

# THE STANDARD

*Bearer*

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## MEDITATION

### Riches Of Grace

*And of his fulness have all we received,  
and grace for grace.*

*John 1:1-6.*

Marvellous confession!

For, let us not overlook the fact that in the words from John's gospel-narrative we have a personal confession concerning the Christ.

Out of His fulness have all we received!

This is not a mere dogmatic statement by a theologian. It is not even a mere objective testimony as to the fulness and glory of the Son of God. But it is an expression of experience, of the experience of faith with respect to the Christ as the ever flowing, ever abundant, ever satisfying fountain of grace.

John had born witness of Him. He spoke of Him as the One that, indeed, came after him, but was preferred before him, and was before Him. He confessed that he was not the Christ, and pointed away from Himself to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, bearing record of Him that He is the Son of God.

And this testimony of John was amply corroborated by the experience of those that had sought Him and found Him, that had been implanted into Him by a living bond of faith. For to as many as received Him, which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God, to them He gave power to become the sons of God. And having spiritual contact and fellowship with Him, they learnt to know Him as the superabundant Fountain of grace: "of His fulness have we all received, and grace for grace!"

Blessed Christ!

Amazing source of spiritual abundance!

We *all*, apostles, their converts, the whole Church, the believers of every age!

Have received out of Him: He alone is the fulness from Whom all receive, and are satisfied!

Even grace for grace: a never ending stream!

Wonderful testimony!

Grace for grace!

Grace: that is the glorious beauty, the blessed pleasantness, the sweet attractiveness, of God's eternal and infinite goodness. For God is the implication of all infinite perfections. And as the only Good, He is supremely fair and beautiful and pleasant. He is such in Himself, apart from any relation to the creature, for all God's perfections are eternal, and He is the I AM, also in His grace. And as the infinitely good God, He is beautiful; and as the Triune, He eternally beholds the beauty of His perfections, and is attracted to Himself.

Such is God's grace absolutely, eternally, in God.

Grace: that is the attitude of sovereign favor the eternal God is pleased to assume with relation to the people of His choice, in His eternal counsel of election. For eternally He has them with Him, and before Him, not as they are in history, in their sin and corruption, but as He sovereignly conceived of them in His good pleasure, and that, too, in Christ, the firstborn of every creature, and the firstbegotten of the dead. As such He beholds no sin in Jacob, no iniquity in Israel. Nothing but beauty and perfection and glory He beholds in them. For whom He hath foreknown, them He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son; and them He also called, and justified, and glorified. He engraved them in both the palms of His hands. They are continually before Him. And always He is inclined toward them in eternal lovingkindness, and regards them in favor.

Such is God's grace eternally, in His counsel, toward His people.

Grace: that is the revelation of this eternal good pleasure of favor and lovingkindness to the people of His love, as they come into the world as sinners, guilty and damnable, corrupt and defiled, children of wrath; and as they walk in darkness, and increase their guilt daily; as they lie in the midst of death, and there is no way out. For even to them, who have forfeited every token of favor, and have made themselves worthy of eternal damnation, God reveals Himself as gracious, justifying the ungodly, forgiving their iniquities, adopting them unto His children, and making them worthy of eternal life and glory.

Such is God's grace, revealed in time, as an attitude of unchangeable favor, to His people in their sin and death.

Grace: that is, too, that altogether wonderful, amazing, exceedingly mighty power of God, operating thru Christ, in His Spirit, whereby He changes the sinner from a cursing rebel into a praying child, from a blaspheming fool into a praising saint, calling Him out of darkness into His marvellous light, instilling into his deepest heart the new life of the risen Lord, cleansing and sanctifying him by His Spirit through the Word of God, preserving him in the midst of a world of darkness and corruption, and preparing him for the inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that never fadeth away.

Such is the grace of Him that quickeneth the dead, as a power, operating in the elect unto salvation.

By grace are ye saved! . . . .

Grace: that is, too, the implication of all spiritual riches and gifts and blessings, with which the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ fills us from above. For, indeed, grace is one; but it is amazingly rich in a diversity of blessings, of new life, of faith, of hope, of righteousness, of the forgiveness of sins, of the adoption unto children, of the love of God, of the peace that passeth all understanding, of patience, of strength to fight the battle, of comfort and consolation, of light and joy, of knowledge and wisdom, of the resurrection from the dead and eternal glory. . . .

Such is the grace of Him, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

Grace: that is, finally, the effect and reflection of all these riches and favors of the God of our salvation in the sinner that is so favored. For by the power of God's beautiful grace he also becomes good and beautiful, before God and men, and this spiritual beauty is supremely expressed when, in humble adoration he prostrates himself before the Most High, and exclaims: "O, my God! Grace, thanks, be to Thee!"

Such is the grace of God perfected in us.

Grace for grace!

Or, according to the original: grace instead of grace.

The phrase is somewhat difficult to translate. Yet,

as is so frequently the case with the wonderful language of Holy Writ, the general meaning is quite clear.

Grace instead of grace! That means that one gift of grace follows upon another, so that we are overwhelmed by its riches: grace upon grace. Hardly have we had time to receive and appreciate and give thanks for one blessing, when another is bestowed upon us!

Grace upon grace! That means, too, that the stream of grace is continuous. It never ends. It never ceases. Nor could we ever live or stand and persevere except for that constant stream of grace.

Grace upon grace! O, that surely means that it is always and ever grace. Never does one gift of grace put us in a position to merit the next. Grace is ever the last word.

Grace for grace! It signifies, finally, that the stream of grace is inexhaustible. Out of His fulness we all receive, receive constantly and abundantly, yet He is ever full!

We all received, and do receive, and shall receive to ages unending, grace for grace!

Amazing mystery of salvation!

Out of His fulness!

He, the Christ, is the fulness of our emptiness.

Full of grace and glory is He in Himself.

For He is the Son of God, God of God, Light of Light, the Word that was in the beginning with God, and that was God, the only begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, the image of the invisible God, the express image of His substance, and the effulgence of His glory. In Him is light, and life, and glory, and eternal joy.

The inexhaustible fulness of divine grace is He.

But He is also the Fountain of abundant grace for us.

For God ordained this Son, from before the foundation of the world, to be the revelation of all the fulness of grace: "For it pleased the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell." Col. 1:19. He, the eternal Son, was ordained to be the firstborn of every creature, and the firstborn of the dead, in order that in all things He might have the preeminence. He was ordained to be the head of His Church, all whom the Father gave Him, that He might be the Captain of their salvation, and through Him, God might lead all His children to glory. He, the Son, was ordained to be God's own Mediator for His people, the strong arm of the Lord, that He might take their sins upon His mighty shoulders, represent them in the hour of judgment, blot out the guilt of their iniquities, and prepare for them garments of righteousness, clothed in which they might walk be-

fore the face of God, and dwell in His house forever. He was ordained, too, to be the living Head of His Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all, in order that, in Him, the wondrous stream of divine grace might break through unto us, and its fountain might be opened unto all the Father gave Him.

His fulness!

And in the fulness of grace He was revealed in the fulness of time.

For He, the glorious and eternal Son of God, became flesh, and dwelled among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. He came in the flesh and blood of the children, His brethren. He was sent in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin. He, the Lord, was seen in the form of a servant, and came in the likeness of man. He united Himself with us, in an everlasting union, and became our Immanuel, God with us.

The Son in the form of a servant!

God in human flesh!

The eternal fulness in the form of our emptiness!

But thus, and only thus, could the eternal fulness become the fountain of grace upon grace for us. For in that form of a servant, standing at the head of all His own, He could and did bear the iniquity of our sins. And with the load of our transgressions upon Him, He took our place before the face of God, in the dark hour of wrath and judgment, and obediently descended into the depth of death and desolation. He completely emptied Himself, that He might become our fulness. Down into hell He went, freely, obediently, from love of the Father and of His own, in order there, in the depth of hell to sprinkle His lifeblood upon God's altar, and atone for all our transgressions, and to obtain from God the right to fill us for ever with the fulness of His grace.

There, on Calvary, the divine fulness, the Son of God, in the flesh, emptied Himself!

There He labored and toiled, with bloody sweat upon His brow, in agony of soul and body, to break through the floods of our iniquity.

And He had the victory!

In Joseph's garden, on the third day, the Fountain of life and grace broke through the darkness of our death! For God raised Him from the dead, and gave Him testimony that He had finished the work, that He had blotted out the sins of all His brethren, that He merited the right to clothe them with garments of eternal righteousness, and to fill them with His blessings.

Light broke through the darkness!

Sin in the flesh was condemned for ever!

Death was swallowed up of life!

And He descended up into the highest heavens, was

clothed with all power in heaven and on earth, and received the promise of the Spirit, in order that by that Spirit and through His Word He might cause the fountain of His fulness to flow into our emptiness for ever!

O, blessed Lord! Light that dispels our darkness, righteousness that overcomes our unrighteousness, fire of love that consumes our enmity, our resurrection and life!

Fulness of our emptiness!

Fountain of grace!

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Out of His fulness. . . .

We have received, we all, even grace for grace!

And even this, that we received of him, is not of ourselves: it is all of Him.

In us there is no power of receptivity for Him. In us is the darkness and never will we turn to the light, unless His light first penetrates into our night. In us is the power of corruption, and never will we seek to be clothed with the garments of righteousness He prepared for us, unless He first break the shackles of iniquity that hold us in bondage. We lie in the midst of death, and before we can even drink from the fountain of life and grace which is He, the power of His resurrection must break the bonds of our death.

We received and do receive of Him even grace for grace.

O, it is true, there is in this reception of grace out of His fulness also activity on our part, the activity of faith, whereby we become deeply conscious of our own emptiness, of our darkness and death, of our sin and iniquity, of the hopelessness of our state; whereby we apprehend Him in the fulness of His light, and love, and righteousness, and complete redemption; whereby we long for Him, to drink from the fountain of His grace, and to taste that the Lord is good; whereby we know Him, seek refuge in Him, cast ourselves upon Him, and appropriate Him and all the riches of salvation in Him.

But never is this act on our part first. Nor could it be.

Nor is it thus that His act, whereby He imparts of His fulness to us, and our act whereby we receive of His fulness, meet in cooperation to accomplish our salvation.

On the contrary, He is first, always first. He imparts of His fulness to us and receive. He gives us the faith, and we believe. He draws us, and we come.

He draws us to the Fountain, and we drink!

Grace for grace; always grace!

Thanks be to God!

H. H.

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## EDITORIALS

### Dr. Schilder on "Common Grace"

At the occasion of the transfer of rectorship of the Theological School of the Reformed Churches (Art. 31), Dr. K. Schilder delivered a speech on the subject: "Is het gebruik van den term algemeene genade wetenschappelijk verantwoord?" (Is the use of the term common grace scientifically justified?).

From a clipping out of "De Rotterdammer" of Dec. 7, which a brother sent us we are able to give the following summary of the speech:

"Ter gelegenheid van de overdracht van het rectoraat van de Theologische Hoogeschool te Kampen, uitgaande van de Geref. Kerken, onderhoudende art. 13 D.K.O., heeft de afgetreden rector, prof. dr. K. Schilder, gisteravond een rede gehouden over de vraag: "Is het gebruik van den term algemeene genade wetenschappelijk verantwoord?"

"Deze plechtigheid had plaats in de nieuwe aula van het gebouw aan den Broederweg. In een uitvoerige rede heeft prof. Schilder deze vraag in ontkennenden zin beantwoord. Hij wees er op, dat het vraagstuk der algemeene genade of gratie sedert de synode van 1942 kerkelijk aan de orde is gebleven en het noodig is te luisteren naar het eenvoudig schriftelijk onderwijs te dezer zake, hetwelk ten deele dogmatisch is vastgesteld.

"In de eerste plaats betoogde spreker dat het feit der continuïteit van tijd en geschiedenis na den zondeval als zoodanig geen genade Gods kan worden genoemd Spr. toonde dit uitvoerig aan en behandelde in dit verband de begrippen vloek en zegen.

"Vervolgens keerde spr. zich tegen de opvattingen door dr. H. Bavinck en dr. A. Kuijper te dezen aanzien voorgedragen. Vooral had hij er bezwaar tegen, dat ten dienste van het politieke en economische leven en van het wetenschappelijk onderzoek een stelsel was opgebouwd.

"Dogmatici van Gereformeerden huize hebben als genade aangeduid hetgeen zij noemen uitstel en tempering van het oordeel Gods na Adams val, doch spr. wees daarentegen op den storm van Gods toorn in het vreeselijk uur van de dagvaarding van den verbannen Adam.

"In den loop van zijn betoog bestreed prof.

Schilder niet alleen de "Kuijperiaansche opvatting", maar ook de uitspraak van de Synode der Chr. Geref. Kerk te Kalamazoo (V.S.) in 1926, die de algemeene genade omschreef als "de gunstige gezindheid Gods jegens alle schepselen"; verder de "neo-Gereformeerde scholastiek" van prof. Hepp; en leeringen van Barth, terwijl hij ook aandacht schonk aan den 17en eeuwschen theoloog Koelman.

"Tenslotte poneerde spr. eenige axioma's.

"1. God behandelt alle schepsel naar zijn aard; 2. Indifferente genade bestaat evenmin als indifferente toorn; 3. Gods genade t.a.v. iederen mensch wordt bepaald door de praedestinatie, door de verkiezing zoowel als door de verwerping; 4. Wij moeten ons vrijmaken van Roomsche en Remonstrantsche terminologie; 5. Afziende van de poging om wat God samengevoegd heeft, "toorn en genade" onder één noemer te brengen, moeten wij ons voegen tot de nederige dingen."

For those of our readers that cannot read the Holland, we briefly note the following:

Dr. Schilder answered the question proposed in the subject of his speech negatively. In the course of his discussion he remarked that the continuity of time and history cannot be called grace of God, and in this connection he treated the concepts "curse" and "blessing". He opposed the views of Dr. H. Bavinck and Dr. A. Kuyper. He also denied that the so-called postponement and mollification of God's judgment could be called grace: God's fierce wrath was revealed from the beginning in the summons and expulsion from Paradise of Adam. He also criticized the "First Point" of Kalamazoo 1924 (not 1926; they still have the dates wrong in the old country), particularly the statement that there is "a favorable attitude (disposition) of God toward all creatures." And he finally offered the following propositions: 1. God deals with every creature according to his nature; 2. There is neither indifferent grace nor indifferent wrath; 3. God's grace with respect to every man is determined by predestination, by election as well as by reprobation; 4. We must free ourselves from Romish and Arminian terminology. 5. Relinquishing the attempt to bring under a common denominator what God has joined together, "wrath and grace", we must condescend to things of low degree.

To this we add:

1. That we would like to have an opportunity to read the speech in its entirety. The above is after all only an excerpt composed by a reporter of "De Rotterdammer". If the speech is to be published we would like to receive a copy.

2. That we are glad that the question of "common grace" is not entirely lost sight of, but also receives some attention. Hitherto the subject of the covenant absorbed virtually all the interest in the recent controversy in the Netherlands. We also rejoice that there is development in the right direction, and that, although in the above speech the problem as a whole was not treated, the truth that God's grace cannot be common begins to receive recognition. It is interesting, in connection with this change for the better, to dig into the past, to consult the old Standard Bearers, and to compare what was written then with the present. In 1930 we expressed the hope that the time might come when, also in the old country, the theory of common grace would totter on its imaginary foundation, because it does not fit into the system of Reformed truth. At that time, however, Dr. Schilder, at that time minister in Delftshaven, could still write: "Maar als het waar is, dat in Nederland de gemeene gratie niet meer als een algemeen erkende waarheid wordt voorgesteld, dan geloof ik, dat tegenspraak zonder meer volstaan kan." That is: "If it be true that someone alleges that the doctrine of common grace is no longer recognized as a generally accepted truth in the Netherlands, I believe that a simple contradiction is sufficient." Standard Bearer, Vol. VI, No. 9. Compare this statement with the present views of Dr. Schilder as expressed in his speech in the Theological School, and you will agree that there is a change for the better, development in the right direction. In this we rejoice.

That same year, Dr. Schilder wrote in *De Reformatie*, in reply to a question of undersigned concerning his, Dr. Schilder's, conception of curse and blessing: "Het blad (The Standard Bearer, H.H.) moet niet vergeten, dat ik tusschen 'zegen' in het algemeen en 'zegen' in bijzonderen zin onderscheid maakte, gelijk trouwens het wezen van de kerk—ik sprak over den zegen in de kerk—een ander is, dan van het terrein, waarop de gemeene gratie werkt." That is: "The paper (The Standard Bearer, H.H.) must not forget that I made a distinction between 'blessing' in general and 'blessing' in the particular sense, even as, in fact, the essence of the church—I spoke of blessing in the church—differs from the sphere in which common grace operates." In the same reply, he emphasizes that his own views are far different from those of The Standard Bearer, and he does not in any sense concur with them: "dat ik met de opvattingen van genoemd orgaan in geen deele meega." Idem, Vol. VI, No. 11.

3. That our chief objection to the "First Point" of Kalamazoo, 1924, is not against the statement that there is a favorable disposition of God towards His creatures in general. This could be understood in a good sense, if taken with reference to creation organically. It is rather: 1. Against the implication that in

"creatures in general" the reprobate are included; and 2. Against the application of this error to the preaching of the gospel, conceived as a "well-meaning offer of salvation on the part of God to all."

4. That we wonder in how far the Reformed Churches (Art. 31) in general digest and accept the views now propounded by Dr. Schilder as in the above mentioned speech; and also how they will ultimately harmonize this with the Heynsian conception of the covenant so generally adopted by them. To me it seems that the two are diametrically opposed.

5. Finally, that I missed, in Dr. Schilder's speech, at least in the report of "De Rotterdammer", mention of the Protestant Reformed Churches, and of what has been developed by them in respect to the theory of common grace. After all, it was not in the Netherlands but in America that the eyes were opened for the error and danger of the philosophy of common grace, that it received a very thorough thrashing, and that the organic-antithetical conception was developed over against it. For our denial of common grace and our attack upon the philosophy of Dr. Kuyper we were ridiculed and reviled as heretics, also in the Netherlands. It will seem quite understandable that, now opinions begin to change in our direction, we would, at least, like to be mentioned whenever the question of common grace is broached. After all, no one has ever offered a more thorough criticism of common grace than what is found in "Van Zonde en Genade." And to date, no complete, synthetic conception of the matter involved in the philosophy of common grace has been offered outside of that which was developed by us. We care not much for personal honor when the truth is concerned; but, on the other hand, we will not be ignored.

H. H.

#### OUR POSITION.

Our readers, no doubt, remember that some time ago, in connection with the proposed coming of the Rev. D. Van Dijk, pastor of the Reformed Church (Art. 31) of Groningen, to this country, we wrote a little editorial entitled "Give Him A Hearing".

That article was read by several ministers of the "Liberated Churches" in the old country. It was translated and published in "De Vrije Kerk," one of the organs of the liberated group. No doubt, therefore, they know that their representative will be welcome to speak in our churches, if he comes.

Besides, several months ago, I wrote a letter to Dr. Schilder, assuring him that, whether the Rev. Van Dijk or he himself would come, we would take care that they should have opportunity to speak.

But I never received a reply, not on my article, nor to my personal letter.

Now, it is not our intention to impose our hospitality on anyone. But the question naturally arises: what is wrong? Why do the brethren of the Reformed Churches (Art. 31) not make use of the opportunity offered them? Would they rather receive an invitation from the Christian Reformed Churches, and are they still in hope that they will receive one? Or are they afraid to make use of the opportunity we offered them, because we stand opposed to their presentation of the covenant? The latter might, indeed, be the case. They all know our stand, by this time, in the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands. My brochure "De Ge-loovigen en Hun Zaad" has been rather generally distributed. Moreover, ministers of the Reformed Churches (Art. 31) write me that it has been and is being discussed, and favorably received by the "synodicals". Dr. Berkhouwer quoted from it. "De Strijdende Kerk" discusses it. (Will some one in the old country have the courtesy to send me a copy of those papers?). One pastor wrote me recently that my name makes headlines in the papers of the "synodicals". Is this the reason why they hesitate to make use of the opportunity to speak in our churches? Let me, then, clearly state our position once more:

1. We do not and never will agree with the covenant conception of the Reformed Churches (Art. 31). But we are not afraid of public discussion. Come and speak, and offer debate. You will have complete freedom of speech, provided you give opportunity for discussion.

2. We stand radically opposed to the hierarchical church-polity of the synodicals, and believe that gross injustice has been committed by them.

3. We like to have you come here to represent your cause. If the Christian Reformed Churches had opened their doors to you, we would not have interfered. But seeing that they definitely closed their doors, we will be glad to offer you the opportunity you seek. And Mr. Van Spronsen can assure you of a hearty welcome, even though we are at odds *in dogmaticis*.

Now, will someone at least give me some kind of an answer?

H. H.

#### IN MEMORIAM

De Hollandsche Mannen Vereeniging van Fuller Ave. Prot. Geref. Kerk spreekt hiermede hunne deelneming uit tot hun medelid, G. Borduin, bij het verlies van zijn vader

REV. M. BORDUIN

Moge de Heere de na bestaanden troosten in dit verlies.

B. Veldkamp, Sec.

G. Koster, Pres.

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## THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

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### An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

Part Two.

Of Man's Redemption

Lord's Day XXI

5.

The Communion Of Saints.

To the article concerning the holy catholic church the *Apostolicum* appends the confession of the communion of saints.

The two are most intimately related. The Church is the communion of saints. Yet, although they cannot be separated, they can easily be distinguished. The communion of saints is the Church considered only from one aspect of its nature and life, that of the fellowship between the members, and of their mutual relation to one another.

In answer to the question: "What do you understand by the communion of saints?" the Catechism instructs us as follows: "First, that all and every one who believes, being members of Christ, are in common partakers of him, and of all his riches and gifts; secondly, that every one must know it to be his duty, readily and cheerfully to employ his gifts, for the advantage and salvation of other members."

Two elements must at once be distinguished in this answer. The first concerns the actually existing bond of this communion; the second refers to the believers' living from the faith of that fellowship and bringing it into practice in their life in relation to one another.

The communion of saints is not established by the saints: it is of the Lord Jesus Christ. It does not spring into existence from the determination and act of the believers to realize a certain fellowship among one another, to create a certain society for mutual advantage and edification. On the contrary, the communion of saints is first, its exercise follows. The confession: "I believe the communion of saints" presents this peculiar fellowship as an object of faith. It means: "I believe that there is such a communion of saints." That communion may not always be manifest. To the earthly eye it may not always be visible. Many influences in this world may often mar this fellowship. Nevertheless, I believe that the communion of saints is a reality. It exists now, in the gathering of believers and their children in this world, and it will exist, and be fully and most gloriously revealed, when the whole Church shall have been

gathered out of the world, and Christ shall present her to the Father, without spot or wrinkle, in heavenly perfection.

What then is this communion?

It is that actually existing bond of fellowship that is based on and rooted in the essential, spiritual unity of believers in Christ, and operates through the multiformity or individual diversity of all the saints.

All true communion requires a basic unity of the whole, but also diversity or multiformity of the members of that whole.

When a large chorus renders Händel's Messiah, that chorus constitutes a communion of singers. Their unity rests in the fact that they all sing the same oratorio; their multiformity is found in the variety and diversity of many voices. Did they all sing different songs, there would be no bond of unity; were all the voices identically the same, there would be no communion or fellowship possible.

Thus there is a certain natural communion of men, even though this fellowship is ruptured by sin. The basis of this natural communion is that God made all men of one blood: there is a basic unity and affinity among men. And the possibility of fellowship in this communion is given with the manifold diversity of individual human beings. If men were not basically one, there would be nothing that united them; if all individual human beings were exactly alike, like so many drops of water, there could be no interaction and fellowship between them: each individual would constitute a whole, and be sufficient unto himself. Now, however, human society is established on the basis of the essential oneness of mankind, and operates through the diversity of its individual members.

The same is true of the communion of saints.

The saints are one in Christ. As the Catechism expresses it, all believers "are in common partakers of him, and of his riches and gifts." There is one Christ. And He is the Head of the whole Church. That one Lord has received the Spirit, and through that one Spirit He dwells in the whole Church, His body, and in all its members. And this indwelling Christ is the sole basis and fountain for the unity of the saints. Through that indwelling Lord there is in all believers a communion of nature, the spiritual nature of the sons of God; a communion of life, the life of their risen Lord, spiritual, heavenly life; and a communion of love, the love of God that is shed abroad in their hearts, and that reveals itself as love to God in Christ and to one another. Moreover, they have the same faith, the same knowledge of God, the same righteousness, the righteousness of God in Christ, the same hope, the hope of the glory of God. They speak fundamentally the same language, so that they know and understand one another; and they unitedly strive fore the same purpose: the glory of God in Christ.

In them is the same mind, the mind of Christ, the same will, the will of their Lord, and they all speak the same thing: the Word of Christ. This unity of nature, of life, of love, of faith, of hope, and purpose, is the ground of the communion of saints. It is not of themselves: in Christ, through the one Spirit, this bond of unity is established.

Hence, it is a communion of *saints*.

This must be emphasized. The believer does not confess a "brotherhood of men". Even though he does not deny that there is a certain natural affinity among men, rooted in the fact that God made all mankind of one blood, he denies that this affinity, from a spiritual, ethical viewpoint, is still a real communion or brotherhood. Just as he denies the "universal Fatherhood of God" in the modernistic sense of that term, so he repudiates the universal brotherhood of men in the same sense. For sin entered into the world. And sin is darkness. In darkness there is no fellowship. But out of the world that lieth in darkness God through Christ gathers His Church, and in the Church establishes a new communion, the fellowship of God in Christ, according to which we walk in the light, and have communion with one another. This communion of saints, therefore, is both particular, exclusive, and antithetical. It does not embrace all men. It is incapable of taking up into its fellowship mere men as such. And this is not due to any act or attitude on their part, to some exclusive constitution they establish, or to a proud "holier than thou" disposition; it is simply due to God's election, and to the act of Christ whereby He gathers unto Himself all whom the Father gave Him out of the world.

This communion is, therefore, a spiritual, ethical fellowship. It is not a communion of select friends, of men that are attracted to one another by common natural characteristics: it transcends all natural traits of character, and unites men of the most diversified and opposite type. Nor is this communion determined by or dependent on a certain likeness in social standing, or commonness in the pursuit of earthly ends: it draws together men of every class and social standing in the world, rich and poor, learned and uneducated, great and small, masters and servants, rulers and subjects. The communion of saints is not a caste. It overcomes all differences between men, provided they are called out of darkness into the marvellous light of God. Only the fact that Christ is in them, and that, by His grace, they have been called unto a new life, unites them into a common bond. It is the communion of saints. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, Who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Eph. 4:4-6.

However, there is, in the body of Christ, an endless

diversity of individual members, and because of this multiformity of the members they are interdependent, they supplement one another, they are in need of one another, and they constitute a real *communion* of saints.

If they were all identically the same, such a communion could not exist. Suppose it were possible that the whole of Christ dwelled individualistically in every saint, so that each one possessed in himself all the riches of Christ, and were able to reflect all His fullness in Himself alone, then there would be no fellowship of the saints, each believer would be sufficient unto himself. But this is not the case. The members of the body of Christ are diverse from one another. This diversity is caused by more than one factor. There is, first of all, the natural difference, difference in nationality, in race and color, in character and temperament, in personality and ability, in talents and gifts. It is true that this diversity is not spiritual, but natural. Nevertheless, we may certainly assume that this natural distinction is made subservient to the communion of Christ, so that the grace of Christ does not destroy it, but rather uses it for its manifold reflection and glory. How different is David from Asaph, Amos from Isaiah, John from Paul, James from Peter! And also this difference is predestinated by God in His inscrutable wisdom, in order that through it the wonderful grace and knowledge of Christ might be reflected in all its manifold glory. The same may be applied to all the saints. The almighty and eternal God without doubt also predestinated the individual character, temperament, ability, capacity, and personality of every one of His chosen saints, in such a way that, in heavenly glory, when the entire multitude of the redeemed shall sing the praises of Him that called them, each may do so in his own way, with his own voice, and together they may constitute one mighty and harmonious chorus, causing the new creation to rebound with its blessed hallelujah's! In the second place, there is also a diversity of spiritual gifts. Although all partake of the same Christ, and all have the same life and love and faith and hope, yet there is difference in the dispensation of special gifts. Gifts of wisdom and knowledge, of instruction and exhortation, of comfort and consolation, are not the same in all. And finally, there is a diversity in regard to the *measure* of the gifts of Christ. They may all receive talents, but to the one is given five, to another two talents, and to a third one talent. And all these differences are not restricted to the saints on earth only: they are carried over into eternity. Also in the new creation, the millions upon millions of saints will all have their distinct individuality: Christ will give them all a new name which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it. Rev. 2:17. In heaven, too, there will be diversity of spiritual gifts,

and of positions: the servant whose pound had gained ten pounds was given authority over ten cities, and he that had gained five pounds was given authority over five cities. And shall not the apostles sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel?

This unity of the saints in Christ, as they partake in common of Him, operating through the endless diversity of the individual believers, constitutes the communion of saints.

In eternal glory this communion will be revealed in all its beauty of perfection.

But also in the Church on earth, and in each local congregation, this communion exists, and must be reflected.

That this is, indeed, the nature of the communion of saints is plainly taught in Holy Writ. In Ephesians four, after the apostle had written of the unity of the Spirit, he adds: "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." And a most beautiful description of this communion of the saints, both from the viewpoint of its unity and of its diversity, is given in the twelfth chapter of First Corinthians: "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gift of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have all been made to drink of that one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many." 4-14.

And then the apostle develops the figure of the body and its members in detail, and applies it to the Church as the communion of saints: "If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many

members, yet but one body. . . . Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." 15-17.

This true multiformity of the members in the one body is, in our opinion, the sole multiformity of the Church we have a right to speak of in the light of Holy Scripture.

Since the time of the Reformation of the sixteenth century, by which the outward bond of the Romish hierarchy was broken, and the Church returned to her position of liberty in Christ, the Church in the world has been and still is divided into many different denominations and sects. This was to be expected. Always there is the carnal seed in the Church in the world. False teachers must needs sneak into the Church and inculcate their false doctrine into her members, seducing them to a carnal life. The manifestation of this evil may be suppressed and covered up by the power of an outward hierarchal yoke, but as soon as the yoke is removed, and the Church recognizes no other bond than that of the Word of God, it is bound to reveal itself. Hence, what is called Church in the world is hopelessly divided. Every denomination has its own creed, every sect its own particular doctrine. Those that call themselves undenominational, or those that sail under the slogan "No creed but Christ," insist upon their own peculiar doctrinal hobby perhaps more than those that adhere to and confess their creed.

Now, this division of the Church into many different denominations and sects is frequently, but falsely, called the multiformity of the Church. It is argued that in all these denominations is found the holy catholic Church, so that they are, essentially, all one in Christ. It is further argued that all these different churches with their different creeds have the truth as it is in Christ. Only, they all know in part, and none of them can claim to know and proclaim the truth in all its purity. Hence, they are all imperfect manifestations of the true Church. And as they all present different aspects of the one Gospel, and all reflect the abundant glory of Christ in their own way, they represent the Church in its multiformity. They are to be compared to so many spokes of one wheel: all these Churches are centered in the hub, which is Christ, yet none of them has actually reached the center. They all point to Christ; they strive to reach His fulness; but they are all imperfect. In the consciousness of this imperfection, no particular church on earth dare claim to be the pure Church in distinction from others. Rather must we assume the position that the Church in which we have our membership is, together with all others, but one imperfect form and manifestation of the holy catholic Church, no purer than others.

This conception of the multiformity of the Church on earth is as pernicious as it is false.

It is false, because it denies that the pure preaching of the Word of God is, indeed, the distinguishing mark of the true Church. According to this view, the truth of the Gospel is vague and ambiguous. Scripture cannot serve as a clear and definite criterion to determine where the truth is confessed and preached. Hence, the preaching of the sovereign grace of God and of absolute predestination together with the Arminian error of man's free will constitute an approach to the truth; both are aspects of a truth that lies on a higher plane, too high for us to grasp. If one Church believes in infant baptism, and the other opposes this truth, while a third must have nothing of "water baptism" at all, they are all fundamentally agreed, only, they are striving to reach a height of truth that is beyond them. In such a view there is no room for discipline exercised upon those that introduce false doctrines. But this is quite contrary to the whole Word of God which everywhere exhorts us to stand fast in the truth, and to watch against the false prophets and teachers, that would seduce the saints from the way of righteousness. False this view is, too, from a historical viewpoint. For it is simply not true that all the existing denominations and sects represent so many forms of the Church, simultaneously striving to attain to the fulness of the truth in Christ.

Such is not their history.

H. H.

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## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

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### Saul

Perceiving that the Lord had indeed determined by Himself that a king be set over the people, Samuel dismissed the elders. "Go ye every man unto his city" was his final word to them. He did not bid them to go in peace, nor did he tell them that seeing that the Lord had so commanded, their request would be granted. Evidently the thing continued to be evil in his eyes, as far as his own understanding of the Lord's doing was concerned. As to the elders, they obeyed Samuel. Leaving his presence, they returned to their respective places. Whether their desire would be granted they knew not. Samuel had told them nothing. Consequently, they had nothing definite to tell the people at home, except that Samuel was sorely displeased. As to Samuel, where that king was to be found, in what tribe and family in Israel, he knew not, unless

he was mindful of the prophecy of Jacob, according to which the ruler was to come from Judah.

The Lord now took action. He sent Saul to Samuel and prepared Samuel for Saul's arrival, by telling his servant "in his ear a day before" Saul's coming that "tomorrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me." In this communication the Lord motivates His command. Hearing, Samuel must have been surprised anew. The nation had rejected the Lord and had not repented of its great sin. This rebellious and impenitent people the Lord now wanted saved. And for the attainment of this purpose, Samuel must make them a king. How past finding the Lord's ways! Yet Samuel obeyed. For he was a dutiful servant with implicit faith in the rightness of God's moral government. There was no objection to the kingship as such. If only the people and king would serve the Lord, all would be well. This he knew.

In telling how Saul and Samuel were brought together, the sacred narrator goes into some detail. But first he gives Saul's family and a description of Saul's person. He was the son of Kish a Benjamite. His genealogical line is traced backward through Kish, Abiel, Zeror, Bechorath to Aphiah. But the record is not complete as according to the statement at I Chron. 8:23 Ner and not Abiel was the father of Kish. The conflict is removed by the legitimate conjecture that Abiel was the grandfather of Kish or a still remoter ancestor. Such omissions of names as that in the record of the book of the Kings occurs elsewhere in genealogical tables.

Kish, the father of Saul, is described in the text as "a mighty power" properly "a mighty man of power." The godfearing Boaz, Jephthah, and Gideon are similarly described, but likewise the rich and powerful nobles in the days of Menahem, king of the ten tribes. Thus we read at II Kings 15:20, "And Menahem exacted the money of Israel, even of all the mighty men of power (the rendering "mighty men of wealth" is incorrect), of each man fifty shekels of silver, to give to the king of Assyria." It is certain that not all these nobles feared God. Perhaps many if not most of them did not. But the Scriptures make it plain that in the early centuries the "mighty men of power or valour" in Israel were men of virile qualities and military capacities, strong and brave and true, fearing God and ready ever to take the field in defense of the violated rights of the people. Also implied in the appellation is that they were men, if not rich, then at least in easy circumstances. Such a man was Kish, the father of Saul. He was not necessarily a truly

Godfearing man, though he may have been—the appellation in question is not the synonym of our word *saint*—but a “mighty man of power, in good circumstances, strong and brave, a defender of the rights of his people and if not genuinely then at least outwardly devoted to the religion of the fathers. Saul, too, as king, was a mighty man of power; yet he was devoid of the true fear of God. The whole tribe to which he belonged was characteristically martial as compared with the other tribes.

Saul's birthplace cannot be established with certainty. He chose as his royal residence Gibeah, and here dwelt at least a part of his family, II Sam. 2:8. His age at the time of his elevation to the throne is not revealed. A good conjecture is that he was approximately forty years. For it may be supposed that the heavy responsibilities connected with the office of kingship prohibited the selection of a younger man. The king was the commander-in-chief of the army, the people's chief executive under Jehovah and their supreme judge; and in distinction from the judges like Samuel, his jurisdiction extended to every corner of the land. It can hardly be supposed that dignities that exalted were bestowed by the Lord upon a very young man; and this agrees with what is revealed of the ages of his two sons. The elder, Jonathan, appears as a warrior shortly after his father's succession; and Ish-boseth, the younger, was forty years old when Saul died a suicide on the battle field.

The two words that the sacred narrator uses to describe Saul's person are *choice* or *excellent* (Hebrew, *Eachoor*) and *good* (*thobh*). Not alone that he was such a man but, says the narrator, there was none of all the children of Israel better, goodlier, than he. The statement does not ascribe to Saul the spiritual graces with which Christ adorns His redeemed people (Saul was devoid of the true fear of God), but has reference to his appearance and to the impression he made by his appearance. For the sacred writer adds that from his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people. But mere physical bulk is not an asset to an ungainly, homely and stupid-looking man but rather a liability as it only serves to accentuate his ugliness. Saul, therefore, being a choice and good man, must have had something more than a huge frame that towered above the crowd. He must have had gainliness, stateliness of bearing, charm, and a handsome face that beamed with intelligence and that bespoke what men call nobility and strength of character. Such was the man Saul as to his appearance. And when the Godfearing in Israel first rested their eyes upon him, it was with delight and approval as they felt certain that he possessed true essential goodness despite the fact that there was no genuine fear of God before his eyes. But the man actually did have cour-

age and much of it; and his natural charm and loveliness must have been remarkable. David's lament on Saul alone bears out the truth of these statements. That lament contains lines such as these, “Saul and Jonathan were lovely and sweet in their lives . . . they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. Ye daughters of Israel weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, and with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel,” II Samuel 1:23, 24. It was from the booty that he had taken in his wars with Moabites, Ammonites and Edomites and the kings of Zobah and of the Philistines that he had clothed the daughters of Israel in scarlet and with other delights, I Samuel 14:47, 48. Having taken the kingdom, he “fought against all his enemies on every side. . . .” He was a brave man and a passionate soldier indeed. He smote also the “Amelekites, and delivered Israel out of the hands of them that spoiled them.” Plainly, his consuming ambition of those first years of his reign was to make his people free and happy by delivering them from the oppressions of every foreign dominion. How his anger burned when he received tidings of the humiliating condition on which Nahash the Ammonite wanted to preserve the peace with the men of Jabesh east of the Jordan. On this condition would Nabash make a covenant with those men, that they allow him to thrust out all their eyes, and lay it for a reproach upon all Israel, I Samuel 11: 1-3. How prompt Saul was to come to the deliverance of his harassed brethren there in Gilead! With what uncommon vigor he crusaded against the wizards in Palestine is known from the text at I Samuel 28:3. At the close of his reign there was hardly a witch to be found in all the land. And he was careful to observe all that Moses had commanded. He would not think of taking the field in battle without first having brought the appropriate sacrifices. And once having sworn, he was determined to keep his vow even at the cost of the life of his own kin. Saul was not a gross idolater. He was not the king of Samuel's witness in the sense that he ate up the vineyards of his subjects. The spoil of the poor was not in his house. The righteous were not sold for silver during his reign. He joined not house to house, he layed not field to field “until there was no place, that he might be placed alone in the earth”. To the contrary, he was an ardent patriot. The interests of his people lay close to his heart. He pushed on every side his wars with Israel's enemies. He clothed the daughters of Israel in scarlet. And he was scrupulous in the observance of all the precepts of the law.

But with all his religiosity and patriotism, with all his character, loveliness and charm there slumbered on the bottom of his soul, at the time of his anointing the iron determination to rule without God and to serve his own ambitions and besides a lust of power

and position that made it quite impossible for him to acquiesce in the rejection on account of his self-will and rebellions first of his house as a ruling dynasty and later of his very person. Instead of humbling himself under the mighty hand of God, he turned persecutor of the righteous David, all in the vile attempt to maintain himself in his position contrary to the revealed will of God. He had not in him the root of a new, heavenly life. He was a man totally devoid of right principle. He was his own God and before the shrine of this god he was prostrated; and therefore all his virtues were in the sight of the Lord glittering sins. Yet, what the man was actually at the time of his elevation to the throne was not known to the faithful in Israel, was known not to Samuel but to Him only—the Lord God—to whose eyes all things are naked and opened.

This was the man then that the Lord now sent to Samuel. As was said, in relating how the Lord brought the two together, the sacred writer goes into some detail. The asses of Kish had strayed from his estate and he instructed Saul to seek them with the aid of one of the servants. The first region where the search was conducted was the hill country of Mt. Ephraim,—a country that extended from the north down into the territory of Benjamin, and Gibeah, Saul's home and starting-place. Not finding the asses they traversed the land of Shalisha,—a land that in all likelihood took its name from the circumstance that there three valleys converged into one, or the one divided into three. For the name is derived from the Hebrew word for the numeral *three*. As the search was in vain also in this place, the two of them passed through the land of *Shalim* that, if the character of the district corresponded to the meaning of its name, was a very deep valley. From *shalim* they went to south-west. Passing through the land of Benjamin they came to the land of Zuph, which lay on the south-west of the tribe of Benjamin. Here Saul's thoughts turned to his father. For, being an excellent and good man, he was a dutiful and considerate son, as also his diligent search for the lost asses plainly demonstrates. He was afraid that his father might have left caring for the asses, and taken thought for them. Out of tender regard for his father's feelings he suggested that they return. But the servant came with another suggestion. In yonder city could be found a man of God. He was honorable; all his words came to pass without fail. Let them then go thither and consult the man, the servant urged. It might well repay them. For perhaps he could reveal the whereabouts of the lost beasts.

(The question whether the city was Ramah, where Samuel in those days dwelt, or some other city to which he had only come thither to the sacrificial feast, has given rise to endless dispute among commentators.

The question must remain an open one as the data on which to base a conclusive answer is lacking. It would thus be futile to mingle in the dispute, the more so because the question is not at all important).

The servant knew everything about Samuel. And the suggestion came from him. From this it has been concluded that Saul knew nothing about Samuel, but this would be hard to explain, if true. Distance could not account for it, as it was but a day's journey from the place of Saul's residence to Ramah, where dwelt Samuel. Accordingly, the servant was well informed. Neither could the reason of Saul's ignorance have been that, as some interpreters have it, Saul was still "a simple-minded youth, who had rarely left his pastoral occupation, and knew little of the political and religious elements of the time." Saul was not a youth but a married man with a son old enough to go to war. Others maintain that the explanation of Saul's supposed ignorance of Samuel is that through all the years of his past life he had been too indifferent to what went on in Israel to know about Samuel. The objection to this view of the matter is that though Saul, it is true, was not an essentially good man and therefore could not have taken a genuine interest in matters religious, he could not very well have remained ignorant of a man like Samuel. The whole nation knew Samuel certainly. Had not the elders of Israel just insisted that he set over them a king? Thus it is more likely that the servant was telling what Saul, too, well knew, simply to lend force to his suggestion and that this was necessary in that Saul had little faith in Samuel and no genuine liking for him. It is not so unlikely that, being in a good-natured mood, Saul was only letting the servant have his way in the matter.

It was otherwise a rather trivial thing about which they went to consult Samuel. It perhaps tells us that in those days it was customary for the people to consult God's prophets about such ordinary matters of life. It must remain undetermined whether Samuel could have helped them by making the desired disclosure, had not the Lord willed to lead Saul to Samuel through Saul's search of those lost asses. Saul realized that it would not do to approach the seer empty-handed. But what would they bring him? Even the bread was spent in their vessels. The servant had the needed present. There was in his hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver. That they would give to the man of God to tell them their way. Saul was pleased. "Thy word is good. Come, let us go," was his reply, and the two proceeded to the city, which stood on a height. Outside the city was another height on which the offerings took place. As Saul and his servant went up the ascent of the city, they met young maidens, going out to draw water, and inquired of them whether the seer was there. In replying, the maidens waxed

loquacious. They gave a generous amount of information and even took it upon themselves to utter words of advice and exhortation. The excellency and goodness of Saul must have had much to do with that. In answer to the question put by Saul and his servant, "Is the seer here," they said, "He is; behold, he is before you: make haste now, for he came today to the city; for there is a sacrifice of the people today in the high place: as soon as ye be come into the city, ye shall straightway find him, before he go up to the high place to eat: for the people will not eat until he come, because he doth bless the sacrifice; and afterwards they eat that be bidden. Now therefore get you up; for about this time ye shall find him." The advice of the maidens was good. Saul and his servant must see to it that they be in the city in time to meet Samuel there. Being strangers they would find it difficult to contact Samuel on the neighboring hill, as there he would be surrounded by the crowd of worshippers. They had just entered the wide place inside the city gate, when they beheld Samuel coming from an opposite direction on his way to the high place. Samuel saw Saul too; and the Lord said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! this same shall reign over my people." The original text reads, "And the Lord answered him, Behold the man I spake thee of!" It suggests that when Samuel looked on Saul and beheld his excellence and goodness, he said what he said when he rested his eyes on Eliab, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before him," and that the Lord replied, "Behold the man. . . ." Saul drew near Samuel, not knowing who he was, and besought him to tell where the seer's house was. Then Samuel identified himself. "I am the seer," was his reply.

The Lord had selected Saul for the kingship. This Samuel could have disclosed to Saul at once and in precisely those words. But this he did not do. Instead, he revealed to Saul the fact of his election by suggestive speech and action. He told Saul that he was to be his guest of honor at the sacrificial meal on that day; that he would tell Saul all that was in his heart; and that the asses that were lost had been found. Thereupon he put to Saul the rhetorical question, "And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on thee and on thy father's house?"

Others translate, "And for whom is all that which is desirable in Israel? Is it not for thee and for thy father's house?" Either version can only mean that, if Saul served the Lord and kept His covenant, the true Israel—all that is desirable in Israel—would honor, love, serve and obey him as the vicar of God and in this sense be his. For honoring God, God would honor him by subduing the nation under him. Either version therefore must also mean that if Saul as king served not the Lord, he would be forsaken by both God and His people.

Saul plainly perceived the implications of this enigmatical statement, perceived that the Lord had selected him for the kingship. For he replied, "Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Wherefore then speakest thou so to me?" It need not be doubted that Samuel's words had genuinely astonished Saul. He was not feigning surprise. True, he must have known that the nation was asking for a king. But there is no ground in the text for the conjecture that he vaguely expected to be chosen for this dignity or even that at the time he consciously desired the high office. Assuredly, Samuel's communication must be held to have amazed him. For, as he said, he was a Benjamite, while it must have been a matter of common knowledge in Israel that, according to Jacob's prophecy the ruler had to come from Judah. Besides, if there was to be a departure from that prophecy, why should the Lord choose him, Saul, a Benjamite? As he said, Benjamin was the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and his family, if we can give full credence to this part of his reply, the most insignificant of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin. This being true, he wanted to know why Samuel so spake to him. And the man was in earnest, it may be believed. With a man of his inclinations and attitudes, objections such as he was raising would have real weight. For there was no depth to the man. He moved in the realm of externalities.

Samuel did not reply. But he had gained his objective. His words had centered Saul's mind on himself as Israel's king to be, and thereby he had set Saul's thoughts to multiplying within him,—thoughts known only to God and to Samuel by divine revelation. Saul's heart was thus also to Samuel an open book now. How true this was, Saul would learn on the morrow. For Samuel had said, "Tomorrow will I tell thee all that is in thine heart." In this way and in still other ways, several of them, would it be shown Saul that in Samuel he verily dealt with the Lord's ambassador, who spake God's word truly and executed God's commands, and who now was transacting with him for God. For Samuel could know the thoughts of Saul's heart only because God revealed them to him. This Saul well understood. He knew that in Samuel he had to do with God Himself. He thus would be without excuse. As to Samuel, knowing the thoughts of Saul's heart, he would be able to advise, instruct, command and warn him appropriately according as Saul had need, on the morrow.

G. M. O.

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A single track mind is no disgrace, provided it is on the right track.

## Questions on Church Polity

A brother, resident in Chicago, sent in these questions: "Why should not the elders as well as the Ministers of the Gospel be chosen for the duration of their lives? Is periodical retirement of Elders biblical?"

Answering these questions must be made to consist firstly in directing attention to the fact that Art. 27 of the Church Order of Dordrecht requires periodical retirement of Elders and Deacons. The article reads:

"Elders and Deacons shall serve two or more years according to the local regulations, and a proportionate number shall retire each year. The retiring officers shall be succeeded by others unless the circumstances and the profit of the churches, in the execution of the Articles 22 and 24, render re-election advisable.

The fixation of the tenure of the offices of Elders and Deacons dates back to the beginning of the Protestant Reformation in the Netherlands. It really came down to us from Calvin, the father of Reformed Church Polity. The Church Order of this Reformer contains an article to the effect that Elders and Deacons shall retire every two years and that only the ablest of them may be continued, that is, re-elected, should they so desire, but for not more than a year. This was in 1541. The article, as to its essential requirement, was adopted by the Reformed "convent" of Wezel in 1568 and thereupon by the following reformed synods in the Netherlands: Embdon, 1571; Dordrecht, 1574; Dordrecht, 1578; Middleburg, 1581. The last named synod reduced the article to the Form that it has in our adopted addition of Dord's Church Order. This redaction was taken over by the Reformed Synod of 's-Gravenhage, 1586 and thereupon by the International Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-'19.

It is certain then that periodical retirement of Elders and Deacons is *historically* Reformed. It is not one of many crystallizations of the spirit of our modern age.

The article in question rests upon the following grounds: 1) Holy Writ contains no precepts respecting the tenure of office of Elders and Deacons. 2) The office as such is permanent to the end of this present dispensation of the world. But the office bearers alternate for any of several reasons. Rome contends that office and office bearer cannot be separate in that it identifies the two. But the Reformed are not of that persuasion.

3. Were the elders chosen for the duration of their natural lives, they would have to be provided for in

their material necessities by the churches. This would not well be possible.

4. Periodical retirement of Elders is desirable for the prevention of hierarchy.

It is on these grounds that the Reformed fathers based the article in question. It must be admitted that these arguments do have such weight as to be decisive of the matter. Take the argument under 3. A congregation with fifteen elders would have to raise annually the sum of \$45,000 for the salary of its elders, should the salary of each be set at \$3,000. The cost, of course is not prohibitive for a congregation that large as to require fifteen elders.

But there is the question of its necessity entering in. The duty that belongs to the office of elders is not to administer the Word of God on the meetings for public worship but to rule the flock of God according to Christ's Word. Hence, it requires less time to serve as elder, less time and preparation. But the argument under 3 is perhaps no reply to the brother's question. He wants not full-time elders, but elders chosen for the duration of their lives, I believe. So we can stop arguing this point.

The argument under 4 has weight certainly. The danger does exist, even with one of the elders—the minister of the Gospel—chosen for the duration of his life. How much greater would the danger be, if they all were chosen for the duration of their lives.

Now the question whether periodical retirement of elders is Biblical. The position of our Reformed fathers was that the article in question is not in conflict with God's Word. The article therefore cannot be declared wrong on the ground of its militating against the Word of God. Thus, if the article is to be declared wrong, forbidden, it will have to be shown that it is detrimental to the spiritual life of the church. On the other hand, if it can be shown that the article is profitable to the spiritual life of the church, it shall have to be pronounced a good article. As was stated, the arguments advanced by our Reformed fathers do have such weight, it seems to us, as to be decisive.

I may add this. It is not right and fair, I believe, to retain in office for the duration of their lives a definite number of brethren, if the number qualified to serve is larger than and perhaps much larger than the number actually in service. It is not fair to the brethren in office. They are men with families; they are men who work for a living. Why should they be made to shoulder for the duration of their lives the burdens connected with the office of elder with just as good men in the pew? And it is not fair to the others. Paul says that he who desires the office of bishop desires an excellent thing. Let the others, too, periodically have that good thing.

G. M. O.

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## THROUGH THE AGES

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### The Papal Schism

As was stated, in 1305 Clement V, being a Frenchman, was elected pope, and chose Avignon, a city surrounded on all sides by France, as his place of residence. Here, as was stated, the popes remained for seventy years. As this period so closely corresponds in its duration with the span of years of Judah's exile, it is known in history as the Babylonian captivity of the papacy. It included, as was said, the successive reigns of seven popes, all of whom were Frenchmen. As was also stated, this absence of the papacy from Rome did the papal system much harm. The papacy threatened to become a French institution, and its corrupt morals became notorious throughout Europe. The last of these seven Avignon popes was Gregory XI. By him the papacy was re-established in Rome in 1377 but the next year he died there.

As we shall now see, still greater calamities were in store for the papacy than those that thus far had befallen it. Pope Gregory XI having died, the college of cardinals, whose task it was to elect a successor for the deceased pope, assembled in the Vatican chose Bartholomew Prignano, archbishop of Bari, who took the name Urban VI. This Urban was an Italian, his election spelled the triumph of the Roman people, who had resolved to keep the papacy in Rome. Urban acquired the reputation of being a tactless pope; but if admonishing cardinals for their worldliness and want of devotion to the duties of their office and if rebuking such men for holding more than one appointment and for accepting bribes from princes, is tactlessness, Urban was a tactless pope. True, he also resisted the demands of the French cardinals that the papacy return to Avignon; but this cannot be held against him, as it was generally agreed that the absence of the popes from Rome had done the papacy much harm. Urban's position was that Rome and the papacy belonged together and could be separated only with disastrous results to both. Nevertheless, four months after his election, the French cardinals, as incensed by his attacks, demanded his resignation. Shortly thereafter, they denounced him as an apostate and declared his election void on the ground that it had been dictated by mob violence. True, it had. While the election of Urban was in progress, an Italian mob, determined to keep the papacy in Rome, had made the air ring with angry shouts and threats. "We will have a Roman pope or at least an Italian." In the room underneath the compartment, where the cardinals were met, soldiers thrust their spears thru

the ceiling. But Urban would not resign; and the French cardinals elected Cardinal Robert of Geneva as pope Clement VII, 1378. This was a new phenomenon in the history of the papacy. Not that there had been no rival popes before. There had been many such popes, chosen however by opposing parties. But these two popes had been duly elected by the same cardinals. The argument that Urban VI had been elected under the pressure of mob violence had little validity since the cardinals had accepted his jurisdiction for four months without a protest. Europe had now two popes, each denouncing the other. Clement VI was not a good man. His hands were full of blood from the massacre of Cesena, and he was known as given to riotous living. After a vain attempt to unseat Urban VI in Rome, he retreated to France and took up his residence in Avignon. The papal schism was complete. Northern and central Italy, most of Germany, Scandinavia, and England declared in favor of the Roman pope, Urban VI. France Spain, Scotland, the kingdoms of Naples and Sicily adhered to the pope in Avignon. The papal schism was the greatest calamity that could befall the Roman hierarchy. It was an heretofore unknown scandal in the Western Church. There were two papal courts that now had to be maintained, and the result was that taxations were augmented as well as papal abuses. Popular regard for the papacy was nearly gone. Men began to doubt whether the papacy was a divine institution.

The dates of this Schism are 1378-1417. It thus lasted thirty nine years. In Rome the period included the successive reigns of four popes: Urban VI (1378), Boniface IX (1389-1404), Innocent VII (1404-1406), Gregory XII (1406-1415).

The election of Boniface IX took place in his thirty-eighth year. He was a man of fine appearance and an able ruler but could not even write. Innocent VII was only thirty five years old at the time of his election. Because his nephew slew in cold blood eleven of the principal men of the city, he was expelled from Rome but later recalled. After the example of his two predecessors he pronounced sentence of excommunication on the popes in Avignon. The last pope of the Roman line was Gregory XII.

G. M. O.

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Shrink not from the right strife unequal,  
 With the best is always hope:  
 But ever in the sequel,  
 God holds the right side up.

## SION'S ZANGEN

### Kom, O God Der Wraken!

(Psalm 94; Slot)

We zijn toegekomen aan het einde van dezen verschrikkelijken psalm. Is het niet verschrikkelijk, als we bepaald worden bij het komen in wrake van den God des hemels en der aarde?

Dit laatste gedeelte klinkt nog somberder dan het geheel. En toch, dieper geblikt dan de oppervlakte, zien we ook hier de schijnselen van het licht Godes.

Luistert: "Als mijne gedachten binnen in mij vermenigvuldigd worden, hebben Uwe vertroosting mijn ziel verkwikt!"

Ja, die vermenigvuldiging der gedachten hebben we gezien.

Let nog maar eens op vers drie en vier, waar de woorden als 't ware opbruisen uit de ziel des lijders.

Als alles gewoon is, hebben we gedachten des harten. Dan volgt de eene gedachte de andere en wordt de draad van ons denken rustiglijk uitgespannen tot het einde, om dan weer met een andere draad te beginnen.

Doch de dingen zijn buitengewoon hier. Meer dan eens hebben we de klachten van Christus Jezus hier ontdekt. En zelfs al blijven we bij de gewone menselijke smart van een gewoon dichter in Israel, dan hebben het hier te doen met iemand die in de engte gedreven wierd. En dan is het verre van gewoon. De dingen zijn zeer buitengewoon hier. Het is hier bang en donker, benauwd en angstig geweest.

En dan worden de gedachten vermenigvuldigd. Ge weet van die oogenblikken. Voorals als men aangevallen wordt door zijn mede mensch. En nog meer, als men aangevallen wordt ten onrechte. Dan wordt het benauwd en dan worden de gedachten vermenigvuldigd. We wachten dan niet totdat een draad der gedachten uitgespannen is tot het einde, doch dan volgt de eene gedachte de andere en onstuimiglijk verdringen die gedachte de een de ander.

In die toestand nu, werd de dichter door God vertroost.

En die vertroosting verkwikten zijn ziel.

Troosten: een bij uitstek Goddelijk werk!

Troosten: hoe moeilijk voor ons om den broeder te troosten. Wij zijn alle moeilijke vertroosters! Job vond het uit.

Dit is de ware troost: als ik mag zien, dat de dingen die mijn vermoeide ziel en lichaam tegen zijn, dienen tot Gods lof en tot mijn eigen bestwil. Dan wordt het stil in het schreiende hart.

Zoo was het gegaan met dezen lijder.

De gedachten vermenigvuldigen zich toen hij van alle kanten besprongen werd, en het moest aanzien, hoe Gods volk verbijzeld werd. Hij kon het maar niet "klaar" krijgen. Hoe kan dat, hoe kan God het zien en niet zoeken?

Doch, evenals Asaf, toen hij de dingen zag vanuit het gezichtspunt Godes, toen werd het stil, toen werd hij door God vertroost.

En dat leidt tot verkwikking der ziel.

Er wordt hier een zeer schoon woord gebruikt, of, liever, een vorm van een eigenaardig werkwoord. De gedachte is, dat degene die getroost wordt door God geliefkoosd wordt, gestreeld in het binnenste. Dat is juist het tegenovergestelde van den dolksteek, waarmee de goddelooze het arme volk doorsteken in het binnenste. Ge vindt die uitdrukking meer dan eens in de Heilige Schrift. Denkt, b.v., aan David in Psalm 43.

Neen, maar de dichter heeft het gezien en ervaren, dat God nabij de ziel is die schreiend tot Hem vlucht. God zal het al zoeken en vinden en wraken!

Want Hij is de gerechtigheid Zelve!

Luistert maar: "Zoude zich de stoel der schadelikheden met U verzelschappen, die moeite verdicht bij inzetting?"

En het antwoord zit in de vraag: O neen! God heeft geen gemeenschap met de goddelooze regeerders, rechters, grooten der aarde, die geroepen worden om recht te doen, doch die juist het tegenovergestelde doen: ze verdichten moeite bij instelling.

Een vreeselijke verdraaiing van de juiste en ware betrekkingen!

Het gaat hier over rechters, koningen of regeerders. Want ze zitten op de "stoel" en ze worden geroepen om "inzettingen" te maken.

Evenwel verdraaien ze alles, want hun "stoel" wordt genoemd een stoel van schadelikheden en hun produkt is dat ze "moeite verdichten bij inzetting". Die zelfde gedachte wordt nog duidelijker weergegeven in het volgende vers: "Zij rotten zich tezamen tegen de ziel des rechtvaardigen, en zij verdoemen onschuldig bloed."

Nu is het heel verschrikkelijk als menschen dat doen.

De mensch is geroepen om zijn naaste lief te hebben en overal zijn welzijn te zoeken. Komt men in aanraking met de ziel van een rechtvaardig mensch dan reageere men op zulk een ziel gelijk het behoort. Komt men in aanraking met den onschuldige, dan zegge men zulks door woord en daad.

Doet met dat niet, doch doet men juist het tegenovergestelde, dan is dat vreeselijk. Dan ziet ge het ontzettende tafereel, dat een rechtvaardige tegengestaan wordt en het onschuldige bloed verdoemd. Alles

wat er dan voor U overblijft is zulks te beweenen en op God te wachten.

Maar het is nog veel vreeselijker hier! Het gaat hier niet over gewone menschen. Het gaat hier over menschen die op de hoogste plaats zitten die ge maar U kunt indenken: ze zitten in het gestoelte van den rechter. Ze moeten inzetten maken.

En het resultaat werd, dat die onnatuurlijke rechters zich stelden tegen den rechtvaardige die voor hen stond; en moeite veroorzaakten door valsche inzetten.

En dat gebeurt!

Zegt niet: zulks gebeurt in elk geval alleen in de wereld, niet toch op 't gebied der kerk?

O ja, mijn broeder, het geschiedt juist op zijn vreeselijks in de kerk en niet in de wereld. Het geschiedt ook wel in de wereld, doch veel erger in de kerk.

Neemt nu maar weer het Groote Voorbeeld: te terechtstelling van Jezus. Het was immers in de kerk van Christus waar Hij terechtstond? Ziet ge Hem niet voor Kajafas? Laatstgenoemde is één van die kromme rechters der aarde. En zoo gaat het geduriglijk door alle eeuwen heen. Stond Luther niet voor dat kromme gestoelte? Stonden wij niet voor dat kromme gestoelte in 1924? Denkt een oogenblik aan de verachtelijke krommigheden die in Nederland geschied zijn onder den naam van het schoone Gereformeerde Kerkrecht? Zonder het recht Gods, dat door Christus in den kerkeraad zetelt, ook maar eenigzins te kennen, worden en werden honderden van rechtmatig gekozen ambtsdragers uit hun ambt ontzet! Is dat geen moeite veroorzaken bij insetting? De Synode en de Classis doet hetgeen des kerkerads is!

En zoo is het gegaan van eeuw tot eeuw.

En nu zegt de dichter: Zou God met zulk rot gemeenschap hebben?

En het antwoord: O neen! Hij is te recht van oogen dan dat Hij ook maar voor een oogenblik het verkeerde zou kunnen aanzien.

O neen! Al dat samenrotten tegen den rechtvaardige heeft God gezien; en Hij zal het ook zoeken. Het eenigste wat gij moet onthouden is dit: ge moet op God wachten. Hier op aarde hebben ze succes. Hier op aarde is er een meerderheid. Hier op aarde ontdekten men het fijngesponnen, doch valsche, weefsel van leugen en haat niet; of men zal het, men herkende het duivelsche, doch men had mede een welgevallen in den dood van zekeren rechtvaardige. Laat dit U tot troost zijn: God had nooit gemeenschap met zulk geknoei! En: Hij zal het zoeken en vinden in den dag des oordeels.

Trekt U terug in God. De dichter deed het ook. Luistert: "Doch de Heere is mij geweest tot een hoog

vertrek, en mijn God tot een Steenrots mijner toevlucht."

Wat ongekunde troost!

Ge kunt, ge moogt U terugtrekken in God. En Hij is voor U een hoog vertrek. Het doet U denken aan die kamer, daar zeer hoog boven in dat kasteel. Daar kan de vijand niet tot U doordringen.

Dat hoog vertrek en die steenrots vindt ge, objectief, in de Heilige Schrift en, subjectief, door Gods Geest toegepast op en in 't hart.

Wilt ge het in één woord hebben, dan is dit de actie van Uw geloof. Uw geloof, Uw werkzaam geloof is als een muur die U omringt. Dat geloof overwint ook het kromme en het verkeerde, dat U doet lijden. Het overwint de geheele wereld en de geheele hel met alle duivelen. Daarom: alle aanslagen die men listiglijk tegen U aanlegt, zullen nooit gelukken. Al zou dan ook de heele wereld tegen U stemmen, als ge rechtvaardig zijt dan trekt ge U terug in de vesting van de Steenrots aller eeuwen. En wordt ge vertroost.

En die kromme rechters, die hoogstaande menschen, zóó hoog, dat ze soms "goden" genoemd werden? Wat zal er van hen terecht komen? Hoe zal het gaan met dat verdraaide en verachtelijke volk, dat altijd den rechtvaardige plaagt, op de hielen zit en verdoemt?

Ge ontvangt Uw antwoord in het laatste vers. En dan zult ge ook zien, dat we den psalm terecht gekarakteriseerd hebben als een vreeselijke psalm. Want hij loopt uit op de hel. Dat is zijn laatste klank.

"En Hij zal hunne ongerechtigheid op hen doen wederkeeren, en Hij zal ze in hunne boosheid verdelgen; de Heere onze God zal ze verdelgen."

Het eerste dat ons hier opvalt is het feit, dat hun eigen ongerechtigheid hen verdoemen zal. God verdelgt dit volk in hun eigen boosheid.

'k Heb wel eens gedacht, dat "atomic fission" en "chain reaction" het einde van het heelal zullen brengen. Het zou best kunnen. Ik dacht daar nu aan, want zoo iets hebt ge ook hier. Historisch hebt ge dat met Haman. Hij is gehangen aan zijn eigen galg.

In elk geval, het zijn onze zonden die ons de eeuwige verdoemenis brengen. Zóó wordt onze boosheid ons verderf.

Dat geschiedt in beginsel nu al.

Ge kunt Uw broeder niet plagen, zeer doen met opzet, veroordeelen onrechtvaardiglijk, het onschuldige bloed verdoemen—en dan ook Uzelf verlustigen. Dat kan niet. Als dat toch zoo is, dan is het erger met U. Maar dan kan niet. Is er in het houden van Gods geboden een groot loon; het tegenovergestelde is ook waar. In het verbreken van Gods gebod is smart. Die God in zulke dingen verlaat heeft smart op smart te vreezen.

God oordeelt alle dagen. Als we het kwade doen

veroordeelt Hij ons in het diepe hart. 'k Heb het vaak genoeg gevoeld.

Doch als men U ten onrechte doet lijden zooals men het dezen dichter deed, dan wordt ge nu al in beginsel getroost, maar hij lijdt smarten!

Het is een voorportaal van de hel waar eeuwige smart heerscht.

O Heere, geef ons oprechtheid. Dat die ons behoude door onzen Heere Jezus Christus!

G. V.

## IN HIS FEAR

### HOW SHALL I PREPARE MY LESSON?

The Sunday School teacher by conducting his class on Sunday asks together with all the other Sunday School teachers, "May we help train your child in the fear of the Lord by teaching him to memorize God's Word, learn the songs of Zion and by recounting to him the truth as it is displayed to us in the many historical events recorded in the Scriptures.

The question before which each teacher then does and surely ought to place himself is, "How shall and how can I best prepare my lesson so that I live up to my promise?" He has a responsibility which he has taken upon himself. He is responsible before God Whose covenant children he instructs. He is also responsible before God because it is His Word which he deals with and which he explains to his pupils. He is responsible to the parents who send their children to him and desire his help in training them in God's fear. He is also responsible to the children he instructs. He is morally obliged also before them to teach them the truth and nothing but the truth. It follows then that he must prepare himself carefully and fully. His work must not be slipshod. He may not come unprepared to his class. He must be diligent and perform his work faithfully, taking the necessary time and work to come before his class ready to train them in the fear of the Lord.

Believing that all our Sunday School teachers very really ask themselves this question over and over again, and believing that many of the less experienced teachers would appreciate a few hints in regard to the preparation of their lesson, we intend to answer the above question in this present essay in the department of education called In His Fear. The Sunday School teacher asks, "May I help train your child". But he also realizes that he himself needs training not only

in the fear of the Lord but also in preparing himself for the training of God's covenant children.

### *Study the Scriptural Passage.*

That you must study the Scriptural passage which constitutes your lesson for that week is obvious enough. No one would deny that, and all realize that there can be no preparation without it. However, the question remains, "What does it mean to study the Scriptural passage?" A related question is, "How do I go about studying my lesson? What must I do first?"

The first step is a very simple yet extremely important one. Read carefully, thoughtfully and repeatedly the passage which constitutes the lesson. The teacher who glances at the passage indicated as the lesson for the week and then says to himself, "O, it is about Joseph being sold into Egypt", or "My, how easy I have it this week, the lesson is about David killing Goliath, and I know that story so well", that teacher has started off with the wrong foot, so to speak, in preparing his lesson. When he comes to teacher's meeting, he likewise is not prepared to enter into the discussion of the lesson. Read the passage carefully even if it is a very familiar story. Especially if it is a less well known incident recorded in the Scriptures read it *carefully* and *thoughtfully*. As you read it notice and commit to memory the various details in the incident. Was it five stones David chose from the brook to slay Goliath, or was it only one? Did Jesus take twelve disciples on the Mt. of Transfiguration, or did He take only three? Was it really three or perhaps four disciples that saw His glory there on the Mount?

Take note also of the exact order in which events occur in the incident. As a rule the events suggest what follows, and in a story it is not very often that one loses the line of thought. However, very often details on the story are forgotten, and one finds the need of going back to repeat a portion of the story because one little element was overlooked while reading and preparing the lesson. These stories as a rule are so well known to us that certain details in the incident suggest themselves to us. But that is not always the case with the child. Often it happens that he has never heard the story before. Note the order of events by reading the lesson carefully.

Likewise take notice of the names of the persons mentioned in the story. If Scripture gives the names of these persons, make a note of it on paper or in your mind. And when you tell the story do not say, "Then a man came and said to David. . . ." when Scripture says, "and the prophet Nathan came to David and spake to him". Or, wait a minute, was it Nathan or Nabal? Could it perhaps have been Naboth? Be definite. Be correct. And therefore first of all read the story carefully and thoughtfully.

Not only does it weaken the story when you eliminate things Scripture includes, or when you give different figures than those in the Scriptures or jumble up the order of events, but you as a teacher may also suffer much embarrassment from your pupils for your wrong presentation. Do not forget that they are also taught by very capable school teachers five days in the week. You must not be surprised then if when you present things incorrectly you see one two or three hands go up. Do not think either that these hands represent intelligent questions which are the result of deep interest in the story. You will find that the child wants to correct you. And you invited that correction from your children by a lack of care in the preparation of your lesson.

In this connection we might also suggest that you strive to use the proper pronunciation of the names which appear in the lesson. If you pronounce these names differently than the child hears them pronounced and is taught to pronounce them in school, you will also invite such disturbances in the presentation of your lesson. Consult a good self-pronouncing (what a poor name for it) Bible or else a Bible dictionary, especially for such names as Mephibosheth. Is the accent on the second or on the third syllable? Failure to do these things besides inviting a correction by your pupils will also disturb the whole class. You often have pupils who like to be rude and who do not take the time to raise their hands to correct you but blurt out that which they have in their mind. This is disturbing for you, but it also disrupts the attention of the whole class.

After you have taken all these details into consideration, you must proceed to understand the main thought in the story and the related thoughts. In order to do this, you should make an honest attempt to see the story in its setting. You may not have enough material at your disposal for a thorough investigation of all the details, but you should not despise the information that can be made available to you. You ought to take into consideration the time when the story takes place. Whether it takes place in the Old Testament times or the New Testament times makes quite a difference. Whether it occurs before the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai or after likewise makes a difference. It makes a difference whether it took place before the Cross of Christ or afterward. When a persecution arose in the days of Stephen, many fled out of the land of Canaan even as far as the Island of Cyprus and to Antioch in Syria. Elimelech also fled out of the land of Canaan into Moab because of the famine. But you cannot place these two incidents on the same level spiritually. Elimelech ran away from the Tabernacle. The saints who fled to Cyprus separated themselves from the Temple but not with the same significance and consequences.

Take into consideration and strive to find out the social and political condition of Israel if the incident belongs to the Old Testament dispensation. Was there a God-fearing or godless king on the throne? Was it during the times of the Judges when men did as seemed right in their own sight or when they had a king to rule over them? How much revelation did the saints have at the time the incident recorded in the lesson takes place? The faith of the shepherds, of Simeon and Anna at the time of Christ is understood and best appreciated when we remember that politically it indeed seemed hopeless that God's promise of a Messiah be realized. In Solomon's time such a promise might seem far more possible. Likewise it makes a difference whether the saint walks uprightly in the face of famine and persecution or in times of prosperity. Find out as much as you can about these things that you may present an interesting story to the child and give him the necessary background to understand it in its true light.

You must bear in mind that you are teaching a child. The lesson explanation must be interesting or the child cannot follow you. Indeed, we are not advocating the practice that you entertain the child. That is something quite different. But to make the story interesting, that is, make it so that you keep his attention is a *must* for you. And to do so you should do some research into these things which will make the story fresh to him and interesting. If you can find some interesting thing about the country in which the incident takes place which will make the picture more vivid before the mind's eye of the child, so much the better. However, we ought to be sure that it does not detract from the truth in the lesson. It must be an item which helps to present the lesson. The point we are making here is that you ought to do more than simply read the lesson passage and look for the details in it. Do as much research as you can for the lesson. A Bible dictionary such as the one by Dr. William Smith, for example, will give you a wealth of material which you can use in your lesson explanations.

In the lesson explanation, we believe that there ought also to be as much as possible a reference to Christ and His cross. We condemn Christless sermons in which His name is not even mentioned. We ought likewise to look in our Sunday School lessons for opportunities to show the children how all things point to Him Who is the word become flesh. We ought to look for the types and shadows in the Old Testament, and when dealing with a story of Christ in the New Testament we ought to look for the picture and shadow of this event (if there be one) which took place in the Old Testament. When dealing with the lives of such men as Moses and David this is often quite easy. And the fact that Israel's rejection of David was a type of

their rejection of Christ ought to be brought out too, and the teacher must look for these things. He must, however, be on his guard not to manufacture types and shadows. Or when no type or shadow appears and the story is of the wickedness of some individual, do not leave the story there. By all means remind the child that *our* sins are forgiven because Jesus died for us. Or else if it be in the Old Testament times and concerning the faith of some great saint, as Abraham believing that he will have a son, show that Abraham in this believed in the promise of God to send the Christ.

We have indicated a few broad and general lines along which to prepare the lesson. Details cannot be given, nor can all the things you might be able to do be indicated, but we have tried to make plain what we mean when we say that you must *study* the Scriptural passage. In the next issue we hope to give a few additional thoughts.

(To be Continued)

J. A. H.

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## FROM HOLY WRIT

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James 1:12: — "Blessed is the man, that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him."

Verse 12 may be considered a summary of the preceding context. In verses 2-4 we are exhorted to rejoice when we fall into diverse temptations. Temptations work the approved state of our faith, and approved faith worketh patience. Hence, let us rejoice. In verses 5-8 the church is admonished to ask of God wisdom. We need wisdom. The way of the Christian in the midst of the world is difficult. Only when we receive wisdom from God will we be able to see the present in the light of the future, to reject the treasures of Egypt, of this present time, for the glories that shall be revealed, to endure sufferings and afflictions for the crown of eternal life and glory. In verses 9-11 the holy writer directs our attention to a concrete example of the afflictions of the people of God. How the poor people of God are maltreated by the ungodly rich! However, the lowly brother will be exalted and the rich will be made low. And now James summarizes this context in the words of verse 12. In this verse James emphasizes, first of all, the blessedness of the afflicted. They shall receive the crown of life. Secondly, we are blessed only in the way of endurance. And finally,

in that struggle we may be sure of victory because the crown of life has been promised by Jehovah to them that love Him.

Blessed is this man, according to James, supremely happy is he, because he shall receive the crown of life. He is blessed *now*, in the certain anticipation of this crown. There are two words in the original Greek which are often translated "crown". The one word refers to a royal crown, can be rendered literally "diadem", the crown worn by kings. The other word for crown refers to a laurel wreath, which was given to a conqueror, a winner as in the old Grecian or Roman games. The latter word is used in this text. The Christian is engaged in a struggle. He must exert himself to the utmost. He must fight to preserve what he has and to obtain the future glory. Consequently, he shall receive a *crown*, a winner's prize, when he shall have struggled unto the end.

James speaks of the crown of *life*. The crown of the victorious Christian is viewed by Scripture from several aspects. In II Tim. 4:8 we read of it as a crown of righteousness. In I Pet. 5:4 the apostle speaks of it as a crown of glory. And in Rev. 2:10 we read of the crown of life. The expression "crown of life", appearing in the latter passage and also in the words of James 1:12, implies that life is viewed as a crown. It is surely beyond all doubt that this refers to eternal life. Eternal life is obtained by the child of God as a prize, is bestowed upon him only as at the end of a struggle. Then he will receive the crown of life, the crown consisting exclusively of life. Life, in the Scriptural sense of the word, is fellowship with the alone blessed God. In heaven we will be characterized exclusively by this life. There will be no death there. Nothing will hinder us in the perfect service of the Lord. Everything, within us and about us, will be perfectly adapted to the blessed fellowship with the Lord. And we shall live forever. Death will eternally be impossible. Of this crown of life, in heavenly beauty and with all the people of the living God throughout the ages, James speaks in this twelfth verse of James 1.

To receive this crown of life, however, we must endure temptation. For, only he who is tried, shall receive the crown of life. This "enduring of temptation" and its accompanying result, "our being tried" is, first of all, an objective requirement for our obtaining of the crown of life. Another way to receive this prize does not exist. Literally we read here of the man who is enduring temptation and, as a result of this, is being tried. Both expressions, "enduring temptation" and "when he is tried" appear in the original in the present tense, and refer, therefore, to an activity, a work which is in progress.

As far as the expression "enduring temptation" is concerned, the word "temptation" (see our interpre-

tation of verse 2) refers to all evil powers and influences, within and without, which would lead us away from the path of God's covenant. The word "enduring" means literally "to remain, abide, and so to persevere". Our attitude, therefore, toward this temptation must be one of perseverance. We must not succumb to them, but endure them, bear them without faltering.

The expression "when he is tried", (literally, "being tried or approved") refers to the same thought which is expressed in verse 3. James does not refer here to the trial of our faith, but to the results of that trial. Our becoming approved refers to that condition of the Christian wherein his true spiritual character is revealed as purged from all foreign elements. Silver and gold are tried, approved by fire in the sense that they are purged of all impurities, so that their beauty and true character may shine the more brilliantly. So also the Christian is being approved. Many foreign elements cleave to the Christian's conscious walk and manifestation. The approved Christian is he who, when cast into the furnace of affliction, is being purified, so that the imperishable character of his faith shines the more gloriously, as purged from all carnal and sinful elements.

We understand, of course, that our enduring of temptation and our being approved are intimately related. The one is the result of the other. That man is blessed who endures temptation for he is being approved.

This enduring of temptation with its accompanying result, our approved state, is, first of all, an objective requirement for our obtaining of the crown of life. This does not mean that our obtaining of the crown of life is dependent upon our perseverance unto the end. Thus the arminian conception would interpret the text. But this view is a denial of the Holy Scriptures. Do we not read in Rom. 8:38-39 that nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which there is in Christ Jesus, our Lord? And are we not taught in Rom. 9:15 that it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy? And does not the apostle, Peter, proclaim the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ blessed, in I Pet. 1:3, Who according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead? Besides these passages, the conception that our obtaining of the crown of life is dependent upon us is impossible. Firstly, God's people have been elected unto eternal life from before the foundation of the world. Hence, our eternal destiny has been Divinely determined. Secondly, Christ has bought us with His own precious blood. Our sins are therefore blotted out. No charge can be laid against us. Thirdly, the people of God possess *eternal* life and can therefore never perish. And, finally,

Christ has received all power in heaven and on earth. Hence, He will irresistibly draw His own unto Himself.

That only the persevering Christian will receive the crown of life is due to the character of the Divine work of salvation. On the one hand, the Divine work of salvation is a perfect work. He finishes what He begins. And because His work is perfect the character of our faith is such that it cannot succumb, but that it must endure unto the end. In fact, we may surely declare that the Divine purpose of temptations is exactly to reveal the imperishableness of His work of grace. And, on the other hand, the work of God within us is such that we are saved as moral, rational creatures. He alone saves. But *we* are saved. He causes us to run but we must run; He enables us to will and we therefore must will; He gives us faith and we must believe. And because He saves unto the utmost he that endures temptation, being approved, shall receive the crown of life.

However, our enduring of temptation and being approved is also a subjective requirement for our receiving of the crown of life. We read in the text: Blessed is the man who endureth temptation, for being approved he shall receive the crown of life. We are now blessed, are *now* supremely happy because we now experience the sure anticipation of the crown of life. Fact is, our enduring of temptation and being approved is the only subjective possibility whereby we now can joyfully look forward to the obtaining of the crown. If we would rejoice now in the future obtaining of the crown and if we now would rejoice in the certainty that God will finish His work, then we must also now experience and taste this blessed work of God within us. Only he is blessed, only he can be blessed who endures temptation. For when we endure temptation, stand stedfastly in the midst of the world, are becoming approved, we increasingly taste the grace of God within our hearts. That man is blessed because he shall, also in his own consciousness, receive the crown of life—he knows that the work of God, which by the grace of God has been begun, shall by that same grace be fully done. And tasting, experiencing this work of Divine grace he will also increasingly look forward unto that day when the crown of life shall be given him and the work of God, by grace begun in his heart, shall be completed in heavenly perfection.

Finally, James declares of this crown of life that the Lord has promised it to them that love Him. The position of God's people in the midst of the world is apparently hopeless. They are the party of the living God but must endure afflictions. Everything seems to be against us and our ultimate triumph appears impossible. However, we may be certain that we will receive the crown of life. God has promised it. When James speaks of "them that love God", he is expressing

the same thought which is implied in the beginning of the text, with this distinction, that the enduring of temptation is possible only in the love of God. It is the love of God which causes and enables us to forsake all things for the life which is above. And God has promised us this crown of life. This promise is no offer. A promise is never an offer. And how ridiculous would be the thought that God offers us this crown of life. How shall we ever accept it? We must die. How can we, who must die, take hold of the eternal crown of life? God has promised it. Let us therefore endure unto the end. Let us continue the good fight of faith. And God will give us the crown of life out of sovereign mercy.

H. V.

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## PERISCOPE

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### *Japanese Christianity. . . .*

In *The Presbyterian Guardian* of December 10, we found a "Declaration issued by the Japanese Reformed Church", excerpts from which we present below. The following note accompanies the article: "It is to be remembered that this is the action of a group of Japanese Christians, who have been out of touch with missionaries for a number of years as a result of the war. It therefore represents a witness from within Japanese Christendom. . . . The best English form of the name seems to be 'Reformed Church of Christ in Japan'. Its relation to and distinction from the KYODAN, or 'Church of Christ in Japan' is thus made clear.

"The text given here is the result of the combined efforts of Major Lardner Moore, and the Revs. R. H. and W. A. McIlwaine."

### DECLARATION

#### *Introduction. . . .*

"It is already nine months since the end of the war, and though the rebuilding of our defeated ancestral country is being planned according to various designs and ways, what the Scriptures say is true, 'Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.' Apart from believing in the Omniscient, Omnipotent, Most Holy and Most Loving God, Who rules over the universe and mankind, even a whole nation has no way of being built well or preserved well.

"At the time of the recent great war, religious freedom was under severe pressure, and our church was perverted; and the truth was not boldly insisted upon. We were ashamed of this before God's holy presence, and mourned for the nation. However, by the providence of God Who controls history it has finally come about that through defeat freedom of religion has been realized in Japan, our ancestral country.

"Henceforth, for the building of a better Japan, we must with true hearts and true purpose become people who are in accord with the will of the Omnipotent and Most Good God, Who controls history. In accordance with His commandments we must revere God and love our neighbor, not merely in the realm of (the human) spirit and culture, but the injunction 'Whether therefore ye eat or drink or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God' must be made our highest aim. It is this theistic life and world view that is the only sure foundation upon which to build a new Japan; this is the first point of emphasis of the Reformed Church of Christ in Japan, and we are zealous for this point. . . .

"Now mankind in God's holy presence is one body, all equally slaves of sin. However God, according to His eternal purpose, has established a plan of salvation for sinful mankind, which He has accomplished in history by the historical atoning work of His Son Jesus Christ; He has given faith to and called those who were ordained to eternal life; and justifying, adopting and sanctifying them, He dwells with men. . . . Then when the fulness of time was come, He sent forth His Son Jesus Christ, by whose death on the Cross, and resurrection, the foundation of our salvation is laid, by His marvellous providence, through the unbelief of the Jews, the Gospel of salvation has spread to all the world. That is, the salvation of God emerged from the temporary Jewish racial setting of the Old Testament age and displayed its proper dignity of universality. Jesus Christ was proclaimed by the apostles as 'the Lord of all peoples and the Light of the world,' and thus the existence of the New Testament Christian Church has come to be seen in all the world.

"The so-called 'Invisible Church' which God alone clearly knows, extends throughout all the earth; it exists as the holy, only, Catholic church through all history, past, present and future, connecting the realms of both heaven and earth."

#### *Doctrine. . . .*

"We are zealous to stand in the true tradition of this Christian faith. Here (rooted in this tradition) is the purpose of the Reformed Church of Christ in Japan to adopt as its standard of faith the Westminster Confession of Faith together with the Larger and

Shorter Catechisms, to which is attached the preamble given below.

Preamble To The Standard Of Faith  
Of The

Reformed Church Of Christ in Japan.

"The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, which are the Word of God that He gave to His own Church, are the only infallible canon of the Church. The Word of God revealed in the Scriptures is formed into a confession of faith by the Church and becomes the standard of faith of the Church; this is the creed of the Church. The Church has from of old continued to hold in common to these four creeds: The Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, and the creed of Chalcedon, as the basic universal creed of the Church. Coming on to the age of the Protestant Reformation, the several reformed Churches stood in the tradition of the orthodox faith of all these creeds; moreover, not stopping with them, they were led on to draw up creeds that were pure and evangelical—nay, that while covering the whole realm of doctrine were in addition pure and excellently systematic. Among these thirty-odd creeds we are convinced that the Westminster Standards most completely set forth the system of doctrine taught in the Scriptures. Though we, the Reformed Church of Christ in Japan, look in prayer for the day when we may draw up in our own words something even more excellent, we are convinced that it is these standards of faith that are most appropriate for our standard of faith today; and so with praise and thanksgiving we make them the standard of faith of our church."

*Government . . . .*

"Referring to one Church government: believing that Presbyterianism is the form of government held by Biblical churches, we the Reformed Church of Christ in Japan desire to put this into practice in its purity."

*Discipline . . . .*

"What is the one good manner of life? We are not legalists, nor again are we antinomians. Sanctification, with which God the Holy Spirit blesses us within, on the basis of the redemption of Christ, is what the believer should earnestly seek in prayer. Perfect sanctification is not granted upon earth; though we daily seek the forgiveness of our sins and must not fail to forgive those who sin against us, we who are in Christ must mutually reprove in the Holy Spirit the sins of our brethren. It is a well known fact that the church of Geneva, where John Calvin, the greatest leader of the Reformed Church which was the main tide of the Protestant Reformation movement, labored,

set forth an exemplary accomplishment in the matter of discipline in the life of faith.

"Thus we desire through one confession of faith, one church government and one good manner of life to show forth the one invisible church as 'One Visible Church', and by this to be assured of the fact that we are a branch of the holy catholic church, and prove the certainty of our salvation.

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CHURCH UNION . . . .

A tentative plan for the merger of the United Presbyterian Church of North America and the Reformed Church in America has been drawn up by a joint committee of both denominations and has been submitted to both churches for their consideration. In presenting the plan, the joint committee emphasized that it was not sent for action or vote but for study and recommendation. After suggestions and amendments are received, the joint committee will revise and rewrite the plan, and the revised draft will be put before the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church and the General Synod of the Reformed Church at their meetings in 1947. If the two general organizations approve the revised proposal, it will then be submitted for vote to the classes and presbyteries. Results of their action then will be considered by the general organizations at their 1948 meetings. Approval by the lower bodies, it is believed, would lead to the general organizations' forming a united assembly at which the new Church would be constituted. The new denomination would be called the United Presbyterian Reformed Church and would have an established membership of some 360,000.

There appears to be considerable opposition in some quarters to the proposed merger of the Congregational-Christian and Evangelical and Reformed Churches. The pastor of the First Congregational Church of Chicago has urged that the churches get to know each other better before proceeding with their merger plans. The Congregational Church doesn't understand the Presbyterian system of the other body, and the E and R Church doesn't understand the Congregational system. He suggested, however, that the stricter ordination and installation practises of the Evangelical and Reformed Church could be used to advantage in the Congregational group.

Consumation of the union of the United Brethren in Christ and the Evangelical Church of America was accomplished at a uniting conference on Saturday, November 16, in Johnstown, Pa. Plans for the union had been under way since 1933 and have been fairly completed since 1939. Out of a total of one hundred fifty six votes cast on the matter of the union in the

two churches, only eight votes were in the negative. The general offices of the new denomination, which is known as the Evangelical United Brethren Church, will be in Dayton, Ohio. The merged group is expected to have over seven hundred thousand members.

The move for union or reunion of churches and religious groups has also reached the Quakers. The Society of Friends was disrupted by a dispute concerning articles of faith and the use of the Bible in 1827, and since then there have been two groups, designated as the Orthodox and the Hicksite. Now, as the result of proposals made a year ago, the two groups have healed their breach and reunited. The Quakers are known today more for their benevolent activities than for their religious services. One of their leading institutions is the American Friend's Service Committee, known around the world for its relief work during and after the war.

W. H.

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## Ingezonden

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Mijnheer, de Redacteur:

Mag ik s.v.p. een klein plaatsje voor onderstaande regelen in uw geacht blad. Bij voorbaat mijn dank.

Van de onderscheidene boekjes "De Geloovigen en Hun Zaad", die we naar Nederland, Canada en in eigen land verzonden, ontving ik o.a. van een oude vriend en broeder een schrijven, 't welk dunkt me wel de moeite waard is in breeder kring gelezen diend te worden, temeer daar de broeder behoort tot de Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk, en eens even vrij en frank zich uitsprekt, hoe hij denkt over eigen misstanden in de Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk.

We laten dan hier enkele passages uit zijn schrijven volgen:

"Gij hebt u belofte gehouden en als gevolg daarvan ontving ik het boekje, De Geloovigen en Hun Zaad". Dit geschenk waardeer ik ten zeerste want mooier beschrijving van het genade verbond en de doop heb ik nog nergens gevonden. Nog eens voor mij is het de mooiste verklaring. En dan geeft Ds. Hoeksema ook een uiteenzetting van wat Prof. Heyns vroeger leerde aan onze theologische school. En in "De Wachter" vonden we de geloofsbeschouwingen van Prof. Heyns zoo verschillend van wat wij in Nederland gewoon waren, zoodat we voor "De Wachter" bedankten. En nu na ruim 30 jaren lees ik uit dit door u mij toegesonden boekje, waar het eigenlijk aan haperde, en daarbij gaat ook veel licht op over veel misstanden in de Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk."

Tot zoo ver het schrijven van den broeder.

Is het een stem van een roepende in de woestijn? We gelooven het niet, dit geval staat niet op zich zelf, is geen ontboezeming van den een of ander ontevreden broeder die het nergens kan vinden, doch uit heel zijn schrijven spreekt beginsel. Er zijn veel meer die geboren in Nederland een zuivere Gereformeerde opvoeding hebben genoten, en in hun hart eensgeestes zijn met bovengenoemd schrijven.

Heeft dit oogenschijnlijk niets betekenend voorval ons ook iets te zeggen, is het ook een wolkje als een mans hand? Zou het ook een aanwijzing voor onze zendings-commissie zijn om het bedoelde boekje te laten drukken in beide talen en te verspreiden onder de leden der Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken hier te lande?

J. R. VanderWal.

Redlands, Dec. 9, '46

Geliefde Ds. Hoeksema:

Bij kalm nadenken heb ik in mijn stukje een ver-gissing gemaakt n.l., de laatste sinsnede, om bij al de Christelijke Gereformeerde leden bedoeld boekje te verspreiden. Dat is natuurlijk onmogelijk, daarom zou ik gaarne indien u denkt dat het waard is gepubliceerd te worden, het zoo in te kleeden. "Bestaat de mogelijkheid ook de verspreiding van bedoeld boekje meer onder de leden der Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk te doen plaats hebben?"

J. R. VanderWal.

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## THE LIFE THAT COUNTS

The life that counts must toil and fight;  
Must hate the wrong and love the right;  
Must stand for truth by day, by night —  
That is the life that counts.

The life that counts must aim to rise  
Above the earth to sunlit skies;  
Must fix his gaze on Paradise —  
That is the life that counts.

The life that counts must hopeful be;  
In darkest night make melody;  
Must wait the dawn on bended knee —  
That is the life that counts.

The life that counts must helpful be;  
The cares and needs of others see;  
Must seek the slave of sin to free —  
That is the life that counts.

—Selected.