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MEDITATION

Drie Kruisen

Alwaar zij Hem kruisten, en met Hem twee anderen, aan elke zijde eenen, en Jezus in het midden.

Joh. 19:18.

Rijk is de Godspraak op Golgotha!

Want ook de Hoofdschedelplaats is immers een Woord Gods?

De hemelen vertellen Gods eer, en het uitspansel verkondigt Zijner handen werk. Maar Golgotha niet minder.

De dag aan den dag stort overvloediglijk sprake uit, en de nacht aan dag toont wetenschap. Maar ook op de Hoofdschedelplaats spreekt God tot ons, en is de eeuwige Wijsheid aan het woord.

Door het Woord Gods zijn immers de hemelen, en alle dingen in hemel en op aarde gemaakt; door datzelfde Woord worden ze nog immer bewaard en gedragen, ook zooals de adem van Gods toorn ze onder den zwaren last van den vloek doet torschen en zuchten. Daarom worden dan ook Zijne onzienlijke dingen, beide Zijne eeuwige kracht en goddelijkheid, uit de schepselen verstaan en doorzien.

Maar het is ook door het Woord Gods, zij het dan ook werkend door goddelooze harten en booze handen, dat Golgotha in het aanzijn werd geroepen, de Hoofdschedelplaats, en alle bijzonderheden, die behooren bij het Goddelijk drama van het kruis des Zoons, geregeld en geschikt. Dat kruis is Gods kruis. De "ure" is Gods ure. De plaats "buiten de poort" is Gods plaats. Ook die twee anderen, die met Hem gekruisigd werden, zijn door Gods hand daar gezet. God geeft hier immers Zijnen Zoon over in den dood; de Zoon legt hier Zijn leven af in vrijwillige gehoorzaamheid aan het gebod, dat Hij van den Vader heeft ontvangen; en de Geest ondersteunt, en bereidt, en heiligt Hem, om daar en nu

den last des toorns Gods tegen de zonde te dragen, en met ééne offerande te volmaken degenen, die door Hem geheiligd worden.

En daarom gaat er ook van de Hoofdschedelplaats overvloediglijk sprake uit: Golgotha is Godsopenbaring!

Alleen maar is er een diep verschil tusschen de sprake Gods door de schepselen, en Zijne Zelfopenbaring op Golgotha.

Dáár wordt Hij wel gekend in Zijne eeuwige kracht en goddelijkheid, als de Heer, Die de dingen, die niet zijn, roept alsof ze waren, en die verheerlijkt en gedankt moet worden. Dáár spreekt Hij ook van Zijnen vreeselijken toorn tegen alle ongerechtigheid en goddeloosheid, die immers aldoor van den hemel geopenbaard wordt.

Hier spreekt Hij van Zichzelven als den Verzoener der wereld, als den Zondenvernieler, Die onze ongerechtigheden uitdelgt, en Die de dooden levend maakt. Want wel spreekt ook de Hoofdschedelplaats van Zijn brandenden en rechtvaardigen toorn, maar dan zooals Hijzelf die draagt, opdat wij, verlost van zonde en vloek en dood, eeuwiglijk in Zijnen tabernakel zouden kunnen en mogen verkeerren.

De God, Die Zijn verbond handhaaft en tot in eeuwigheid bevestigt!

Wiens liefde immer eerst is, volkomen souverain, een vuur, dat nooit gebluscht kan worden!

De God, Die wonderen doet, en Wiens pad immer door de zee voert!

Hij is het, Die op Golgotha spreekt!

En rijk is Zijne sprake!

Alwaar zij Hem kruisten. . . .

En met Hem twee anderen. . . .

Drie kruisen moeten op Golgotha geplant worden, om de symboliek der Godspraak te dienen.

En naar de sprake der drie kruisen willen we een oogenblik luisteren.

O, ook van de plaats zelve gaat Goddelijke sprake uit. Immers was de Hoofdschedelplaats, wat overigens

ook de oorsprong van dien naam geweest zij, buiten de poort, een eindweegs buiten Jeruzalem. En de Schrift leert ons in den brief aan de Hebreëen, dat dit niet anders mocht, omdat in Jezus het offer van den grooten verzoendag vervuld moest worden. En de lichamen dier dieren, welker bloed in het binnenste heiligdom gedragen werd, werden immers buiten de legerplaats verbrand. Hoofdschedelplaats, dat wil dus zeggen: aan dat kruis in het midden hangt het lichaam der zonde, om vernietigd te worden; daar hangt ook onze Hoogepriester, die Zijn eigen bloed in het binnenste heiligdom op 't verzoendeksel voor Gods aangezicht sprenkt, eene volkomene dekking voor al onze zonden.

Maar op de drie kruisen zij onze aandacht gevestigd.

Zeker, we weten het, dat het naar Gods beschikking was, dat Zijn Zoon den dood des kruises zou sterven. 't Was zoo niet de bedoeling der booze menschen geweest. Ook was dit niet hunne "ure". Zij hadden Hem liever heimelijk overrompeld, geholpen door den verrader, om Hem zonder eenige opschudding van kant te brengen. En ook moest het vooral niet op het feest geschieden, opdat er geen oproer onder het volke wierde. Doch Gods raad bestaat altijd, en naar Zijn bepaalden raad zou Zijn Zoon op het feest den dood des kruises sterven.

En we weten ook, welke sprake Gods er door dat kruis Zijns Zoons uitgaat.

Een vloek is Hij geworden voor ons.

Zoo toch had Hij Zelf gesproken door Zijnen knecht Mozes: "Voorts, wanneer iemand in eene zonde zal zijn, die het oordeel des doods waardig is, dat hij gedood zal worden, en gij hem aan het hout zult opgehangen hebben; zoo zal zijn dood lichaam aan het hout niet overnachten; maar gij zult het zekerlijk ten zelven dage begraven; want een opgehangene is Gode een vloek." En zoo verklaart het ons de apostel: "Christus heeft ons verlost van den vloek der wet, een vloek geworden zijnde voor ons; want er is geschreven: Vervloekt is een iegelijk, die aan het hout hangt." Deut. 21:22, 23; Gal. 3:13.

De vloek, dat is Gods toorne-Woord.

Zooals Hij ons zegent, als het Woord van Zijn gunst uit Zijn mond tot ons uitgaat, zoo vloekt Hij ons door het Woord Zijns toorns. En zooals Zijn zegenend Woord ons opneemt in Zijn huis, ons het zoete en zalige van Zijne gemeenschap doet smaken, zoodat we leven; zoo stoot Zijn vloekwoord ons weg, bant het ons uit Zijne woning, doet het ons ellendig omzwerven, zoodat we wegzinken in den dood.

Dat vloekwoord Gods is de sprake van dat kruis.

En zeg nu niet, dat die sprake beter en duidelijker gesproken ware, indien daar op de Hoofdschedelplaats slechts één kruis, inplaats van drie, gestaan had, daar Hij, de Zoon Gods, toch immers gansch alleen den toorn Gods moest dragen. Want door die beide andere kruisen komt ook Gods Woord tot ons, het Woord, namelijk:

"Vervloekt is *een iegelijk*, die niet blijft in al hetgeen geschreven is in het boek der wet, omdat te doen." En daarom ook dit Woord: *Zoovelten* als er uit de werken der wet zijn, die zijn onder den vloek."

Die twee misdadigers zijn "de wereld", zijn wij, gij en ik, zooals we in onszelfen als overtreders der wet onder den vloek liggen.

O, voor de menschen, die deze twee kwaaddoeners gevonnist hadden, waren ze wel bijzondere misdadigers, uitvaagsel, die niet waard waren om een plaats in de menschelijke maatschappij in te nemen. Voor God echter waren het eenvoudig overtreders der wet, van Zijne wet, en daarom slechts vertegenwoordigers van ons allen. Want allen liggen we onder de wet. En allen zijn we overtreders der wet. Zonder onderscheid liggen we onder den vloek.

En Hij, de Zoon Gods in het vleesch, is daar op Golgotha wel onder den vloek, doch niet omdat ook Hij een overtreder der wet was.

Die vloek, die op die twee anderen rust, is op Hem, omdat Hij hem op zich nam.

Niet Zijn eigen, maar der wereld vloek draagt Hij.

Hij werd met de misdadigers *gerekend*!

Gerekend door de menschen, die Hem met smaadheid overlaadden, en Hem uitwierpen, buiten de legerplaats.

Maar gerekend ook door God, zoodat Hij den vloek der overtreders op Hem doet aankomen.

Den gemeenen vloek is op Hem!

En met Hem twee anderen!

Aan elke zijde eenen, en Jezus in het midden!

Drie kruiselingen: Jezus en twee anderen. Maar dan toch *anderen*.

En ofschoon van alle drie ééne sprake Gods uitgaat, het Woord van Zijnen vloekenden toorn, het Woord, dat *een iegelijk* vervloekt is, die niet blijft in al hetgeen geschreven is in het boek der wet, om dat te doen, toch is er een scherp onderscheid tusschen de sprake, die er uitgaat van dat kruis in het midden, en van die der twee anderen.

Ook voor de openbaring van dat verschil had Goddelijke leiding gezorgd.

Let maar op het opschrift boven elk der kruisen.

Dat ook boven de hoofden der twee anderen een opschrift was aangebracht, lijdt geen twijfel. Het was immers gewoonte, dat, wanneer een misdadiger tot den kruisdood veroordeeld was geworden, zijne misdaad, op grond waarvan hij gevonnist werd, op een bordje geschreven werd, en ieder toeschouwer werd bekend gemaakt. Soms werd dat opschrift reeds aldus gereed gemaakt op de plaats des gerechts, om den hals gehangen van den misdadiger, en alzoo door dezen zelf, door de straten der stad, naar de strafplaats gedragen, om dan aan zijn kruis te worden genageld. Soms werd

het, zooals waarschijnlijk in het geval van des Heilands kruisiging geschiedde, op de strafplaats geschreven. Het mag dus worden aangenomen, dat ook boven de hoofden der twee anderen zulk een opschrift was aangebracht.

Doch op hunne opschriften stond niets anders te lezen dan hunne misdaad, de grond van hunne veroordeeling, met aangifte van hunne namen.

Vervloekt als overtreders der wet!

Een iegelijk!

Maar ziet nu, dat middenste kruis draagt een geheel ander opschrift! God Zelf had Pilatus' hart en hand gestuurd om te schrijven: "Jezus, de Nazarener, de Koning der Joden." En hoe ook de vijandige Joden, zooals te begrijpen is, protesteerden tegen deze aangifte van den grond voor Zijne veroordeeling; en hoe ze er ook op stonden, dat aan dit opschrift zou worden toegevoegd, dat Hij dit gezegd had, Pilatus bleef hals-tarrig bij zijn opschrift: "Wat ik geschreven heb, dat heb ik geschreven!"

Maar hoe wonderlijk!

Wat geheel onderscheidene sprake gaat er thans uit van dat kruis!

Jezus! Maar dat is Jehova-Heil. Dat was de naam, waarmee Hij door den Engel benoemd was nog eer Hij ter wereld kwam. En had diezelfde engel dien naam niet verklaard met de woorden: "Hij zal Zijn volk zalig maken van hunne zonden"? Jezus, Jehova-Heil, de God onzer volkomene zaligheid, Die Zijn volk van hunne zonden verlossen zal, onder den vloek der wereld, onzen vloek! Dat is de sprake der drie kruisen, met Jezus in het midden!

De Nazarener!

O, uit menschelijk oogpunt was dit niet anders bedoeld dan als een smaadnaam. Kan uit Nazareth nu iets goeds voortkomen?

Maar gehoord als Goddelijke sprake beteekent die naam toch geheel iets anders. Immers leert ons de Schrift in Mattheus 2:23, dat Hij, door Goddelijke leiding Zijn woonplaats kreeg in Nazareth, "opdat vervuld zou worden, wat door de profeten gezegd is, dat Hij Nazarener zal geheeten worden." Maar hoe en waar dan was dit ooit door de profeten gezegd? We verstaan er iets van als we er op letten, dat Nazareth wordt afgeleid van het Hebreeuwsche NAZAR, dat Spruit beteekent, of Rijsje, en dat letterlijk voorkomt in Jesaja 11:1, en naar den zin ook nog op andere plaatsen in de profeten.

De Nazarener!

De Spruit, het Rijsje uit den afgehouden tronk van Isai, de Wortel uit eene dorre aarde, de Beloofde, de lang Verwachte, de Knecht des Heeren, van Wien het voorzeggd was, dat er gedaante noch heerlijkheid aan Hem gevonden zou worden, Die geteekend was, lang voorheen, als de Verachte, de Onwaardigste onder de menschen. Die onze krankheden op Zich zou nemen en

onze smarten zou dragen,—Hij staat hier op de plaats des toorns Gods, onder den vloek, die op ons rust als overtreders der wet!

De lijdende Knecht des Heeren!

Dat is de sprake Gods door de drie kruisen. . . . en Jezus in het midden!

De Koning der Joden!

Maar wie is dit anders dan de Messias, de Christus Gods, de van eeuwigheid Verordineerde, Die in den weg van lijden Zijn koninkrijk zou beërven, de machten der duisternis zou verwinnen en teniet doen, en de kinderen des Koninkrijks, Hem van den Vader gegeven, naar de eeuwige heerlijkheid zou voeren?

Jezus, Jehovah-Heil, Immanuel, God in het vleesch, de openbaring van den God onzer zaligheid, Die Zijn volk zal zaligmaken van hunne zonden; de Nazarener, de lang beloofde Spruite uit den wortel Davids, de Koning der Joden, de Gezalfde des Heeren, Hij hangt aan het vloekhout op de Hoofdschedelplaats!

Wat wil het zeggen?

Wat anders dan dit, dat, terwijl de twee anderen *van nature* onder den toorn Gods en Zijnen *liggen*, Hij onder de wet, en daarmee onder den vloek *vrijwilliglijk kwam*?

Wat anders dan dit, dat, terwijl die anderen *als overtreders* den last van den vloek dragen, Hij dien vloek draagt, omdat Hij met de misdadigers *gerekend* is, Hij, de zondeloze Knecht des Heeren?

Wat anders dan dit, dat, terwijl die twee anderen onder den last des toorns Gods eeuwig moeten *verzinken*, Hij dien last op Zijn machtige schouders kan *dragen*, en *wegdragen*?

Wonderlijke sprake Gods!

Onze Zondenverzoener!

En Jezus in het midden!

Dat ook; ja, met nadruk, dat ook!

Want wel draagt Hij daar den vloek der anderen, maar niet van beiden. Wel torscht Hij den vloek der wereld, maar toch niet voor allen in die wereld.

Het kruis maakt ook scheiding: Jezus in het midden!

Het kruis spreekt ook van Goddelijke vrijmacht, van verkiezing, maar ook van verwerping: aan elke zijde eenen, en Jezus in het midden!

Het kruis is ook oorzaak, dat de gedachten van veler harten geopenbaard zal worden, gedachten van genade en zonde, van geloof en ongeloof. Reeds op de Hoofdschedelplaats begint deze scheiding: de een wordt aangenomen, en neemt aan, de ander wordt verworpen en verwerpt.

En zoo gaat het door tot de einden der eeuwen: het kruis een kracht Gods, en dwaasheid!

In het midden Jezus!

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EDITORIALS

The Missionary Monthly About The Clark Case

Our readers, no doubt, remember that, sometime ago, we wrote a series of articles about a doctrinal controversy in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church connected with the name of Dr. Gordon H. Clark. Although the licensure and ordination of Dr. Clark by the Presbytery of Philadelphia was maintained by the General Assembly, over against a protest lodged with the Assembly, chiefly by several members of the faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary, the case is not finished, and the controversy is not settled. A committee is supposed to report to the next General Assembly on the doctrinal issues involved. And we look forward to that report. In the meantime, many are the indications that prove that there is no peace and harmony in the ranks of the Orthodox Presbyterian membership. The "Complaint" has stirred up a doctrinal battle that might even lead to a schism.

More than once, and in various ways, during the past year, we were reminded of this controversy. Just recently, Dr. H. Beets writes about it in the "Reformed Press Digest" of the Missionary Monthly. We quote him:

There is something else that is agitating our Orthodox Presbyterian brethren. On page 349, of the Presbyterian Guardian of December 10, we read about a *theological controversy* in the Church. What that controversy is at bottom is plain from the minutes of the Thirteenth General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. That assembly met May, 1946. A certain Gordon H. Clark had been before the Presbytery of Philadelphia for admission to the ministry. It was claimed by some that he held fundamental errors with respect to four heads of doctrine. What were these doctrines? Quite fundamental, it seems to us, and we don't wonder that brethren reared in our circles felt heavy hearted about them and protested against them. The following are the doctrines:

1. The doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God.
2. The doctrine of the position of the intellect with respect to other faculties.
3. The doctrine of the irreconcilability for men of divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

4. The doctrine of God's free offer of salvation to the reprobate.

Dr. Clark's alleged errors are said to have their common root in a rationalistic approach to Christian theology. If that root is present there is indeed reason to be alarmed about the situation in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, but we have confidence in our brethren reared in our circles to stand as the Rock of Chickamauga.

Something which reminds of a struggle between former days stirred our circles, is the following statement on page 65 of the Minutes. "The second allegation is that Dr. Clark steadfastly refuses to describe as sincere the offer which God makes to sinners in the gospel." The Minority report is signed by Prof. John Murray. We understand he is a Scotchman, and evidently backed up by men whom we personally know and esteem, such men as Dr. Cornelius Van Til, Dr. Ned B. Stonehouse, Rev. R. B. Kuiper, Rev. John J. DeWaard, and Rev. O. Holkeboer.

Now in my opinion, the editor of the "Reformed Press Digest" should not permit his easily flowing pen to run away with him in this fashion.

First of all, without expressly saying so, the editor leaves the impression with the readers of the Missionary Monthly that Dr. Clark errs in respect to "quite fundamental" doctrines, and that the complainants, the brethren in whom Dr. Beets has confidence because they are reared in Christian Reformed circles, are quite right in their protest.

If this is the opinion of the editor, and if this opinion is based on a thorough study of the case, he should have plainly stated this rather than convey a vague impression. But in that case, he should have acquainted his readers with the facts in the case, and with the grounds upon which such an opinion on the part of the editor is based.

If, however, the opinion of the editor is not based on a personal and thorough study of the case, but, as we are afraid, merely on the confidence he places in the brethren complainants, and that, too, because they have a Christian Reformed background, it had been better that the remarks had not been published. For this, virtually, means that Dr. Clark is condemned without a hearing. True, as was said, Dr. Beets does not state definitely that the complainants are right and Dr. Clark is a heretic. But note the following words: "It was claimed by some that he held fundamental errors with respect to four heads of doctrine. What were these doctrines? Quite fundamental it seems to us, and we don't wonder that brethren reared in our circles felt heavy hearted about them and protested against them." And again: "Dr. Clark's alleged errors

are said to have their common root in a rationalistic approach to Christian theology. If that root is present there is indeed reason to be alarmed about the situation in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, but we have confidence in our brethren reared in our circles to stand as the Rock of Chickamauga." What other impression are these words designed to leave than that the complainants have reason to be alarmed at the heresies of Dr. Clark?

The fact that the General Assembly of last May sustained the Presbytery of Philadelphia in the licensure and ordination of Dr. Clark should have meant something to Dr. Beets.

Secondly, it is my conviction that the editor of the "Reformed Press Digest" does not do the cause any good, rather works harm, first, by presenting "our brethren reared in our circles" as the champions of the truth, and the saviors of the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches; and secondly, by suggesting that they "stand as the Rock of Chickamauga" in this matter.

Much better, while more salutary for the Church in every respect, it had been, had the editor advised the brethren complainants to withdraw their protest, and to leave the controversial matters involved, most of which are concerned with rather abstruse theological and philosophical problems, to the free discussion of theologians, rather than attempting to impose one's personal views upon one another by having them coined as official dogma's of the Church.

Certainly, we ought to watch over the purity of doctrine on the basis of our Confessions. Never should we allow heresies to creep in unawares. When, as in the Bultema case in the Christian Reformed Churches, such fundamental truths as the unity of Israel and the Church, and the kingship of Christ over the Church, are denied, the Church must stand "as the Rock of Chickamauga." But when theologians attempt to impose their own pet theories, that have nothing to do with the adopted standards, upon the Church, they become the cause of trouble and schism. Even on the basis of the Confessions there is room for the *libertas prophetandi*. If this room is denied, the ecclesiastical walls are made so narrow that none but a certain theological clique can live within them.

An illustration of this Dr. Beets may find in the theologians that controlled the Synod of Kalamazoo, 1924, and the subsequent trouble and schism they caused. Another illustration is furnished by the late schism in the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands. A similar history will probably be made by the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches, if the theologians of Westminster continue the attempt to force their own private notions on the Church.

And what are those doctrines with respect to which Dr. Clark is supposed to err, and which seem so fundamental to the editor of the "Reformed Press Digest"?

Since when is there a well defined dogma about the incomprehensibility of God? That God is incomprehensible is accepted by Dr. Clark as well as by his opponents. But since when has it become established Reformed dogma to maintain that a "proposition" (grass is green, Christ is the Son of God, etc.) does not mean the same thing for God as it does for us, as the complainants hold?

Where do our Confessions, or the Standards of the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches, define "the doctrine of the position of the intellect with respect to other faculties?" In fact, what right has Dr. Beets even to speak of "the intellect and other *faculties* in the plural. Since when has the trichotomous division of the soul (the division into three faculties, intellect, emotion, will) become Reformed doctrine, or where, in the Reformed Confessions, is the theory of the primacy of the intellect (the theory that the intellect always leads, the will follows the intellect) branded as an error? Fact is that the complainants are on the wrong side of the fence on this point, when they make the blunder of maintaining that the trichotomous division of the soul is, at least, traditionally Reformed, and that the primacy of the intellect was usually condemned by Reformed theologians. For the very opposite is true, as is well known, and as can easily be proved.

Since when is the doctrine that there are "contradictions" in the Bible been coined as Reformed truth? And why is even the attempt to reconcile divine sovereignty and human responsibility to be branded as heresy and rationalism? Yet, it is of this very thing that Dr. Clark is accused.

And when, forsooth, has the theory of a well-meaning offer of salvation to the reprobate, the theory that the preaching of the gospel is grace to all that hear, become officially Reformed, except in 1924, when the Christian Reformed Churches adopted this fundamentally Arminian error?

Or since when was it branded as "rationalism", not that a man makes his own intellect or reason the source and standard of knowledge, but that he proceeds from the assumption that God's revelation is capable of being logically interpreted, so that logical deductions made from Scripture may be accepted as truth?

My advice to the brethren of the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches is, not that they "stand as the Rock of Chickamauga", but that they drop the Clark case, and then discuss their theological and philosophical problems freely, in brotherly fashion and love, without branding one another as heretics. In that way, there is hope that they serve the cause of the truth and accomplish something for the well-being of the Church.

Even now, the lines are being drawn in the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches.

As was said, the last General Assembly appointed a committee to study and report on the doctrinal questions mentioned in the "Complaint". In the meantime, others, not members of the committee, are also studying these matters, preparing mimeographed papers on them, and distributing these copies. They are written by the Clark side of the controversy. During the course of the past year, I received two of these copies, through the kindness of the authors. Hereby, my thanks to them. I hope to receive whatever is written by them, as well as by others, on these questions. In due time, we may, perhaps, discuss their contents in our paper.

These men now assume the offensive against the doctrines set forth in the "Complaint".

The one, written by the Rev. Floyd E. Hamilton, and attacking the view on total depravity as set forth in the "Complaint", is introduced to the readers in the followings words:

"Serious issues have been raised, and it is the duty of all ministers and elders of our church to study these doctrines so that the Fourteenth General Assembly may be a thoroughly informed Assembly.

"One way to study doctrines is to study what the doctrines are *not*. It is the conviction of many of us that the doctrines set forth in 'The Complaint' are not the doctrines as they are taught in the Word of God and the Standards of our church. We believe that in several respects they go beyond and are contrary to these historical doctrines of the Reformed Churches."

Similarly, the second paper, written by Dr. Clark himself, and sharply criticising "The Philosophy of the Complaint", especially regarding the problem concerning God's knowledge and ours, is introduced in the following words:

"Serious doctrinal issues have been raised in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church during the years 1944-1946. The thirteenth General Assembly elected five ministers to study the four doctrines in question. It is the duty of all ministers and elders of our Church to study these doctrines so as to protect the Church from error. It is the conviction of many of the ministers that the doctrines of *The Complaint* are not the doctrines of the Word of God or of our subordinate standards. We believe that in several respects *The Complaint* goes beyond the Confession and is contrary to the historic position of the Reformed Churches. This paper is one of several which, appearing during the winter of 1946-1947,

aim to preserve the original position of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church”.

Now let the authors of *The Complaint*, who, no doubt, also have their followers, stand as the Rock of Chickamauga, and it is not at all difficult to foresee another schism.

H. H.

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

Part Two.

Of Man's Redemption

Lord's Day XXII.

1.

Our House In Heaven. (cont.)

When, nevertheless, especially in the Psalms, the saints of the old dispensation strike a note that bespeaks a rather gloomy outlook upon the state of the dead, and a clinging to this present life on the earth, we must remember two facts. First of all, the land of Canaan was the fulfillment of the promise. It was a shadow of the heavenly rest. There God dwelled with His chosen people. For the saints of the old dispensation, the service of and fellowship with God, His blessing and favor, were inseparably connected with the land the Lord their God had given them. The promise of the fifth commandment had an earthly meaning for them, exactly because the land of Canaan was the rest of God. Hence, they clung to this shadow of the heavenly Canaan, and were loath to leave it. And, on the other hand, for the Old Testament saints, heaven did not open the prospect of glory and joy in the same measure and to the same degree as it does for us. The promise had not yet been fulfilled. Christ had not yet come. The kingdom of heaven was not yet centrally realized in Him. They could not as yet rejoice with the apostle Paul of later days in the prospect of being with Christ. All this must wait until the fulness of time. In the light of these facts, we can somewhat understand that the pious among Israel, even though they believed that God would “afterwards receive them in glory,” did not share, with the saints of the new dispensation, the brighter outlook upon the intermediate state, and that they prized highly, and clung tenaciously to a long life in the land of promise.

That the New Testament clearly presents the state of the soul immediately after death as one of conscious glory, and fellowship with God in Christ, there can be no doubt. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the latter is presented as being carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. The apostle Paul writes: “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” II Cor. 5:1. It is evident that the apostle here posits no time between the dissolution of our earthly house and the entrance into the house of God in heaven. The one follows the other immediately. The exit from our earthly house of this tabernacle is, at the same time, the entrance into our eternal house in heaven. The reference, therefore, is not to the moment of the resurrection. The “building of God” is not the final glory of the kingdom of God which we shall inherit in our glorified bodies, but the glory we shall enter immediately after death. In the epistle to the Philippians, the apostle speaks of “having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better”; and this desire he contrasts with abiding “in the flesh” which is more needful for the Philippians. Here, too, it is evident that, through death, he expects to enter into conscious and perfect fellowship with Christ. Phil. 1:23, 24. To the malefactor on Calvary the Lord gives the promise: “Today shalt thou be with me in paradise”. To interpret this promise as if it meant no more than that, with Christ, the penitent thief would enter into *Hades*, the state of the dead, would have no sense. Paradise is the state of glory in heaven, the “building of God”, into which the thief shall enter with Christ that very day. And the book of Revelation presents those “which came out of great tribulation”, as a great multitude in heaven, rejoicing in the salvation of God, standing before the throne of God, and before the Lamb, and serving the Most High day and night in his temple. Rev. 7. They rejoice in “the first resurrection”, and reign with Christ. Rev. 20:4, 5.

This truth, that the soul of the believer, immediately after death, shall be taken up to heaven, to be with Christ in glory, should not be confused with, and mistaken for, the philosophical idea of the immortality of the soul.

The two are quite distinct.

When philosophy, rejecting revelation, ponders the problem of the “immortality of the soul”, it tries to establish that the soul, after the death of the body, *continues to exist*. The Biblical distinction between life and death does not enter into its consideration. Hence, the expression “immortal soul” has come to mean no more than “imperishable soul”, or a soul with endless existence. But the tacit assumption is that, if the soul continues to exist after physical death, it must live. Philosophy denies sin and guilt, Christ and the

atonement, and, therefore, the truth of eternal life and eternal death. It prefers to speak of immortality in this general sense as it applies to all men alike. If the soul is immortal, then all men shall continue to live after the death of the body; if she is mortal, then death is simply the end.

It is to be regretted that this philosophical usage of the term is frequently adopted by Christian people.

Not only do common laymen often speak about the "immortal soul" which all men are supposed to have, but even teachers and theologians, that ought to know better, fall into the same error.

Even the late Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Utrecht 1942) maintained the usage of the term immortality in this sense, and gave it its official sanction, when it declared: "That according to Scripture and the Confession, when man dies, his body returns to the dust; but his soul, whether in communion with Christ enjoying eternal salvation or suffering in desolation, *continues to exist* until the last day. . . . which from of yore was expressed in the doctrine of the immortality of the soul." Here, too, continued existence is confounded with immortality.

It may be granted that our Confessions use the term in this sense in Art. 37 of the *Confessio Belgica*. But Scripture never does. In the Bible, the word "immortality" occurs, strictly speaking only in I Cor. 15:53, 54: "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." The word also occurs in I Tim. 6:16, but there it is applied to God Who "alone hath immortality," while in I Tim. 1:7, and in Rom. 2:7 (Authorized Version) a different word is used in the original that can better be translated by "incorruptible."

With application to man, therefore, only the passage in I Cor. 15 uses the term immortality. And there it means, not continued existence, but complete victory over death in the glory of the resurrection.

This is also the literal meaning of the word. Immortal, strictly speaking, does not mean "having continued existence," but "having everlasting life," or "not mortal," *not capable of dying*.

And in this sense, it cannot be said of the soul of man as such that it is immortal. On the contrary, it is very mortal.

Adam was created, endowed with life, but he was, nevertheless, mortal: he could die. And when man fell, and the punishment of death was inflicted upon him, he did not cease to exist, but he fell into the state of death, according to his whole nature, body and soul. The whole man, body and soul, was created mortal, and, through sin, the entire man died. This is so em-

phatically true that, according to Scripture, he shall never see life unless he is born all over again. To live, and to reach the state of immortality, he must pass through the radical changes of the new birth and the resurrection of the last day.

When the wicked, outside of Christ, die the temporal death, it is again not merely the body that dies, while the "immortal soul" simply continues, but the whole man dies: *the person of the wicked passes into a deeper state of death*; as to the body he enters into the corruption of the grave, and as to the soul, he opens his eyes in hell.

And when the wicked, in the last hour, shall be raised unto the resurrection of damnation, they do not become "immortal", but they sink into the final state of death. For the wicked there is no life, still less immortality. He passes from death unto death.

With the believer, however, this is quite different. Principally, he becomes immortal when he is regenerated. For then he is raised with Christ, and his life is hid with Christ in God. He partakes of the resurrection life of Christ. Hence, "he that believeth on the Son hath eternal life," John 3:36. "And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." John 11:26.

When, therefore, the believer passes through the change of physical death, he does not sink into deeper death, but he is delivered from the "body of this death" in order to pass on to the heavenly glory of perfect fellowship with Christ. Physical death has become his servant, to set him free, to open for him the door into glory. According to the inner principle of life that is in him, he is immortal: he cannot die. Here, however, in the earthly house of this tabernacle, he carries the principle of immortal life in a mortal vessel. The dissolution of the earthly house, therefore, is necessary to unite him in perfect fellowship with Christ, and to transfer him into the building of God, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Although, therefore, in general, it is quite correct to speak of physical death as a separation of soul and body; and to say, with the Catechism, that "my soul after this life shall be immediately taken up to Christ its head"; although even Scripture gives us the example in this respect, when it warns us not to fear him that is able to kill the body but cannot kill the soul, but rather Him that can destroy both soul and body in hell; yet, on the basis of Scripture, it is possible and more definite in the case of the death of the believer, to make another, a sharper distinction: that between the "outward" and the "inward man".

First of all, it must be remembered that the word "soul" does not always have the same connotation in the Bible. Sometimes it denotes the entire man, as in Gen. 2:7: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Again,

the word is used to denote the earthly life man, as a physical-psychical being lives in this world: the soul of man as, in and through the body, it is connected with and related to this present world and lives an earthly life. Thus, for instance, the word is employed in John 12:25: "He that loveth his life (soul) shall lose it; and he that hateth his life (soul) in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." In the same sense, it occurs in John 10:17: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life (soul), that I might take it again." But it also denotes that spiritual entity in man which, in distinction from his physical organism, is the seat of his intellect and will. Thus in the passage in Matt. 10:28, to which we referred above: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." It is with this latter connotation that we use the word, when we speak of physical death as separation of soul and body, and say that, immediately after death, the soul is taken up to Christ its head.

Approximately in the same sense, the Scripture sometimes uses the word "spirit". In I Thess. 5:33 we read: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." The intention of this passage is not to teach that man consists of three entities or parts: spirit, soul, and body. However, we may, no doubt, say that to man's "soul" or spiritual substance, there is an earthly side or aspect, by which it is very mysteriously and intimately connected with the body, is able to function through the body, and thus to react upon earthly things and live an earthly life; but also a spiritual side, according to which man is related to God and spiritual things. The physical or earthly aspect of the soul is, in the passage just quoted, simply called the soul; while by "spirit" is indicated that higher substance in man, in virtue of which he is adapted to apprehend spiritual things. In this sense, the word spirit is used in Rom. 8:10: "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness." According to this terminology, therefore, we may describe physical death as the separation of spirit and body.

But there is another reason, why it is more correct to speak of the death of believers as a separation of their "outward" and "inward man". To define death as the separation of soul and body is to speak in general terms that are applicable to all men. Whether we refer to the death of the believer or of the unbeliever, always it is a separation of soul and body. But in the case of the believer, death is much more. It is the liberation of the new man in Christ from all that is foreign to it. And this can be definitely expressed by saying that, when the believer passes through the change of physical

death, his outward man finally perishes, while his inward man is taken up with Christ in glory. This distinction the apostle had in mind when, in II Cor. 5:1, he wrote: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Of this "outward" and "inward man" he wrote in chapter 4:16: "For which cause we faint not; but though out outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day."

To this outward man belongs, to be sure, the body. But much more is implied in it. To it also belongs the "soul" in the sense of our earthly life, the life which we live through the senses. In death the soul, in the sense of man's spirit, is separated forever from all things earthy. No longer does it perceive earthly things, nor has it any need of them any more. It is separated, too, from all earthly relationships: the ties of human love and friendship, as they function through our present body, are severed forever. Still more. The outward man also includes "the old man" of sin, as it has its instrument in the body. Death serves the Christian to remove the last vestiges of sin. And, finally, it may be said that to this outward man must be reckoned the "world" in its evil sense, with its temptations and allurements, its hatred and persecutions. From all this, the "inward man" of the believer is separated at death. It constitutes "the earthly house of this tabernacle" that shall be dissolved.

The "inward man" is the new man in Christ. According to this inward man, the believer in Christ is born of God. He is free from sin. He cannot sin because he is born of God and "his seed remaineth in him". Moreover, according to this new man, he is born from above. He is not earthy, but heavenly. He partakes of the resurrection-life of our glorified Lord. He seeks and sets his heart, not on earthly, but on the heavenly things, and longs to be with Christ. In this present tabernacle of his outward man, he groans, "being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." II Cor. 5:4. And it is this longing of the "inward man" that shall be completely fulfilled, as to the "soul" of the believer, when the earthly house of this tabernacle shall be dissolved in physical death. For then he shall be immediately taken up to Christ in glory.

Just what belongs to the "building of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," is difficult for us to define. Of a soul-life without the body we cannot possibly conceive. As long as we are "on this side," and are of the earth earthy, the concrete details of our heavenly house must be considered to belong to the "hidden things" that are for the Lord our God, and about which we dare not speculate. That a special, intermediate body will be provided for us in that state,

has been suggested, but without ground in Holy Writ. Let it suffice us to know, first of all, that there is such a heavenly house, into which we shall enter through death, and as soon as our earthly house is dissolved. Secondly, Scripture also plainly reveals that this "building of God," in distinction from our present tabernacle, shall be characterized by heavenly glory and perfection. In that house there will be no more sin, no more temptation to sin, no more "hating of that which we do, and doing that which we hate," no more persecution and suffering for Christ's sake. It will be a state of perfection and final victory, even though, with all the saints, we shall look forward in hope, even there, to the resurrection of the last day. Thirdly, this already implies that, although we shall still be "unclothed" as far as the body is concerned, the "building of God" denotes a state of *conscious* bliss. The "soul" shall not sleep, as is the theory of some. For, although physical death may be called "sleep" from the aspect of the body, and with a view to the resurrection, the spirit of man cannot sleep, even in death, but shall rejoice in heavenly beauty and glory. And, thirdly, in that heavenly house we shall forever be with Christ. We shall behold Him always and everywhere, face to face, have unbroken fellowship with Him, and through Him with the Father. For that will be the ultimate glory of heaven, that it is the house of our Father, our eternal home!

H. H.

Questions on Church Polity

We must now examine the grounds on which Dr. H. Bouwman and others base their view or theory according to which Classis rightfully deposes office bearers. Here follows a statement of these grounds.

- 1) De Classis doet dit niet als een hooger bestuur maar volgens "het kerkverband".
"The Classis does this (deposes office bearers) not as a higher directory, but by virtue of the denominational bond or tie".
- 2) The Classis is an accumulation of Consistorial authority.
- 3) The Classis is a Consistory and therefore rightfully deposes office bearers.
- 4) The Classis does this not apart from but in connection with the consistory.
- 5) It is proper that the same assembly (in this case the Classis, G.M.O.) that judges whether one can be inducted into the Ministry of the Word, also

judges whether one can be deposed from the Ministry.

- 6) The Classis vests the Minister of the Gospel with the office and therefore also rightfully deposes him, if necessary.
- 7) So much is involved in suspension and deposition of the Minister (for the Minister himself). It is imperative therefore that deposition of the Minister be done by Classis.
- 8) In the "Gereformeerde" churches of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries deposition was always in the hands of Classis and Synod in the event of higher appeal. In the controversy with the Arminians it repeatedly occurred that Classis or Synod deposed a Minister contrary to the desire of the Consistory and a large part of the congregation. (Geref. Kerkrecht, D. 11, bladz. 663).
- 9) The opinion that major assemblies (Classis and Synod, G.M.O.) cannot censure consistory members in the sense of excommunication but only in the sense of severing the denominational tie between them and the recalcitrant consistory, must be rejected as unreformed and at complete variance with what our reformed synods and our canons (authorities on ecclesiastical law, principally Voetius, G.M.O.) have taught. (Geref. Kerkrecht, D. 11, Bladz. 73).

It must be admitted that we gaze here at an imposing and apparently irrefutable and thus conclusive mass of argument. But we will see. Let us examine these grounds.

- 1) The Classis does this (deposes a Minister of the Gospel, office bearers) not as a higher directory over and above the churches but according to "het Kerkverband" that is, by virtue of the denominational tie.

Mark the expression, "not as a higher directory". These words are important. They amount to a confession on the part of the author that the Classis is not under Christ the ruler of the local churches. This teaching Dr. Bouwman affirms with emphasis elsewhere in his Kerkrecht. I quote:

"De verschillende plaatselijke kerken worden niet opgelost en omgesmolten tot eene classicale kerk, zoodat hare vrijheid en zelfstandigheid zou zijn opgeheven. Dit is werkelijk het geval volgens het collegialistisch kerkrecht, zooals dat ook in de Nederlandsch-Hervormde Kerk in 1816 is ingevoerd. Daar is elke plaatselijke kerk een onderafdeeling van het eene groote geheel der kerk. De Synodale organisatie heeft zich een bestuursmacht toegeeigend over de kerken, waardoor de zelfstandigheid der plaatselijke kerken is aangetast. . . . Er mag geen bestuursmacht

insluipen, waaraan de plaatselijke kerk zou onderworpen zijn." (Geref. Kerkrecht, D. 11, bladz. 14)

"The various local churches are not dissolved and forged over into a classical church. The local churches are not parts of one large church, so that they lose their freedom and independency. This is actually the case according to collegialistic Church Polity, as introduced in the Netherlands Reformed Church in 1816. There each local church forms a subordinate part of a large church. The Synodical organization has appropriated a directing power over the churches, whereby the independency of the local church is attacked. No directing power, to which the local church would be subject, may be allowed to creep in".

And then this, too, from the pen of the same author:

"Het woord superior (hooger) bedoelt niet dat een meerdere vergadering een hooger bestuur is, waardoor de minderen geregeerd worden".

Translation:

"The word superior means not that the major assembly is a higher directory by which the minor assemblies are ruled." (Geref. Kerkrecht, D. 11, bladz. 18).

This is plain language, isn't it? the substance of which is that Classis is not the ruler of the churches. That is what the author says, literally, "Er mag geen bestuursmacht insluipen, waaraan de plaatselijke kerk zou onderworpen zijn". These are his words. Now this teaching is of the very essence of Reformed Church Polity; it is the very cornerstone thereof. It lies at the basis of all the cardinal articles of Dort's Church Order, so that to deny this teaching is to reduce these articles to a collection of enigmas. This is so obviously true, that no writer on Reformed Church Polity, wishing to be known as reformed, has denied or challenged this teaching outright at least. All affirm it with emphasis. Also the Rev. Gerrit Hoeksema in his brochure—a booklet of 107 pages, in which he strives to prove that a Classis may rightfully depose a Consistory, thus strives to prove that Classis under Christ is the ruler of the local churches. On page 66 of this booklet one may read, "We are all agreed that there is no other, and surely no higher power in the church (under Christ) than Consistory power." And again, "We are all agreed that there may be no 'bestuursmacht boven de kerk'. Then the church of Christ is no longer free." This is the way they all talk and write. And it is not a wonder. For the fact and truth that Classis is not (under Christ) the ruler of the churches, has not the rule over them, forms the line of demarcation between the Reformed system of church government and the hierarchy. Besides, it is the literal teaching of Art.

84 of Dort's Church Order, "No church shall lord it over other churches, No Minister over other Ministers, no Elder or Deacon over other Elders or Deacons."

But to return to Dr. Bouwman. The Classis is not a "hooger bestuur", a governor, ruler, to which the churches are subject and by which they are ruled. Now that statement from the doctor's pen can only mean that Classis has not the key-power and that, accordingly, it cannot depose office bearers. Bouwman literally states this on page 14 of the second volume of his work. There we read, "Het kerkverband moet juist dienen tot bevordering en bewaring van de vrijheid en de zelfstandigheid der kerk. De kerkelijke macht, die aan de enkele kerken toekomt, namelijk de bediening van woord, sacramenten en tucht—mark you, *tucht*—mag niet aan haar worden onttrokken en aan de algemeene kerk gegeven worden." Translation, "The power, authority, of the church, that belongs to the separate churches, namely, the ministration of the word, sacraments and discipline—mark you, *discipline*, G.M.O.—may not be taken from her and be given to the general church (Classis and Synod, he means).

Well, now, if this is true, and it is true, if the Classis may not set itself up as bishop with key-power over the churches, if this power *may not* be taken from the churches and transferred to Classis and Synod, as Dr. Bouwman affirms, how then can Classis nevertheless rightfully engage in the exercise of this power by deposing office bearers? Dr. Bouwman has the solution. The Classis does so, says he, according to "het Kerkverband", thus by virtue of the denominational bond. But this is not a solution. It only adds to the stupendousness of our problem. If a man is not by the authority of God king, if therefore, he has not the rule over the people, may he nevertheless rule on the ground that the country where he dwells is a confederation of states (like our United States of America)? Can anyone conceive of anything more impossible? Who therefore would want to answer this question in the affirmative? Nobody. Absolutely nobody. Well, then, if Classis is not by Christ's authority ruler of the churches, may it nevertheless rule the churches, deposing office bearers if need be, according to "het Kerkverband", that is, on the ground that the churches are organized into Classis and Synod and thus form a confederation of churches? Now who in the world would want to answer this question in the affirmative? Well, Dr. Bouwman for one. And there are others who answer this question in the affirmative, unbelievable as this may sound.

This appeal to "het Kerkverband" is vain; and Rev. Gerrit Hoeksema fully agrees with me here. He wrote on page 54 of his brochure, "And only then can you defend the right of Classis to depose a Consistory. Sometimes more general phraseology is used, such as "rechten van het kerkverband". Prof. H. Bouwman,

for instance, says in defence of the deposition of Geelkerken's consistory, that, 'de synode naar eisch van het kerkverband moest opkomen voor het recht en de vrijheid der leden.' Such an expression, 'naar eisch van het kerkverband,' proves nothing and means little. (How true this is. G.M.O.) The question is, what kind of 'kerkverband' has been established? Is it a mere federation? Then the deposition of Consistory is out of the question. Then separation from one side or the other is the only action that can be taken." So far G. Hoeksema. We deal here with a confession on the part of the Reverend that is of paramount importance. He really insists here that Classis cannot possibly depose a consistory, though without meaning to do so, of course. We will have occasion to return to this affirmation of the Reverend in the sequel. Strange how that the exponents of the theory that Classis can rightfully depose office bearers so violently disagree among themselves as to just what constitutes the proof of their theory. Yet, it is not so strange, considering what they try to prove—the impossible.

2) Another famous reasoning of many of the exponents of the theory according to which Classis, though not a "hooger bestuur" rightfully deposes office bearers runs like this. Ten kings have more authority than one. So, too, the Classis, its authority is as many times greater than that of a Consistory as there are churches delegating to the classical assembly. Hence, the Classis, though no "hooger bestuur" is superior as to its authority to the Consistory and therefore rightfully deposes office bearers, if need be. Now this is a fine way to reason about *authority*, isn't it? reason about it as though it were a material quantity that, like salt or sawdust can be collected on a pile and heaped up. Yet, so they reason. Joh. Jansen writes, "Komen nu een aantal kerken samen en brengen zij haar gezag door hare afgevaardigden mee dan hebben deze meerdere vergaderingen zooveel gezag als de afzonderlijke kerken er door saambrenging comuleeren. d. 1. ophoopen". So Dr. H. Bouwman and Voetius as quoted by Bouwman and Jansen. But this "accumulation theory" as an explanation of the supposed key-power of Classis over the local churches is untenable. And Rev. Gerrit Hoeksema agrees with me also here. He writes, "How untenable the "accumulation theory" is as a complete explanation of the authority of Classis and Synod can also be explained from another viewpoint. What is the authority that the various consistories bring together in Classis? It is the authority of each local consistory over its local church. Think again of seven local churches; add all their authority together and what have you? You still have nothing but the authority of seven consistories over seven churches. And that is all you can ever get by a mere process of addition or accumulation.

"You still have seven separate churches and seven

separate consistories. Not one of them originally had anything to say over the others, for (Article 84), 'No church shall in any way lord it over the other churches'. By merely adding them, you get a greater accumulation of the same kind of authority, that is, individual consistory over its individual church." Brochure, pp. 53, 54.

The Reverend here exposes the fallacy of that so-called "accumulation" theory in a way that cannot be improved upon. Hence, nothing need be added. The above citation is also important on account of the strange twist it gives to Art. 84 of the Church Order. Then, too, also this excerpt brings clearly out how little the exponents of the theory that Classis deposes office bearers are agreed among themselves as to what really constitutes the ground of their theory.

3) Dr. Bouwman tries to reason the crooked thing straight—the thing: deposition of office bearers by Classis—in still another way. His argument comes out plain in the following paragraph from his pen:

"When therefore a Consistory or a large part of the Consistory refuses to acknowledge the decision (of Classis or Synod) and opposes it, then, if the consistory continues its connections with the churches, the Synod has the right to take from the consistory the execution of the office. All the churches, also the church involved, have transferred in a definite instance their key-power in the hands of the Synod and therefore in the particular instance the Synod can decide not only but see to it that the decision is carried out as well. This follows from the character of the major assemblies". Geref. Kerkrecht, Vol. 11, p. 27. (The original of this translation is found in the Standard Bearer for Feb. 1, 1947).

Now this is a strange reasoning, to say the least. Rev. Gerrit Hoeksema doesn't like it either. He finds it absurd. "And, therefore, it is absurd to say," says he, "that the Classis derives its authority from the Consistories. . . ." Brochure, p. 72. However, we should not fail to grasp the point to this reasoning of Dr. Bouwman. It is this: In a crisis, as when there is need of a power to depose a rebellious consistory, all the consistories transfer their key-power to the Classis (Synod), and thereby bring it into being as a major consistory with key-power to depose office bearers. Now this doctrine according to which the major assemblies (Classis and Synod) are major consistories is also that of Rev. G. Hoeksema and he got it from the late Prof. Heyns. Yet there is a difference. With G. Hoeksema and Heyns, Classis (Synod) is a permanent consistory. But according to Dr. H. Bouwman, when the crisis is past, the key-power reverts to the local consistories, and the major consistory is again a common Classis.

Bouwman and Hoeksema need this doctrine ac-

cording to which Classis (Synod) is a consistory. Everyone who affirms that Classis can rightfully depose office bearers and at once wants to be known as being reformed, needs this doctrine. For Classis cannot rightfully engage in this action except it be a consistory and thus not a Classis. For according to the Church Order and our Confessions all key-power is concentrated in the Consistory. (By insisting that Classis is a consistory Bouwman and G. Hoeksema admit this.) Hence if the major assembly is a Classis and not a consistory, it cannot depose office bearers. G. Hoeksema admits this. He even affirms it with emphasis. I quote,

"To get beyond that, to get combined consistory authority over the combined churches and over each other you must unite these consistories into a large whole, *into the large consistories we call Classis and Synod*. Then the Classis can ask submission of the individual consistory as a member of the larger body. And only then can you defend the right of the Classis to depose a consistory. . . . The question is, what kind of "kerkverband" has been established? Is it a mere federation? Then the deposition of consistory is out of the question. . . . Is it on the other hand, a real union? . . . then you have a real ethical and ecclesiastical basis for deposition. And the Classis, really nothing less than a large combined consistory, clothed with real governing power as any consistory, has the right and duty to proceed with censure. It has the same authority over the consistory, that the consistory has over its individual members, the authority, namely, of an ecclesiastical body, all whose members are subject to its government." Brochure, p. 46.

Here it is stated plain as can be that if the Classis is not a consistory, deposition of officebearers by Classis is out of the question. This is indeed true. Here the Reverend brings out into the clear light of day the fundamental issue or question which is: Is the Classis a Consistory? In a following article we will go with the question to the Church Order and our Confessions and learn their answer. It is the answer that our Confessions and the Church Order give to this question that counts and their answer only.

A closing remark or two. I have fault to find with the way Rev. G. Hoeksema and Dr. Bouwman treat their readers. The Reverend waited with telling his readers that to his mind Classis is a consistory until he had filled fifty-four pages of his booklet with a mass of tortuous argument. He should have stated his position at the outset. Then we would not have wondered how he can reason as he does on those fifty-four pages. That would have been clear to us had he only prefaced his argument by a statement setting forth his

conception of the character of the major assemblies.

And then, this, too. Since to G. Hoeksema's mind (and to the mind of Dr. H. Bouwman and others) Classis is a Consistory with key-power over the churches, he should have refrained from stating as his conviction that Classis *is not* a governing power over the churches. For both cannot be true.

G. M. O.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

Saul Commanded

(Continued)

"And thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal," said the prophet to Saul, "and behold, I will come down to thee, to offer burnt offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace offerings: seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come to thee, and shew thee what thou shalt do" 10:8.

As appears from the text at 13:1, it was not until Saul had reigned two years that he went down before Samue to Gilgal according to the above-cited word of the prophet. The course of events was this. Having secretly anointed Saul, Samuel called the people together to Mizpeh, where the public choice of Saul by lot took place in the presence of the people in confirmation of the secret anointing. Having been declared king by the people, Saul returned to his home in Gibeah as followed by a band of valiant men. Nahash, king of the Ammonites, besieged Jabesh Gilead. The Jabeshites proffered their service, which Nahash would accept only on the condition that he be allowed to thrust out all their right eyes, and lay it for a reproach on all Israel. The men of Jabesh appealed to all Israel for help and were delivered by Saul. Samuel exhorted the people, "Come, let us go to Gilgal, and renew the kingdom there." The people responded and there they made Saul king. On this occasion Samuel testified his integrity and again reproved the people for their great sin of wanting a king in the room of the Lord. As terrified by the Lord's thunder, they repented and were comforted by Samuel. The sacred narrator continues, "Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel" 13:1. This notice begins a new section, and the events narrated therein took place after Saul had reigned two years.

Having reigned for this length of time, he chose him three thousand men of Israel. Two thousand he placed under his own command in Mickmash and the rest were with Jonathan in Gibeah. Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines at this place. As the

Philistines could be counted on to wreak terrible vengeance, Saul was obliged to act. "He blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear." "So were the people called together after Saul to Gilgal" 13:4. For thither Saul had gone before the face of Samuel, that is prior to his going. Though this is not stated in just these words, it is the necessary implication of the verse last quoted.

That this going down to Gilgal on the part of Saul was the fulfillment of Samuel's word that he had spoken to the king two years previous is evident from the sequel of the text. Hearing of the disaster that had overtaken their garrison in Gibeah, the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel. At the sight of the adversary's military might, the people were afraid, and they hid themselves wherever they could—in caves, thickets, rocks, high places, and pits. Some fled over the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. The sacred writer continues, "As for Saul he was yet in Gilgal. . . and he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed" 13:7, 8. This is a plain reference to 10:8 quoted above.

Saul's waiting two years with going down to Gilgal must not be interpreted as disobedience to Samuel's word. For the prophet did not rebuke him for it. Had his word to the king been, "Thou shalt go to Gilgal *immediately* and wait for me there seven days," the case would have been different. But Samuel refrained from specifying a time. In all likelihood he could not, as the Lord whose word he spake, had not revealed to him just when He wanted Saul to make that move. To properly understand Samuel's word to Saul, we must view it in the light of that other word which he spake to him, "And let it be when these signs are come unto thee, do for thee as thy hand shall find," meaning, 'Do thy kingly duty as the Lord will reveal it unto thee from time to time through His providential working, and then thou wilt eventually, how soon I know not, go down to Gilgal, where thou shalt tarry, till I come to thee to offer the required burnt offering and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace offerings.'

The first call of duty that came to Saul was the appeal of the men of Jabesh-Gilead for help against Nahash the king of the Ammonites. Under the inspiration of the Lord but not by His grace Saul responded to that call. Also the cruel and astoundingly humiliating condition of peace laid down by Nahash was of the Lord. Not so long thereafter Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines. That was the signal for a general revolt, and again Saul's duty was plain. The time was now at hand for him to go down *before the face* of Samuel to Gilgal and in this place call together the people after him that they might be led forth to battle against the Philistines after having received

consecration by solemn offerings. Under the inspiration of God, Saul responded also to this call of duty. So was Saul by the providential working of God sent also to Gilgal in fulfillment of a prophetic word of Samuel.

The Bible expositors of the rationalist school, who are bent on discrediting the Scriptures at every turn, do interpret Samuel's prophetic word to Saul—thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal—as if it read, "Thou shalt *immediately* go down before me to Gilgal," and thereby they throw this entire section of the book of Samuel—10:8-13:9—in irreconcilable conflict with itself. This prophecy of Samuel with the word *immediately* read into it, is in conflict with 13:1-8. For according to this latter passage, Saul went down to Gilgal not *immediately* but in the second year of his reign.

So is the prophecy in question pitted also against 11:14, "Then said Samuel to the people, Come, let us go to Gilgal, and renew the kingdom there." According to this latter passage, it is said, Saul went to Gilgal not *before*, that is *prior to*, but *with* Samuel, and indeed at his special exhortation, and there was therefore no waiting on Samuel. But also this discrepancy is one of the critics own creation. What they refuse to discern is that Saul went down to Gilgal twice, the first time *with* Samuel to renew the kingdom (11:14), and the second time before Samuel to gather together the people for the war with the Philistines (13:1sq.). Rather than read these scriptures aright, the critics regard 10:17-12:25 as a section "interpolated in the original document". In this way do they think to remove their manufactured conflicts.

G. M. O.

THROUGH THE AGES

The Renaissance Popes, 1431-1521

There were in all eight of these popes. Since they were the Renaissance popes, it is necessary that we be clear on that movement known in history as the Renaissance. The Renaissance—the word means new birth—was a revival of the pagan learning, wisdom and art of the Graeco-Roman world. It had its beginning in Italy shortly after the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453. The fall of the city caused a great migration of Greek scholars into Italy. These fugitives brought with them the pagan culture of the East and disseminated it among the Italian secular and spiritual princes and the wealthy classes. From

Italy the new learning spread to the utmost bounds of Europe.

In its broadest sense, the Renaissance was the working of that natural energy that brought into being, instrumentally, our modern civilization with its new and pagan conception of religion and science and with its manifold inventions and discoveries.

Of this movement the Reformation was neither a phase nor a product. The two movements differed in principle and aim. The subjective principle of the Reformation was the life of regeneration, the faith and love of God's believing people. Its objective principle was the Scriptures. And its aim was to emancipate the Scriptures from the reign of tradition and dogma to subject human reason to the reign of the Scriptures. The Reformation loved the Bible. To the Bible it went back in its original languages. The Renaissance, on the other hand, went back to the ancient classics and revived the spirit of Greek and Roman paganism. Its objective principle was these classics, the pagan learning and wisdom contained therein in which it gloried. Its subjective principle was unbelief, hatred of God and His word, and positively, the love of the world and the things thereof—the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. True, in Germany the Renaissance, too, inveighed against popes and councils as the ultimate authority in matters of faith. But it was moved by hatred of all authority, whether as expressed in the degrees of councils, in the pronouncements of the popes, or in the doctrine of the Scriptures. Thus its aim was to emancipate the mind of man from the reign not merely of tradition and the dogma of the church but of the Scriptures as well. If the priests had subordinated the Bible to tradition and dogma, the Renaissance subordinated it to individual and private judgment. Humanism (Renaissance) therefore was skeptical, rationalistic.

The ten pontiffs who occupied the papal throne, 1450-1517, gladly received the new learning and were deeply influenced by it. All were worldly men who gave little thought to the spiritual interests of the Christian Church. They were patrons of letters, artists, and great builders who adorned Rome and filled it with treasures of art, and whose principal ambition was to increase the estates of the church and to maintain themselves as independent rulers over against the lay potentates of Italy who, too, were always striving to extend their possessions. They had a big heart, did these popes, for their own nephews and other relatives, and bestowed upon them great favors in total disregard of their intellectual and moral disqualifications and age. The vatican in this period was always crowded with office-seeking kin of the popes. And some of these popes could count among those seeking emoluments

of office their own illegitimate children. A degree of Constance had made the age of 30 the lowest limit for appointment to the college of cardinals, and had forbidden papal favoritism. Yet several of these relatives were made cardinals before they were 30, others before they were 23. Sixtus IV bestowed the cardinal hat upon John of Aragon at 14. Leo X made the bastard son of his brother a cardinal at the age of 7. Bishoprics, abbacies and other ecclesiastical posts were in large numbers given to papal children and relatives and favorites. Rarely were they conferred for piety or learning.

The cardinals were rich and lived in luxury in palaces adorned with splendid furnishings. And their servants were many. As to the popes, they acknowledged their own illegitimate children without shame and could easily marry them off to the sons and daughters of the most aristocratic families in Italy. Banqueting and indecent entertainment was the order of the day in their palaces, and among the invited guests were even women of ill-report.

The popes of this period were great spenders. They had to be, as the cost of maintenance of their household was enormous. When their resources were exhausted, they would borrow from banking houses with the things of the Vatican put in pawn. Some of them involved Italy in wars in the attempt to realize their papal schemes. As clad in armor, Julius II led his warriors on the battle-field in person. He was a master of the art of diplomacy. To realize its aims the papacy even made a covenant with the sultan. In fine the gayeties, scandals and crimes of the Renaissance popes make this period one of the most depraved in the history of the popes.

There occurred in this age three events of importance; the fall and termination of the Eastern Empire, 1453, the discovery of the Americas, and the invention of printing.

It will be recalled that with the election of Martin V, 1417-31, the church was again united under one pope. The successor of Martin was Eugenius IV, 1431-47, an unimportant pope. Nicolas V, 1447-55, was a devotee of the new learning, the Renaissance, and was ruled by its spirit. During his pontificate, Rome became the chief home of the Renaissance. He laid the foundation of the famous Vatican library. Though little of stature, Nicolas was highly endowed intellectually. With his education completed, his ecclesiastical advancement was rapid. He was the pope to crown the last German emperor, Frederick III. He persistently strove to arouse the nations of Europe to crusade against the Turks for the recovery of Constantinople, but there was no response. The age of the crusades was past. Besides, the Turks were fanatical warriors and known to be such and were therefore dreaded.

The next pope was Alfonso Borgia,, a Spaniard, who assumed the name Callixtus III, 1455-58. He was hostile to the new learning; his only thought was of the Turks, whom he vowed to punish and drive from Constantinople. A great deal was also attempted but nothing was accomplished. His only claim to renown was his unblushing favoritism shown to depraved friends and relatives.

G. M. O.

SION'S ZANGEN

Een Nieuw Lied Den Heere

Deze psalm wordt ook gevonden in I Kron. 16, tezamen met brokstukken van andere psalmen, die tezamen een schoon geheel vormen.

De gelegenheid was een zeer bijzondere. De Ark des Verbonds was teruggehaald van uit het huis van Obed-Edom. De zangers en speellieden ontvingen hunne instructies; en Asaph en zijne broederen kregen bevel van Koning David met een voorbedacht lied. Toen zong men uit den treure tot den Heere!

En Michal, de vrouw van David, de dochter van Saul, mokte achter de gordijnen: haar hart was niet recht voor God. Ze verachtte David voor zijn dansen en spelen voor God's aangezicht. Ze verstond niet, dat al dat spelen en dansen een vooruitgrijpen was op het volmaakte hemelleven.

En men zong een nieuw lied. En toen men uitgezongen was, zeide al het volk AMEN!

Dit is een nieuw lied!

Dan moet er ook een oud lied zijn.

We lezen meer van een nieuw lied. Zoo zegt ons Opeb. 5:9, dat de vier dieren en de vier-en-twintig ouderlingen het Lam een nieuw lied toezingen; en hoofdstuk 14:3 zegt ons, dat de honderd vier-en-veertig duizend als een nieuw gezang zongen vóór den troon; en dat niemand dat gezang kon eeren dan dat bestemde getal die van de aarde gekocht waren.

Het nieuwe gezang staat in verband met het Lam en Zijn bloed. Het is een gezang, een jubel vanwege een werk van God, zooals Hij op aarde nooit te voren gewrocht had. We hebben het oog op het weerbrengen uit den eeuwigen dood van Jezus en die van Jezus zijn. Dat werk is zóó wonderlijk, zóó onbeschrijflijk lieflijk, dat het de hemel zal doen daveren van eeuwigheid tot in alle eeuwigheid.

Het oude gezang was óók mooi. Het was het ge-

zang van Adam en Eva, die de schoonheid en de lieflijkheid Gods bezongen in het eerste Paradijs. Evenwel, zoo hoog het tweede Paradijs uitblinkt boven het aardse Paradijs, zoo blinkt het nieuwe lied in schoonheid boven het oude. Als een kind Gods staat te jubelen voor Golgotha, dan bezingt hij dingen waarvan Adam en Eva in den staat der rechtheid zich geen voorstelling van konden vormen in die eerste dagen van onschuld. Hun bevattingsvermogen en de dingen die dat bevattingsvermogen toespraken waren aardsch, de onze hemelsch, eeuwig, glorieus. De eerste Adam is uit de aarde aardsch; de laatste Adam is de Heere uit den hemel. Adam kon U vertellen van de liefde Gods, doch dat God zóó lief kon hebben, dat Hij Zijn eeniggeboren Zoon in den eeuwigen dood zou storten voor zondaren zooals wij, ziet, daar wist Adam niets van. Hij was gelukkig en zong: zijn zang is den ouden zang. Doch wij zingen een nieuw lied, een lied den Heere.

En zoo komt het, dat er keer op keer sprake is van nieuwe dingen. Het kind Gods blinkt boven het kind der aarde uit: zoo krijgt hij een nieuwen naam. Hij krijgt dien nieuwen naam, door de vernieuwing zijns gemoeds: hij wordt een nieuwe mensch. En die nieuwe mensch moet naar een nieuwe stad, het nieuwe Jeruzalem, hetwelk gegrondvest wordt met een nieuwe hemel en een nieuwe aarde op den berg van Gods heiligheid. Straks zult ge het hooren, als God zal zeggen en volbrengen de woorden die Johannes in 't verre verschiet gehoord heeft: Ziet! Ik maak alle dingen nieuw!

Zoo is het, dat David ons toeroept: Zingt den Heere een nieuw lied!

Ja, hij zegt: zingt den Heere, gij gansche aarde!

Twée dingen die onze aandacht vragen. Eerst: dat nieuwe gezang is voor den HEERE! Dat is de lieflijkste naam van God. Die naam zegt ons, dat Hij de onbeweeglijke, de steeds staande, getrouwe en onveranderlijke VerbondsGod is. Er mogen groote baren van zonde en schuld komen, zoodat het uitverkoren kind van de liefde Zijns harten gruwelijk en goddeloos wordt: Hij is de HEERE! Hij verandert nimmer. Al moet het dan ook Zijn Eigen Zoon kosten: Hij gaat dat volk ophalen uit de diepten van vreeselijke goddeloosheden en Hij gaat hen zetten in hemelsche plaatsen, ja, in Zijn Eigen hart.

Tweedens, de geheele aarde moet Hem zingen en psalmzingen. Gevoelt ge dat nooit? Ziende op de goddeloozen die U omringen en luidkeels schreeuwen van hun goddeloosheid, hebt ge niet vaak inwendig geweend over zulk doen? Hebt ge niet vaak gevoeld, dat al zulk schreeuwen in groote boosheid tegen natuurlijk is? Ge gevoelde het: zoo hoort het niet. Het behoort bij Gods schepping, dat alles des Heere zingt en psalmzingt. Want Hij alleen is God, te prij-

zen tot in alle eeuwigheid. Werkelijk, de wereld van thans is een vreeselijk verdraaien van het goede, hetgene dat schoon is, hetgene dat welluidt.

Vers drie verzwaart die gedachte.

Doch eerst het tweede vers.

“Zingt den HEERE, looft Zijne naam, boodschapt Zijn heil van dag tot dag.”

Looft Zijn naam, wat mag dat beteekenen? Het wil zeggen, dat die Naam de uitdrukking is van Zijn aanbiddelijk Wezen, schoon, lieflijk, aantrekkelijk, almachtig en zeer wijs en verstandig. Ook behoeft ge niet te vragen waar die openbaring van al zulk lieflijk schouwspel gevonden mag worden, want het omringt U van alle zijden, het wortelt in Uw diepste hart, het is binnen in U en overal waar ge sechts blik. Alles, letterlijk alles, getuigt van dien schoonen Naam. Geen wonder, dat wanneer men uitdrukkelijk den Naam vloekte in Israel, zulk een persoon gesteenigd moest worden. Tweedens, heeft die Naam de kostelijkste sieraden ontvangen in het wonder-werk van Jezus Christus. Nooit blonk die Naam Gods zóó schitterend dan in de vreeselijke drie uren van duisternis op de heuvel des bloeds van Golgotha. Daar ruischte een lied van een liefde die nooit gemeten kan worden. Paulus zal later aanmanen om te trachten om de hoogte, de breedte, de lengte en de hoogte van die liefde te pijlen en te meten, maar het zal een pogen zijn: klaar komt ge er niet mee tot in alle eeuwigheid. De allerkostelijkste steen jaspis, en dat is de steen van God, zal eeuwiglijk lieflijke kleurenpracht uitzenden tot de drommen van heiligen en engelen, tot verbazing der beschouwers, tot heilige hemelsche vreugde. O, hoe heerlijk is Zijn Naam! Derdens, de Heilige Geest roept U hier toe dien NAAM te loven. Dat beteekent, dat ge Uzelf en anderen vertelt hoe schoon, hoe lieflijk, hoe aantrekkelijk die NAAM is. Loven is zingen van het schoone. Een hemelsch werk, dat hier op aarde begonnen wordt. Gaat tot Zijn poorten in met lof!

Boodschapt Zijn heil van dag tot dag!

Het heil, wat is het?

Heil is, dat ge vol zijt van God? Het wil zeggen, dat ge eerst vol waart van verfoeiselen, leelijk en afzichtelijk. Het wil eerst zeggen, dat ge ver van God omzwierf, in Uzelven zoo rijk, en zóó goddeloos, dat ge Hem Die het hart der Engelen doet orgelen van geluk, een vervloeking noemt. Doch dat ge nu al die verfoeiselen kwijt raakte, en in plaats daarvan het diadeem van Jezus ontving. Ge ontvingt sieraad voor asch. Ge werd omhangen met de witte kleederen des heils en gelijkgemaakt aan Jezus. En door Jezus' woord en Jezus' Geest werd ge vervuld met God.

Neen, wanneer ge vol zijt van God, dan behoeft men U niet te vermanen om toch te getuigen van die volheid. Dan boodschapt ge al dat heil. Gij zult Mijne getuigen zijn, zegt Jezus. Terecht. En zij zijn het geweest. Ze spreken nog luide nadat zij gestor-

ven zijn. Als deze niet spraken, zoo zouden de steenen in de straat beginnen te zingen.

Van dag tot dag!

O ja, dat duurt tot in der eeuwigheid. Begonnen op aarde, gaat het kind Gods voort om te wijzen op God in Christus. Hij zag en nam in zich op al die schoonheid van dien God en weerkaatst het vanuit een vol hart.

“Vertelt onder de heidenen Zijne eer, onder alle volken Zijne wonderen.”

Dat klinkt Nieuw-Testamentisch, en kan schoon dienen voor een zendingspreek.

Die heidenen, die arme heidenen! Ze buigen voor hetgeen geen God is: ze zijn niet vol, doch zij vergaan van ellende en verdriet. Denkt aan Uw vaderen, ver, zeer ver terug, in de bosschen van Noord-Europa. Voor hen was God de donder en het weerlicht. Zij sidderen voor hetgeen geen God was. Ze wisten niets van de eer Gods, noch ook van Zijn wonderen.

Toen zijn de Roomsche zendelingen gekomen. Sommigen lieten hun bloed in de bosschen van de heidenen. Voor hun liefde ontvingen zij haat.

Ook Uw vaderen hebben dat gedaan. Dokkum in Nederland heeft hun bloed gezien.

Maar zij bleven komen. Zij vertelden Zijn eer onder de heidenen. En de Heere gaf zegen: Noord-Europa zag den waren God en knielde in de bosschen en zijn gered door het Kruis van Jezus Christus.

Zoo is het gekomen, dat gij en ik knielen voor God en Zijn eer vertellen.

Ook zullen wij Zijn wonderen vertellen.

Het wonder is het heil uit het oogpunt van het heuglijke feit, dat het leven tot in eeuwigheid ons tegengloort vanuit de diepten des doods. Leven uit de dooden! Denkt daar eens over na. We duizelen al, als we hooren, dat God slechts sprak en de wereldbollen rolden daar voort in het heelal. Hoe is het U te moede als ge hoort van een eeuwig Koninkrijk hetwelk gebouwd is op bloed, het Bloed van Jezus? Wat zegt ge van een nieuw gezang van het Lam, hetwelk Hij zingt als Hij uit de dooden opgeroepen wordt tot een eeuwig leven? En hetzelfde voor Zijn jongeren?

Het wonder is dit, dat Gods eeuwige liefde zich een baan kiest door de smarten van Messias, om uit te komen bij Uw hart. Het zijn de stroomen van levend water die ontsprongen, opborrelen uit Gods hart doch zich een baan kiezen door den dood van Zijn Zoon. Duizelt ge niet bij de gedachte, dat leven komt uit den dood? Hoe kan dat? Door de almachtige kracht Gods! Leest eenige wondere verzen uit Efeze 1. Daar getuigt de Heilige Geest van “de uitnemende grootheid Zijner kracht, naar de werking der sterkte Zijner macht!” Het gaat daarover het wonder, het opbrengen van Jezus uit de dooden, dezelfde actie die in ons werkt die gelooven. O, wat wondere theologie!

Hoe zwaar! Maar ook hoe lieflijk! Hoe arm is de mensch die haar niet aanbidt!

De Heere zal U de reden geven waarom ge moet vertellen Zijn eer en loven Zijn Naam en getuigen van het eeuwig Wonder in Jezus! Luistert! "Want de HEERE is groot en zeer te prijzen, Hij is vreeselijk boven alle goden!"

Och arme, wat zal ik daarvan zeggen? De Heere is groot. Er zijn maar elf menschen op de aarde die Einstein's boek kunnen lezen en begrijpen, hetwelk hij schreef over "Het Betrekkelijke", ook in verband met zijn theorie over het geweldige heelal. Ga op het strand staan en luistert naar de baren die aanrollen vanuit de oceanen, en aanziet de grootheid Gods. Blik omhoog in helden nacht en zie op naar de sterren, de duizende sterren. "En geen één ontglipt Zijn oog; en niet één ontglipt Zijn oog!" Denkt de gedachten, de diepte gedachten aangaande het zijn der dingen, het bestaan der wezens, denkt aan de idee der dingen, en duizelt. Het is alles zóó groot. Wij kunnen er niet bij. En dat is nog niets. Denkt aan God die waarlijk God is. Denkt aan Zijn meteloosheid, Zijn onbegrensheid, Zijn eenheid, Zijn alomtegenwoordigheid, denkt aan al Zijn deugden.

Langzamerhand zult ge uitkomen bij die kreet van Elihu: Bij Hem is een vreeselijke majesteit!

Ja, Hij is vreeselijk boven alle goden. Hij staat uit. Hij is majestieus. O, als die God straks zal brullen uit Sion, ter eener zijde; en zal glimlachen met teedere woorden, ter anderder zijde: wat zal dat wezen! Ik kan er in komen, dat het eene volk zal schreeuwen: Bergen, heuvelen! We worden liever verbrijzeld door u, dan te staren in dat OOG! Liever verscheurd en vergaan onder de vallende rotsblokken, dan te zien den toorn des Lams! Ik kan er ook inkomen, dat het andere volk zal huppelen van zielevreugd bij het zien van den glimlach van dat vreeselijke, en toch zoo teedere Wezen. Hij zal glimlachen, al roepende tot Sion: Komt, gij gezegenden! beërft het Koninkrijk, hetwelk voor U bereid is van voor de grondlegging de wereld!

Zouden we dan niet vertellen, zingen, jubelen den HEERE? Zouden we dan niet opspringen van vreugde bij het zien en bij het ervaren van het eeuwige Wonder? Wij zijn dood geweest, en zie wij leven tot in alle eeuwigheid!

En de dorpelen der deuren werden bewogen en het Huis werd vervuld met rook. Mozes of de priesters konden niet staan om te dienen in het aardsche heilighdom: de heerlijkheid des HEEREN vervulde alles. Maar hoe zal het zijn die eerste dag, dat eerste uur in den hemel vóór Zijn lieflijk Aangezicht?! Ik hoor ze jubelen!

G. V.

IN HIS FEAR

Searching The Scriptures

(Continued)

Our societies, organized for the study of God's Word, afford us a wonderful opportunity for searching the Scriptures. This fact we began to discuss with you in our last installment of this department. In continuation of that thought we would like to point out to you now why our societies are such a wonderful and valuable means to this end.

You have first of all this fact to consider, that in connection with our society discussions we are called upon to do personal investigation of the Word of God, searching these Scriptures in order to be prepared for the discussion that takes place in our society. The spiritual instruction we receive on the Sabbath is quite different. Then we gather to share in the fruits of another's searching of the Scriptures. Then we gather to listen and to receive instruction, comfort and admonition. We are and indeed must be active while we are assembled in God's house. Our physical presence means nothing apart from spiritual activity. But in the preaching of the Word we are not actively searching the Scriptures, we are instead listening as one of God's servants leads us through the truth as God has led him to find it in his preparation for that service. This does not mean that this of necessity must be the last word in the matter. There is abundant room also for us today, after enjoying the work and search of the Scriptures of those God has sent to us as His servants, to do as the people of Berea did. We must search the Scriptures as further personal study of the truth we have heard. A sermon does not exhaust the matter. If it did, then we would soon come to the time when we would not need divine services anymore for our instruction. But the attentive listener on the Sabbath will often feel the need of searching the Scriptures after a particular sermon not because he does not agree with what has been said but because he desires to see it more clearly. This often occurs when a text is treated from one of the gospel narratives dealing with some incident recorded in one or more of the other gospel narratives as well as in the particular text that has been chosen for that morning's sermon. The attentive listener will like to look up the parallel passages when he gets home and further search the Scriptures. A similar instance arises when a sweeping remark is made in the course of the sermon which the attentive listener feels that he would like to explore and investigate further, not because he believes

his pastor is misleading the congregation but because this is a new thought to him and he desires to see it more clearly. His pastor may for example state that in the Scriptures we nowhere read of God being reconciled to man but always of man being reconciled to God. When he gets home, he may want to take his concordance and with its help search the Scriptures and look at each text wherein the word "reconcile" occurs to investigate this matter somewhat more deeply than was possible in the sermon that morning.

In such ways as mentioned above one is often led by the preaching of the Word of God to search the Scriptures even as the Bereans did after Paul's preaching in their city. In fact the preaching of the Word on the Sabbath ought to have just exactly that effect that it spurs us on to personal investigation and study of the truths recorded in God's Word. But does it in your life? Our Sabbath days are more apt to be days of extra sleep and overeating rather than wonderful opportunities to search the Scriptures from which we are kept to a great extent during the week days. And so our societies occupy an important place in our spiritual life because to a greater or lesser degree they discipline us in this search of the Scriptures. Indeed there are again those who though they belong to a society organized for the study of God's Word never prepare for their lesson discussion except when it becomes their turn to explain or to introduce the lesson. But the fact remains and is even more clearly brought out by this fact that we need to be driven and to be trained to search the Scriptures. It is well for us all to join a society in order that we personally may search the Scriptures.

You may say "Yes, but the preaching of the Word on the Sabbath is sufficient and society membership is not compulsory." This is an excuse rather than a reason for not joining such a society. And the value of a personal study of the truth both in the preparation of the lesson and in the discussion in the society meeting is not to be so lightly put aside. As the well known expression has it, "You get out of a thing what you put into it", so the personal application of the individual to the Word of God is never without its fruit and blessing. The work you accomplish yourself in the study of God's Word remains with you much longer than that which you simply hear from the mouth of another. Besides this we would impress upon the minds of those who belong to a society but never or seldom prepare for their lesson discussion, that to come prepared to discuss the lesson with others also means that you come prepared to benefit by the discussion. Your own personal study of the text will help you tremendously to profit from the remarks of others who also have studied that same passage.

This leads us to our next point. In our societies

there is that mutual assistance of the various members for one another. We all have our own God-given natures and talents and with these we personally study God's Word. The one has a practical mind and sees in the text many things that have a direct bearing upon our walk in the midst of this world. The other is more inclined to delve deeply into the doctrinal significance of the text and has discovered in his personal study at home something the others were not able to see. The one sees the text as a direct and strong denunciation of a prevalent false doctrine. And so one can continue, for in a society one will find all these and many other approaches to the lesson being discussed. In this way the society members are favored with the thoughts of their fellow men, and very often as a member is explaining his view, you will observe others in the literal act of searching the Scriptures. You will notice them paging back and forth either at the suggestion of the speaker to particular verses or else if they cannot quite agree with what is being said to search for texts to substantiate what they are about to say in reply. That element in our society life is not to be overlooked. In the preaching of the Word you have no opportunity to stop the speaker and call his attention to other texts. Nor can you ask him to repeat or make himself clearer on a certain point. Of course you may and even must do so afterwards if you think that he has presented the lie, but we are now considering only the fact of a clearer understanding of the truth. In society you benefit from the study of others and you have the opportunity of questioning them further until you see the point as well as they. In fact it often happens that when you come with a point yourself of which others never thought, you yourself by the question and the remarks which are made and directed to you go home with a clearer and richer view of your own point than you had before society. That is also what we mean by the statement that if you come prepared to discuss your lesson, you also come prepared to benefit from the discussion. If a person does not benefit from the discussion, he must not go home and say that he is not going back again because it is not worthwhile. He ought first of all to examine himself and ask himself whether he is making that society what it ought to be by preparing himself for it and by taking part in the discussion. There are passages of Scripture which are more difficult than others for a society to discuss, but there are no passages which when discussed are of no value at all and which cannot be enjoyed if all the members will but study it personally and then discuss it together. The member who never does anything else in the discussion than to raise questions which he himself cannot answer is helping the discussion along, provided, of course, that his questions are sensible ones and are not, as some delight to present the "if" questions. By "if" questions we

mean those which run along this patten, "If this happened instead, then would this be the result?"

A third factor which makes our societies a valuable means to our activity of searching the Scriptures is the fact that in our society life we have a systematic searching of the Scriptures. A book of the Bible is usually discussed and an effort is made to search it for the spiritual knowledge our faith requires and upon which it feeds. Or else a well known chapter is discussed. It makes no difference, there is a system of lessons followed. And this makes for systematic-searching of the Scriptures.

If we are not a member of any one of these societies which are organized for the study of God's Word, we are not even apt to spend any time during the week to study the truth. We will read it perhaps at the table once or twice a day, but study or searching of the Scriptures is quite something else. Even if we do study that Word of God apart from any society membership, the tendency is always there for us to do it rather unsystematically. First of all we stand before the questions, "Where shall I begin?" And once having begun a certain passage, we soon come to passages which are more difficult, and we simply skip them to go on to what requires less effort and search on our part. If it is a little too involved, we take the liberty to disengage ourselves from it. A society does not, or at least should not behave that way and is not inclined to do so as quickly as an individual.

Besides this of course the society is a wonderful thing for just exactly that reason. There you can go with your questions and problems for help from your fellow members. And a passage from which you would have derived no benefit because you left it alone becomes significant for you too. It is a good thing for us to be tied down to a particular passage that we may systematically study God's Word together.

By means of our society, system is also brought into the study itself. It is amazing how time flies, and he who has no special night for studying the Word of God soon finds out that weeks go by in which he did not study that passage he meant a few weeks ago to look up and examine carefully.

It is a sad thing that we have to be tied down to a society in order to be busy with the study of God's Word, but so it is, and it behooves us all who are not prevented by God from such profitable activity to organize or join such a society and to search together the Scriptures for our spiritual welfare. We may expect a rich blessing upon our labor when we gather together to build one another up in the faith. We will not become rich in material things, but we will grow in His fear, and the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

J. A. H.

FROM HOLY WRIT

James 1:17: — "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights, with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

That God is the God of perfection, a Light in Whom there is no darkness, receives all emphasis in this context of the epistle of James. In verse 13 the holy writer expresses this thought by declaring that God cannot be tempted with evil and therefore tempteth no man. In verses 14-16 the truth of God's perfection is again confirmed where we read that every man is tempted of his own lust, thus being drawn away and enticed, and that lust brings forth sin which, when completed, brings forth death. Sin, therefore, in the ethical sense, is of man and not of God. In verse 17 James gives positive expression to the truth of the Lord's perfection by declaring that He is the Father of lights, with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. It is well to bear this context in mind unto a correct understanding of this seventeenth verse.

James speaks in this text of "good" and "perfect" gifts. We read that "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights, etc." The clear implication is that the Father of lights is the exclusive source of these gifts. The first question which requires an answer involves the identity of these "good and perfect" gifts.

Many would generalize this text. It is often used, e.g., on Thanksgiving Day. These "good" and "perfect" gifts, then, refer to earthly things, such as health, corn, grain, etc., and are bestowed by God upon all men. Of course, we would not dispute the assertion that God gives good things to men, rain and fruitful seasons, thereby filling their hearts with good and gladness (Acts 14:17). We do not contradict the assertion that these gifts are good things in themselves. We would, however, maintain that this interpretation of verse 17 of James 1 does not fit in at all with the context of this passage. The entire context is ethical, spiritual. That God is the God of ethical perfection receives the emphasis here throughout. And we violate the Word of God if we give verse 17 an interpretation which does not harmonize with this context.

First of all, we read here of "every good gift". The word "good" means literally: excelling in any respect, distinguished. The fundamental meaning of the word is that something has the quality whereby it is what it should be. Thus the Word is often used in the Scriptures with respect to earthly matters. A tree, then, is good when it produces wholesome fruit.

A servant is good when he, as a servant, is what he should be. Soil is good when it is productive. This word is also abundantly used in the Scriptures to denote moral, spiritual perfection. Rom. 9:11 speaks of "children having done neither good nor evil." And striking is the thought that a good man out of the treasures of his heart bringeth forth which is good.

"Good", then, we would define as the quality of moral perfection, that He is infinitely exalted above all that is called creature, and therefore worthy of all praise and adoration. This goodness of God also determines the meaning of goodness as applied to the creature. We are good when we are as we should be. And a creature is as he should be when, with all that is in him, he stands in that spiritual relation to the living God whereby he loves and serves the Lord with all his heart and mind and soul and strength. The good gifts of our text are therefore those gifts from above which render man good, enable him to assume that spiritual relation and attitude to the living God. This interpretation is surely in harmony with the context. That context speaks of man even as he is tempted, being tempted with evil, drawn away and enticed of his own lust. The context in verses 13-16 is therefore ethical, spiritual. The "good gifts" of verse 17 must be understood as the opposite of this evil. Hence, "good gifts" are those gifts which enable us to withstand evil, to resist temptation, to walk holily unto the glory of the living God.

We also read of "perfect" gifts in this text. The word "perfect" means literally: brought to its end, finished. It therefore means: "wanting nothing necessary to completeness", and in that sense "perfect". In this sense a man is said to be perfect, in distinction from a child, because he is complete. He has grown unto full stature. This also throws light on the meaning of the word in this text. This thought, too, must be understood in the light of its context. The good gifts of verse 17 are contrasted with the evil of verse 13. But the "perfect" gift also has its contrast. Sin, we read, when it is finished, brings forth death. The word "perfect" of verse 17 is principally the same as "when it is finished" of verse 15. Sin is finished when it runs its full course in the life of the individual sinner, who does not experience the restraining and redeeming power of the grace of God. Perfect gifts are gifts of God which render the child of God complete in his service of the Lord. Every good gift is a perfect gift already in this life. Surely, our imperfection cleaves unto us. Yet, the grace of God takes hold, be it in principle, of our entire being, all our heart and mind and soul and strength, together with all that we possess, so that the child of God, walking out of the principle of holiness, will dedicate his all to the living God. And ultimately the perfect gift will be realized at the end of time. Then we shall serve God com-

pletely. All sin shall be no more. God's tabernacle shall be completely established with man. And our redemption shall have been completely perfected.

Emphatically James attributes these good and perfect gifts to the living God. In the first place we read that they are "gifts" and "from above". It is true that the emphasis, in connection with these gifts, falls upon the words "good" and "perfect". Yet, it should not escape our attention that they are mentioned as gifts. It is a fact that, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. The good and perfect, on the other hand, is presented as a gift in this text because whatever is good and perfect must be given. In me no good dwelleth. Among all the children of men none seeks the Lord. All have sinned and corrupted the glory of God. Ethical goodness and perfection must be bestowed. And the same truth is expressed in the text when we are emphatically told that every good gift and every perfect gift is *from above*.

Secondly, that every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, from God alone, is because God is the Father of lights. The lights in this text have generally been understood as referring to the lights in the firmament, and that for a three-fold reason. Firstly, we read of the plural "lights" instead of light. Secondly, the expression "lights" is used in Scripture to designate the heavenly bodies in the firmament, as in Psalm 136:7 and in Jer. 4:23. And, thirdly, the text itself seems to indicate this explanation. We read: With Whom there is no variableness neither shadow of turning. Variableness and shadow of turning are surely applicable to the heavenly bodies. We therefore conclude that James refers here to the light bodies in the firmament.

God is the Father of lights. That James speaks of God as being the *Father* of lights is because the idea of "Father" is fundamentally that of creative source. He is their Father because He brought them forth. It is not necessary at this time to call attention to the creation as such of these luminaries on the fourth day. We would emphasize the thought, however, that James refers to the creation of these heavenly bodies for a specific reason. It is not merely his purpose to tell us that they were created by God. He would call our attention to the fact, however, that their creation by God reveals God unto us. The magnitude of the universe must speak to us of the greatness of Him Who created it. The sun, moon, and stars, pouring forth light upon the earth, expressive of purity, in the rays whereof all dust particles are instantly exposed and condemned, speak to us of the Lord, Who made them, Who is infinitely above them, as the Creator must be exalted above the creature, and Who in Himself is the God of perfect light in Whom is no darkness whatever. God Himself is Light and the God of infinite glory and

perfection, the sum-total of absolute goodness.

Consequently, from Him alone must come every good gift and every perfect gift. To be sure, from Him alone also proceeds the death of the sinner. When we read in the context that sin brings forth death we understand that this death is from God. Only, we must bear in mind that God inflicts death *through* sin. And God inflicts death through sin, exactly because He is Light, in Whom is no darkness and Who therefore hates all iniquity, condemns it, and turns against it forever. In fact, God eternally in His counsel willed sin to show forth forevermore His eternal and spotless perfection. But, for the same reason, every good and perfect gift is from Him alone. We understand that, if the sinner is the author of his own sin, the child of God, too, is the author of his good works. If we, then, read that every good and perfect gift is from above we realize that, maintaining the truth that man is a morally free agent, whether he be a child of darkness or of light, the emphasis in this text falls upon the fact that our good works are worked in us by God alone, that God only can be their source, because He alone is a Light in Whom is no darkness. Notice that we read here that *every* good gift and *every* perfect gift is from above, the Father of lights. The thought is not merely expressed that God always gives good gifts. But we read that every perfect gift is from the Lord. This means emphatically that good and perfect gifts apart from God are inconceivable. God Himself is good, the God of infinite perfection. Apart from Him is darkness. As the God of infinite perfection He alone can bestow good and perfect gifts. And, bestowing this good upon His people, the Lord cannot rest until He shall have finished in them the good work. Then they shall stand before Him in eternal glory. Then He shall delight in them and they in Him, and God shall be all in all.

Finally, there is with God no variableness or shadow of turning. Various explanations of this expression are possible. We understand that James here is declaring of God what is not characteristic of these heavenly bodies. They are characterized by variableness and shadow of turning. In many ways this part of the text can be interpreted. Does James refer to a shadow caused by turning, or a shadow which causes turning, i.e., a change? Besides, instead of reading "neither" we can substitute the word "which". Then we read of variableness, which consists of a shadow caused by turning. Be all this as it may, the meaning of the expression in the text is plain. The heavenly bodies are characterized by change. God is unchangeable. He is the Unchangeable Giver of every good and perfect gift. He is unchangeable in His punishment of the sinner, and sin must bring forth death. He is also unchangeable toward His people and will bless them forevermore.

H. V.

PERISCOPE

Centennial. . . .

During the course of this year the communities of Holland, Michigan and Pella, Iowa, will celebrate the 100th anniversary of their founding. Here in Holland, the commemoration of this event has already begun. The opening event was a public meeting held in Hope College Memorial Chapel on Feb. 9. It was 100 years ago, on Feb. 9, 1847, that the Rev. A. C. Van Raalte, with a party of seven men and one woman reached the shores of Black Lake (now Lake Macatawa) to found the colony of Holland. On Feb. 1, of the same year Van Raalte had visited and chosen this vicinity as the site for the home of his followers.

Following soon after this first small group many settlers came to the region. Holland was the center but other colonies sprang up in the surrounding territory. Each of these was given, and still bears, the name of the particular province or town in the Netherlands from which the various groups came. Their names are interesting and almost tell their history. A partial list includes: Zeeland, Graafschap, New Groningen, Overijssel, Drenthe and Vriesland.

Now 100 years later we are celebrating the founding of these communities. We feel, however, that much of the celebration of this event will reveal a history of apostacy from the Reformed traditions of Van Raalte and other leaders of his time. Hence, the remembrance of this event will be a cause for sorrow as well as rejoicing. It reminds us of what Ezra writes concerning the celebration that followed the completion of the foundation of the second Temple, after the return from the captivity. "But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice."

This note of a "glory departed" was already struck at the 100th anniversary meeting referred to above. The speaker on this occasion was Dr. E. F. Romig, pastor of the West End Collegiate Church, New York City, (Eastern branch of the Reformed Church). Dr. Romig struck a note which was foreign to the heart and mind of these early pioneers and likewise far from the Reformed tradition. His closing appeal revealed this most clearly. After a rather rambling oration, of almost an hour, the speaker concluded with the question whether the heritage we have received from these founders has caused us to strive for, and "have all led to the establishment of a world in which the brotherhood of man" is evident, and universal peace a possibility. If this has been the result, it is good, he

said, and upon it rests the benediction of God. Then the past 100 years have been valuable history. He closed with the well-known modern appeal that we must "forget our isolationism and build up a world in which God's rule can prevail". It should be evident to anyone who maintains the Reformed Truth that is certainly not our heritage, nor the striving of the Reformed tradition.

Such is also contrary, if not in flat contradiction, to what Van Raalte and his followers desired and maintained. This is most clearly evident from a bit of the history of the movement that has just recently come to light. In September of 1946, Dr. A. Hyma, professor of history at the University of Michigan, became the first person to receive full access to many valuable and hitherto unpublished Van Raalte documents. Dr. Hyma purchased these from the Van Raalte heirs, who had jealously guarded them against misuse and publication. According to Dr. Hyma, "A profound secret lay hidden in the Van Raalte documents, for which reason the founding of the Dutch settlements in the Middle West was shrouded in dense mystery until at last the key to the secret was found. Now we know that Van Raalte deliberately subordinated nearly all his activities from 1846 to 1876 to the one grand scheme, which was the establishment of a Christian society to be ruled by him personally. He and his friend, Judge Kellogg of Allegan, obtained possession of some 100,000 acres of land between the Kalamazoo and Grand Rivers. There they were going to found a kingdom of orthodox Christianity in which only true Christians could secure title to real estate property. They were planning to watch the sale of every lot, in order that no unbelievers could enter the sanctuary and poison the faith of their devoted followers. The sale of alcoholic drinks and the building of theatres were to be strictly forbidden. Dancing would also be prohibited, as well as gambling; yes, even the playing of cards was not to be allowed." Quoted from the *Banner*, of Feb. 7, 1947.

It is evident, therefore, that the purpose of Van Raalte and his followers was not the establishment of a brotherhood of *all* men, nor to make "a world in which God's rule can prevail" but to live in isolation and separation and segregation. He did not count all men as brethren nor conceive of a world kingdom for Christ but went to the opposite extreme. Though this plan was never realized, yet, we believe that Van Raalte and his group were *closer*, much closer, to the truth than that which we hear and see 100 years later. History reveals an apostatizing church and generation.

Russia. . . .

Soviet authorities have given permission for the creation of new Baptist seminaries in Russia and for the re-opening of a previously established theological

school. Jacob Zhidkov, chairman of the Baptist and Evangelical Union of the U.S.S.R., made this announcement when asked whether Russian Baptists have any seminaries or Sunday Schools. He added that Sunday Schools do not exist in the Soviet Union as the constitution does not permit religion instruction to children except in their homes.

He further reported that about 70% of Baptist and Evangelical pastors in Russia also work in other occupations; mainly in factories and offices, and on collective farms. This brief statement certainly gives a rather clear picture of the much vaunted "religious freedom" in Russia.

Netherlands Reformed Church (Nederduitsch). . . .

Two congregations of the Netherlands Reformed group in Grand Rapids have received word of the acceptance of their call to a minister from the Netherlands. These congregations have been without a minister for a number of years and have turned to the Old Country for help; since they have no seminary to train their own men. The new pastor, the Rev. W. E. Lamin, recently accepted a joint call from the congregations of Division Ave., and Ottawa Ave., in Grand Rapids. He will bring his wife and seven children with him and is expected to arrive in the next month or two from Rijsen the Netherlands.

Novel Scheme. . . .

An ingenious and novel plan to raise money has been instituted by the First Presbyterian Church of Bluffton, Ohio, according to a U.P. dispatch, which appeared in the *Holland Evening Sentinel*. This congregation is attempting to increase the sum of \$2000 to \$10,000 by applying(?) the method of the parable of the talents. Each member of the congregation was given a \$10 "talent" to use and return in five months with an accounting.

The story reads in part: "The church members could either return the \$10 intact, any part of it, or whatever sum they had made it earn. Pastor E.N. Bigelow said the church placed no restrictions on how members should put their "talent" to work.

"Or if the member wanted to keep the money, he could, no questions asked. Furthermore, there would be no pressure applied to see that the money was ever returned. None, that is, but "moral compulsion".

"The church borrowed \$1,000 from a Bluffton bank to start the program. Parishioners took that up with alacrity. The church promptly put the touch on an influential member for another \$1,000 and is distributing the tens from that now by mail". The proceeds will be used to remodel the church building.

Apparently here is another church and congregation which has forgotten the Scriptural injunction to give as the Lord hath blessed. When this true idea of

offering is lost it is inevitable that the church shall want. The result will be the introduction of all sorts of devices to obtain by "scheming" what does not come forth willingly.

French Calvinism. . . .

The present state of Calvinism in France was briefly touched upon in a letter which appeared in the *Calvin Forum*, of February, 1947. The writer, Rev. R. W. Teeuwissen, has been in France for almost two years. Concerning Calvinism in France, he writes as follows: "As you can already understand then I have discovered very little or practically no Calvinistic movement so far. Professor LeCercf, the great Calvinist. . . is dead, and no one seems to have replaced him.

"Another Calvinist, the historian Pannier, also died some months ago. I believe he was the last active member of the Calvinistic study group.

"Let me, however, also add at once that I have been unable to get around as much as I had hoped and there may be certain things which have escaped me. . . I intend to go down to Southern France into the old Huguenot country. I am looking forward to meeting with a number of Pastors belonging to the small group of churches who refused to enter the merger of several churches into the *Eglise Reformée de France* a few years before the war. I at one time met the professor of Doctrinal Theology of their very small seminary, Prof. Bruston. . . .

"The two French persons whom I have met after their return from visits to the States have been quite shocked by the liberalism and moralism they ran into over there.

"Two general remarks about the Church in France. On the whole the Gospel is being preached, but from the organizational viewpoint and as regards active church-life, such as giving, etc., there is much to be desired."

China. . . .

Under the caption: What China Wants, we found the following: "Give us missionaries and more missionaries. Of course, it is easier to give money than men; but we in China challenge the Church in America, if you have to choose between men and money, send us men, send us missionaries who know Christ and can make Him known." —Kung Sam Lee, Shanghai radio man, in *Foreign Affairs Bulletin*, quoted in the *Moody Monthly* of February, 1947.

From the same source we learn that the voice of the Christian broadcasting station, XMHD in Shanghai, is soon to go back on the air. This station is owned and operated by Christian Chinese and was begun in the year 1933. It was begun by a few Christian Chinese who felt that the only way to get beyond the forbidding walls and barred gates of every Chinese

home was by the way of radio. K. S. Lee, the general secretary of the association, envisions a great future in this work. He looks forward to the time when China will have 100 radio stations in a Christian broadcasting chain. He maintains that only a few in China can read; but almost all can hear.

Speaking of Christian broadcasting services reminds us that also in the Netherlands there is an organized Christian Broadcasting Association. Every Church of soundly Reformed principles gets its fair share of the hours available.

We wish to add two remarks to the above. In the first place, we have often wondered if a Christian broadcasting chain will ever be a reality in our own country, or if such a vision is impossible. We understand that the size and distance increase the problems and cost but if a poverty stricken country like China can consider it a possibility we certainly can. It is also true that the potential audience and number of supporters is likewise greater in our country. In the second place, what was reported above concerning China, certainly supports and emphasizes what was stated in the report of the Mission Committee at last year's Synod regarding a Foreign Mission work of our own. We still believe that it should be considered and is a possibility.

W. H.

CLASSIS WEST

will meet, the Lord willing, on the first Wednesday of March, March 5, 1947, in the Rock Valley Protestant Reformed Church. Delegates desiring lodging can contact Rev. P. Vis. All delegates are urged to have with them the Acts of Synod 1945.

Rev. C. Hanko, S. C.

ANNIVERSARY

On March 4, 1947 our dear parents,

Mr. and Mrs. EDWARD BYLSMA

hope to celebrate their fiftieth wedding anniversary.

We are indeed thankful to our heavenly father who spared them for us these many years, and Who through them provided us with our Christian home. Our prayer is that the Lord may bless them graciously in the coming years.

Their grateful children:

Mr. and Mrs. George Spruyt
Mr. and Mrs. John Bartelds
Mr. and Mrs. Adrian Griffioen
Mr. and Mrs. Ralph H. Meyer
Mr. and Mrs. Gerard E. Bylsma
Mr. and Mrs. George De Vries

Grand Rapids, Michigan.