed to the evil of the respect of persons. One cannot escape the conclusion that the church to whom James wrote must have catered to the rich and permitted these corrupt practices within her midst. This danger exists throughout the ages. Is it not true that the rich are sorely needed? Do they not control the finances? What can the church of God, especially when that church is small, do without them? Special favors are therefore granted them. Prominent places in the consistory and societies are accorded them. Their sins are not rebuked, even when, according to chapter 2:7, they blaspheme the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the lowly brethren are afflicted and oppressed. Within the church of God they are never considered. They are barred from all offices

and fellowships. They are persecuted if they dare to raise their voice in protest. They are merely a means unto an end, and the cries of these laborers ascend into the ears of the Lord Sabaoth. How necessary, therefore, is this word of James unto them, exhorting them to rejoice!

The rich man, we read, shall be made low. And at the conclusion of verse 11 we are told that he shall fade away in his ways. Some would interpret this conclusion of verse 11 as if James intends to teach us that the rich man will pass away, not himself, but merely in his ways. He will merely lose his earthly possessions. This interpretation, however, is quite impossible. In verse 10 we read: "because as the flower of the grass *he* shall pass away." In addition to this we read in this same verse that *he* will be made low. And the description of the rich man's doom in the fifth chapter is too clear and vivid to permit any other interpretation but that the rich man himself will pass away.

The word which is translated "ways" in the expression "he shall fade away in his ways" means literally: purpose, a going, pursuit, undertaking. The word refers to the wicked rich as he is ever in the pursuit of the things of this world.

What does James mean when he tells us that the rich man will not only be made low (verse 10) but also that he shall fade away in his ways? In verse 11 the holy writer uses a figure, an illustration. We read: "For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways." Some have attempted to attach a deep, spiritual, allegorical interpretation to these words of James. The sun, then, is explained here as a symbol of Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, and the ungodly rich are consumed at His coming. Of course, we do not deny that Christ is the Sun of Righteousness, or that the rich will be consumed at His coming. But we see no reason why a profound, allegorical interpretation must be attached to a passage as clear as this eleventh verse. The evident implication of the figure speaks for itself. The perishableness of the beauty of the flower of the grass receives the emphasis here. The sun arises, its burning heat withers the grass and the plant, the flower falls out, and its beauty has passed away. The flower of the grass has withered in the very midst of its beauty. So the rich man perishes in his ways, in the very midst of his ways. The rich man is never satisfied. He is always clamoring for more. His heart ever goes out to the things of this time. He continually declares within himself that his house shall stand forever. It is for this reason that he is always cut off in the very midst of his ways, his undertakings, his pursuits, his seeking of the things of this world.

The grim reaper, death, always comes unto him in the night, unwanted and undesired.

The lowly brother, however, shall be exalted. His position in the midst of the world is difficult, particularly when that world begins to control and govern the church of God. It is not a light matter to be poor, to be ridiculed as poor, to be trampled upon. It is difficult especially because the lowliness of the brother is to be ascribed to his being a brother. Is it not largely due to the fact that the Lord is his God? Must he not always love the Lord and place his trust solely in Jehovah? Does the lowly brother not invite affliction and oppression, as it were? Is it not because his God has commanded him never to resort to violence but always to place his trust in Him, that he does not resist when the rich troubles and oppresses him? And are the people of the Lord not a mere handful over against the powers of evil that oppose them? It is difficult, is it not, to be ridiculed and maltreated continually and not to be able to do anything to alter the situation?

However, the lowly brother shall be exalted. He shall be glorified. Of course, the hereafter is meant by the writer of these words. This is not stated literally in this text, but it is recorded in chapter 5:7. It is at that time and only at that time that the tables will be turned. Then, in the day of Jesus Christ, his Lord, will he be glorified. All shame and ridicule and mockery will abruptly cease. He will receive a glory unspeakable. It will then become evident to all that his cause was the cause of the Lord, that he suffered and endured for righteousness' sake, that he bore the affliction of the world because he had loved wisdom and had sought the things which are above. The text refers specifically to this reversing of the situation. Here, in this world, the rich reigned and the poor were oppressed. With an iron hand the ungodly had lorded over the poor who were oppressed as brethren, as the people of the living God. This will be reversed. The cause of the flesh cannot prevail. Whosoever seeks his life shall lose it and whosoever would lose his life for God's sake and for the sake of His Christ shall find it. And the righteousness of the cause of the lowly brethren must be publicly revealed in the sight of the wicked whose toys and playthings they were, so that the lowly shall be exalted over them, pass judgment upon them and condemn them, and then reign in glory forever.

Finally, the lowly brother is exhorted by James to rejoice. Let the wicked rejoice, writes James, in that he is made low. James does not exhort the rich here, we understand, to glory in his riches. He proceeds from the fact that he is boasting. This is a fact. Hence, boasting in his riches, he may as well rejoice in his imminent destruction. This is not bitter sarcasm but a terrible reality. His riches are leading

him to destruction. Glorifying in his present exalted position he may as well glory in his being made low. But, let the lowly brother rejoice. Let him rejoice with respect to the future. That glory is certain. And the child of God may indeed rejoice because of that future, not because he personally will be vindicated, but because the cause of God, wherein he might stand, shall be vindicated eternally. But let that lowly brother also rejoice now. He not only shall rejoice. But he can rejoice now. His present lowliness is according to the good pleasure of his God. The Lord has chosen the poor of this world that they may be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom. They are poor in order that in them His grace may be shown, and that Jehovah may be revealed eternally as the Sole Avenger of His Cause, which is derided in this world, but shall be vindicated by the Lord in that day when He shall make all things new.

H. V.

---

---

## PERISCOPE

---

---

### The Conference

#### *Final Session. . . .*

Last time we presented a resumé of the lecture of the Rev. L. Doezeema. He had been chosen as the final speaker and developed his topic: "The Reformation of the Church", as follows:

I. The Need for Reformation—the condition of continual deformation and defection in the form of the Church constantly requires reformation.

II. The Principles of Reformation— 1. It is a return by the true Church to the Word of God. The false Church cannot be the object of Reformation. 2. It is God's work—alone and completely.

III. The Pattern of Reformation— 1. It is begun by God in the heart of an individual or individuals by arousing a consciousness of deformation. 2. It is continued through creation of tension wrought by polemic and discussion. 3. It is concluded in persecution and expulsion of the reformers.

IV. Our Calling Toward Reformation — Several principles were suggested to guide us in this calling.

#### *Discussion. . . .*

*The Rev. W. Korn:* "The false Church cannot be reformed? Within the false Church is the true seed?"

*The Rev. L. Doezeema:* "If the Church is false it cannot be reformed. Rev. Korn's question is—when do we determine that it is false? In Luther's time the institute was false, not the organism."

*The Rev. L. Vermeer:* "If ecumenicity and union are contrary to the maintenance of the purity of the Word of God, how do you harmonize that with the prayer of Christ that all may be one?"

*The Rev. L. Doezema:* "I didn't mean to imply that, but that the present spirit of these is false. The modern trend for outward power and advantages is wrong. This present spirit is not conducive to the maintenance of the pure Word."

*The Rev. L. Vermeer:* "It was stated that today there are no Churches comparable to Smyrna and Philadelphia not needing reform. Will you explain that?"

*The Rev. L. Doezema:* "As we move toward the end of time there is also degeneration in the manifestation of the Church. I cannot lay hands on any Church that needs no reform. We should always say we need reformation."

*The Rev. A. Petter:* "What is the form of reformation? does it come in leaps and bounds or is it a general process? Is sanctification included in reformation or is reformation limited to those generations in which a definite break occurs?"

*The Rev. Doezema:* "That point needs clarification. I agree that every individual stands in need of daily conversion. Maybe we can call this reformation, yet there is a time when you cannot point to a definite need in the gathering of the Church. Potentially the Church always needs reformation but God did not point to it in Smyrna and Philadelphia, for example. So today it may be possible that there is a Church in which you cannot point to a definite defection but there is always a calling to reformation all along the line, even though it cannot be seen as necessary."

*The Rev. C. Hanko:* "I had a very similar question. As long as we do not see a definite error in a Church we cannot say it needs reform. Our Protestant Reformed Churches will need it. We can see the trend but the need is not yet present. Is Christ the Great Reformer as the speaker said?"

*The Rev. Doezema:* "We cannot say as Churches that we do not need reform. Reformation applies not only to the preaching but also to its application in the life and walk of the members. We are conforming to the world and the constant call is to reform."

"Christ is always in another class. He is the Great Reformer in the sense that He reforms by His Spirit through the preaching of His Cross and Resurrection."

*The Rev. W. Hofman:* "Will you explain the statement that it is God's will that the Church remain intact?"

*The Rev. Doezema:* "Concerning His true Church, God wills that it be preserved and remain intact. His Church which He elected, He desires to preserve true. Therefore, He forbids the separation of the chaff from the wheat now, to keep the wheat intact. At special times He separates that Church."

*The Rev. M. Gritters:* "Can the Roman Catholic Church return to the Word? It was stated that the false Church cannot return to the Truth because it never had the Word. Didn't it once have it? How do you explain that statement?"

*The Rev. Doezema:* "The false Church never possesses the Word spiritually. They never possess it in spirit and in truth; even though they have the Word. Hence, the false Church can never return to it."

*The Rev. J. Blankespoor:* "What do you consider to be the organization of the Church? Does not deformation begin in the organism?"

*The Rev. Doezema:* "The organism is the life of the Church as it becomes evident in the gathering of believers, the confession, and walk, of the Church. I was first inclined to say that deformation begins with the preaching, but the pressure of the congregation often leads the preacher in the wrong direction—to defective preaching. Sometimes, therefore, it begins with the people and at other times is due to a false prophet in the pulpit."

*The Rev. Blankespoor:* "What is the Divine reason for reformation and the conditions which demand it?"

*The Rev. Doezema:* "The good pleasure of the will of God to save His people thru the way of sin and death."

*The Rev. G. M. Ophoff:* "I would like a fuller definition of the terms used, viz., form of the Church, organism and essence. Just what is included in form of the Church? Also as to the cause of deformation, can the speaker shed a little light on the statement that sometimes it begins in the form and sometimes in the organism? Just what is the cause of deformation? If the essence of the Church is incorruptible, how can the form become corrupt?"

*The Rev. Doezema:* "The form of the Church is that arrangement which the Church takes as she appears in the midst of the world. She is invisible in essence and the visible manifestation is the form of the Church. The form may be true or false. Form is essential to reveal the essence which is invisible."

*The Rev. Ophoff:* "What is the form, for example, of the Protestant Reformed Churches?"

*The Rev. Doezema:* "The following elements belong to the form: the institute, the preaching, the life of individual members, as well as the gathering of families for public worship."

*Postscript. . . .*

This concludes our discussion of the Conference. Since we have been quoting others throughout, to be consistent we will also close by repeating some pertinent remarks of our Chairman, the Rev. G. Vos: "Let me assure you that it is worthwhile. God the Lord has thrown us together. And He did this for a reason."

We are a help to one another. . . . you receive wonderful inspiration, instruction, edification and spiritual comfort at such gatherings. . . . Yes, it surely is worthwhile! See you at Sutton! Deo Volente!"

#### QUOTABLE QUOTES:

While quoting we might go on for a bit. While "periscoping" around through the various periodicals we receive, the following quotes struck out attention. We considered them interesting and instructive enough to pass them on.

##### *Marrying. . . .*

"We are called upon by God to unite two people in the bond of marriage, yet we do it in a slovenly manner by allowing such trashy stuff as 'I'll Walk Beside You' to be sung. What has a thing like 'I'll Walk Beside You' to do with marriage?" Dr. Jeffrey Cranswick, Anglican Bishop of Tasmania, denouncing as "trashy stuff" songs traditionally sung at weddings. As for "I Love You Truly", he declared that it had not "an atom of worship in it." Quoted from "The Amen Corner"—Evangelical-Messenger.

##### *Worry. . . .*

"Worry is not only a sin against God, it is a sin against ourselves. Thousands have shortened their lives by it, and millions have made their lives bitter by dropping this gall into their souls every day. Honest work very seldom hurts us: it is worry that kills. I have perfect right to ask God for strength equal to the day, but I have no right to ask Him for one extra ounce of strength for tomorrow's burden. When tomorrow comes, grace will come with it, and sufficient for the tasks, the trials, or the troubles." Rev. Street—quoted in "The Christian Home and School Magazine".

##### *Authority. . . .*

"When little Johnny, in response to every command placed by father or mother, says, 'I won't do it,' and gets by with it, there are at least two serious violations of God's ordinance. The one is that the parents tolerate the disrespectful ignoring of a divine ordinance. They themselves may even have been partly responsible for it. Be that as it may, however, here is an ordinance that is being violated. It is in conflict with the idea that God is the sole authority in this world and it means that the child is on the way to becoming a spiritual and moral outlaw. The second violation is that the child himself is recognizing an authority that cannot be real, that of his own sinful heart or, if you will, the authority of Satan. The lesson is clear: Don't let your children obey Satan." Prof. H. Schultze—The Christian Home and School—"The Banner."

W. H.

## The Tension Of The Church\*

(Cont. from p. 144)

Besides this spiritual tension in the life of the individual Christian he is also constantly under pressure because he, while in this life, is of the earth earthy. On the one hand, the child of God is a heavenly citizen. He has been born again from above. He has become a stranger here below, also, mind you, a stranger upon the earth. Also the earth as such has become strange to him. Really, he does not belong here, sojourns in an altogether strange world, a foreign land. He is a citizen of heaven but he is still wandering in a desert land. On the other hand, however, that same Christian is also earthy. He is earthy himself. He continues to have flesh and blood. And he also finds himself amidst earthy relationships. He has a father and a mother, brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts, nephews and nieces, sons and daughters, and to all these he is united through bonds of flesh and blood. Consequently, what a tension! The child of God is constantly, as it were, in a vise. And he is aware of this strain, this pressure especially when he must choose between his Christ and his flesh and blood. It can and does occur in the life of the child of God that, while the love of Christ prompts him, it does not prompt those who naturally are dear unto him. And he is aware of the word of his Lord that whosoever does not love father or mother or brother or sister or son or daughter above Him is not worthy of Him. The child of God is betwixt two. He must choose for the One and resist the other. The same illustration applies to the bread-question of our present day. To adhere to the principles of our Lord of lords, keep our garments pure and unspotted also in the field of economics and labor and refuse to be affiliated with labor organizations which would render it impossible for us to confess the Name of Christ and at the same time suppress my flesh and blood as it cries for daily bread. Hence, the child of God is constantly betwixt two. To this we would add that, as he speeds to the end of his life, his new life draws him more and more toward heaven and, behold, he is not always reconciled to the thought that he must leave this earth.

We can also speak of tension as experienced within the Church of God, in distinction from the tension of the individual Christian. There is, on the one hand, the calling of the true Church of God as the Body of Jesus Christ, our Lord. As such we must reveal our spiritual identity and walk as a people redeemed by the Lord, born from above, shewing forth the praises of the living God, and walking with uplifted head unto the city which has foundations. This Church of God, however, is constantly under pressure which is exerted

upon her by the carnal church which also constantly reveals herself. This carnal church attacks the Church institute and organism. She would either subject the Church of God unto her own evil designs and carnal purposes or destroy her from off the face of the earth. Unto that end these powers of darkness attack the organism and also the institute of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our faith in and confession of the Christ, our seeking of the things above, our heaven-mindedness must be obliterated. And to secure these results they also attack the Church Institute. The preaching of the gospel must be replaced by a word of man; it must be shorn of its Divine note; it must cease to be a power of God unto salvation; it must more and more serve to rivet the attention of the people of God upon the earth and the things below rather than upon God's covenant and upon the things above. Also Christian discipline is the object of their attack. Briefly, the Church as the organic and instituted body of the Lord must cease to function; it must disappear; and the cause of God must be no more upon the face of the earth. We can well understand the pressure underneath which the party of the living God must constantly labor. We are called to preserve the purity of the Church of God also against all the infernal attacks of the carnal church. And, while combating this particular mode of the devil's operations, we realize constantly to our sorrow and distress that we must deal with the fifth columnist within our own nature, and that the carnal church has a tremendous ally in the motions of sin as they continue to operate within the child and church of God itself.

And finally, permit me to call your attention to this tension of the Church as experienced in her struggle with the world. When we speak of the world we refer to that sphere of life, outside of the pale of the Church, directly controlled by him who is the Prince of the powers of the air and a liar and a murderer from the beginning. We refer, to be sure, to that mass of individuals, who are not of the Church of Jesus Christ, our Lord. But we also would include the lusts of the eyes and of the flesh, the pride of life, that earthly sphere of life as it is directly brought forth by the workers of iniquity unto the satisfaction of the flesh. The children of the world create, bring forth their own sphere of life whereby they can satisfy the desires and lusts of their own evil heart and mind. The Church of God exists in the very midst of this world. Everywhere this conflict between the Church and the World erupts and breaks forth. Always they stand absolutely over against each other. The contrast between the two is irreconcilable and must never be erased in any sense of the word. In every sphere of life, whether labor or art or science or economics, the Church and the Word exist and live and breathe and act from diametrically opposing principles. In the field of

labor the Christian faces the alternative of joining the fellowship of those who know not the cross of Christ and the hope of heavenly glory and thereby denying whatever is sacred to his faith, or of refusing to impose upon himself this burden of Belial but also thereby exposing himself to physical want and distress. Everywhere this wicked world bears down upon the child of God. Everywhere temptations surround him and he stands exposed to the enticements of the Evil One. And ultimately the entire world will be controlled by him, who, to be sure, has been in the world throughout this New Dispensation, but will finally culminate in that son of perdition, with whom also the carnal church will be united. Then the final and monstrous attempt will be exerted to destroy the Cause of the Living God and of His Christ. This conflict between the Church and the World also exerts a tremendous pressure upon the child and church of God. How well we then understand the word of the apostle in Rev. 3:11: "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." And also with respect to this uncompromising conflict the Christian is aware of a constant tension within him. He must fight the good fight of faith, the fight which has in faith its source and origin. He must oppose without compromise any attack of the enemy which would deprive him of what he has in Christ. He must be a light in the midst of darkness, the party of God over against them who know not his Lord. He must love and uphold the truth and condemn every lie. And he discovers, while fighting this good fight of faith, that he is literally betwixt two, the life of his new man which is from above, and that of the old man which is from below. Indeed, he must cry out, "O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death!" But he thanks God through Jesus Christ, his Lord, in Whom he has the victory now and will receive it in the day when all shall be made new.

#### *Its Purpose.*

This tension of the Church must have a purpose, a Divine purpose. The question might reasonably be asked, "Why must the people, the church of God, be subjected to this tension, and that throughout the ages?" Let us understand the question correctly. We do not at this time inquire concerning the struggle in which the party of the living God is constantly engaged with the world. To this question we would submit the answer that it is the sovereign will of Jehovah that His people tarry in this world, manifest their light in the midst of darkness, fight the good fight of faith over against those who would vainly oppose the cause of God unto the condemnation of that wicked world and unto the eternal revelation of that fact, not only that victory is of the Lord but also that,





throughout the ages, God's people always had the victory and the wicked world was but an instrument in the hand of our Almighty God. The wicked will eternally confess upon bended knee, not only that the Lord is King but also that He always was King, also when they were vainly exalting themselves. The question which we ask, however, pertains specifically to the child of God as he must constantly experience a tension in his own spiritual life, so that, even in his struggle with the world, his old man is constantly in league with the forces of darkness.

I have stated that this tension must have a Divine purpose. This matter can surely not be viewed dualistically. The conflict within the child of God must never be understood as if two mighty opposing forces were contending with each other for the upper hand with the issue being in doubt until the end. If this were true it would be impossible for the Christian to take upon his lips that shout of triumph of the apostle in Romans 8, namely, that he is more than conqueror through Christ that loved him, or, as we read in the same chapter, that all things work together for our good, for good unto them who love God and are the called according to His purpose. Neither is this phenomenon to be attributed to an attempt on the part of God to save whatever He can, or even to be understood as if the Lord were saving His own in spite of the many powers of darkness who would hinder Him in this work of salvation. We may say that God saves His own "in spite of the forces of evil" but only from the viewpoint of those forces of evil and as they are morally responsible for their attacks upon the church of God. But to use this expression from God's viewpoint is definitely dualistic. God never saves in spite of the enemy but always through that enemy. A dualistic conception of the Divine work of salvation is impossible. It is contrary to Holy Writ which teaches us literally in Isaiah 45:7 that He forms the light and creates darkness, makes peace and creates evil, and He, the Lord, does all those things. And this conception is surely impossible in the light of the teaching throughout the Word of God, that God is God and He alone.

What, then, may be God's purpose with respect to the tension of His Church? I believe that God has willed this phenomenon to call eternal attention to the fact that His grace, His grace alone, is imperishable, and that the child of God must sing the praises of his God, and of his God alone, forever. If anything shall be marked indelibly in the memory and the consciousness of the people of God into all eternity it is this: He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. The only reason why the people were saved unto the uttermost is surely not because it was of him that runneth or of him that willeth. To the contrary, this is the experience of the people of the living God, that, if left to themselves, they never would have run unto the end,

would invariably have chosen the things of the world. And this is the experience of the Church of God that salvation is of grace, of grace alone. It is for this reason that the Lord leads His Church upon a way that must eternally witness of our promises unto sin and of the imperishable character of the grace of God. Who, then, shall deliver us from the body of this death, now throughout our lives and, finally, in the day of Jesus Christ? We thank God *through Jesus Christ, our Lord*. In Him we have the victory. In Him alone we have the victory. Let us say this, now and forever.

H. V.

\* Paper read before the Conference of Ministers of the Reformed Church in the U. S., and of the Protestant Reformed Churches, October 1946.

---

— ATTENTION —

MINISTERS OF CLASSIS EAST: — The Ministers' Conference will meet on Tuesday, January 7, 1947, in Fuller Ave., at 9:30 A.M., the Lord willing.

Program: —

"Faith and Works in the Epistle of James". — W. Hofman.

"The Covenant of Grace". — B. Kok.

W. H.

---

IN MEMORIAM

In the afternoon of November 16, 1946, it behooved the Lord in His infinite wisdom, suddenly to take out of our midst, our beloved father and grandfather,

MR. BASTIAN LEMS SR.

at the age of 82 years.

Though the suddenness of his departure was a great shock and we do not always understand God's ways, yet we wish humbly to submit to the will of the Lord which always is wise and good. May his sudden passing also teach us all to number our days and redeem the time.

Mr. and Mrs. Paul Lems  
Mr. and Mrs. Lane Vanden Bosch  
Mr. and Mrs. Henry Kleinwolterink  
Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Van Kekerix  
Mr. and Mrs. Ted Feekes  
Claus  
Gerrit  
Hilda  
Bastian Jr.  
and 33 grand-children,