

THE STANDARD

Bearer

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MEDITATION

Blessings Of The Holy Spirit

"And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven."

Luke 24:51, 52.

"Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."

Acts 2:33.

Natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God!

In this short sentence, which we have taken literally from God's Word, you have the explanation why the wonders of Christ's coming, dying, resurrection, ascension and return in the Holy Ghost leave him cold, does not interest him, or provoke him and even awakens his laughter and scorn. When the Godhead came to dwell in a very special sense in the church, making the church blessed forever, the wicked spoke of drunkenness: they are full of sweet wine.

The things of the Spirit of God are foolish to the natural mind, for these things are spiritually discerned, i.e., you must have eyes of the illuminated mind, and eyes of the reborn heart in order to see the verities of God's wonderful kingdom.

Yet how wonderful are these things when once you are enlightened!

Attend to this: Christ came into our prison, the prison of eternal death and the curse and utter condemnation. And that prison could not hold Him, for one very simple reason: He loved God! And His love of God was so intensive that He loved Him for you and me and for the billions of the chosen Israel of God. When these billions presently shall stand before the great white throne, God will reveal His eternal love in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that love shall show the justification of the redeemed. It has

made you whiter than snow. You shall be as the Bride who stands in all her beauty and splendour before the face of her Bridegroom, ready to enter the palaces of the King and to be very happy forever and ever.

He loved God so much that the cords of death could not hold Him. Hark to the voice of the triumphant heralds of the Gospel of God: Christ is risen indeed!

* * * *

And that risen Christ of God, with healing in His wings, walked with His disciples no more after the resurrection. He *appeared* unto them ten times. And the reason is plain: He wished to instruct them about the things of the Kingdom that was coming; He wished to leave His witnesses behind, witnesses of the greatest miracle ever performed: His resurrection!

But when the forty days are fulfilled in which He gave them all this blessed instruction, He took them to Bethany, beautiful Bethany.

Travellers tell us that it is beautiful for situation, and I can well believe it. It had to be so. The horror of Golgotha is no more. Jesus is risen. God made Him a Prince and a Christ. His triumphant ascension must needs be from a garden of beauty.

They have arrived at the mount, called Olivet. From its sides a view of the city of the King is given. He views it as the Conqueror and as the sole Possessor. Watch Him! He is going to take Jerusalem with Him to heaven. Paul will instruct us later: when Jesus went to heaven, Jerusalem went to heaven, which is the mother of us all.

They have arrived at Bethany.

We know that Jesus loved it. There He would often go in order to converse and to have fellowship with His most beloved disciples: Mary, Lazarus and Martha.

Listen to the risen Lord!

He commands His disciples not to depart from Jerusalem. He gives them the promise of the Holy Ghost. He answers a foolish question.

And gives the missionary command.

And then comes the end of His last discourse on earth.

The sound of His harmonious and beautiful speech

lingers in the grove of olives, and slowly dies away.

Look strongly on Him: He will soon be taken away from the church!

He lifts His hands and arms in blessing. He spreads these blessed arms over the little group that stands in silence, waiting, waiting.

And then it happens!

Jesus went to heaven.

The text in the Acts of the Apostles tells us that "while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight!"

Do you note the mysteriousness of it, the strangeness of every episode that deals with Jesus since His resurrection? He comes and He goes, and no doors hinder Him. He stands and He walks with His most intimate followers, and they doubt, they durst not ask Him whether or not He is the Lord, because they knew that He was indeed the Lord. Some believe, and others doubted. He must condescend to eat and to drink in order to convince them that He is no apparition to be dreaded, and you and I know that Jesus had no more need of bread and drink. For Christ to eat and to drink at the lake of Tiberias, I would almost call a miracle in reverse. But He did it in order to put the minds of the fearful and wondering disciples at rest.

But everything is strange.

And we should not marvel over much at this, for Jesus is the risen Lord. Henceforth, He belongs to a different world. He is the Firstfruit of the New Heavens and the New Earth that is coming. Paul tells us that our life is hid with Christ in God. In a sense that life is even hid in heaven. For the present heaven of heavens is not even pure in God's sight, and will presently have to make place for the pure and eternal things that are being ushered in at the last day.

And thus it is here at Bethany.

The disciples saw Him. They saw His outstretched arms and hands.

And then a cloud!

No, I do not believe that it was a common cloud of vapour and mist such as we see above us so often in this world of ours.

I think it was a glorious chariot which God sent in order to receive His Son in heavenly places.

Our resurrected and glorified Redeemer is the wholly Other now. He was earthy, but He is now heavenly.

While He blessed them, the cloud came and received Him out of their sight.

* * * *

I do not think that it took Jesus very long to go to heaven.

And when we say these things, we do not know what we are talking about. The heavenly beings have their own laws, and they are different from ours.

We speak of so many miles per hour. In this vein we cannot speak when we speak about Jesus' ascension. You may leave your measurements and yardsticks at home when you are invited to attend the Ascension at Bethany.

You may look, and you may marvel.

And that is your blessedness.

Even now, after so much study, dogmatics, exegesis and meditation, we go to Bethany, listen for a while, and then we simply wonder and marvel at the things that came to pass.

The disciples did not fare any better.

They heard the lingering sweetness of His last words.

They saw His benign and loving Face.

Perhaps they heard the softly spoken blessing. Maybe, I do not know for certain, but maybe He said to them: The Lord bless you and keep you! The Lord make His Face to shine upon you and be gracious to you! The Lord lift up His Countenance upon you, and give you peace!

At least, if not these words, then surely their content. For that is the blessing of God for His people Israel.

And then He went to heaven.

But attend to this: *while He blessed them, He was taken up into heaven!*

There is a revelation of unspeakable consolation.

The last time I saw my Lord on earth, His arms were extended over me in Divine blessing. While I write to you, and while you read these simple words, His arms are above you and me: He is still blessing us!

The musical and melodious song of our triumphant resurrection Gospel has acquired additional charms. The chorus is swelling in notes that have their origin in God's heart. The resurrected Lord is blessing us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places.

Is it wonder that we begin to sing of hallelujah here on earth already?

* * * *

No, I do not know how long it took for the cloudy and glorious chariot to bring Jesus to the throne of God. Perhaps He arrived there at once. As a child I always thought that the journey to heaven took ten days since there is that space of time between Ascension Day and Pentecost.

Now I know better(?).

But Jesus did go to heaven. We have abundant proof.

Jesus had told His disciples before His ascent that they should abide in Jerusalem until they should receive the promise of the Holy Ghost.

And they were obedient to His words, for at the day of Pentecost, or rather, after the Jewish day of Pentecost was *fully come*, that is, after it was entirely past, we find the little group of disciples in an upper

room. I like to think that this upper room was in the temple. I do not know for certain, and it seems as though no one knows for certain, where this upper room was located. But I would found my opinion on two grounds. First, because that temple was the embodiment of the very idea of Pentecost: God dwelling with His people in wondrous unity. And, second, because the great multitude at once go to the place where they were sitting, and if this place had been a common house, in a common street of the city of God, I cannot understand how they all with one accord find this place where the disciples are. But if we understand the place to have been an upper room of the Temple, then it is plain. The people of Jerusalem, hearing the mysterious sound as of a mighty and rushing wind, at once realize that it is something supernatural, and for them the super-natural was not unknown. They had the Holy Scriptures which abundantly testified of many strange things which had happened in the glorious past. And therefore they all with one accord go to the right place in order to find out about the origin of this strange phenomenon.

And, finally, read verse 46 of Acts 2. It was their custom to congregate in the Temple. But now let us attend unto the proof that Jesus went to heaven, blessing His people. The effects are very convincing.

The tenth day after His glorious ascension they were with one accord in one place, and suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the house where they were sitting.

There was no wind, so that a man could feel it, or so that you could see things sway in motion because of it. No, but it was the *sound* of a rushing mighty wind. Moreover, it came from the heavens; that also was noted; and it filled the house, the upper room, where they sat.

At the same time, there appeared a great column as of fire, darting downward in as many tongues as there were disciples, and this mass of cloven tongues sat upon them.

It was no actual fire, but appeared as fire.

And, finally, they heard them speak in strange tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. They did not know those languages before this event, but at its occurring, they spoke the languages and dialects of every nation that God sent to them for an audience.

These three things are the revelation of the blessings of Jesus Christ. He shed forth "this which ye now see and hear."

Three things, and they are signs of the Gospel of God. That Gospel was being fulfilled as never before. It is the flood of waters upon a dry ground of the prophet Isaiah. It is the fulfillment of Joël's prophecy: And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh. . . .

It is the coming of the God of our salvation who

through Christ and His Spirit is making His home in our hearts. The blessing arms of Jesus are still over us, over the whole church!

Blessed Pentecost!

* * * *

This, which ye now see and hear!

Let us look into these things a little more closely.

They are signs of God's eternal covenant of grace.

There is the sign of the rushing mighty wind from heaven. If you will remember Paul's instruction of Romans 5 when he says that the love of God is spread abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit that is given to us, then we can see something of this sign's significance. God throws Himself irresistibly upon His beloved church through Jesus the Lord.

God had exalted Him to the highest place in heaven, His own throne. And being seated at the right hand of the majesty on high, He gave Him the promise; that is, the Holy Ghost. And the Holy Ghost is given by Christ in His turn to His beloved church, from then on to dwell in her as the Spirit of Christ. For there is a difference. Henceforth, the very *quality* of Jesus Christ shall dwell in the church of God, making us taste Him in all the wonders of His love and loving-kindness.

A strong and rushing wind. God is irresistible when He comes to bless and to save us. Nothing can stop Him or His Spirit.

And then the sign of the fire. Negatively, fire is the sign of the purging power of the Holy Spirit.

Are you a child of God? Well, you can prove it to yourself and others by your sanctification. The fire of God's love will purge away, burn away all the dross in your life. Here and now only in principle, but at your death this selfsame Spirit will burn away all your sin and evil. Positively, the fire of the Holy Ghost is the love of God that is spread abroad in your heart. You are set on fire of heaven, and heaven's God. You will love Him above all and your miserable neighbour as yourself.

And then the tongues! It is the healing of Babel's confusion. "And God confused their language there!" Do you not remember that line in your catechism book?

But Babel is healed. Every one understands. And thousands glory in the God of their salvation. They hear the speech of the Holy Spirit. What else could it be but the recital of God's wonders and praises.

The last thing which the disciples saw of Jesus was the wonderful spectacle of those blessing hands.

They are still over us. They gave the Holy Spirit and all His attending blessings.

We look to the heavens to His return. We wait, as those that wait for the morning, the morning of the resurrection. And our waiting is not in vain. We have the pledge of that wonderful Holy Spirit in our hearts and minds and souls. Amen.

G. Vos.

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EDITORIALS

God Invites All Men To Christ?

The readers will remember that the Rev. H. J. Kuiper wrote in *The Banner* on the general theme: GOD AND MAN IN SALVATION. So far he has written five editorials on this mighty truth.

In my first editorial on that series it was my intention to point out that the Rev. Kuiper erred grievously when he taught his people that *in a certain sense Jesus Christ died for the whole world, every man, head for head*. It is astounding how a man can write for reformed people in that vein, and receive no serious opposition in his own circles. To my knowledge, no one has ever gone as far in this pernicious error as the Rev. Kuiper did. He taught that there are mercies in God, antedating the Cross of Calvary, and finding an avenue through that Cross to the life of the reprobate ungodly. This mercy of God for the reprobate is then, according to Kuiper, the blessing of this temporal life with all its attending fruits of life, health, possessions, etc.

We tried to show that such error is in direct conflict with the teaching of God's Word.

In the same editorial he proceeds on his way, and the thing gets worse. He writes also about the error of the first point of Kalamazoo, which dealt with the favorable attitude of God overagainst the reprobate ungodly in the province of general grace, the grace, namely, of salvation in Christ Jesus the Lord.

Writes Kuiper:

GENERAL OFFER IN DISTINCTION FROM GENERAL ATONEMENT

Our Arminian brethren, however, do not have these minor temporal fruits of the death of Christ in mind when they say that Jesus "died for all men". They intend to say much more; namely, that by his death he paid for the sins of all men.

Is that true? Does Scripture permit the ambassadors of Christ to declare to all men indiscriminately, hence to every individual: "Jesus died for you; He paid for your sin"? Bear in mind that among those who hear their message are elect and reprobate. Who are elect and who are not they cannot know. They extend the offer of grace to all. They are divinely authorized to do that. God commands them to invite and even urge all sinners to come to Christ and to promise them forgiveness of sins and eternal life on the condition of repentance and faith. They have no right to say to any and every one: "Jesus paid for your sin"; but they do have the right to say to all: "Christ invites you to come to him for salvation, and if you come He will in no wise cast you out." This is the outward call of the gospel of which the Canons of Dort say that it is "unfeigned", sincere. "As many as are called by the gospel are

unfeignedly called. For God has most earnestly and truly declared in His Word **what is acceptable** to Him, namely, that those who are called should come unto him" (III, IV, Article 8).

For the present let it suffice to say that this **general** offer of salvation, taught by all leading Reformed theologians since the time of Calvin, is not to be confused with the doctrine of a **general or universal atonement**. Salvation is offered to all who hear the gospel and fulfill the conditions; but it was **not earned for all**. Those who hold that it was earned for all assure every hearer of the gospel that God sent His Son into the world and to the cross **with the intention** of saving him, but that this intention does not at all guarantee his salvation. To carry out that intention the Son of God paid the ransom for his sin, but this merely made his salvation possible; it is now "up to him", by the exercise of his free will, to accept or to reject that ransom and the salvation which it purchased for him.

What shall we say about this popular doctrine? We answer that it is a dangerous heresy. A heresy because it conflicts with the basic teachings and the emphatic declarations of God's Word. A dangerous heresy because it is based on the supposition of an impotent God whose saving intention can be frustrated by man and is being frustrated by all who reject the gospel.

We have in the above a mixture of truth and error, more error than truth.

A very palpable example of this we find in his statement which reads: "this general offer of salvation, taught by all leading Reformed theologians since the time of Calvin, etc."

Allow me to quote from Calvin's Calvinism, page 49-51: "The fiction of Pighius is puerile and absurd, when he interprets grace to be God's goodness in inviting all men to salvation, though all were lost in Adam. For Paul most clearly separates the *foreknown* from those on whom God deigned not to look in mercy. And the same is expressed, without any obscurity, in the memorable words of Christ: 'All that the Father giveth Me, shall come unto Me; and him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out.' Here we have three things, briefly indeed, but most perspicuously expressed. First, that all who come unto Christ were before given unto Him by the Father; secondly, that those who were thus given unto Him were delivered, as it were, from the hand of the Father into the hand of the Son, that they may be truly His; thirdly, that Christ is the sure keeper of all those whom the Father delivered over to His faithful custody and care, for the very end that He might not suffer one of them to perish. Now if a question be raised as to the beginning of faith, Christ here gives the answer, when He says that those who believe, *therefore* believe *because* they were given unto Him by the Father. . . . Pighius will himself confess that there is need of illumination to bring unto Christ those who were adversaries to God; but he at the same time, *holds fast the fiction that grace is offered equally to all, etc.*" (The last

italics are mine, and the others Calvin's, G.V.)

Much has been written on the so-called offer of grace to all who hear the Word, and it is not necessary that I repeat all our defense against the fallacy of the offer. But it is rather striking that the advocates of that fallacy will go to the extreme of open deceit in order to maintain their errors. The Rev. Kuiper boldly states that all theologians since Calvin have taught the offer, and the reader will bear witness that in the above excerpt from Calvin he simply rejects the offer. He calls it a fiction, that is, that which is feigned or imagined, as opposed to that which is true!

Rev. Kuiper, you have heard that Calvin rejects the idea of the offer of grace which you teach is offered equally to all; you have now read that Calvin denominates a so-called "invitation to all men unto salvation" *puerile and absurd*. Will you, please, rectify this deception on your part?

I am, of course, willing to detract this accusation if you will tell me that you never read Calvin anent the idea of the so-called offer of grace and the invitation unto salvation for all men. In that case I would say that it is very careless to make such sweeping statements as you have made in the above quotation over your name.

But that Calvin did reject the idea of the offer of grace is not so important. It is of more import that the Holy Scriptures directly oppose it. To my mind the clearest text in this respect is Mark 4:11, 12: "And He said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them."

Try and preach that to a mixed audience of believers and disobedient ones, and in the face of your text, say: God is favorably inclined to all of you with respect to the things of eternal salvation! He seriously and truly invites all of you, whether you are elect or reprobate, unto Jesus Christ the Lord!

But Jesus said: The mysteries of the Kingdom are done in parables unto them that are without, lest they should be converted and their sins should be forgiven them! Evidently, the Lord did not want that to happen!

We do preach that it is pleasing to God that those who believe come unto Him. All those that come unto Christ, He will in no wise cast out.

And, you are in duty bound to tell your audience also that this coming unto Christ, and this believing on Him, is the wondrous Gift of Grace which the Father reserves for His elect only!

Is this necessary? Yes, for it must appear that all boasting in the flesh is vain, and that he that glorieth should glory in the Lord God alone! G. Vos.

A New Kramer Dictionary

Very many people in our circles are acquainted with the brown volume of Kramer's English-Dutch, and Dutch-English Dictionary. My acquaintance with it dates back to the time when as a boy of 11 I studied English in the Netherlands. A few years later I had to translate a publication of the British Museum relative the findings of scientists who had translated the Babylonian tablets into English. I remember that my Kramer was never far from my elbow that winter, and did me an invaluable service in that dreary task.

Since then I have always possessed a copy of the thick, stocky Kramer.

The original work has run 16 editions, which were at the same time improvements of the original work.

And now we are indebted to the Dover Publications, Inc. of New, N.Y. (1780 Broadway at 57th St.) for the first American edition. This first American edition was published through special arrangements with the G. B. Van Goor Zonen's uitgeversmaatschappij N. V., 's Gravenhage en Batavia.

This is the 17th revised edition, and, as was said, the first edition printed and published on American soil.

As long as I can remember, the publishers in Holland stuck to one format: thick, stocky, and invariably in the brown color. I have always found it a difficult volume to handle.

The first American edition is far better in that respect. The old editions gave us a book, 7 by 5 inches, while this edition presents us with a book that is longer and somewhat thinner. I do not know whether it is the binding, the quality of the paper, or some other mechanical reason, but this book handles much easier than any of the former editions. They were too stiff to handle for a man who is in a hurry to get at the word he is seeking. A very clear type of letter is used, and the paper is strong and "hefty". It will wear well. The binding is of an agreeable blue color and is waterproof cloth.

The cost is \$6.00, and you can obtain the book at Baker's Book House, 1019 Wealthy St., S. E., Grand Rapids, Michigan.

There is a startling innovation in this 17th edition. Since the Board of Education (The Netherlands) has officially adopted the new Holland spelling, this edition presents us with the New Look in Holland letters. I suppose it will have to come to pass, but I do not like it. That new spelling seems to rob us of beautiful elements of the Holland language. When I see the words "Engelse Taal", I feel a shudder come over me. But I suppose we will have to get used to it. We cannot blame the Dover people for doing as they did. If the official instances in Holland approve this new-fangled

spelling, our dictionaries will certainly have to come out in the strange dress of would-be Dutch. I note that more and more Holland papers and magazines employ the New Look. And so our dictionaries must follow the trend.

It is well that we get this new edition. It is years since the 16th was printed, and you all know that language is a living thing; it grows. New terms and words are coined constantly, and older words change in meaning. The dictionary people must keep step with this constant change.

There must be many people in our circles who will benefit by this new edition. Especially since the process of Americanization is continuing, while at the same time correspondence with the Netherlands has increased tremendously since the last war. Almost every one of Holland descent has sent packages to needy relatives and friends, and is busy corresponding with them. And a good dictionary comes in very handy at times when our cousins employ some new words. I could tell you of amusing instances of this.

Moreover, ever since the separation in the Netherlands Reformed churches, we are flooded with brochures and books that tell us all about it, and a dictionary is often necessary to determine the exact shade of meaning of a Dutch word that is used by the theologians.

Well, here is your opportunity to obtain a good one.
G. Vos.

25th WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On Sunday, June 6, 1948, our beloved parents

HENRY MEULENBERG

and

TILLIE MEULENBERG (nee Visser)

hope to celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary.

We thank our Heavenly Father with them for having kept and sustained them together through the years, and pray that the Lord may grant them His peace in their remaining years.

"Blessed be the Lord who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation".—Psalm 68:19.

Mr. and Mrs. Gary Bol

Mr. and Mrs. David Meulenberg

Ronald P.

Mary J.

H. Pierre

Daniel R.

Judith K.

1 grandson.

Grand Rapids, Michigan

OUR DOCTRINE

The Expression "Sanctified In Christ" In Our Baptism Form

(Conclusion)

And that this truth as expressed in this ditactic part of our Baptism Form also applies to the children is evident from the Thanksgiving Prayer. We read: "Almighty God and merciful Father, we thank and praise Thee, that Thou hast forgiven us, and our children, all our sins, through the blood of Thy beloved Son, and adopted us to be Thy children, and sealed and confirmed the same unto us by Holy Baptism. . ." Notice, please, that we read here: And received us (also our children therefore) *through Thy Holy Spirit* as members of Thine only begotten Son, and adopted us to be Thy children, and sealed and confirmed the same unto us by Holy Baptism." All that we read, therefore, in the didactic part of our Form is applied to our children. And all this is further emphasized by the words which appear shortly before the prayer: "Since then baptism is come in the place of circumcision, therefore infants are to be baptized as heirs of the kingdom of God, and of His covenant."

Thirdly, another reason why the phrase, "sanctified in Christ", must be interpreted in a spiritual-subjective sense of the word will become apparent when we refer to related baptism forms of the days of the Reformation. Remember, our own Baptism Form was composed by Petrus Dathenus during the days of the Reformation. In the Baptism Form of A Lasco (1499-1560—born in Poland—a prominent reformer who came to England in 1550 where he labored for the cause of Protestantism), in the second question the confession is required of the parents that these children must be baptized upon the command of Christ with the seal of the adoption of His righteousness. Of greater significance is what Micron declares in his Catechism which appeared in London in the year, 1561, with a preface by A Lasco. Micron or Micronius was a Dutch Protestant who was born in the year, 1522(3) and died in the year, 1559. His ninetieth question reads: Why are not faith and confession by the mouth not demanded in the same manner of the children of the Congregation before they are baptized? And the answer reads: "Because the Congregation has a much surer testimony of their salvation out of the Word of God, than one could have from the confession of adults, and their innate sickness (because of which they can neither believe nor confess) is not imputed unto them for Christ's sake, in Whom they are considered blessed,

that is, holy, justified, pure, and believing, not less than the adult believers."

Fourthly, in support of the assertion that the phrase, "sanctified in Christ", must be spiritually-subjectively understood, I would offer you several quotations from the fathers of the time of the composition of our Baptism Form. Bullinger, a contemporary and friend of Calvin, writes in his "Huisboek", 5th decade, eighth sermon or lecture: "I pray you, why do we baptize our minor children? Because they confess with the mouth? I think not. Do we not baptize them because God has commanded to bring them unto Him? And because we believe, that God out of *pure grace and mercy through the blood of Jesus Christ has cleansed them, has adopted and made them heirs of His eternal kingdom?* Whereas we baptize the children for this reason, we thereby sufficiently declare that grace is not bestowed upon them through baptism, but that that is sealed unto them which they already possess." In his "small Catechism" Ursinus declares: "The first reason why the children must be baptized, is that the Holy Spirit operates also in them, and inclines them to believe and obey God, although they can believe as the adult believers can." Caspar van der Heyden writes in his "Short and clear proof of the Holy Baptism": "Even as in Adam our children are not merely *reckoned* as dead, but really are dead, so also in Christ they are not only *reckoned* to be alive, but they are ingrafted into Christ, even as they can be partakers of His life." And to the Baptists he directs the question: "If now the children are pure and holy . . . and such does not occur through the Holy Spirit of regeneration, the ingrafting of Christ, will you tell us whereby it does occur?" Batingius writes in his "Explanation of the Catechism of the Christian Religion": "The second proof for infant baptism is founded upon this, that the children, as well as the adults, are promised the forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit. From this we conclude thus. Whereas it is revealed, that the sign and the outward ceremony cannot in any way be denied them to whom the things signified, as the forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit, are promised and given. And whereas it appears that the forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit are promised and given the small, minor children, how then could the element of water be justly deprived the young children?" Having said this, he proves this, statement with Matt. 19:14, in connection with John 3:5, and then concludes: "So there can be no doubt of their (i.e., the children) regeneration, which is further strengthened by the fact, that regeneration is a work of the Holy Spirit." Festus Hommius, clerk of the Synod of Dordt, declares in his: "Disputationes Theologicas adversus Pontificios: "Although the children lack the aptness or adaptation (*hebbelijkheid*) of operating faith and do not possess active faith, never-

theless they may not therefore be reckoned among the positive unbelievers; not because they receive active faith in baptism, or that of them it can be said that they believe through the faith of another, namely, of the church or those who present them for baptism; but *because they have faith in the first activity, in the root and in the seed and that through the inner operation of the Holy Spirit.*" In his *Loci Communes* Antonius Walasus appeals to Calvin in his opposition to Beza and expresses himself thus: We say that the children (we take them indeterminately, leaving unto God His judgment) must be reckoned among the believers, because the seed of the Spirit of faith is in them, which some call the aptness and others the inclination of faith; out of which subsequently, through the hearing of the Word active faith is gradually formed, sometimes earlier, sometimes later." Jacobus Trigland, one of the most vehement opponents of the Arminians, directs in one of his writings the following question at the Arminians: "Whether the young children of believers are truly regenerated and sanctified by the Holy Spirit? If not, how then can they be saved. . . . and upon what ground are they then baptized, inasmuch as baptism is the washing (bad) of regeneration?" Voetius declares: "In no other way is baptism administered to children and the word of the promise applied to them, than the Supper of the Lord or baptism is applied to adults. *For inner faith and inner conversion is supposed out of the outward confession.* If these be present then they are sealed by baptism, which is actually and formally the seal; if not, then baptism seals nothing." And of the same writer we would also quote the following: "It is the consensus of opinion of Reformed theologians, that the power of baptism does not consist in the producing of regeneration, but in the confirmation of regeneration, which is already present."

From these quotations we may draw some definite conclusions. On the one hand we may say that the fathers here are surely speaking of the children of believers according to election. At first glance we might say that they do not distinguish here. They do not mention election or reprobation in these quotations. At first glance, therefore, we might draw the conclusion that the fathers here are speaking of all the children of the believers without discrimination. Against this view, however, we may object that the language of the fathers in these statements is altogether too positive. We read, for example, "that God out of pure grace and mercy, through the blood of Jesus Christ, has cleansed them, has adopted and made them heirs of His eternal kingdom." Ursinus declares that "the Holy Spirit operates also in the children and inclines them to believe and obey God, although they cannot believe as the adult believers can." And thus we could continue. The language of the fathers in

these quotations is positive. They do not presuppose or assume something to be true. What they say concerning the children they declare to be facts. They are speaking of the children according to election. And on the other hand, it is apparent that many of the fathers understood regeneration to precede baptism.

To quote Voetius again: "It is the consensus of opinion of Reformed theologians that the power of baptism does not consist in the producing of regeneration (Roman Catholicism—H.V.), but in the confirmation of regeneration, which is already present." And although Calvin also has been quoted in support of the contention that regeneration precedes baptism, yet the great Reformer remarks in his *Institutes* that the Baptists are guilty of the error that the thing signified always must precede the sign. He writes in his *Institutes*, IV, chapter 16, page 152 (Calvin is opposing the Anabaptists who, in their denial of infant baptism, contend that, inasmuch as baptism is a sign of regeneration and we know not of the infants that they are regenerated, baptism should therefore not be administered to the): "And though in adults a knowledge of the mystery ought to precede the reception of the sign, yet a different rule is to be applied to infants, as we shall presently show. . . . They contend that this passage (1 Peter 3:21, H.V.) leaves not the least room for the baptism of infants, who are not capable of that in which the truth of baptism is here stated to consist. But they frequently fall into this error, maintaining that the thing signified should always precede the sign." Calvin, therefore, in this statement evidently rejects the idea that regeneration always precedes baptism which is the washing of regeneration. A third conclusion which we may draw from the quotations of the fathers is that they all agree that the work of God's grace usually occurs in the hearts of His people during their infancy. Nothing more need be said on this point. The quotations speak for themselves.

Its Proper Significance in our Baptism Form

Let us understand the question clearly. That the phrase, "sanctified in Christ" has a subjective, spiritual connotation is plain. The question, however, is: Understood in that spiritual, subjective sense of the word, what is its significance in our Baptism Form? Does the expression refer to all the children of believers? Must we then adopt Dr. Kuyper's view of presumptive or presupposed regeneration? Must we assume that all our children are actually sanctified in Christ, a view which Kuyper advocated because of his unique conception of the sacrament? Dr. Kuyper distinguished between form and essence. The administration of baptism to a certain child was only then a sacrament if it be accompanied by the operation of the Holy Spirit. If this operation of the Holy Spirit

were lacking, then that which was administered was not really a sacrament but merely a form. Hence, the *sacrament* of baptism could only be administered and was only administered to regenerated people or children of God. But, inasmuch as not all the children of believers are elect children, how can the church administer the *sacrament* of baptism? How can we administer a sacrament instead of a mere form? And Kuyper's answer to this question was that the church must presuppose regeneration whenever the sacrament of baptism is administered.

But, please observe with me the following. In the first place, nowhere in our Baptism Form do the fathers presuppose anything. Kuyper's "presupposed regeneration" and the various quotations of the fathers which we quoted are surely not identical. Kuyper presupposes things; the fathers speak facts. Also, Kuyper presupposes regeneration of all the infants of believers; the fathers express themselves thus only with respect to the elect children. Nevertheless, although Dr. Kuyper expressed himself in favour of the doctrine of "presupposed regeneration" and the fathers regarded the sacrament of baptism as a seal of the regeneration already present in the child, nowhere in the Baptism Form or in our Confessions do these ideas occur. Nowhere is the idea of a presupposed regeneration expressed. And in the Utrecht Conclusions we read, and I quote: "Meanwhile Synod is of the opinion, that the proposition, that each elect child is therefore regenerated already before baptism, cannot be proven either upon the basis of Scripture or the Confession, inasmuch as God fulfills His promises according to His sovereignty, in His time, whether it be before or during or after baptism, so that one is required to express himself in this matter very carefully and not be wise above that which God has revealed unto us."—thus far the quotation from the Utrechtsche Conclusions. And this certainly applies to our Baptism Form. Where do we read of a presupposition in this first part: "Holy baptism witnesseth and sealeth unto us the washing away of our sins through Jesus Christ. Therefore we are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. For when we are baptized in the name of the Father, God the Father witnesseth and sealeth unto us that He doth make an eternal covenant of grace with us, and adopts us for His children and heirs, and therefore will provide us with every good thing, and avert all evil or turn it to our profit. And when we are baptized in the name of the Son, the Son sealeth unto us, that He doth wash us in His blood from all our sins, incorporating us into the fellowship of His death and resurrection, so that we are freed from all our sins, and accounted righteous before God. In like manner, when we are baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost assures us, by this holy sacrament, that He will dwell in us,

and sanctify us to be members of Christ, applying unto us, that which we have in Christ, namely, the washing away of our sins, and the daily renewing of our lives, till we shall finally be presented without spot or wrinkle among the assembly of the elect in life eternal." Neither is the idea of a presupposition present in the words: "Since then baptism is come in the place of circumcision, therefore infants are to be baptized as heirs of the kingdom of God, and of His covenant." The first question addressed to the parents is also devoid of all presupposition: "Whether you acknowledge, that although our children are conceived and born in sin, and therefore are subject to all miseries, yea, to condemnation itself; yet that they are sanctified in Christ, and therefore, as members of His Church ought to be baptized?" And, finally, the language of the Thanksgiving Prayer is equally positive: "Almighty God and merciful Father, we thank and praise Thee, that Thou hast forgiven us, and our children, all our sins, through the blood of Thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, and received us through Thy Holy Spirit as members of Thine only begotten Son, and adopted us to be Thy children, and sealed and confirmed the same unto us by holy baptism." Secondly, in connection with the language of our Baptism Form, please note with me the language of the first question. That first question does not read, "Whether you acknowledge, that although this child or these children is or are conceived and born in sin. . . ." But we read here of "our children". This is significant. In the light of the first prayer, it is evidence that the fathers purposely spoke of "our children" in this first question instead of "this child" or "these children". In that prayer the fathers do speak of "these children". Is it not therefore significant that, in this first question, when the fathers speak of a fact, they do not speak of "these children" but of "our children"?

We conclude, therefore, that the fathers speak here, in this first question as well as throughout the Baptism Form, of the church organically and her seed. And they speak of the church according to election. This does not necessarily mean, therefore, that these children are "sanctified in Christ" before the administration of the sacrament of baptism, and that, in this Baptism Form they either presuppose regeneration in our children or believe it to be a fact. But it does mean that, as a rule, our elect children are regenerated during infancy, and of this fact also the administration of baptism is then a sign and seal. And to this fact the parents testify, when they answer the first question propounded unto them.

The Thanksgiving Prayer.

Permit us, in conclusion, to say a few words about the Thanksgiving prayer. We quote it in full: "Almighty God and merciful Father, we thank and praise

Thee, that Thou hast forgiven us, and our children, all our sins, through the blood of Thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, and received us through Thy Holy Spirit as members of Thine only begotten Son, and adopted us to be Thy children, and sealed and confirmed the same unto us by holy baptism: we beseech Thee, through the same Son of thy love, that Thou wilt be pleased always to govern these baptized children by Thy Holy Spirit, that they may be piously and religiously educated, increase and grow up in the Lord Jesus Christ, that they then may acknowledge Thy Fatherly goodness and mercy, which Thou hast shown to them and us, and live in all righteousness, under our only Teacher, King, and High Priest, Jesus Christ; and manfully fight against, and overcome sin, the devil and his whole dominion, to the end that they may eternally praise and magnify Thee, and Thy Son Jesus Christ, together with the Holy Ghost, the only true God. Amen." The explanation of this prayer which satisfies me completely is that which was given by the Rev. Hoeksema in Volume IX of our Standard Bearer.

First, we would remark that the first part of this prayer cannot be applied to all the children. The fathers surely knew that Christ did not die for all men. All their writings, and our Confessions emphasize this truth. They could not believe that all the children had been received by the Holy Spirit as members of God's only begotten Son and adopted to be His children. This appears from the language of the entire Baptism Form whose language is positive throughout.

Secondly, in the second part of this prayer, when the church prays that "Thou wilt be pleased always to govern these baptized children by Thy Holy Spirit, that they may be piously and religiously educated, increase and grow up in the Lord Jesus Christ. . . . the fathers place these children, in their address and prayer to God, among the elect seed. This not only explains why they pray that it may please the Lord always to govern them by the Holy Spirit, etc., but also why they are able to say that God has shown His Fatherly goodness and mercy, not only to us, but also to them. And consequently, this prayer must be prayed and only then can be understood if we insert the thought of Scripture: According to Thy will.

Thirdly, and finally, should or could not the fathers have expressed themselves more clearly in this final prayer or thanksgiving? To this we answer, in the first place, that the language of the fathers here is surely the language of the Scriptures. According to Gen. 17:7, God will establish His covenant with Abraham and his seed, and notice that the word "seed" appears there without any limitation. If then, according to Romans 9, we are taught that this promise does not apply to all the natural seed of Abraham, this does not alter the fact, that, although all is not Israel that is called Israel, yet they are all called Israel. In

the various epistles of the New Testament the entire church, whether located at Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colosse, etc., is addressed as saints in Christ Jesus, beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, elect strangers, holy and beloved of God, etc. And please understand that these words are addressed to the entire church. These names indeed apply to all. This must be understood and can only be understood on the basis of the principle that the whole body is addressed by the name which it has received according to its elect kernel. The reprobate, although not saints in Christ Jesus, beloved of God, etc., bear the name of the elect because, organically, they constitute one body with the people of God in the midst of the world.

In this light I wish to pray this thanksgiving prayer. All are spoken of according to election. Also the children are addressed according to God's decree of election. Whether this particular child or these particular children will actually grow up as members of Christ's body we may safely leave in the hands of God. And, therefore, we pray with the reservation of course, that all this may occur according to the will of our God. Then our prayer will surely be heard.

H. Veldman.

IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church hereby expresses its sincere sympathy and condolence with its fellow-member and brother, Henry Knott, in the loss of his mother,

MRS. ANDREW KNOTT

May the God of all mercies comfort him and also bless this loss to his heart and the hearts of all the bereaved family.

Consistory, First Protestant Reformed Church

By—Rev. H. De Wolf, Pres.

Sidney De Young, Clerk.

CALL TO SYNOD

The Consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church being designated the calling church by the last Synod, hereby notifies the churches that Synod will convene on June 2, 1948. The pre-synodical prayer service will be held in the auditorium of the First Church Tuesday, June 1, at 8:00 P.M., with Rev. J. De Jong, president of the 1947 Synod, conducting the service. The first session of Synod on Wednesday A.M., will be held at our Fourth Church and all succeeding sessions at the First Protestant Reformed Church. Requests for lodging will kindly be forwarded to the undersigned.

Consistory First Prot. Ref. Church,

By—Sidney De Young, Clerk

1001 Franklin St., S. E.

Grand Rapids 7, Michigan.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

Nabal, The Man Of Maon

The Lord had given Saul into David's hand—Saul, the man who without a just cause, sought David's life to take it. But David, being a man who feared God, spared the king's life.

It was about this time that Samuel died. All Israel, through its representatives, assembled together, and mourned his passing. For the seer was a great man of God. In his person had been concentrated the three-fold office of judge (king) prophet, and priest in a time when there was no king in Israel, when the priesthood had fallen into disrepute, and when every one was doing what seemed right in his own eyes. The peculiar task to which the Lord had assigned him was to guide the destinies of the nation in the transition of its government from the judgeship to the kingship. All his prophesying was built around the truth that obedience is better than sacrifice, and that the safety of the nation lay solely in its walking in the way of God's covenant. Samuel's eyes had been opened to this truth by the spiritual whoredoms of the people in connection with the cessation of the worship at the tabernacle that resulted from the capture of the ark of the covenant and the separation of the ark and the sanctuary. These were God's doings, the speech of which Samuel, as taught by the Lord, had understood and proclaimed; and herein lay his significance for prophecy. Samuel, as judge, had led no armies into battle; but he had been a man of prayer, and in response to his prayers the Lord had delivered His people.

This was the man Samuel. And now that he was dead, the whole nation paid him homage by lamenting his decease. It was a public demonstration of sorrow for which the whole nation, through its representatives, assembled in the seer's place of residence on the day of his burial. But the grief of the true Israel only could be genuine. "And they buried him in his house at Ramah."

It may be asked why Saul had not sought Samuel's life to take it. The question is pertinent. Samuel in life had been of the party of David. He had been the one to anoint David. More than once he had openly befriended the son of Jesse. It was to Samuel that David had fled at the outbreak of Saul's persecutions of him. And the two of them—David and the seer—had gone and dwelt in Naioth. For in Naioth dwelt a company of prophets of whom the seer was president. In the quiet retreat of these prophets David took up his residence. Here it was that Saul had found him. We know the outcome of the king's attempt to

lay hold on that occasion. The attempt ended in failure, thanks to the Lord's gracious interposition in behalf of his servant. As overcome by the ecstasy, Saul fell unconscious to the ground and lay down naked all day and all night. This had given David just that much time to escape. And Saul returned to his home. He took no action against the seer at that time or at any time later on. He did not dare. For Samuel was held in too high esteem by the people. Saul's fear of the people was of the Lord, which is equivalent to saying that it was God who continually protected Samuel against the king's wrath.

Now follows the story of David's clash with Nabal of Maon. David had gone down from his hitherto abode in the high land of Engedi southward into the wilderness of Paran, which extended southward from the mountains of Judah far to the desert of Sinai. The reason of this move is not stated. Perhaps the wilderness of Judah no longer afforded sustenance to David and his men.

As to Nabal, in the vocabulary of the Holy Scriptures, the name that he bears means *stupid, foolish*, not in the rational-intellectual but in the spiritual-ethical sense. The name becomes the man. For as his name is so is he. He is an impious, abandoned, wicked person, thus a fool (verse 25 of chapter 25). The word *nabal* in its verbal form and as used of falling and faded leaves and flowers means to be or become withered, faded. But the word is also applied to men as a signification of a state of spiritual withering. Such was the state of Nabal. He was withered, morally depraved, foolish, acting foolishly. Accordingly his servant calls him "a son of Belial" (verse 15), namely a man without moral worth (the literal meaning of this name is: without worth), thus worthless, wicked, vile, "churlish and evil in his doings" (verse 3)—churlish (Hebrew, *kashah*) that is, hard, difficult, stubborn. "He is such a son of Belial," says the servant, "that a man cannot speak to him him." He will not listen to godly advice, is unsusceptible to counsel truly wise. The treatment that he affords David and his men fully bears out the truth of these statements as we shall see presently.

Nabal, then, is a bad man. In what respect is he bad? What are his evil doings? Just how has he been ordering his life? Has he been committing one crime after another? Has he offended over and over against the outward precepts of the law? Is he a robber or a murderer or adulterer or a blasphemer, so that the magistrates in Israel should have put him to death long ago? Is this what the sacred text means to reveal of the man in stating that he is evil in his doings? Not at all. The thought conveyed is not that Nabal is a criminal, an outlaw, a gangster. For all that the text reveals of the man, his past life may be as free of statutory offences—offences that call for punishment

by Israel's magistrates—as the life of any member of the theocracy. Formally, he may have been living strictly within the law, the moral as well as the ceremonial and civil, and thus treading God's courts, paying the tithes, keeping the new moons and the sabbaths and the appointed feasts, and making prayers. He may be generous to the poor. Certain it is that he is good to his servants, the shearers of his sheep. He prepares for them a feast in his house, like the feast of a king (verse 36). And he eats and drinks with them, joins them in their merry-making. But he is churlish, says the text. A man cannot speak to him. But these statements must be rightly understood. Nabal is the easiest man to speak to when the conversation turns on the subject of how he may increase his business. Only when good men must remind him of his heavenly calling, do they find it impossible to talk to the man. For Nabal is not interested in right principles of action, especially if doing the right clashes with his material interests and well-being. For Nabal is a son of Belial. He worships at the shrine of Mammon. His god is his belly. He minds earthly things. He works for the bread that perishes. He is evil in his doings. The text makes mention of but one such evil doing, namely, the evil treatment that he afforded David and his men. It is the only evil doing of the man in which the sacred writer is interested. But there must have been more of them of a like character. Offences they were against the law of love and thus unpunishable by Israel's magistrates.

Yet, in a formal sense and in several ways Nabal may have been a paragon of virtue. Outwardly he may have been as good a member of the theocracy as there were in Israel. Certainly, he is one of the richest. He is called a man of Maon, after the city in which he dwells. But his possessions on the contrary are in Carmel on the elevated plain of the highland of Judah, perhaps about a mile from Maon. Here the man pastures three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. He is thus a man "very great" (verse 2). It shows that in a natural sense he is not a fool at all; in a natural sense he is wise and prudent; he has all that it requires in the way of natural ability to build up a large business and make of it a going concern. The text also contains a statement of his origin, which accords with his importance as a man "great" by his riches. Nabal "was of the house of Caleb". Caleb had received for a possession the region of Hebron, near which Maon and Carmel lay (Josh. 15:13ff.) But for all his greatness Nabal is a fool. But he is married to a woman who is not a fool. Her name is Abigail. Of her it is stated that "she was a woman of good understanding," meaning, that she fears God in love and is therefore a truly wise person. Besides, she is beautiful of form.

In Paran David and his men come upon Nabal's flocks and their shepherds. God-fearing and law-abiding, David respects Nabal's right to these his possessions. He does the shepherds no injury; he refrains from raiding the flocks. Not only so, but he and his men are a wall unto them, that is, a powerful protection against the wild beasts and the attacks of robbers from the Arabian desert. Time passes on, and it is now the season of sheep-shearing. It is a joyous time; and the heart of every right-minded proprietor is open. Nabal especially has reason to be glad. Under the watchful care of David and his band, his flocks have richly increased not only but not a sheep or a goat is missing. David has done Nabal much good; and he has a right to expect that Nabal will do him good in return, not because he has established a legal claim upon Nabal's possessions but because it is Nabal's duty before God to do well by him. For David is a righteous servant of the Lord, poor, needy, and afflicted. Without a cause, Saul seeks his life to take it. For this reason alone, apart from the good that David has done the man, Nabal's heart should be open to him.

So David selects ten young men and sends them to Nabal to ask him "in my name of his peace." He puts into the mouths of the men this greeting, "To life—that is, live thou long—peace be to thee, peace be to thy house, and peace be upon all that thou hast."

Now follows a statement of the request that David's men in his name are to direct to Nabal. The regular re-occurring sheep-shearing was one of the greatest events in the housekeeping of such an oriental establishment. This explains the introductory words of the petition, "And now I have heard that thou hast shearers. . . . Nabal is next to be reminded of the peaceful association of his men with Nabal's herdsmen during his stay in the wilderness, of the forbearance exercised by his warriors towards the unarmed herdsmen, and finally of the protection afforded the herdsmen by David's people against the raids of the wild tribes of the desert, "now thy shepherds which were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there ought missing unto them, all the while they were in Carmel. Ask thy men and they will shew thee." Then follows the request proper, "Wherefore let the young men find favor in thine eyes: for we come in a good day: give, I pray thee, whatever cometh into thine hand unto thine servants, and to thy son David." Characteristic of these words are their urgency. Through his men David implores, beseeches Nabal to show him favor. The need of sustenance for himself and his men is that pressing. And Nabal will give what his hands find, that is, as much as pleases him. Whatever he thinks he can spare will be received with greatest gratitude. "To thy servants and son David." The expression betokens deepest reverence and piety of

the younger men toward the older.

The men come to Nabal. They speak their request "according to all these words in the name of David and rested, that is, according to oriental custom in all such visits, they sat down. Nabal gives his answer, "Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants nowadays that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be?"

It is an astounding reply that Nabal tenders these men. For he must perceive, as well as his wife and servant perceive later on, that he pursues a dangerous course. What might not an enraged David do to him! Besides, would it not be to his material advantage that he firmly establish himself in the good graces of his benefactor by granting his request? Would not a friendly David continue to protect his possessions in the wilderness? What is it then that causes the man to react as he does? He is not a miser who cannot part with a few sheep. He holds a feast in his house, like the feast of a king. Yet he sends the men away empty-handed. What makes him to do that? His carnal fear of Saul and hatred of David.

His carnal fear of Saul. It is *David* who turns to him for some bread. Nabal is afraid to give him bread. The highpriest Ahimelech had done that and paid with his life, he and all the priests of Nob. Saul had ordered them slain to a man. Mindful of that massacre, does Nabal tremble as he thinks of the fate that might be awaiting him and his household, should he now give bread to the son of Jesse? This is not a baseless conjecture. His saying to the men, "There be many servants nowadays that break away each from his master," is an unmistakeable and clear allusion to Saul. It is certain that the reply is inspired partly by fear of what the king might do to him, should he befriend David. Nabal must have decided how to answer these men long before their arrival. For he must have been expecting theme, seeing that he could not have remained ignorant of what David and his band was doing for him there in the wilderness. That Nabal allows himself to be deterred by fear of Saul to give aid and succor to David is his wickedness. David is the Lord's righteous servant, Israel's anointed king. All know by now that he is a deliverer sent of God: for no man can do the works that he does except the Lord be with him. He fights the Lord's battles, and evil has not been found in him all his days. But this servant, not yet having come into his kingdom, is poor and afflicted. Godless men seek his life to take it. This servant in his need now asks some bread of Nabal, whom he has done much good. And Nabal, as inspired by the fear of what godless men can do him, and thus as constrained by the love of this life, rails at this servant and orders him

away without giving him bread. For all Nabal cares, David may perish of hunger, if only Nabal may have his flocks and eat, drink, and be merry. For the pleasures of this life, Nabal crucified Christ as he stands before him in David. But Nabal can only come to this because he hates the righteous and righteousness. Nabal hates God.

Thus, it is not only fear of Saul and love of this life that causes Nabal to ill-treat the son of Jesse, but his hatred of David as well. Nabal is bitter toward David. He rails at his men. He moves David to the quick by the vile logic of his reply. His argument is this, "Nowadays there be many servants who break away each from his own master. For all I know you and your leader, David, may be such good-for-nothing runaways, rebellers against authority. If so, I would be giving my bread to upstarts. That would be bad for me. I would soon find myself in a terrible predicament. I could give and continue to give until my store were exhausted. For the land today is filled with such characters. Hearing of my generosity to you, all of them would come begging of me bread. "Shall I then take my bread. . . . and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be?" "That would be a dangerous procedure on my part, a precarious course to follow, and for my servants thoroughly unjust. For if I were to provide in the needs of every upstart in the land, I would have to deprive my servants."

That Nabal should use this argument on David can only be because he hates the son of Jesse as much as he fears Saul and loves this life. For David is not an upstart, but a law-abiding member of the theocracy, as his treatment that he has afforded Nabal's possessions in the wilderness has fully demonstrated. David is a just man, sorely afflicted by the godless Saul, appointed to succeed Saul on the throne and by whose hand the Lord is now delivering his people and has been for some time all in confirmation of his anointing. And this Nabal well knows. But being bitterly disposed toward David and towards God's people, the true Israel, he wills to ignore it and treats David as though he were one of the bad men in Israel.

But the wickedness of Nabal's reply runs still deeper. His statement, "Nowadays there be many servants breaking away, each from his own master," call for some more attention. The subject of the statement—many servants—is certainly meant as a designation of David and his band, so that the thrust of Nabal's questions, "Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse?" is verily, 'Is he that David who broke away from Saul and seeks to capture his throne? And are you men followers of that rebel?' For all I know, your leader may be that David and you the followers of that vile man.' Nabal, being a son of Belial, is of the party of Saul. He takes Saul's side against David.

He pronounces Saul's charges against David true and thus justifies Saul's doing according to which he seeks David's life to take it. But Nabal refrains from making any positive statement in telling the men what he thinks of them and their leader. He simply asks questions, (he is a cautious man) which he, himself, answers in the affirmative not by word of mouth but by sending away the men empty-handed. Nabal is a man evil in his doings.

(Besides the one given above, there are other possible interpretations of Nabal's reply, namely the following:

1. There be many servants now a days that break away each from his own master. Shall I then take my bread. . . . and give it to men, whom I know not whence they be, 'that is, to whom they belong, from whom they broke away.' This interpretation is too unlikely. It borders on the absurd. Certainly, Nabal meant not to tell the men that he would have no scruples in giving them of his substance if only he knew the masters against which they rebelled."

2. "Who is David? And who is the son of Jesse?—meaning, 'I know David well, but who is the son of Jesse that I should give him of my bread? He is a rebel, that's what he is. He schemes to capture Saul's throne.' The remainder of the answer then applies only to David's followers, and the thought conveyed is this, 'As for you his followers, for all I know, you, too, may be worthless runaways like your leader, all of you. For now a days there be many servants breaking away every one from his own master. The land is filled with such people. Should I then take my bread and give it unto men whom I know not, whence they be, that is, whom I know not whether they be rebels or law-abiding and god-fearing men?' This is not an unlikely interpretation. It does not differ materially from the one to which I give preference. However interpreted, Nabal's reply is thoroughly vicious.")

G. M. Ophoff.

50th WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On Thursday, May 20, 1948, D. V., our beloved parents

MR. and MRS. O. VAN ELLEN

hope to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary by having Open-House in the afternoon from 3 to 5, and in the evening from 7 to 10 o'clock.

Their grateful children:

Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Bolt

Mr. and Mrs. Louis Knoll

4 grandchildren.

1110 Dunham St., S. E.
Grand Rapids, Mich.

SION'S ZANGEN

Majesteit En Heerlijkheid

(Psalm 104; Tweede Deel)

We waren toegekomen aan het vijfde vers, in den Psalm die zingt van Gods majesteit en heerlijkheid, zooals die deugden uitgespreid liggen over de werken Zijner handen in de natuur rondom ons en boven ons. De Psalm gewaagt ook nog wel van de dingen des Koninkrijks Zijner liefde, doch de hoofdzaak hier is echter de werken Gods zooals we die zien en beleven op aarde en in verband met die aarde.

"Hij heeft de aarde gegrond op hare grondvesten. . . ."

Ik denk, dat de tegenwoordige natuurkundigen en geleerden op het gebied der kosmologie wel wat zullen glimlachen bij het gedurig lezen van dezen psalm; en dan vooral bij het lezen van het vijfde vers. De aarde gegrondvest op hare grondvesten? En dan zullen zij U vertellen, dat de aardbol door het luchtruim vliegt met een ontzettende snelheid, maar dat er geen sprake is van een dusgenaamd "fundament" der aarde of ook van een "grondvesten" der aarde.

We zullen de ongeloovige en goddelooze stakkerds laten glimlachen, en hen beklagen. Alle glimlachen in spot en hoon ten overstaan van Gods werken is een vreeselijk ding. Het ware beter dat wij niet geboren waren, of indien al geboren, dat men een molensteen om onze kinder-hals gehangen, en zoo in de diepte der zee geworpen had. Dat ware beter dan te lachen om Psalm 104:5. Bovendien, we behoeven waarlijk niet te wachten op de verlichte (?) eeuwen der wereld om te hooren van den zwevenden aardbol. Gods Heilige Geest heeft eeuwen geleden gezegd, dat God de aarde hangt aan een niet. Job 26:7.

Wat beteekent het dan, dat de psalm gewaagt van een grondvesten der aarde? Het antwoord is niet moeilijk. De goddeloozen zelf zullen ons helpen om het te verklaren. Spreken zij ook niet van "terra firma"? En dat beteekent, dat de aarde vast is, vast staat, dat men op de aarde rekenen kan, enz. Is het geen wonder, dat alles zoo precies gaat en staat, loopt en vliegt, hangt en zweeft? We loopen en kuieren op aarde; we bouwen onze huizen en fabrieken; we zaaien en beelden de aarde; we zetten onze horloge's en uurwerken; we rekenen uit en hebben onzen raad uren, dagen, maanden en jaren vooruit, steunende en rekenende op het vast-staan der aarde, en met haar, op het vast-staan der andere hemellichamen. Er is een geleerde geweest die uitrekende, dat de mate onzer dagen geen honderdste van een seconde verschilt over een periode van twee duizend jaren.

God heeft de aarde gefundeerd op hare grondvesten.

“... zij zal nimmermeer noch eeuwiglijk wankelen.”

Hoe zit dat?

Lezen we niet in Openbaring 20:11: “En ik zag eenen grooten witten troon, en Dengene die daarop zat, van wiens aangezicht de aarde en de hemel wegvlood, en geene plaats is voor die gevonden”? Hoe lezen we hier dan, dat de aarde tot in der eeuwigheid vast zal staan?

Het antwoord is gemakkelijk: de aarde zal wel door een proces van vuur gaan en gezuiverd worden, doch zij zal staan blijven tot in alle eeuwigheid, ofschoon gezuiverd, geheiligd, verhoogd, verhemelscht, wedergeboren. Er is een wedergeboorte aller dingen, en de aarde zal daar ook in deelen. Dus de aarde blijft tot in der eeuwigheid, en zij blijft vast en onbewogen. Zegt Jezus niet, dat de zachtmoedigen zalig zijn, omdat zij het aardrijk zullen beërven? En naar de profetie van Jesaja en van Petrus en van Johannes, verwachten wij nieuwe hemelen en een nieuwe aarde. Nu dan, die nieuwe aarde is geen nieuwe aarde in den zin, dat het een *andere* schepping zou zijn, maar een nieuwe aarde in den zin van een *herschapen* aarde komt er voor Gods volk.

En nu verder.

“Gij hadt ze (dat is, die aarde) met den afgrond als met een kleed overdekt; de wateren stonden boven de bergen.”

Deze woorden brengen ons in gedachtenis de geschiedenis der schepping, waar in weinige woorden ons verhaald wordt van het geboren worden der dingen. De aarde nu was woest en ledig, en duisternis was op den afgrond! De psalmist brengt ons terug tot den toestand der aarde vooraleer de Heere scheiding maakte tusschen het water en het droge. Juist hoe de aarde er toen uitzag is ons niet bekend. Het was chaotisch, donker, woest en ledig. En ik denk dat de zanger Israels ons deze openbaring geeft of accentueert om haar lateren toestand van orde en schoonheid zooveel te heerlijker af te malen.

“Van Uw schelden vloten zij, zij haastten zich weg voor de stem Uws donders.”

Poëtische taal. Men scheldt niet hetgeen dood, ongevoelig, onpersoonlijk en levenloos is. En dat de Heere hier van het schelden der wateren spreekt, beteekent mijns inziens, omdat God plannen had met die aarde. Zij moest droog worden om de arena te worden van het machtig wereld gebeuren. Zoolang de aarde bedekt was met water kon de mensch niet komen, en bij en na diens val, kon de Christus niet komen om de fundamenten te leggen voor een nieuwen hemel en een nieuwe aarde. Het water moet weg! En de Heere “schold” de wateren. Het ziet op Zijn machtwoord der voorzienigheid, of ook wel, op het

secondaire scheppingswerk van God op den derden dag der scheppingsweek.

Daar gaan zij: zij haastten zich, want God de Heere dondert tot hen Zijn machtige stem. Wat schepsel zal traag zijn als God de Heere spreekt?

“De bergen rezen op, de dalen daalden, ter plaatse die Gij voor hen gegrond hadt. Gij hebt eenen paal gesteld dien zij niet overgaan zullen; zij zullen de aarde niet weder bedekken.”

De wateren der zeeën en der oceanen zijn vreeselijk van vermogen. Er zit iets angstigs in. Soms wordt de zee ons bezongen en beschreven als iets persoonlijks, en dan spreekt de Heilige Schrift van de “hoogmoed” der golven, Job 38:10 en 11. In die plaats wordt gesproken van dezelfde waarheid als in onzen tekst. Daar zegt God zelfs, dat Hij die zee een grendel en deur gezet heeft tegen haar hoogmoed. En in Jeremia 5:22 gewaagt de profeet van dezelfde werken Gods ten overstaan van de zee, die wel bruist en zich beweegt, doch die haar perk, haar door God gezet, niet zal overschrijden.

Nu dan, die zee bedekte de aarde en maakte die aarde tot een woeste en ledige massa, doch toen de Heere op haar “schold” toen is die zee teruggevloden en is gebleven binnen de perken haar door God gesteld. Op die regel is eene uitzondering gemaakt door God Zelf in de dagen van Noach. Toen heeft God voor tijd en wijle de wateren gebruikt om de eerste wereld met den zondvloed te straffen. Doch daarvoor en daarna blijven de zeeën en de oceanen binnen de perken. En het “zand” is dus daar rondom die hoogmoedige zee om haar verschrikkelijke stroomen tegen te houden. Zie: Jer. 5:22.

Maar de Heere gebruikt het water tot Zijn hoog en verheven doel. Luistert slechts: “Die de fonteynen uitzendt door de dalen, dat zij tusschen de gebergten benen wandelen.”

Er is veel water, dat opborrelt uit de aarde. Er zijn de “fonteynen des grooten afgronds”. En zij zijn de schatkamers van God, die Hij gebruikt tot verfrissing en tot laving en tot vruchtbaarmaking der aarde. Hij doet die wateren opborrelen en zij worden vergaderd in beekjes, rivieren en stroomen, en beginnen dan hun wandeling door de aarde heen. De idee der rivier is de milde uitdeeling der dingen Gods. Zij schijnen wel te leven, die rivieren en stroomen. Zij murmelen, kabbelen of storten neer met groot gedruisch. Maar ze zijn allen van God. In een anderen psalm hooren we van het gedruisch “Uwer” watergoten!! En als die stroomen hun weg zoeken en vinden, dan spreken ze soms. Reden waarom er in Gods Woord gewaagd wordt van den vrede die zijn zal als een rivier. Zet U aan den oever van een stroom en luistert. Ge zult ervaren, dat er vrede in die stem is. En ge wordt zeer stille. Dat murmelen en dat spreken van die rivieren gaat soms over in zingen. De Heilige

Geest roept hen toe: Laat al de stroomen vroolijk zingen, de handen klappen naar omhoog! O, Gods sprake in de natuur is verrukkelijk.

“Zij drenken al het gedierte des velds, de woudezels breken er hunnen dorst mede.”

Wie zal er nu toch om de vogels denken? God doet het, anders stond het er treurig bij met hen. Dat is waar, ook al is het dat men tegenwoordig allerlei wetten gemaakt heeft om het gevleugelte en de min of meer wilde beesten te beschermen. Bovendien, als men al die dieren- en vogelbescherming op den keper beschouwt, dan zien we dat het niet dan zelfzuchtigheid van den mensch is. Men doet het om zichzelf en niet voor de dieren. Maar God doet het om de dieren. Hij hoort het roepen van de jonge raven. Gods barmhartigheid is over alle Zijne werken. Ziet het maar aan de rivieren en haar werk.

Daar komen de woudezels! De beesten zijn dorstig. Ge kunt het hun aanzien. Maar, geen nood! Ze zijn aan Gods goedheid over hen gewend. Zij volgen hun “instinct”. Ze zoeken de waterplaatsen op. En hun dorst breken ze in het frissche water. Een der schoonste psalmen heeft een ander dorstig dier, dat haar dorst leschte, gebruikt als een voorbeeld van Gods volk, dat moede en mat zich tot God voegt om laving, om laving: ‘t Hijgend hert, der jacht ontkomen!

“Bij dezelve woont het gevolgelte des hemels, een stem gevende van tusschen de takken.”

Wat zitten hier schoone gedachten in.

De vogelen des hemels!

Zij hebben een heerlijke sprake der symboliek, door Gods Woord gebruikt om U te troosten.

Laat mij er U op wijzen.

Soms wordt het benauwd op aarde voor des Heeren kerk. Dan woeden de heidenen en bedenken de volken ijdelheid tegen God en tegen Zijn Gezalfde. En dan moet de kerk het ontgelden. Dan zuchtten zij: Och dat mij iemand vleugelen als eener duive gawe: ik zoude henenvliegen waar ik blijven mocht; zie, ik zoude ver wegzwerfen, ik zoude vernachten in de woestijn. Sela. Ik zoude haasten, dat ik ontkwame van den drijvenden wind, van den storm. Ps. 55:7-9.

Maar dat mag nog niet. We mogen geen “wereldvlucht” zoeken. We moeten blijven en strijden te midden van den “roep des vijands, vanwege de bangstiging des goddeloozen.”

En toch krijgen we de vleugelen. Leest Openb. 12:14. Daar ontvangt de vrouw, en dat is de kerk Gods, “twee vleugelen eens grooten arends”.

De vogels zijn symboliek van vrije beweging. Daarom spreekt mijn tekst van het gevogelte des hemels. Als kind zagen we het vliegen, het scheerend vliegen der zwaluwen; dan zuchtten we ietwat, en keerden ons af.

Nu dan, die vogelkens worden wel verzorgd door

hun God. Zij wonen bij de rivieren. Rondom die uitdeelaars van water groeit het geboomte, en in hunne takken bouwt de vogel haar nest. Is hun nestje dan klaar, dan worden de eieren gelegd, uitgebroed en door de moeder-, en vader-vogel wordt gezorgd voor de kleine naakte vogeltjes. En daarna wordt er gezongen en gekwinkeleerd in de takken van het geboomte naar hartelust. Het koor der vogels is heerlijk. Denkt aan de leeuwerik en de vink, en talloos anderen. Hebt ge er wel eens op gelet, dat het koor der vogelen altijd harmonieus is, al zingen en kwinkeleeren er nog zoveel in getale en in soort? God is de directeur van deze zangers der aarde.

Soms zingen zij vanuit de takken in den nacht. Dat zijn de nachtegalen. Vele jaren geleden heb ik ze gehoord, maar al is het zoolang geleden, kan ik het zoete slaan van die vogelen nooit vergeten.

“Hij drenkt de bergen uit Zijne opperzalen, de aarde wordt verzadigd van de vrucht Uwer werken.”

Wat is God toch dicht bij dezen zanger. Overal wordt Hij door den psalmist gezien en gehoord. En zoo is het metterdaad. De regen komt neder in stroomen op het hooge gebergte, en de bergstroom wordt geboren. Ik heb dat éénmaal meegemaakt; en het is vreeselijk. San Bernardino, Colton, Riverside, Redlands en Los Angeles zullen het nooit weer vergeten. De Heere opende Zijn opperzalen boven de San Bernardino bergen, en we hoorden het gebruik van een wolkbreuk. En daar kwamen de stroomen van water. Hier was meer dan drenking.

En door de eeuwen heen gaat de Heere door met het drenken der bergen, zoodat het water omneer mag vloeien om het landschap rondom de bergmassa's te bevruchten. Er moet verzadiging komen voor de aarde. En die verzadiging is er dan ook gekomen. Doch denkt er aan: het is de “vrucht van Gods werken.”

Hoe wonderlijk zijn Uwe werken, O Heere!

Ook weet het mijn ziel zeer wel.

Laat ons ervan zingen, van zingen!

G. Vos.

IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory of the Protestant Reformed Church, Randolph, Wisconsin, herewith expresses its sympathy with their fellow-member, deacon Dewey Alsum in the death of his eldest brother,

JOHN ALSUM

That the Lord may grant His grace to our brother and to all the bereaved relatives, is our prayer. May it ever become clear that the Lord alone doeth all things well.

Consistory, Randolph Prot. Ref. Church,
Rev. G. C. Lubbers, Pres.
Mr. Wm. Huizenga, Clerk.

IN HIS FEAR

What Manner Of Persons?

The Day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night.
The heavens shall pass away with a great noise.
The elements shall melt with a fervent heat.

The earth also and all the works that are therein shall be burned up.

Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be?

Did you ever set yourself squarely before this question which Peter presents in II Peter 3:11? And what kind of person did you find yourself to be?

Shall we be like the world? Shall we deny the Day of the Lord? Shall we behave as those of whom we sing?:

“To their lands they give their name,
In the hope of lasting fame”.

But listen! The earth also and all the works that are therein shall be burned up. All this earth, the gigantic mountains and the oceans of water shall be burned up. The wood, the paper, the cloth and what we call inflammable things shall burn, but so shall the rocks, the steel, the concrete and the soil. And all the works that are therein likewise shall burn up. The little corner of paper flying aimlessly across your yard in the breeze will burn up. It is the work of man, but your Empire State Buildings, your skyscrapers shall likewise burn up. The colossal pyramids in Egypt as well as every grain of sand upon the beach will all burn up, and the elements shall melt. Nothing man has ever made shall pass through that fire. It will all perish through it.

The new heavens and the new earth will not have our radios and radar, our automobiles and planes, our telephone and telescope. These are the works that are now in the world, but they shall all be burned up. The new heavens and the new earth are a spiritual realm in which the present things have no place. And as the glorified body of Christ arose through the rocks and entered the room where the disciples were assembled the doors and windows being locked, so the glorified bodies of God's people in the new earth will have no use for nor contact with our radios, automobiles, telephones and the like. All man has ever made and still will make is for this world only and will not enter into the new creation.

Shall we live as though these things are our goal and as though they are the desire of our hearts? Men may have countries named after them. Streets and

cities may bear their names. Buildings may be called by the names of prominent citizens whose only virtue(?) may be that they were able to amass the money of others. A candy bar or cookie may bear their name far and wide. But these things shall have their end. Beautiful paintings may bear the signature of a great man according to the standards of the world. Inspiring harmonies and melody progressions may bring fame to the name of a man who died before he was recognized. But God says of it all: I WILL BURN IT ALL UP! The earth also AND THE WORKS THAT ARE THEREIN shall be burned up. Your valuable museum pieces and art gallery collections, your books and songs, your important government documents and congressional records, your symphonies and sonnets, all these with all the other things men have made and safely guarded through the ages, God shall destroy. God's opinion of the value of these things and man's opinion of these things certainly vary. What manner of person ought we then to be? Should our evaluation of these things be that of the world or that of God?

Nay, that does not mean that we may not touch these things. It does not mean that we may not use or even enjoy these things. But our use and enjoyment of them must be subservient to our looking for and hasting unto the day of the Lord. It is folly to seek these things as an end in themselves, for these things shall end in utter destruction and shall pass away. It is an act of wisdom to use them—either by employing them or avoiding them—as means to walk in all holiness and godliness. In contact with the things in the world we must come. Every day in every way we touch the works of the world in one way or another. We hire the world when we ride the trains and busses, when we buy our clothes and groceries and in so many other ways. And we may surely believe that Paul and Barnabas also hired the men of the world to transport them from Antioch to the Island of Cyprus in their ship. Paul did not hesitate to appeal to worldly Caesar. He wrote with the pen and on the parchment invented by the world. World flight we would never advocate, and Peter does not do so either when he asks us what manner of persons we ought to be, seeing that all these things shall be dissolved. He does not tell us to leave all material things alone. How can we? We are in the world, placed there by God to employ it ALL to His glory.

What manner of person ought we to be? Sober persons living in the reality of our salvation and coming glory. All things shall burn up. Shall we mope and idly sit by saying to ourselves, what then is the use of working and laboring? Paul condemns this stand. In I Thessalonians 4:11 he writes, “And that ye study to be quiet and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you.”

And again in II Thessalonians 3:10, "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat." Things as such are not always evil. There are things which in themselves cannot be good. There are certain kinds of work which are always sinful. But there are many things we may do and can do without necessarily sinning by its performance. We must not say that it is useless to work since God will destroy it all anyway. We must still labor six days a week. And all that work must so be conducted that we can say that our walk is a holy one, one that is in harmony with our hope for a better world in which righteousness shall dwell, and one that furthers us rather than holds us back in our activity of looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of the Lord. A sober Christian is not a long-faced individual you always see weeping. He is not a man with a gloomy outlook on life. He is a man who is aware of the reality of things, aware of the end of all things, aware of the coming of the Day of the Lord and the melting of all things, but far from being despondent and rather than having such a gloomy outlook on life that he says to himself, what is the use of working and gathering a few earthly things which I will lose anyway?, this sober Christian looks for the realization of the promise of a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness shall dwell. That is no gloomy outlook on life, but it is a proper evaluation of things *present*. We certainly ought to live soberly. We ought neither to live from the principle of let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die, nor from the principle that all our work is vain and therefore not to be performed. We are still called upon to be stewards of all this earth, even though God intends to destroy everything we make. And our work is not in vain. Though all we make perishes, by God's grace we will receive a reward in the new heavens and earth for what was done to His glory in the world that has passed away.

What manner of persons ought ye to be? Seeing that all these things shall pass away? Surely we ought to be those persons who heed that which shall not pass away. Heaven and earth shall pass away but My words shall not pass away" Jesus once declared. We ought to live in the sphere of that Word of God which will remain through all the destruction of the Day of the Lord. Men's works and therefore his words too shall pass away. The contracts he has made, the books he has written, the philosophies he has penned down shall all go up in smoke and be no more. God's words, His promises and that which He promises will not be touched by that conflagration. What manner of persons are we? Do we find more pleasure in the silly novels and radio serials than in the Word of God? Do we find more pleasure in worldly amusements than in the study of God's Word?

Do we find more delight in the things that shall be burned up than in those which shall abide eternally? Do we live for fun and pleasure? What manner of persons ought ye to be?, those that are spiritually minded, giving diligence that they may be found by Him in peace without spot and blemish.

What kind of a father or mother are you? And what kind ought you then to be? If there ever was a time when we ought to take our children aside and speak to them of the coming of the Day of the Lord, it is now. If there was ever a time when our children needed to be warned and protected over against the anti-christian philosophy of a better world without the cross of Christ, it is now. Christ indeed is extolled to the sky. But not His cross and the atonement He achieved thereby. Christ as a social reformer, as a teacher without equal is universally lauded and taught. And that is more dangerous and deceptive than the atheism of the Society of the Godless in Russia which seeks to wipe out all belief in God.

Provide your children with a good, Christian education in their day schools and see to it that these schools hold before the eyes of the children the reality of the coming of the Day of the Lord. Be sure that all the teaching of history has this in mind, that all geography recognizes the fact that present things shall pass away, that civics does not overlook that perfect form of government of the coming of Christ and likewise the certainty of its coming as a government of God, by God and for God, which is therefore also glorious and wonderful for those whom God has chosen to be His children. Be sure that art, literature, music and the like recognize the fact that all man's work shall perish and only the work of Christ enters the new creation. Let the child learn and learn well the fact that the earth and all the works therein shall be burned up. Do not deceive your child into thinking otherwise. To withhold this truth from him is to deceive him.

And do not let it go at that. When the child is home explain the events of the day to him in the light of God's Word. Explain it all as part of that one Grand Plan of God whereby He accomplishes the Kingdom of Christ. And teach him what manner of person he ought to be, seeing that all these things shall pass away. Teach him to have a holy conversation. Teach him godliness. Teach him to look for and spiritually to run unto the coming of the Day of the Lord, not running away from it in fear but looking for it with the firm hope of attaining by God's grace the fulness of the promises of Christ which cannot pass away.

J. A. Heys.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Dead In Sin, or Dead To Sin

Scripture speaks of being dead in sin, but also of being dead to sin. Although the expressions appear very similar, they are entirely different, even mutually exclusive. A person is either dead in sin or dead to sin; if the one is true, the other, which is the very opposite, cannot be true. They are as different as eternal woe and eternal blessedness, as far apart as utter despair and infinite joy of salvation.

What makes it the more interesting is the fact, that Scripture also uses other expressions, closely related to these, such as, "ye are dead," (Gal. 3:3) or "we be dead with Christ," (Rom. 6:8) or again, "I am dead to the law," (Gal. 2:19).

Dead In Sin.

The phrase "dead in sin" is found in Ephesians 2:1, 5, "And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins. . . . Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." A similar passage appears in Colossians 2:13, "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him (Christ), having forgiven you all trespasses".

In each case the American Standard Version translates this expression as "dead through your trespasses and sins". This expresses the idea of the original Greek more accurately, stressing that we are dead due to our trespasses and sins.

That takes us back to the fall of our first parents, and the execution of God's death sentence upon them, "the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." God demanded of His friend-servants in paradise that they should love the Lord their God with all their heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. They were called to show that love by willfully choosing the good and rejecting the evil, even in the face of temptation. Yet they transgressed God's law by allowing themselves to become ensnared in the temptation of Satan. That was their trespass, and at the same time their sin. They deliberately missed the mark God had set before them, by turning away from God to make friends with the devil. Thereby they became guilty. And immediately the death sentence was executed upon them. They died the moment they sinned. This punishment of death included both physical and spiritual death. Corruption and mortality began to prey upon the body to destroy it. But spiritual death also entered in, bringing separation from the living God and causing them to experience His just curse and

condemnation. They were subject to vanity wherever they turned, for sin had dominion over them. They well knew what it meant that "the soul that sins must die". As we read in Romans 5:12, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

Thus all Adam's children are dead in trespasses and sins, corrupted in their very nature. The image of God, in which they were created, became so perverted that their knowledge of God is turned to darkness, their righteousness is changed to enmity, and their holiness became pollution. The sinner is ensnared in the bondage of sin in all his will and desire, thoughts and plans, seeing and hearing, words and deeds. He moves about in the sphere of darkness as an enemy of God, only increasing his guilt and condemnation continually. Paul describes this depraved condition in Ephesians 2:2, 3, by saying, "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

The Transition.

There is a point of time in the life of the elect sinner when he passes through a transition from the condition of being dead in sin to being dead to sin. Scripture calls this conversion. Paul relates his own experience of this change in Romans 7:9, where he says, "For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died."

The apostle refers to his former condition of being dead to sin when he says, "I was alive without the law once." This may sound strange to us, even contradictory, until we call to mind that he is speaking of his own experience. How could he better express the paradox that is the common experience of every believer? Before his own consciousness he was alive, even though he actually was dead in trespasses and sins, for he was blind to his depraved condition. Sin seemed dead, He was so completely enslaved to her, that he was not even disturbed by her dominion over him, which was constantly destroying him. But this false security was disrupted when the law came with its absolute demand, "Thou, Paul, shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and mind, and soul, and strength." The Holy Spirit, working within his heart, brought him face to face with the living God and aroused in him the bitter consciousness of his sin and utter sinfulness. Then, as the apostle expresses it, "sin revived, and I died." He became aware of the

power of sin that held him in bondage. He learned to know his misery as a sinner before God, dead in trespasses and sins. The process of conversion, as a work of God's grace within him, was well under way.

What actually happens to the re-born, repentant sinner is, that God is drawing him to Him with an irresistible power of grace. He is united with Christ in the likeness of His death, that he should henceforth not serve sin, but should live unto God. Christ made atonement for the sins of His people by His death on the cross. What is more, He merited eternal righteousness and salvation in heavenly perfection for them. He arose and ascended to heaven, where He receives all the blessings of salvation prepared by the Father. He is the true Light, the Bread of Life, the Way and the Truth, the Resurrection and the Life. From heaven He bestows all His blessings of grace upon His people, whom He unites to Himself by a bond of living faith. In union with Christ they are blessed with all spiritual and heavenly blessings. Christ's death on the cross is so completely their death, as if they had atoned in their own bodies for all their sins. They are dead with Christ, but they are also raised with Him, and exalted with Him to the highest heavens. As Paul expresses it in Romans 6:3-8, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized to Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead to the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For as we have been planted with Him in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him." Or, to quote again from the apostle's own personal experience in this matter, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me." Gal. 2:20.

Dead To Sin.

Hereupon follows that the regenerated sinner, who was formerly dead in sin, is now dead to sin.

We can refer to Romans 6:2, "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"

This is not the same as saying that sin is dead to the believer. Nothing is farther from the truth or his own experience. Paul himself informs us, that even after he was dead to sin, sin still was very much alive in him, causing him to raise the bitter complaint, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" This very complaint

arose from the heart that was dead to sin. Once he was alive to sin, for sin had dominion over him, and he was her willing slave. He loved the darkness rather than the light. He yielded to all her wiles and readily followed wherever she led him. But grace changed all that. From a legal aspect, the dominion of sin was broken. Her right to rule over him was taken from her. The guilt of sin was removed, for the debt was paid by the atonement of the cross. Christ's perfect obedience fulfilled the just demands of God's law. God's justice was satisfied, and the redeemed sinner stands righteous before God. In his own heart he is assured by the testimony of the Spirit within him, that there is no condemnation for him, since he is included with those who are in Christ Jesus and have His perfect righteousness applied to them. The apostle can say in Galatians 2:19, "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God."

Since the dominion of sin is destroyed, the believer is also spiritually delivered from the bondage of sin. He is a new creature; old things have passed away, and all things have become new. II Cor. 5:17. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed him from the law of sin and death. The darkness is banished from his mind, flooding his soul with the light of life. His heart is renewed, so that in principle he really does love the Lord his God with all his heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. He wills the good so completely that he is sorely grieved by the fact that he fails to accomplish it. He hates the evil, even while that evil wars in his members. He has learned to hate and confess sin in daily sorrow of heart. He has also learned to oppose sin, assured that in principle he already has the victory over it.

In one word, he is dead to sin. And he is saved in hope. Therefore he longs to be delivered from the body of this death. He finds consolation in the Word of God that assures him, "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Galatians 3:3.

"Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

C. Hanko.

IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory of the Fourth Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan wishes to express its heartfelt sympathy to one of its members, Elder John De Hoog, and his family, in the recent death of his mother,

MRS. A. DE HOOG

who passed away in the Netherlands, at the age of 80 years. May our covenant God give comfort according to need.

Rev. R. Veldman, Pres.

Mr. H. Meulenberg, Clerk.

PERISCOPE

Holland Immigration. . . .

From time to time this matter has been brought to the attention of our Churches and also to the Mission Committee. Literally thousands of Hollanders are leaving the old Fatherland and seeking a new home. The great majority are settling in the province of Ontario, Canada, while several are also entering the United States. To inform these immigrants of our Churches and our position the following has been prepared in pamphlet form for distribution.

DE PROTESTANTSCHЕ GEREFORMEERDE KERKEN

* * *

Een woord aan alle liefhebbers van de
Gereformeerde Waarheid

* * *

Op verzoek van de Zendings Commissie
geschreven door

DS. JOHN D. DE JONG
Grand Rapids, Michigan

* * *

Any of our consistories or members who desire this pamphlet for distribution may procure them by addressing a request to the Mission Committee—1210 Logan St., S. E., Grand Rapids, Michigan.
The Mission Committee.

Als Christenen belijden wij: "Ik geloof eene heilige, algemeene, christelijke Kerk." Hiermee is echter het vraagstuk van de Kerk als bepaald instituut niet opgelost. Vooral niet voor iemand die de Gereformeerde waarheid liefheeft. Een Gereformeerd mensch gelooft en belijdt dat het zijne roeping is om zich aan te sluiten bij die plaatselijke kerk welke de zuiverste openbaring is van het lichaam van Christus. Nu is het natuurlijk waar dat het vraagstuk der Kerk zich niet altijd even sterk aan ons opdringt. Velen onzer zijn in een bepaalde plaatselijke kerk geboren en getogen en het schijnt haast een vanzelfsheid te zijn dat we aannemen dat onze kerk de zuiverste kerk is. Toch is dat altijd niet waar en zoo'n houding, die we nogal gemakkelijk aannemen, is eigenlijk niet te prijzen. Wij moeten niet maar uit de traditie leven zonder meer, maar we moeten er in onze ziel van overtuigd zijn dat wij lid zijn van die plaatselijke openbaring van het lichaam van Christus die de meest zuivere kenmerken van Christus' Kerk vertoont.

Als we echter verhuizen, hetzij naar een andere landstreek of naar een ander ons onbekend land, zoo-

als vele Gereformeerde menschen tegenwoordig naar Amerika of Canada emigreeren, dan gevoelen we onmiddellijk dat het vraagstuk der Kerk van groot gewicht is. Af en toe krijgen we dan ook brieven van Gereformeerde broeders en zusters uit Nederland waaruit blijkt dat het vraagstuk der Kerk voor hen een geweldig, ja, voor sommigen een beangstigend vraagstuk is. Een broeder schreef ons o.a.: "Wij willen gaarne naar Amerika emigreeren, maar we zijn bang dat als we in Amerika terecht komen onze kinderen gaan afdwalen van Gods Woord en in de massa zullen worden opgelost. En nu willen we geen eventueel stoffelijk voordeel ten koste van het eeuwig heil van de kinderen, ons door God toebetrouwd."—Een andere broeder schreef o.m.: "Als emigrant die gereed staat om het Vaderland te verlaten, richt ik mij in dit schrijven tot u. Het is op zichzelf al een heele groote stap om naar Canada te gaan. Maar, dominee, de Kerk, hoe moet dat? Als ik in Canada aan wal stap tot welke kerkelijke denominatie moet ik mij wenden voor kerkelijke gemeenschap, volgens art. 29 van onze Nederlandsche Geloofsbelijdenis?" . . . Deze en meer dergelijke vragen verblijden ons ten zeerste. Zulke broeders betoonen dat ze nog een kerk-begrip hebben en dat ze de gemeenschap zoeken van die kerk welke de zuivere merkteekenen van de Kerk van Christus vertoont. Ze willen niet worden opgeslokt door eenige kerk en ze zijn bezorgd over het geestelijk welzijn hunner kinderen. Dezulken verstaan het woord van onzen Heiland: "Zoekt eerst het Koninkrijk Gods en Zijne gerechtigheid."

Nu is het doel van dit vlugschrift allereerst om onze Gereformeerde broeders en zusters uit het oude Vaderland enkele inlichtingen te geven over de Protestantsche Gereformeerde Kerken (The Protestant Reformed Churches). Als een emigrant heeft u hier natuurlijk groot belang bij, en als Gereformeerd belijder wilt u graag iets meer van onze kerken weten. Want nu dat u in Amerika of Canada is gevestigd moet u een keuze doen in betrekking tot de Kerk. En we nemen aan dat u de rechte keuze wilt doen omdat u de Gereformeerde waarheid lief heeft. U moet een keuze doen omdat u, strikt genomen, dezelfde kerk hier niet weervindt die u in Nederland heeft verlaten. In Nederland was u misschien lid van de Gereformeerde Kerk, hetzij dat die plaatselijke kerk Synodaal of Vrijgemaakt was. Het is ook mogelijk dat u tot een andere, zich Gereformeerd noemende kerk, behoorde. En nu is u in Amerika of Canada, maar de kerkelijke denominaties die zich hier Gereformeerd noemen zijn natuurlijk geen onderdeelen of afdelingen van eenige van de kerkelijke denominaties in Nederland. Wel onderhouden sommige van de kerken in Amerika en Canada correspondentie met Gereformeerde kerken in Nederland. Maar dat wil nog niet zeggen dat het daarom dezelfde kerken zijn. De Reformed Church en de

Christian Reformed Church, en de Protestant Reformed Churches hier aan deze zijde der oceaen hebben een eigen kerkverband en een eigen kerkelijk leven, en ze hebben ook alle drie hun eigen geschiedenis van wording, ontstaan, groei, enz. Het is dus de vraag voor u: "Tot welke Kerk moet ik mij hier wenden voor kerkelijke gemeenschap?" Het is meest waarschijnlijk dat u dienaangaande reeds advies hebt ontvangen in het oude Vaderland. Is u er echter zeker van dat dit advies op deugdelijke gronden berustte en dat uw adviseurs met volkomen kennis van zaken spraken? Per slot van rekening moet u zelf de keuze doen.

U zegt misschien: "Bij dezen tijd is mijn belangstelling wel opgewekt om iets meer te hooren van de Protestantsche Gereformeerde Kerken, waar worden ze gevonden, waarin verschillen ze van andere, ons meer bekende, kerken?" Welnu, we hopen u daar iets meer van te vertellen en uw vragen te beantwoorden.

De Protestantsche Gereformeerde Kerken zijn ontstaan in het jaar 1924-'25. Onze kerken zijn dus nog jong. Uit den naam blijkt echter reeds dat wij ons historisch plaatsen op de basis van de Gereformeerde Kerken der Reformatie van de zestiende en de zeventiende eeuw gelijk de leer der vaderen ligt uitgedrukt in de Gereformeerde belijdenisschriften. In dien zin hebben we dan ook al een heele geschiedenis achter den rug en beroepen ons telkens weer op de vaderen. U vraagt misschien onmiddellijk: "Hoeveel plaatselijke kerken behooren tot de Protestantsche Gereformeerde Kerken?" U stelt deze vraag natuurlijk niet omdat u gelooft dat de grootte van een kerkverband ook de zuiverheid bepaalt. Een Gereformeerd mensch weet wel beter, want op zoo'n standpunt kan er nooit een kerk-reformatie ontstaan en hadden onze vaderen allen in de Roomsche kerk moeten blijven. Doch, om op uw vraag terug te komen: Wij tellen thans 23 kerken verdeeld over de volgende Staten: Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, California.

U stelt echter meer belang bij het antwoord op de vraag: "Hoe en waarom zijn de Protestantsche Gereformeerde Kerken ontstaan, en wat leeren die kerken, en wat is hun belijdenis?" Ook die vragen hopen we te beantwoorden. Allereerst dus heel in het kort iets over het ontstaan en het begin onzer geschiedenis. Als inleidend woord op ons antwoord op de door u gestelde vraag willen we eerst zeggen: "De meeste van onze oudere leden waren voor 1924 leden van de Christian Reformed Church. "En hebben ze die kerk zoo maar verlaten, vraagt u?" Neen, het smart ons te zeggen, maar er was geen plaats meer voor hen in die Kerk. Laat ons echter niet op het verhaal vooruit loopen. In 1924 kwam de Synode van de Christian Reformed Church bijeen in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Op die Synode waren verschillende bezwaren en protesten tegen een paar leeraren uit de Christian Reformed Church, met name Ds. H. Danhof en Ds. H. Hoeksema. Er waren

er die beweerden dat deze twee predikanten leeringen verkondigden die afdwalingen waren van de Gereformeerde waarheid zooals die officieel vervat is in de Drie Formulieren van Eenigheid. Het ging in de bezwaren, uitgedrukt in de protesten, vooral over het stuk der genade en de verkondiging van het Evangelie. Na lange beraadslaging formuleerde de Synode tenslotte Drie Punten waarin de Synode zich uitsprak over de aanhangige kwesties.—We merken hier tusschenbeide even op dat volgens onze vaste overtuiging de Synode niet rijp was om zich ten finale uit te spreken over deze zaken.—En wat was de beknopte inhoud van deze Drie Punten? De Synode sprak uit: 1. Dat er, behalve de zaligmakende genade Gods bewezen alleen aan de uitverkorenen ten eeuwigen leven, ook een zekere gunst of genade Gods is, die Hij betoont aan Zijn schepselen in het algemeen. 2. Dat God door de algemeene werkingen Zijns Geestes, zonder het hart te vernieuwen, de zonde in haar onverhindert uitbreken beteugelt, waardoor de menschelijke samenleving mogelijk is gebleven. 3. Dat God zonder het hart te vernieuwen zoodanigen invloed op den mensch oefent, dat deze in staat gesteld wordt burgerlijk goed te doen.—De Synode beweerde natuurlijk dat hare uitspraken gegrond waren op de leer der Schrift, in overeenstemming met de Gereformeerde belijdenisschriften, en dat de vaderen van oudsher deze gevoelens altijd hadden voorgestaan.

Het kan best zijn dat u zegt: "Dat valt me nog al mee, die Drie Punten zijn nog niet zoo erg naar het mij voor komt." U moet echter wel begrijpen dat de leiders der Christian Reformed Church ook hun interpretatie gegeven hebben van deze Drie Punten. En allen, zoowel de Christelijk Gereformeerde broeders als de Protestantsche Gereformeerde broeders, zijn het van harte eens dat het eerste punt het *eigenlijke*, het *voornaamste* punt is. Als dat waar is dan komt men gemakkelijk tot de bewering van het tweede punt, en het derde punt volgt als vanzelf uit het tweede. Als het tweede punt waar is dan moet het derde punt waar zijn. En nu is de vraag niet allereerst: "Hoe leggen wij de punten uit," maar: "Wat is de interpretatie van de leiders van de Christian Reformed Church?" We zouden daar heel wat van kunnen zeggen en er is vooral in de eerste jaren na 1924, heel wat over deze Drie Punten geschreven, vooral van den kant van de beschuldigten. En deze Drie Punten zijn door de leiders van de Christian Reformed Church zoodanig verklaard en toegelicht dat ze, naar onze vaste overtuiging, inderdaad strijden met de Gereformeerde belijdenis en de leer der Schrift. We zouden dit overvloediglijk kunnen bewijzen met vele aanhalingen uit de geschriften van de leiders uit de Christian Reformed Church. Dit is echter niet mogelijk in dit kort bestek en daarom slechts een enkel bewijs in verband met het eerste der Drie Punten. Ds. H. J. Kuiper, thans redacteur van

"The Banner", schreef o.a. het volgende: "Hij zendt den goddelooze *aardsche* zegeningen als vruchten van Zijne goedertierenheid, om hen te overtuigen van Zijn welmeenende gewilligheid om hen te schenken de *grooter* gave der zaligheid in Christus." (Rev. H. J. Kuiper "The Three Points of Common Grace," (De Drie Punten Der Algemeene Genade), bladzij 15, uitgegeven in 1925).^{*} We zouden dergelijke aanhalingen met vele kunnen vermeerderen. We komen straks echter nog wel op deze dingen terug en hopen duidelijk aan te toonen dat de Christian Reformed Church nog steeds het eens ingenomen standpunt handhaaft en verdedigt. We laten het aan den vriendelijken lezer over om te oordeelen of de zoo juist aangehaalde woorden, die voor geen tweeërlei uitlegging vatbaar zijn, de vertolking zijn van Gereformeerde beginselen.

Laat ons in dit verband nog even mogen opmerken dat de Synode van 1924 tevens verklaarde dat de 'aangeklaagde' predikanten in de fundamenteele stukken der leer goed Gereformeerd waren.

De teerling was echter geworpen en wat de Synode niet eischte werd wel door de locale Classes geëischt. De twee Classes eischen namelijk dat de twee predikanten men hun kerkeraden een verklaring van onderwerping aan de Synodale besluiten, uitgedrukt in de Drie Punten, zouden onderteekenen en verder niets zouden leeren dat met deze besluiten in strijd was. Dus, van de Synodale uitspraken maakten de Classes *bindende* besluiten. Toen de reeds genoemde predikanten met hun kerkeraden zich aan deze hiërarchische daad om Gods wil en om des gewetens wil niet konden en wilden onderwerpen, werden ze met hun kerkeraden geschorst in hun ambt en kort daarna afgezet als predikanten in de Christian Reformed Church.

Dat is, heel in het kort, de geschiedenis van het ontstaan onzer kerken. Niemand die de geschiedenis kent zal de feiten die we noemden kunnen of durven loochenen. En daarom, gij allen die dit leest, met name alle gij liefhebbers van de Gereformeerde waarheid, het is onze innigste overtuiging dat onze voorgangers in 1924-'25 niet anders konden handelen dan zij gehandeld hebben. Wij hebben niet een ander kerkverband gezocht noch gewild, maar men heeft ons daartoe gedwongen. De Classes hadden ons het recht van discussie en interpretatie van de Drie Punten ontzegd. Welnu, aan de besluiten der meerdere vergaderingen mochten de aangeklaagden zich niet onderwerpen om der waarheid wil. Velen zijn toen met hen meegegaan omdat zij de beginselen liefhadden die door de leiders werden voorgestaan en omdat zij de verantwoordelijkheid van de Synodale en Classicale besluiten niet voor hun rekening konden en durfden nemen. Natuurlijk, het zich niet onderwerpen aan de besluiten van de 'bevoegde kerkelijke autoriteiten' wordt in zulke ge-

^{*} De aanhalingen in dit geschrift zijn uit het Engelsch vertaald door schrijver dezes.

vallen dan een grond voor schorsing en afzetting. Maar dat is toch niet het hart der zaak waar het om ging. Wij hadden, en we hebben nog steeds de Gereformeerde waarheid lief, maar voor de gestrengte, zuivere, antithetische, Gode welbehagelijke Gereformeerde waarheid, zooals gepredikt door de genoemde voorgangers, was toentertijd geen plaats in de Christian Reformed Church. Wij konden niet zuiver Gereformeerd zijn in dat kerkverband. Ook is de Christian Reformed Church nooit van haar eens ingenomen standpunt terug gekomen. Protesten op de Synode van de Christian Reformed Church in 1926, door ons ingediend, werden van de hand gewezen. Maar daarmee werd dan ook voor goed de leer der algemeene genade tot een kerkelijk dogma verheven. Iets dat nog nimmer geschied was in eenige Gereformeerde Kerk. En onze belijdenisschriften weten van geen algemeene genade. De eenige keer dat de term algemeene genade wordt genoemd, wordt hij gelegd in den mond van de Arminianen.

Ook later pogingen tot samenspreking om weer tot eenheid te komen zijn op niets uitgelopen. De Christian Reformed Church houdt nog steeds vast aan de Synodale, *bindend* gemaakte uitspraken van 1924. Wel noemt de Christian Reformed Church deze uitspraken 'verklaringen' van de Gereformeerde belijdenis. Doch dit is onmogelijk te handhaven, want onzerzijds waren en zijn we nog steeds bereid om onze beschouwingen aan de scherpste kritiek, die zich gebonden weet aan de Schrift en aan de Gereformeerde belijdenis, te onderwerpen. De leeruitspraken waren geen 'verklaringen' maar 'toevoegselen' aan de belijdenis.

En sinds dien tijd hebben we een eigen kerkelijk leven en zijn later kerkelijk georganiseerd in Classes en Synode; de laatste vergadert elk jaar.

De Christian Reformed Church is ook haar weg gegaan en heeft geschiedenis gemaakt. Het standpunt dat men eens, ter kwader ure, heeft ingenomen, heeft natuurlijk niet nagelaten om verder door te werken. De Kerk die velen onder ons nog steeds "Onze Moeder" noemen, heeft in 1924 de Gereformeerde waarheid op het stuk der genade verkracht. En het officieele standpunt, zooals uitgedrukt in de Drie Punten van Kalamazoo komt uit en moet noodgedwongen zich openbaren in de leer en in de praktijk des levens. Aan dat standpunt ligt een Godsbeschouwing en een wereldbeschouwing ten grondslag. En beginselen werken altijd door.

Maar, zegt u misschien: "Ik heb toch wel eens gehoord dat de Christian Reformed Church het Arminianisme, dat zooveel in de Amerikaansche kerken wordt gevonden, verwerpt." In zekeren zin is dat waar, en het is nog maar kort geleden dat de redacteur van "The Banner", (een officieel kerkelijk weekblad van de Christian Reformed Church) de leer van het Arminianisme en van een algemeene verzoening heeft be-



streden. Maar het is tevens waar dat dezelfde redacteur in datzelfde verband ook het volgende schreef: "Tegenstanders van deze leer (n.l. de leer der algemeene genade) hebben ons vaak uit gedaagd om te verklaren op welke basis een rechtvaardig God Zijne genade kan schenken aan de verworpenen. In betrekking tot de uitverkorenen is die basis de plaatsbeksleedende verzoening van Christus. Maar daar kan geen wettige basis voor algemeene genade zijn, zeggen zij, omdat Christus alleen voor de uitverkorenen stierf. Ons antwoord is dat alle barmhartigheid die God bewijst aan het zondige menselijke geslacht van den Verlosser vloeit. Daar is geen genade, particulier of algemeen, los van het kruis van den Zaligmaker. Die genade begint niet bij het kruis, en wordt, zoo gezegd, niet gegenereerd bij het kruis. Integendeel, die genade gaat aan het kruis vooraf, zij is eerst. Ook zij roept om het kruis omdat genade nimmer geschonken kan worden tenzij aan de eischen van het Goddelijk recht is voldaan. Die genade is als een hemelsche stroom welke de menschen alleen bereiken kan door het kanaal van het kruis als het instrument van het strenge recht Gods. Los van het kruis kunnen de verkorenen de zaligheid niet beerven; los van datzelfde kruis zou de gerechtigheid Gods *onmiddelijke eeuwige* straf eischen voor al de zonen van gevallen Adam." ("The Banner," 12 Maart, 1948, blz. 324).—De onbevooroordeelde en gewillige lezer moet natuurlijk goed voor de aandacht houden dat geen enkel Schriftuurlijk bewijs voor de zoo juist aangehaalde paragraaf wordt gegeven. Het beweerde wordt hoegenaamd niet bewezen.—En in "The Banner" van 19 Maart, 1948, blz. 356, begint dezelfde redacteur een artikel met deze woorden: "Wij hebben gezien dat in een zekeren zin kan worden gezegd dat Christus voor alle menschen *stierf*. Daar zijn kostelijke *tijdelijke* weldaden die toevloeien aan allen die het evangelie hooren, en sommige welke God aan alle menschen schenkt, vanwege het lijden en sterven van onzen Heere aan het kruis."—We zouden de voorgaande aanhalingen met anderen kunnen vermeerderen, maar dat is voor ons doel thans niet noodzakelijk. We wilden alleen maar duidelijk maken dat de Christian Reformed Church vandaag de leeruitspraken van 1924 nog ten volle handhaaft.

U zegt misschien: "Maar hoe kan dat toch, hoe kan men eenerzijds leeren dat Christus alleen voor de uitverkorenen gestorven is en anderzijds, en dit derzelfder tijd, dat als vrucht van de kruisverdienste van Christus er ook kostbare tijdelijke weldaden toevloeien aan de verworpenen? Iemand die natuurlijk nog fijne Gereformeerde voelhorens heeft merkt terstond dat deze twee dingen met elkaar in strijd zijn." U zegt misschien: "Dat loopt heelemaal niet los, het eene is waar of het andere, het eerste is Gereformeerd en het tweede gaat wel terdege in de Arminiaansche richting." U

heeft gelijk. Dat is goed gezien. Maar daarin schuilt dan ook het gevaarlijke van zoo'n voorstelling. Men kan twee kanten uit, men heeft twee lijnen. Trouwens, daar komt men dan ook openlijk voor uit. Alleen maar, men beweert dat het ons menschelijk verstand te boven gaat hoe God eenerzijds Zijne genade en zaligheid welmeenend aan alle menschen, die komen onder de prediking des Woords, kan aanbieden, dus ook aan de verworpenen, en dat Hij anderzijds toch alleen de uitverkorenen zaligt. Ds. H. J. Huiper schrijft b.v. in "Three Points of Common Grace," bladzij 15, het volgende: "Het is waar dat God van eeuwigheid sommigen verkorenen heeft tot het eeuwige leven en anderen verworpen. Maar het is ook even waar dat Hij de zaligheid welmeenend aanbiedt aan allen die het evangelie hooren. Het feit dat wij met ons eindig verstand deze waarheden niet ten volle kunnen harmonieeren moet ons niet terug houden om ze beide te aanvaarden. Beide zijn duidelijk in de Heilige Schrift geopenbaard."—Ziet u, het is een mysterie en wij kunnen de mysterien niet oplossen, dus, moeten we dat aan God over laten. Voor ons menschelijk denken is er tegenstrijdigheid, maar bij God zijn geen tegenstrijdigheden. Nu klinkt zulk beweren natuurlijk wel heel mooi, maar het is toch bedriegelijk en het strijdt tegen de doorgaande leer der Schrift. U gevoelt natuurlijk wel dat zoo'n standpunt als wordt ingenomen door de Christian Reformed Church ook verlamdend op de prediking moet werken. Op dit standpunt is het immers heel gemakkelijk om een Gereformeerde predikatie te hebben met een Arminiaansche of Methodistische toepassing. En wat moet het kerkgaand publiek per slot van rekening nu gelooven?

(Wordt Vervolgd)

J. De Jong.

IN MEMORIAM

It pleased our Heavenly Father to take away from us on Saturday, April 10, 1948, our father, grandfather, and great-grandfather,

LUCAS TEMPLEMAN

at the age of 90 years, 8 months, and 10 days.

Mr. and Mrs. G. Popping
Mr. and Mrs. J. Spyker
Mr. and Mrs. J. Krosschell
Mr. and Mrs. D. Van Egmond
Mr. and Mrs. J. Tempelman
Mr. and Mrs. R. Tempelman
Mr. and Mrs. C. Schnyders
24 grandchildren
9 great-grandchildren.

Fdgerton, Minnesota.