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MEDITATION

The Cross and Boasting

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

Galatians 6:14

Sharp contrast!

The concision, who desire to make a fair show in the flesh; and the spiritual circumcision, who glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ! Those who strive to be pleasing in the eyes of the carnal world, especially the carnal Jews; and those who, covered by the blood, glorying in the cross, desire to be pleasing before God! Those who fear, lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ; and those who, boasting in the accursed tree on which the Lord of glory was nailed, count all things,—even life itself,—but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord! Those who, themselves the mutilated, would boast in the flesh of the Gentile Christians, pressing upon them the whole unbearable burden of the law, so that they could say, "We are their teachers; we even teach the Gentile world to keep the law!" And those in whom the mutual fellowship of life between them and the world has ceased, and who ascribe this fact of grace exclusively to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Emphatic contrast! God forbid! Let it be far from me, that I should boast, that I should be proud of anything, rejoice in anything, but in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Personal confession! Confession of Paul, the converted persecuter, the apostle to the Gentiles; confession of the Christians then; confession of every child of God in principle! For do not overlook that note. The apostle does not make a mere cold dogmatical statement of what is a fact in the case of every Christian, every elect. Such a statement could indeed be made. Every true child of God glories in nothing else than the cross of Jesus Christ. By our Lord Jesus Christ, and Him crucified, the world is crucified unto every child of God; and they are crucified unto the world. Nor does the apostle pen an emphatic admonition. That

also is possible and necessary. Never must you and I boast in anything else, save in His cross. Always must we take care to glory only in Golgotha's cross. Always the world must be crucified to us, and we to the world. And always the power of that crucifixion must be the power of the cross. Ample room there is in the lives of us all for such admonitions.

But here you find a personal expression arising out of the life and experience of the apostle. God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of *our* Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to *me*, and *I* unto the world!

Shall we repeat it? Can we? Do we?

* * * *

The world is crucified to me... and I to the world! Of that fact of salvation the apostle boasts here. And the power of that mutual crucifixion is our Lord Jesus Christ, and that too, as the Crucified One. The result is that when the apostle boasts, he boasts not of himself but he glories in the cross of Christ.

Marvelous wonder! Radical change!

The world is crucified to me, and I am crucified unto the world! That means that I and the world are dead to each other. It means that we have died to each other in a very peculiar and distinctive way: we have died to each other by crucifixion. And it implies, therefore, that outside of the cross there was at one time a very definite fellowship, a communion of life, between me and the world. That relationship existed once, but it is no more. The world and I are mutually crucified!

You will understand readily that the apostle refers to the world from a certain definite viewpoint. For the apostle speaks of a mutual fellowship that is broken by crucifixion: he has broken through that crucifixion with something evil. That world has become accursed to him, and he to that world. It is the world of which the apostle John writes: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

The world is the organic whole of all things that result from the striving and acting of *sinful men*, totally depraved men, —men that are incapable of doing any good, and inclined to all evil,—using all created things as their means.

Man is the heart and the head of creation. Thus he came from the hand of the Creator. All earthly things must serve that man, in order that with all things man may serve his God. But now when that man, who was created in the image of God, capable of serving God in the three-fold office of prophet, priest, and king, becomes God's enemy, turns his back on the living God refuses to serve and glorify Him, serves the devil, loves the lie, becomes submerged in horrible darkness, unrighteousness, unholiness,—when that man, still using all things, still having dominion over the earthly creation even though he is a rebel, still acting upon all things, still operating in every relationship of life, with that whole of created things serves sin and the devil, then you have what the apostle here calls "the world".

To that world he is crucified. And that world is crucified to him. It is the world that contains the lust of the eyes, and all it produces: the sinful satisfaction of the senses. It is the world that contains the lust of the flesh: sinful pleasures, treasures, and their accompanying greed and corruption. It is the world that is filled with the pride of life: it glories in man and his works; it is filled with self-righteousness; it dethrones God, and enthrones man. It is the world that passeth away, and the lust thereof, while he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.

With that world I am one by birth. I am not only in the world, but I am *of the world* by nature. As that world is, so am I: in guilt, in sin and trespasses, in death, living from the same principle, the principle of enmity against the living God. There is fellowship between us. That world lives to me, pleases me, gratifies my carnal desires, offers me the satisfaction of the flesh. That world caters to me as I am by nature. And I live to the world. I seek it, I honor it, I please it, I strive for it. Its thoughts are my thoughts. Its aim is my aim. Its pleasures are my pleasures. Its treasures are my treasures. Its sinful ambition is my sinful ambition. In and with all my existence, all my powers of body and soul, I go hand in hand with the world. And that world goes hand in hand with me.

But now, hear the gospel of the cross! The world is crucified to me, and I unto the world!

That implies that all the ties of fellowship that there ever existed between me and that world mutually are broken. And they are broken not only on the part of the world, but also on my part. All that was true when I was in my fallen estate, my natural estate, is no more true! I am dead to the world, and it is dead to me.

And mark you well, this death takes place in a very peculiar way! The physical death of my body is not that which accomplishes the break. Nor is it a natural process of development and evolution, of growth and reform, that gives rise to this breach between me and the world. But the apostle speaks of a spiritual, ethical schism. Spiritually there comes a great gulf between me and the world! Ethically an unbridgeable chasm comes to separate us! For it is the death of crucifixion, the accursed death, of which the

apostle speaks. And the death of the *cross* implies hatred and contempt. It means that the victim is despised and cast out. And when the world, therefore, is crucified to me, and I to the world, it means that in place of a mutual fellowship there comes a mutual enmity. I and that world, which formerly were in complete harmony, are now at complete odds!

The result is that I am still in the world, yet not of the world! That world and all its sinful life and lusts, its corruption, its pleasures and treasures is dead to me in the sense that it is become the object of my contempt. And I am dead to the world and its sinful ambition in the sense that I am become the object of its contempt and hatred!

Mutual enmity instead of mutual fellowship!

Such is the power of the cross of Christ!

And remember: the enmity of the world is the fellowship of God!

* * * *

Glorying of that wonderful fact of salvation, of deliverance from the dominion of sin and death, I glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in nought else!

God forbid that I should glory in ought else! For it is *by*, or *through*, that cross that this mutual fellowship between me and the world is killed.

Very little difference does it make whether you read the text "by *which*", referring to the cross, or "by whom," referring to the Crucified One. The meaning remains the same. The death by crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ has the power, is the efficient cause of the cessation of the fellowship of life between me and the world.

Mark you well, the crucified Lord Jesus Christ has that power. Not His teaching is that power, so that the breach between me and the world is a matter of moral persuasion. Not His example brings about the break, so that it is a matter of habit and attraction. Not His reformatory work, so that this change is a matter of changed environment. But as always, the cross of Christ stands at the center of it all. It is His crucifixion. And that cross, the cross of Calvary, means that there is a victorious power, a power that is able to cut the tie between the world and me. In the cross of Christ I glory!

In it I glory to the exclusion of all else! God forbid that I should glory save in it!

According to the flesh, indeed, I may put my confidence in many other things,—countless things. But in my deepest heart I hate that very inclination, and I say, "Far be it from me." Also that proceeds from the fact that I am crucified to the world, and the world to me. And I attribute all to the cross of Jesus. In it only I trust. On it I rely in life and death, with body and soul, for time and eternity. It is the death of my death, the power of my power, the life of my life! Only in it do I boast!

You ask why? The reason is simple, but wonderful. For the death of Jesus is the killing of the power of sin.

The power of sin, that which binds me to the power and dominion of sin and death, is *guilt*, a mountain of it. Guilt

is liability to the punishment of death. And the death of Jesus Christ is the satisfaction for, the removal and blotting out of guilt, the restoration of that state of righteousness in which I have a right to life. Still more: His death on the cross was vicarious. It is the death of *Jesus Christ, our Lord*. It is for that reason the removal of *our* guilt, the death of *our* death. In His cross is the righteousness and life of all that are His. They were all crucified to the world of sin and death when He was crucified. The power of sin and death were forever put to nought by His cross for all the elect. For at Golgotha all the guilt of all His own, past, present, and future, was completely blotted out.

Would you boast? Boast, then, not in your own work, not in your own righteousness. But, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord!

* * * *

And then even your glorying is from Him. For only in Him, that is, being one plant with Him, having a living bond of fellowship with the crucified Redeemer, can you even boast. That cross is the sphere in which you must stand when you boast. And that means *faith*. And faith is the gift of God!

For Christ Jesus, the Anointed Savior, is *our Lord*. To Him we belong. For us He is responsible. His will is our delight. And this is all because He is the Crucified One that is risen! His power raises me from the dead, regenerating me. His power, the power of the risen Lord, unites me to Himself, placing me in living fellowship with Him, the crucified Redeemer, causing me to confide in Him, appropriate His righteousness as my own, desire it, seek it, receive it by His grace.

In the cross of Christ I glory . . . And in it only.

H.C.H.



MEN'S LEAGUE MEETING

The Easter League of Men Societies of the Protestant Reformed Churches will hold their membership meeting Thursday evening, March 18, at 8 o'clock in the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church.

Rev. G. Vandenberg will speak on the topic "The place of Reformed Churches in the end of the ages." Opportunity will be given for questions and discussion.

We cordially invite all our men to come and spend an evening of christian fellowship with us.

THE BOARD.

IN MEMORIAM

The Hope Prot. Ref. School Board expresses heartfelt sympathy with its secretary, Dewey Engelsma, in the loss of his Mother,

MRS. LENA ENGELSMA

May the God of grace who performs all things according to His own eternal good pleasure, also sustain and comfort him in His unchanging love.

D. Kooienga, President.

J. Kalsbeek, Assistant Secretary

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EDITORIALS

*Classis East of the Prot. Ref. Churches,
Convened in Hudsonville, April, 1953.*

Reply To My Classical Censure

(Continued)

Thirdly, I claim that the Rev. Kok and the consistory did not speak the truth, and therefore, lied, when in their answer to the classis, read on April 8th last, they presented the church political conception of Mr. Kortering as implying that the suspension of a pastor must not be initiated with the consistory, but rather with classis and synod. In an answer of the consistory dated Feb. 3, '53, which was a reply to a letter by Mr. Kortering, we read: "From your missive it apparently seems to be your position that the matter of the suspension and deposition of a minister of the gospel is not primarily a matter of the local consistory, but a matter of classis and synod. This is clearly evident from the first paragraph of your answer, which reads as follows: 'Since this matter is no personal matter, but purely a church political matter on our doctrine, and which concerns all our churches, in as far as the Rev. Kok revealed himself in his public writings, I cannot retract, which I will hereinafter make plain in the grounds submitted.' This becomes further evident from your statement on page 5, paragraph 12 of your reply, where you write as follows: 'Regarding my position as elder over against the status quo of the seriousness of the question at hand, namely to suspend our pastor from office, I must clarify my position as follows: on the question whether Rev. Kok can be retained in his office as minister of the gospel, to which he was ordained by our churches, or whether his public errors are so grievous, and of such wide scope that deposition may have to follow, I have no jurisdiction. Grounds: Since the errors of Rev. Kok are errors against the doctrines of the Prot. Ref. Churches, therefore that question properly belongs to classis-synod of these churches who ordained Rev. Kok into office.'"

This answer was composed, we must remember, after the Rev. Kok and his consistory had read and studied the complete protest of Mr. Kortering that is now at the classis. In that protest Mr. Kortering plainly clarified his position as to the matter of church polity as follows:

"Allow me to state the following and possibly you will understand what I meant.

"A consistory can de facto suspend a minister for sin, but whether he shall be deposed belongs to the approbation of the classis and the deputies of synod, Art. 11, D.K.O. And sometimes, according to the nature of the case, the neighboring consistory has to be called in."

A little further on in the same protest Mr. Kortering states:

"Allow me further to state

"It was not a question in my soul, whether the local consistory (including myself as elder) has the right to suspend our pastor, and in the final analysis to depose Rev. Kok, in the proper way.

"For proof positive that I believe this with my whole heart is very plain from the following.

"It is based on the very fact that my motion above, namely to suspend Rev. Kok, still lies on the table of the local consistory, and remains right there. This motion was not made to classis, nor was it made to synod, but directly in and to the consistory where Rev. Kok is pastor. Therefore legally before the legal body where Rev. Kok is minister, with full authority to act.

"But everyone will certainly agree with me that the matter of the deposition requires further clarification and Art. 4, D.K.O. plainly shows another side of the question. This is shown under 'Decisions pertaining to this article' section C, 2, b, c. Where the classis according to and in conjunction with Art. 11 D.K.O. with the deputies of synod present examined, (Rev. Kok) and they decided on the status quo of this examination whether he, Rev. Kok, should be permitted or not be permitted to preach in our churches as a minister of the word. And where further they required of him to sign the form of subscription as a solemn pledge and oath to be a faithful minister in our churches.

"From this the conclusion follows. If they, the classis and the synod of the Prot. Ref. Churches, permitted Rev. Kok to enter his sacred trust as minister of the Word in our churches, the same classis and synod must also appreciate his suspension and deposition from his sacred trust in our churches, in the correct church political way as the D.K.O. plainly shows

"And that was what I broadly was referring to in my January 28th communication, and which you apparently misunderstood."

From this it is very plain that the Rev. Kok and his consistory, when they composed the answer to classis which was read on April 8 in the forenoon, and in which they presented as corrupt the church political view of Mr. Kortering, already knew, as besides, they could have known from the very fact that he had already presented his demand to suspend Rev. Kok to the consistory, that Mr. Kortering harbored no such view of Reformed church polity as the Rev. Kok and the consistory attributed to him. They certainly knew that what they presented in their answer read on April 8 to the classis was a misrepresentation, and therefore, a deliberate lie.

And now as to the beginning of the cesspool which the Rev. Kok created during and after his visit to the Netherlands. Concerning the dealings of the Rev. Kok and the Rev. de Jong during that visit in the Netherlands, I remark the following:

a. The Rev. Kok presumed to do the very work which properly belonged to the Committee of Correspondence. I understand that he did not presume to do so in any official

capacity. I will grant that they met with the Committee of Correspondence of the Reformed Churches (Art. 31) in the Netherlands on their invitation. I still maintain that he should never have presumed to do the work of our committee. Moreover,

1) It is a matter of ethical soundness that, even though his dealings were illegal and presumptive, as they certainly were, he should not have kept the matter secret, but should have given a full report to the churches of all their discussions.

2) It is evident too that he did the work of the Committee of Correspondence in such a way that even the most pronounced opponents of the Protestant Reformed truth (such as Van Dijk, Van Raalte, Holwerda) were satisfied, were willing to have full correspondence with us, and so that no further discussion was even considered necessary unto that end. Proof of this is the fact that the Rev. De Jong upon his return to this country had a letter in his pocket asking for such full correspondence.

b. The Rev. Kok (and also the Rev. de Jong) in his discussion with the brethren in the Netherlands, in order to persuade the opponents to full correspondence, evidently did two things:

1) He denied the distinctively Protestant Reformed truth, and left the impression that there was since 1924 no distinctive explanation of the Three Forms of Unity in opposition to the Three Points and in opposition to the Liberated and Heynsian conception of the promise and of the covenant, binding in our churches.

2) He gave the impression that our churches stood wide open for the Liberated and their doctrine. This is evident from the letter of Prof. Holwerda. Let it not be said that this letter is not true. For, in the first place, it is the only report we have of the discussions between the brethren in the Netherlands and the Rev. Kok and de Jong. In the second place, that letter was never contradicted. In the third place, it is corroborated by the effects the discussions had: the opponents were willing to have correspondence with us, and changed around again when they discovered that our churches were after all Protestant Reformed, and not Liberated. And finally, all the agitation of the Rev. Kok in writing and classical gatherings point in the same direction.

3) From this letter I quote the following:

"His (the Rev. Hoeksema's) conception regarding election etc. is not church doctrine. No one is bound by it."

"Most (of the Prot. Ref. people) do not think as Rev. Hoeksema and Rev. Ophoff."

"Sympathy for the Liberated was great also in the matter of their doctrine of the covenant."

"For the conception of the Liberated there is ample room."

"The Prot. Ref. Church proves to be the true church also herein that she truly seeks the immigrants from Holland and consciously leaves all room for their conception."

Let this be sufficient. The statements of Prof. Holwerda are very definite. He could not possibly have invented them. I therefore protest that the Rev. Kok was lying in the Netherlands, and that he sold out our churches to the Liberated, denied that these was anything distinctively binding in our churches as far as Prot. Ref. truth is concerned, and tried to open wide our churches for the Liberated and their doctrine of the covenant. This has been the stand of the Rev. Kok ever since.

Later the Rev. Kok added to the stink of the cesspool his constant agitation against the Declaration, and that too, in a very dishonest and illegal way. In 1951 the Synod of our churches adopted a Declaration of Principles, declaring that it is the expression of the confessions. This Declaration, as an expression of the confessions, is, according to Art. 31 of the Church Order, settled and binding unless it is proved to conflict with the Word of God or with the articles of the Church Order. Now, the Rev. Kok never proved, or even attempted to prove, either publicly in the papers, or in the way of an official protest before the Declaration was adopted that the synodical decision mentioned above is in conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order. Hence, the Rev. Kok cannot possibly have any conscientious objections to abide by the decisions of Synod of 1951 regarding the Declaration of Principles: because it certainly is not in conflict with the Word of God as far as he can judge, and it is not binding upon anyone except as a basis for the organization of churches. Nevertheless, the decision of Synod which states that the Declaration is an expression of the confessions is settled and binding also for the Rev. Kok. Nevertheless the Rev. Kok agitates in an insidious manner against the Declaration of Principles. He did so by translating and strongly recommending an article of the late Prof. Schilder, in which the latter not only attacks the Declaration, but also incorporates his erroneous view of the promise of God. Although the Rev. Kok hides behind the name of Dr. Schilder, he is responsible for the contents of that article. Besides, in *Concordia* he lets his son speak of "slight differences" between us and the Liberated, with evident approval from the Rev. Kok. And finally, he agitates against the Declaration of Principles by again hiding behind the name of Prof. Schilder in attacking the Declaration through the means of offering to our churches the brochure which that professor wrote against said Declaration of Principles, and by launching which attack Prof. Schilder is supposed to have "greatly honored" our churches, according to the Rev. Kok.

I call all this insidious propaganda, by which our churches are corrupted, unless God forbid, and unless we clean out that cesspool of corruption.

The Rev. Kok publicly lies about me when he quotes (I have reason to believe in conjunction with others) certain scattered passages of my writings in which he seems to be able to show that I too believed in conditions and in his conditional theology, which is evidently Liberated and Heyn-

sian, or at least very sympathetic to that Liberated conception. These quotations are dishonest, and therefore lying, because if the Rev. Kok consults my writing, as he evidently must have done, he knows very well that my current teaching is opposed to the conditional theology and the conditional promise of God. That this was my conviction from the very beginning of my ministry I can plainly prove. To show you that in this respect I never changed, as some slanderously allege, I will quote a few passages from my very first sermons of 1915 and 1916 on the Heidelberg Catechism. You must remember that during the first five years of my ministry I typed out in full all my sermons. I still have them in my possession, and they are open for inspection to anyone who likes to read. Here are some of my quotations. From Lord's Day VII:

"The Heidelberg has now reached the discussion of a most important subject. Of all the things which a Christian ought to know faith is perhaps of highest significance. For faith is the very root of the Christian's life. It is in the first place the subjective principle distinguishing the saved from the lost. Those that are in the faith have eternal life. But those that have not the true saving faith shall not see life, the wrath of God abideth on them. And not difficult it is to see that it should be so. For outside of Jesus Christ our Mediator, there is no salvation possible. And faith is the tie that binds us to him. By faith we are ingrafted into him. By faith we have vital contact, living connection with him whom to know is life everlasting. Without faith we have no part with him whatever. By faith all his benefits are ours, for he is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. And all those blessings which are in reality in him and which he possesses not only for himself but for all his people, become actually ours. Faith is as it were the channel through which they all flow toward us. But without faith those blessings cannot become ours, there is no channel through which they can flow, there is no vital connection with the living bread.

"Although as we are saying, faith is one of the most important subjects of the entire doctrine of salvation in Jesus Christ, yet it is at the same time a subject concerning which there is much misunderstanding and confusion in the church of God. And a very common idea is that we are saved because of faith. Whether this notion lives more consciously or unconsciously in the hearts of the children of God, true it is that it exists and that one meets the idea time and again in the church. Faith is the cause of our salvation, or if you wish, the subjective ground upon which we are saved, God saves us because we believe, and if we do not believe He refuses to save us. Faith is first and salvation follows. Faith is the condition upon which God will forgive us our sins If this be true, if it is true that this true faith is the condition and the cause of our salvation then it is not true that salvation is of the Lord, then it is not true that God has known and chosen His people from all eternity, then it is not true that God must save us from beginning to end. If

we do not get rid of this idea of faith, friends, as if it is an act of man which he performs and which is the condition upon which our God will save him, then we will never be able to avoid the rut of Arminianism, then we will never be able to clearly understand our own Reformed view of the truth, and then it is immaterial to us to which church we belong."

And a little further: "But what then? If faith is neither the cause nor the ground nor the condition of our salvation in the objective sense of the word, what relation does it bear to our salvation? If it be true that in the most absolute sense of the word grace does not follow but precede faith, so that even faith is already a gift of grace and so that therefore God reveals his grace unto the sinner before he actually believes and embraces the Savior, why is faith at all necessary? Faith is not the cause and not the ground and not the condition of our salvation, but it is the spiritual, the subjective means through which salvation becomes ours."

I can quote much more. But let me furnish just one more quotation:

From the sermon on Lord's Day 27 I quote the following (I speak here of the covenant of works, because I did not know any better at that time. When I came from school I had no conception of the covenant, and I gradually had to develop the idea of the covenant all by myself. So excuse the term covenant of works.):

"And even as it was in the covenant of works so it is also in the covenant of grace. It is established not with all the individual members, but with one Head, and that one Head is Christ Jesus. Let us also clearly see this fact. We do not belong to this covenant no more than to that of works because of our personal consent. This is an idea which lives too often in the hearts and minds of the people of God. But this is wrong. We did not belong to the covenant of works because of our personal consent, we do not belong to the covenant of grace because of our personal consent. Nor must you have the idea, that you must fulfill certain conditions in order to enter into that covenant, for that would again place the burden of the covenant upon your personal responsibility. And this is not so. Surely there are obligations also in the covenant of grace, but these obligations flow forth from our being in the covenant. Christ therefore has fulfilled all the conditions. The covenant was established with Him as the Head in all eternity, and therefore He came in time, to fulfill the conditions as the Head of His people, and as their Head He suffered, as their Head He dies, as their Head He fulfills the law, and having fulfilled all, His people have nothing at all to fulfill anymore. They are saved by grace."

Now, if you wish, I can produce hundreds of quotations from the rest of my writings which plainly show that I never believed in a conditional promise or a conditional salvation or in faith as a condition, or in any conditions at all. Repeatedly I state in all my works that there are no conditions unto salvation. And therefore, when the Rev. Kok arbi-

trarily, outside of their context, quotes a few passages of my writings, without paying any attention to my current teaching, he is dishonest and he lies.

About number 7 I will be brief. Nevertheless, it belongs to the cesspool of corruption in our churches. I am referring to the talk and slander and backbiting that goes on within our churches especially about me. I can point to witnesses, if they will only speak, as they have spoken in the past, even among our ministers, that slander and backbite without apparently having any scruples. I said in my introduction that some of their talk is so stinking it smells like the cesspool. Besides, in my own consistory one of my elders said, and he was evidently one of them, that he knew of 9 former consistory members that stated that the synod of 1924 was right, when they declared that I was onesided. All this, brethren, belongs to the cesspool in our churches, which we must clean out. And I agree with the Rev. Ophoff, if we have not the courage to clean it out, if we have not the spiritual, ethical courage to repent and to confess, our churches will certainly go on the rocks.

Hereby, brethren, I present to you my reasons and grounds for my statement that the Rev. Kok and his consistory lied, and that there is indeed a stinking cesspool of corruption in our churches that must be cleaned out. I thank you.

After I read this document to the Classis, it became plain that I was not guilty of anything worthy of Classical censure. And the motion to censure the Rev. Ophoff and myself was put to a vote and failed to carry.

H.H.

Lynden.

Small but staunch.

Thus I would characterize our little congregation in Lynden, Wash., especially after they were delivered from a group of schismatics who, for some time already, revealed that they were no longer in harmony with the Protestant Reformed truth.

I recently had the privilege of spending a couple of weeks, three Sundays, in their midst, and to me it was, indeed, refreshing to meet them and to discover how they understood and loved the truth as our churches have always embraced it.

The occasion of their living and existing as a Protestant Reformed Church in separation from those that used to be with them but now are become schismatic was simply that the consistory of Lynden decided to make common cause with De Wolf c.s. and made announcement to that effect from the pulpit. Since then the faithful members never attended services again under that consistory, called for help from the east, and were organized as the Protestant Reformed Church of Lynden, Wash.

In the little while I was there, I preached twice every Sunday and delivered two lectures: the first on "The Children of the Promise," the second on "Our Present Contro-

versy in the Light of History." The audiences were small. In that respect, there is no comparison between Lynden in 1932 and today. Then I also spoke there, but then the audiences were so large that we had to move from a hall that seated at least two hundred people to the gymnasium of the high school. This time the audiences were disappointing. Yet, they were growing and I am convinced that even today Lynden offers a good field of labor for our future Protestant Reformed missionary.

But he must labor in a different way from that of our former missionary. When you hear our people in Lynden talk about his way of laboring you can only feel disgusted.

When I used to go out speaking for our Protestant Reformed truth, I always emphasized the difference between us and the Christian Reformed Churches, especially in connection with the "Three Points" adopted by the Synod of Kalamazoo in 1924. And I did so this time. Always the people listened. And they listened now. Besides, whenever I appeared I always tried to gain subscribers for the Standard Bearer. My chief purpose was not to gain numbers but to instruct the people in the Reformed truth.

But our former missionary, according to the reports I heard from the people in Lynden (and there is absolutely no reason to doubt their word) did nothing of the kind.

He deprecated such a thoroughly Protestant Reformed document as the Declaration of Principles, which implies, of course, that he did not preach according to it either. As long as that Declaration existed, according to him, we would never grow. He told the people not to read the Standard Bearer, the only organ that always stood and still stands consistently for the Protestant Reformed truth. And the people there told me other things which I will not report here.

The result was, of course, that he gained nothing, neither numbers nor fruit for the Protestant Reformed truth.

But I am convinced that, if only we will be specific, if only we never compromise but bring forth a Protestant Reformed sound, there is still a field of labor everywhere, also in Lynden. But the moment we attempt to compromise we will become as the salt that has lost its savor.

The congregation is small but staunchly Protestant Reformed.

They must have nothing of the Arminian conditional theology. Those that left them were full of this. They openly declared that they had learned it of the liberated to speak about conditions. They now can maintain the responsibility of man! Again and again the congregation wanted the consistory to put H. Veldman on the trio. But him they called a "kerk verwoester,," a destroyer of the church! Other sound Protestant Reformed preachers they pronounced too doctrinal or dead.

But our own congregation in Lynden stands in the truth and loves it.

This is even evident from their offerings on Sunday. When I was there they collected an average of thirty dollars

per Sunday, which is rather liberal for a small congregation of five families and a few individuals.

I enjoyed my stay here as well as my labors among them.

May the Lord bless them, and grant that they may soon be in a position to call a pastor of their own!

H.H.

To Dr. James Daane

For the present I have no time to reply to your articles in the *Reformed Journal*.

But I ask of you, in all fairness, to do either of two things:

1. Insert in all your articles N.N. instead of using my name. I cannot recognize my theology in your presentation of it. You are literally fighting against windmills.

2. Or prove, with actual quotations from my writings, not by mere philosophical argument and deduction (for you have a very fluent pen, but your argumentation, thus far, is weak) that I actually teach what you present to your readers as my doctrine.

What you must prove is:

1. That I actually ever taught the equivalence of election and reprobation in the counsel of God. I always taught the very contrary.

2. That I must first identify the elect (and actually do) before I can preach the gospel. This is nonsense.

3. That a gospel which is particular in content cannot be addressed to all the hearers. This also I deny.

4. That there is grace for the reprobate in the preaching of the gospel (the "First Point" of 1924).

I would also like to have you explain your conception of the "absolute antithesis." I am afraid that you confuse antithesis and dualism.

Please, answer in the *Reformed Journal*. Once you started a discussion in your paper, and when I replied in *The Standard Bearer*, you asked to continue your discussion in *our* organ on the pretext that there was no room in the *Reformed Journal*. Because I did not consider your proposition fair at all I did not go into it. Later you complained that you offered me a discussion but that I did not want it. That is not true. I think that a discussion you start in the *Reformed Journal* cannot be finished in the *Standard Bearer* before a different class of readers. Hence the above request.

H.H.

Lies About Lynden

In a purported church news item in *Concordia*, Feb. 25, 1954, pages 7 and 8, one finds such a concoction of inaccuracies, omissions, and downright lies concerning the recent history of our Protestant Reformed congregation in Lynden, Washington, that it is simply amazing that anyone, let alone a writer in a religious paper, dares to break out in print in such a fashion. The undersigned writes about this matter because he is personally acquainted with the facts, and because such lies must be publicly contradicted

for the sake of the good people of God who are made the object of such slander in Lynden.

The author of this so-called news item is unknown. Is he, perhaps, too much of a coward to sign his name? News items, of course, need not be signed. But their source should be identifiable. And especially when these news items become news *comments* and partake of an *editorial character*, the author should not be ashamed to sign his name. From the literary style, as well as from certain other facts, I think it is not difficult to accurately guess who penned this vicious piece. But I will not identify the man now: let him speak up. Or does this mean that the Consistory of Lynden (schismatic brand) holds itself responsible for the contents of this article? Let them repudiate it if they do not.

But now notice the wicked lies:

1. It is a lie that the faithful Protestant Reformed people in Lynden acted on so-called instructions from headquarters. The truth is that they sought, and received, *advice* on certain matters of procedure from the pastor of the Doon, Iowa, Protestant Reformed Church. The truth is too that these people were never in doubt as to their principal stand in the whole situation. The truth is too that until the people in Lynden themselves sought advice, there was absolutely no interference in their affairs, except for a great deal of agitation on the part of the adherents to the Rev. H. De Wolf!

2. It is a lie to say that these people simply refrained from attending services held at the I.O.O.F. Hall in Lynden. The truth is that the moment the "consistory" of Lynden announced its stand in favor of the Rev. H. De Wolf, they principally ceased to be a Protestant Reformed Consistory, and there were no Protestant Reformed worship services to be found in Lynden. The truth is that these faithful people were being wickedly deprived of their Protestant Reformed church home. And the truth is too that they could far better attend the Christian Reformed Church, even though principally they do not differ in doctrine from the De Wolf group. Personally, I would sooner attend a Christian Reformed Church myself than to listen to the preaching of a renegade Protestant Reformed minister.

3. It is a downright lie to say that these people threatened the "consistory." The truth is that they seriously admonished them for their error. The truth is too that they insisted on having their protest treated without delay. And the truth is too that they stated their position clearly, informing them that in good conscience before God they could not recognize the De Wolf group (and they gave grounds). But threaten? Not at all. The "consistory" was completely free to follow their own course. And the faithful Protestant Reformed families were completely free to follow the Protestant Reformed course, and to inform the "consistory" thereof, as they did. The truth is too that the "consistory" never even granted them the courtesy of an answer, never acknowledged their letter, as they could easily have done before December 9.

4. It is a lie that they did not know what they were

protesting. They knew very well that they were protesting the "consistory's" stand in favor of De Wolf. And they produced solid grounds for their protest too. And it was not necessary to know the "consistory's" grounds in order to register their protest, and in order to state their own positive grounds against the decision.

5. It is also a rather ludicrous lie to state that the validity of a reason for an elder's omitting part of an official announcement by the consistory is "debatable." Since when is such a thing debatable under Reformed church polity?

6. It is a lie to state that these people don't know what they are doing. I found in my brief stay in Lynden, both in May, 1953, and in December, 1953, that they know very well what they are doing, and that they are not to be swayed in their ardent zeal for the truth of God's unconditional promise and absolutely sovereign grace. But perhaps the author never became acquainted with them?

7. It is a lie too to say that they are victims of persisting propaganda. For they are neither victims, nor has there been any persisting propaganda except on the part of the De Wolf schismatics. These people by the grace of God understand the truth; they love it and are drawn to it when they hear it proclaimed. And they reject all heresies repugnant thereto, as they vowed before God and His church.

8. It is a malicious and hypocritical lie to say "We have no hatred nor malice in our hearts against those who left us." For, in the first place, they did not leave, but the adherents of De Wolf left. And in the second place, it is impossible that such a concoction of lies and slander should have their source in any other motive but that of hatred and malice. For lying and slander are the proper works of the devil! They certainly cannot arise out of love and brotherly kindness!

9. And finally, it is such a malicious and unholy lie as to make one shudder and tremble, when the author adds: "We commit our way into the hand of the Lord. And we will, by His grace, go onward on our difficult church-path" To go onward on that church-path and to commit your way into the hand of the Lord are mutually exclusive! For there is no peace, saith my God, for the wicked! And wicked your way certainly is, Mr. Anonymous! His strength is indeed perfected in our weakness. But the strength of the Holy One of Israel is not perfected in your wicked and unholy course of lying, deceit, and slander!

H.C.H.

My (Ophoff's) Reply to Kok

The reply concerns Kok's use of my explanation of Art. 31 of the Church Order. In the "Reformed Guardian" for Feb. 12, 1954, Kok writes and I quote:

"This is exactly the issue involved from a church political point of view. Must a minister of the Gospel, against whom there has never been lodged a single complaint against his preaching, be *immediately* suspended, merely because on the

previous day he refused to consider a decision of the classis, which to his own mind was in conflict with the Word of God, as settled and binding, *while he is protesting it?* And must a consistory who refuses to suspend its pastor on such grounds, be considered illegal and schismatic? The Rev. H. Hoeksema and Classis East say emphatically, Yes, such an office-bearer must immediately be suspended, and if the consistory refuses to do so, it must be declared illegal and schismatic. The Rev. G. M. Ophoff, in his article which we will quote presently, says, that such a conception of Church Polity is "the most horrible and dreadful popery conceivable." Far worse, and far more destructive certainly, than was ever perpetrated in 1924." Thus far Kok.

Kok is quoting me here out of connection. It means that he is up to his old tricks again. But I shall let this go. It makes for the case at hand no essential difference.

Let us quote Art. 31 of the Church Order. For this is the article involved here. It reads:

"If anyone complain that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to a major ecclesiastical assembly, and whatever may be agreed upon by a majority of vote shall be considered settled and binding, unless it be proved to conflict with the Word of God and with the articles of the Church Order, as long as they are not changed by a general synod."

So reads the article. Let me give my interpretation of it. The ruling of the article, as I understand it, is as follows: and whatever may be agreed upon by a majority of vote shall be considered settled and binding except for him that to his own satisfaction has proved it to be contrary to the Word of God. The solemn duty of such a one is to try to make this plain to the churches — next Classis and Synod, if need be. And the churches shall not hold him to the decision while he is thus occupied, providing, of course, they can so do without doing violence to their conscience.

This is my understanding of Art. 31.

Now certainly it must be held that in advising suspension and deposition of De Wolf and the elders that supported him, the classis was persuaded that necessity was laid upon it by the Word of God. For conscience sake, therefore, it had to hold the De Wolf group — the elders that supported De Wolf and De Wolf himself — to its decisions, while these aggrieved ones protested. And the same is true of the faithful consistory of Fuller Ave.

But according to Kok, Art. 31 is for all cases without exception. The consistory and with it the Classis should have allowed De Wolf and the elders supporting him to reject the advice of Classis that they be suspended and deposed, while protesting the advice and accordingly be allowed to continue functioning in their office. This, according to Kok is the requirement of Art. 31. But, of course, Kok is dreadfully wrong. The Art. as Kok interprets it — that is, the Art. without the qualifying statement, "if conscience permit," is in conflict with Art. 79 of the Church Order. This Art. reads: "When ministers of the Divine Word, elders or dea-

cons, have committed any public, gross sin, which is a disgrace to the church, or worthy of punishment by the authorities, the elders and deacons shall immediately by preceding sentence of the consistory thereof and of the nearest church, be suspended or expelled from their office, but the ministers shall only be suspended”

Mark you well, shall *immediately* be suspended or expelled from office. Certainly, this may not be taken to mean: “shall immediately be suspended or expelled from office unless they protest. In this case they shall be allowed to continue functioning in their office, i.e. be allowed to continue to preach and to teach and to administer the sacraments and partake of the Lord’s supper until they have done protesting.

If this were the requirement how could the church ever take effective action against impenitent gross sinners in her midst? If the offender protested his censure would have to be lifted until he had done protesting. And in the meantime he would have to be allowed to continue in the full enjoyment of his rights as a member including partaking of the Lord’s Supper no matter how gross the sin into which he had fallen.

It must also be held that in seating the delegates of the faithful consistory of Fuller Ave. and accordingly in refusing to seat the delegates of the De Wolf group the last Classis East was persuaded that necessity was laid upon it by the Word of God. The Classis was therefore also obliged to ask of Kok that he submit to the decision that called for this action, while he protested it, that is ask of him that he recognize the two delegates that Classis had seated. How otherwise could Kok have worked with the Classis? Impossible. But Kok refused. What it meant is that he and the Classis had come to the parting of the ways. And so Kok left, but without the Classis later on expelling him from his office. Where then does the hierarchy of Classis come in? Can Kok say? He cannot.

What Kok, of course also fails to tell his readers is that before suspending De Wolf with the advice of Classis, his consistory had labored with him for over a year. And what Kok should also have revealed is that on the Classis De Wolf and his party including Kok received all the opportunity they desired to argue the point that the suspension of De Wolf and the deposition of the elders supporting him as advised by the previous Classis was wrong, contrary to the Word of God.

And finally this statement from Kok (see above): “Must a minister of the Gospel, against whom there has never been lodged a single complaint against his preaching be immediately suspended”

Of course, Kok knows that he does not write the truth also here. Fact is that previously several complaints had been lodged against De Wolf’s preaching.

G.M.O.

AS TO BOOKS

Christenen in de Antieke Wereld (Christians in the Ancient World) by Dr. A. Sizoo. Published by J. H. Kok N.V., Kampen, the Netherlands. Price f 7.50.

In this book Dr. Sizoo presents different pictures of the life of the Christians in the world during the earliest centuries of our Christian era. The book consists largely of quotations from ancient documents translated by the author. He gives passages concerning and testimonies of early witnesses of Christ that sealed their faith in death. He further describes the life in the ancient Christian community, the life of the monks, the bishop, the preacher, the work of the catechete, the life of the congregation and its problems and difficulties, the family and the education of the children, and closes the book with the report of a rather extensive journey by a certain lady.

I found this a rather interesting book, clearly and interestingly written. It is easily accessible to all that are able to read the Holland language.

H.H.

Blijf bij mij, Heer (Abide with me, Lord) by Rev. N. Buffinga. Published by J. H. Kok N.V., Kampen, the Netherlands. Price f 6.95.

This book means to be a „Bijbels Dagboek”, a biblical diary. It contains brief meditations, spiritual and practical, for every day of the year. Each one is based on a passage from Holy Writ. Partly, these meditations are adapted for the Christian holidays, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost; partly, they are of a more general nature. Besides, there is one complete series of meditations on the Lord’s Prayer.

Naturally, the meditations are not all of equal value as far as form and contents are concerned. Some of them are very brief. But, on the whole, as a book for daily reading and spiritual edification, we gladly recommend it to our readers.

H.H.

Jesaja (Isaiah) by Dr. J. Ridderbos. Published by J. H. Kok, Kampen, the Netherlands. Price f 6.50.

This commentary belongs to the series „Korte Verklaring.” It is the second volume of Dr. Ridderbos’ commentary on Isaiah, covering chapters forty to sixty-six.

Rather in detail, Dr. Ridderbos discusses the question whether Isaiah is the author of this second part of the prophecy that bears his name. This, of course, in the introduction. It is not quite clear to me just in how far the writer assumes that Isaiah is actually the author of this part of his prophecy. To me the correct interpretation of the Cyrus-passages, and especially the answer to the question what purpose God had in introducing the name Cyrus prophetically, long before he actually appeared on the stage of history, must be taken into consideration for the solution of this problem.

We gladly recommend this volume of „Korte Verklaring” to our Holland reading public.

H.H.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Prophecy of Isaiah

In trouble His people poured out their hearts to Him when His chastening was upon them. Like a pregnant woman is in pain and cries out in her pangs when the time of her delivery is nigh, so were His people in His sight (through the ages of the Old Dispensation). They had conceived and were in pain; but all they brought forth is wind as it were, that is typical deliverers none of whom had wrought true salvation in the earth and therefore here characterized as wind (vers. 16-18). The thought here to be supplied is that in the fulness of time God Himself wrought true salvation through Christ, who also was in the loins of His people. And so the elect dead were raised from their spiritual death and Christ shall raise them up in the last day. And therefore let the righteous who now dwell in the dust, arise and sing. For their dew is as the dew of herbs. They, in other words, are like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth fruit in its season. And they shall rise from the dead unto life everlasting (ver. 19).

And let His people enter the Lord's chamber where they dwell securely till his indignation be overpast. For He comes forth from His sanctuary to inflict punishment on the inhabitants of the earth for their sins (ver. 21).

The destruction of the satanic world-power and Israel's joyful prosperity. Chapter XXVII:1-9

In the text this power is made to assume the form of beasts as the swift-moving leviathan, the coiled serpent and the crocodile. They shall be destroyed by the strong sword of the Lord (ver. 1). In that day a song shall be sung to the vineyard of the fermented wine, the church of the elect. In this hymn the Lord is the speaker. Every moment, day and night, He guards His vineyard lest anyone visit her with evil intent. And He will abundantly water her (vss. 2, 3). Were Israel thorns and thistles (reprobate), He would march against him and consume him altogether. But He is His heritage in Christ. Let him then take hold of the Lord's strength and make peace with Him. And that he shall. For in the days to come the Lord shall cause Jacob—in the first instance Christ and secondarily the body of the elect—to take root and to blossom, and Israel to bear fruit. And they shall fill the earth with fruit (vss. 4-6). For the Lord has not smitten him with the stroke of the smiter, i.e. ever so hard as He smote those who smote him. Never has he been slain as the enemies were slain by the Lord (ver. 7). In a measure, when he shoots forth his branches, shall the Lord strive with him. He shall blow with a strong east wind in the day of the east wind. In this manner will his iniquity be atoned. And the fruit thereof will be that the Lord shall make all the stones of the altar as limestone that are crushed fine, and He will cast to the ground the groves and images (vss. 8, 9).

This is a rather difficult passage. But its meaning is clear nevertheless. Israel is God's people. Hence, in smiting him the Lord does not utterly destroy His vineyard. There is always a remnant according to the election of grace. The vine is not uprooted but pruned. This pruning action of the Lord, by which the dead branches are removed, is here compared to a strong east wind that the Lord will blow over His vineyard in the days of visitation. By these visitations, the full burden of which would ultimately be born by Christ, the iniquity of Israel was expiated. And the result thereof is that the fruit of the vineyard fills the earth. Everywhere the men of His goodpleasure, with the riches of the cross dwelling in them abundantly, turn from their idols to serve the living God.

The fortified city destroyed and Israel gathered. Chapter XXVII:10-13.

The fortified city shall be solitary, an abandoned habitation, forsaken like a wilderness. They shall be broken off and gathered by women for fuel. For it was a people without understanding. Therefore the Lord their Maker will show them no mercy (vss. 10, 11).

Whether the "fortified city" is Babylon and in the final instance the anti-christian world-power of this present dispensation or whether the city meant is Jerusalem here below is a question. I incline toward the view of Calvin that it is the earthly Jerusalem of which the prophet here speaks, the reprobated Israel. The imagery of the text favors this view. It speaks of branches withered and broken off. This makes it likely that the prophet had before his mind the metaphor of the vineyard, that he employed at the beginning of the chapter.

In that day the Lord shall beat off the flood of the river (Euphrates) unto the stream of Egypt (the Nile), and every one of the children of Israel—the church of the elect both Jews and Gentiles—shall be gathered in this Gospel period. A great trumpet shall be blown and the perishing ones in the land of Assyria and the outcasts in the land of Egypt shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem (vss. 12, 13).

This is a prophecy of the calling of the Gentiles in the Gospel period by the exalted and glorified Christ working through His Spirit and His Word. Accordingly Assyria and Egypt are the whole earth from the four corners of which the church is gathered. The Jerusalem in the mount of which the called ones worship is the Jerusalem above. Of this work of Christ the turning of Judah's captivity was the prophetic type. Necessarily implied is the atonement of Christ and the appearing of the church in glory.

Herewith ends the second cycle of Isaiah's prophecies.

Prophecies occasioned by Israel's lack of trust in the Lord regarding the Assyrian menace in the time of Hezekiah. Chapters XXVIII-XXXIII.

King Ahaz's sin had been that he sought protection against Syria-Ephraim not in the Lord but in Assyria at

the time the rising world-power. Since then Assyria had become a scourge through Ahab's blood-guiltiness. After the example of Ahaz, Hezekiah, otherwise a godfearing king, sought protection against Assyria not in the Lord but in Egypt. It seems that under the pressure of surrounding unbelief he approved an attempt to conclude a covenant with Egypt as the means of deliverance. But the Alliance that his government was trying to bring about through promises of large sums of money and property, was contrary to the will of God. Hence, Isaiah opposed it with all his might. The result was a new cycle of prophecies formed of five speeches each of which begins with a *woe*.

The First Woe, Chapter XXVIII

Woe to Samaria and Jerusalem. Chapter XXVIII:1-13

The city of Samaria was still standing. Located on a hill that overlooked fertile valleys, it was a city of "glorious beauty" and as such the crown of the pride of its godless inhabitants, who were steeped in the vice of drunkenness. But the beauty of their city is a fading flower. Operating through a mighty and strong foe—the world power—the Lord as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, and as a flood of mighty over-flowing waters shall cast the city down to the earth. And the drunkards in it shall be trodden under foot. (vss. 1-4).

In the text Samaria is called Ephraim (vs. 1). It indicates that the prophecy implies the prediction of the permanent dispersion of the Israel of the ten tribes. But there will be a remnant according to the election. And its glory shall be not the fading beauty of the earthly—here the wicked and doomed city of Samaria—but the Lord. With Him they shall sit in judgment as filled with His Spirit and strength and as warring His warfare (vss. 5, 6).

The prophet now turns to Jerusalem. Like Samaria this city, too, is a sink of iniquity. Priests and prophets alike have abandoned themselves to drunkenness. Even the tables of the sanctuary are covered with their vomit so that there is no clean place on them. Their debaucheries have wholly unfitted them for their office. They err in vision and waver in judgment (vers. 7, 8). What is worse, they will not submit to the Lord's word of rebuke and instruction, which they characterize as suitable for small children but wearisome for grown people. In their own words, it is "precept upon precept and line upon line, here a little, there a little" (vss. 9, 10). In punishment of their obduracy, the Lord will speak to them with lips of a people of another tongue. This is a veiled prediction of the Babylonian invasion and exile with all its attending suffering. But they will have no reason to complain as they despised the rest and refreshment—the Gospel of Christ—set before them by the Lord (vers. 11, 12). That they mocked with the Lord's Word is explained by the fact that it was in His heart that they should stumble backward, be snared and broken. This was the supreme reason (v. 13).

This passage sets out with the sentence, "But *they* have also erred through wine (ver. 7). That the pronoun indi-

cates the inhabitants of Judah and particularly of Jerusalem, is clear, it seems to me, from the fact that in this passage our prophet decries also the pollution of the *tables* by the drunken priests. Doubtless these *tables* belong to the furniture of the temple in Jerusalem.

The sure foundation. Chapter XXVIII:14-22

Now the *rulers* of Jerusalem are commanded to attend to the word of the Lord. Described here as scoffers, they are presented as saying that they have made a covenant with death and an agreement with Hades, meaning that they imagine that by setting lies their refuge and deceit their hiding-place they have secured themselves against the scourge when it passes through so that it will not come near them (vss. 14, 15). Therefore the Lord lays in Zion a corner—sure foundation—stone, tried and precious. He that believes in Him shall not be confounded. This stone is Christ. And on this foundation-stone the building will be erected through judgment and righteousness (vss. 16, 17). But the scoffers will not turn from their lies to betake themselves in faith to the Stone. Therefore their lies shall be swept away by the scourge of God and they themselves will be trodden down by it. So will their covenant with death be annulled and their agreement with Hades obliterated (ver. 18.). The scourge will come not once but repeatedly by day and night. And when the prophet's preaching that the scoffers ignore as so much trifling talk comes to pass, they shall understand, that is they will be filled with a lively and terrifying awareness that it was God's word indeed that they despised (v. 19). That lies cannot serve a man as a place of refuge is a truth that the prophet sets forth by a double figure, namely that of a bed that is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it, and that of a covering that is narrower than he can wrap himself in it. Therefore it will be naught but grief for the scoffers in the hour of judgment (v. 20). For the Lord will rise up in His might as formerly on Mount Perazim and in the valley of Gibeon to execute His strange work of destruction that the scoffers deem impossible. Therefore they should desist from mocking, lest they remain in their bands forever. For a consumption has been determined upon the whole earth. The prophet knows for he has heard it from the Lord (vss. 21, 22).

Predicted in this passage was the Lord's coming in judgment through the Assyrians and the Chaldeans as their successors. By their invasions they covered the whole land as a mighty waterflood until it was desolate.

The symbol of the plowman. Chapter XXVIII:23-29

The prophet cannot leave his announcement of judgment directed to Jerusalem without concluding it with the proclamation of salvation. For his main task is to comfort God's people, that is all such who come in faith to the Stone. So he requests their ear as he shows them from the manner of working of the plowman how wonderful God is in His counsel and how excellent in His working. The farmer does not plough all the day, that is he does not cut and break the soil endlessly, as though he plowed for the mere sake of lacerat-

ing the ground. On the contrary, when the soil is prepared, he sows fitches, cummin, the principle wheat, selected barley and spelt—the kinds of seed named in the text—each in their place. But the wisdom of the plowman is not of himself. God instructs him to discretion and teaches him (vss. 23-26).

This makes the sensible and discretionary farming of the plowman a sign of heavenly things. There is infinitely wise and loving purpose that activates God, the heavenly husbandman, in His plowing and threshing His elect. The outstanding example is Christ. Because He was bruised for our iniquities, He sees His seed, the family of redeemed (Isa. 52:10). Tribulations work patience and the hope that maketh not ashamed. His chastizements yield peaceable fruits of righteousness. How infinitely far God is from bruising His people for the sole reason of making them suffer.

The task of freeing the grain from the chaff in the time of harvest is done just as judiciously. The fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cartwheel turned upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten with a staff, and the cummin with a rod. Bread corn is bruised (v. 27).

God's strokes differ as to kind and severity. Each saint is chastized in a manner and measure as is needful to prepare him for his own place in God's house.

But the plowman will not ever be threshing it. For then were the grain destroyed. This prudence, too, is of the Lord (v. 29).

When the elect are once gathered and separated from the chaff the threshing will have served its purpose and come to an end.

How wonderful in counsel is God and excellent in working (v. 29).

The Second Woe. Chapter XXIX.

The announcement of this woe is directed to Ariel, i.e. the city where David dwelt, Jerusalem. Though as gazing into the future the scoffers add year to year and foresee an endless return of the cycle of feasts, though, in a word, the prophet's prediction of judgments to come were to the scoffers as idle tales, yet certainly the Lord will greatly distress Ariel. Notwithstanding it shall be to Him Ariel. He will never be unmindful of the fact that it is Ariel upon whom He lays His hands (vss. 1, 2). This thought is further worked out in the sequel. The Lord causes it to be known that He will encamp against Ariel round about, lay siege against her with a garrison, build fortifications against her, so that she, brought down into the dust, will let her speech be heard in whispers and her voice faintly as a spirit from the dead (vss. 2-4). But immediately the promise is added that the multitude of her enemies shall be like small dust and be made to pass away like chaff in an instant, suddenly. The Lord of hosts will visit them with thunder, earthquake, a great noise, storm, tempest and a flame of devouring fire (vss. 5, 6). The whole multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel shall be as a dream of a night vision. They shall pass away and their remembrance will be obliterated (ver. 7). They shall be in the condition of a thirsty and hungry man who dreams that he eats and drinks and whose hunger and thirst persist because it was only a dream (v. 8). The point to this imagery is that the Assyrians, certain of victory, feasted in their minds upon the spoils of an imagined conquest that did not materialize in that the Lord destroyed them before the gates of Jerusalem.

The prophet once more addresses the mockers. He bids them to tarry and be amazed at his revelations, to regard them with attention and be blinded by them. He describes the effect that his world produces in this people. They are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink, meaning that in their unbelief they are hardened and stupified by his preaching. Seeing, they do not perceive; and they hear, but do not understand. He reveals the reason. The Lord has poured out upon them the spirit of deep sleep, and has closed their eyes. This includes their secondary prophets, heads, and seers (vss. 9, 10), the teachers in Israel whose task it was to explain the revelations to the people. All the preaching of the prophet has become to them as the words of a letter that is sealed, because they do not desire the knowledge of the truth. And all have their excuses for not attending to the prophet's words and taking them to heart. To drive home the point the prophet avails himself of a figure. One who is learned is given a piece of writing and asked to read. But he cannot, because, so he says, the writing is sealed. It is then given to an unlearned man with the same request. He replies that he cannot read it because he is unlearned. So the scoffers. The one says that the prophet's preaching is confused and unintelligible and that therefore it can be understood by no man, while the other, falling back on the fact that he is unlearned, complains that it is above his comprehension. But the fact is that the prophet's revelations could be understood by anyone that hungered after the word of God (vss. 11, 12).

G.M.O.

IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies' Society of the Hope Prot. Ref. Church hereby expresses its sympathy with its Vice President, Mrs. Dewey Engelsma and two members, Mrs. J. Bomers and Miss Sibyl Engelsma, in the loss of their Mother,

MRS. LENA ENGELSMA

May the God of all grace so comfort them, that they may experience in their present sorrow the peace that passeth all understanding.

Rev. John Heys, President.

Mrs. John Kalsbeek, Secretary.

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Church will convene, the Lord willing, April 7, 1954, at Doon, Iowa. The consistories are notified that at this proposed session all matters belonging to a regular classical session will be entertained, including matters for the next synod, such as subsidy requests, new synodical business, voting for synodical delegates, etc.

H. Veldman, temporary Stated Clerk.

IN HIS FEAR

Walking in Error

(2)

Last time, because we did not have at our command the documents of the Classical sessions from April through October, we quoted from memory the thrust of the protests of the Rev. Hoeksema and the Rev. Ophoff.

Then we made the claim that these protests clearly reveal that they were not protesting to Classis against Rev. De Wolf but against that faction of the consistory which supported him in his heretical statements.

Now that we are home again and have before us the protest of the Rev. Hoeksema, we like to quote from it to substantiate by documentary proof our claim that it was a protest *against the consistory*. Although we put the substance of the protest in a different form, the quotation that follows clearly reveals that we were entirely correct in our presentation of the matter. In fact, it gives the correct answer to more things that have been erroneously presented to Protestant Reformed membership. We quote from the first page of the document handed in to the April session of Classis last year. And, if you please, we quote then from that part which was addressed *to the consistory* informing it of the protestant's intention to take the matter to Classis. Therefore we said last time that these men knew that it was *a protest against them*.

The quotation we have in mind is as follows:

"I protest:

1. Against the above mentioned action of the consistory on the grounds which will become evident in the accompanying protests

2. Against the action of the consistory whereby they rode roughshod over former decisions, without proving that these decisions were contrary to the Word of God or the Church Order, without even rescinding them. These decision which are still settled and binding are:

a. The sermon of the Rev. De Wolf, preached April 1951 is condemned.

b. The same is true of the sermon preached by him September 1952.

c. The Rev. De Wolf is asked to retract and apologize."

Does anyone now dare to deny that the elders were involved in the case of Rev. De Wolf? And do Rev. De Wolf and his elders dare under oath before God and man on the witness stand in court dare to deny that it was the case of the elders as well as that of Rev. De Wolf? Dare they take, under oath before God, the stand that these elders might vote in their own case? Let them not philosophize. Let them with documentary evidence show that these men were not personally involved and had the right to vote and hold their offices as elders in good standing.

But, before we go on, let us notice also what the action

was against which the Rev. Hoeksema protested, according to point one which we quoted above. We quote him again in the paragraph just above the one we already quoted:

"Last Monday you made, principally, your final decision in the matter when, by a vote of 9 to 8 (I being absent), you decided to approve of the answers of the Rev. De Wolf to the questions proposed to him by the consistory. This implies that you approve of the heresy taught publicly by the Rev. De Wolf that "God promises every one of you that, if you believe, you shall be saved"; and that "our act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter into the kingdom of God."

Here, again, you have the answer to a repeated misrepresentation which was designed to deceive and lead undiscerning souls into the camp of false doctrine. It has been stated repeatedly that in all his ministry in Fuller Ave. only two little statements of Rev. De Wolf could be found as a basis to try to get him out. Anyone who will deal honestly with this protest of the Rev. Hoeksema, whether he agrees with its contents or not, will have to conclude that he protested also against the answers which Rev. De Wolf gave in the examination which became necessary because he would not retract and condemn his heretical statements. Of course, even apart from that, it can be proven from the very minutes of the Fuller Ave. Consistory that there was far more than just those two statements. On September 24, 1952 the consistory, according to the sets of minutes handed out to the delegates of Classis, passed the following motion: "Art. 8. Motion is made that this consistory maintains that the sermon of Rev. H. De Wolf delivered Sunday evening, Sept. 14, 1952, is partially heretical and not Reformed as expressed in the grounds presented in the protest of Rev. H. Hoeksema and this consistory condemns the sermon as such." Art. 9 tells us that a substitute motion was made to ask Rev. De Wolf "to answer in writing a reply to the contents of Rev. Hoeksema." The meaning is, no doubt, to reply to Rev. Hoeksema's protest. Art. 10 tells us that the substitute motion is defeated. And Art. 14 informs us that the original motion, that is, the one of Art. 8, is put to vote and *carried*.

Let no man say again before God or man that it was simply two little statements in all his ministry, and then statements that could be interpreted correctly! Why was the whole sermon once condemned by the consistory? Why did Rev. De Wolf not give a good account of himself in his examination? Why did he out of one corner of his mouth say that he should not have used that word "promise" in his first statement because of its implications; and why did he out of that same corner of his mouth say that he frankly admits that, in the second statement, he said more than he meant to say; and then why did he out of the other corner of his mouth say that even then he would not admit that he had preached false doctrine in that statement? See pages 4 and 23 of his answers in the examination.

Why should he not have used the word "promise", if some of its implications were good? Indeed, he says that the

word did not necessarily need to have an evil implication. But if it does have a good implication, why should he not have used it? You see, there is a whole lot more to it than that. He told the consistory, in his defense, and he told the Classis in his defense that he meant "declare" by the word "promise". Apparently in his mind the wrong implication of the word "promise" in his statement was that it could (?) mean "promise". He meant "declare" by the word "promise" and was sure that he could use the word "promise" to express the idea. Those, however, who said that "promise" means "promise" were really stretching a point too far. The word "promise" does not necessarily imply "promise." Well now, that is nice. But there is more.

In his answers to the questions put at his examination he says, "As I explained before, by 'God promises' I meant the same as God declares to you, or God assures you that if you believe, you shall be saved. That was really my meaning." Along these lines he tried also to defend himself before Classis while insisting on keeping the word "promise" in the statement. He would not call the statement in its literal form heretical.

But at a later date, after he had in error walked out of the Protestant Reformed Churches with his deposed elders, he cast even that aside and with a grateful look to Rev. Petter for giving him a thought that he never had for his defense, either on the floor of Classis or in the consistory room, he reversed himself and said that it was after all a *promise* to all who hear. In the Reformed Guardian, No. 3, page 4 he refers us to Rev. Petter's article in the preceding Reformed Guardian and whole heartedly subscribes to his distinction between a promise and The Promise. But note that now his statement does not mean "God declares unto every one of you . . ." but now it stands literally "God promises every one of you . . ."

And it was Rev. Blankespoor who, more than anyone else, at that Classical session, showed Classis that the conditional faction wanted something more than "God declares unto every one of you that if you believe you will be saved." For when we were discussing the point as to whether it were proper to speak of God promising everyone, he, in defense of such an idea, asked us what we must do then with a text like the one to reprobate Jeroboam in I Kings 11:30-39. The Rev. Vos gave him an answer, and he expressed himself as not being satisfied with it. Then the Rev. Ophoff gave him an answer, and that answer was that God has the promise declared in the hearing of the reprobate but does not promise it to them. We can remember his words as though they were spoken yesterday. He called our attention to the Word of God in Deuteronomy, where Moses speaks of the blessings that come upon the obedient and of the curses that shall come upon those who walk in error. And then he called our attention to the fact instead of reading after all these blessings were mentioned as coming upon the faithful, "Behold, I have promised you" life, joy, peace and the rest, we read, "See, I have set before you this day life and good,

and death and evil," Deut. 30:15. Now, if Rev. De Wolf and Rev. Blankespoor are sincere in that by the word "promise" they mean no more than "declare" or that "God has the promise proclaimed to the reprobate" why is it that after the Rev. Ophoff said the very same thing by showing that Scripture says that God *sets the promise before* all who hear, Rev. Blankespoor reminded us for three days that he was not satisfied with that answer of the Rev. Ophoff? What more did he want? What more do they want? The delegates to Classis and many of the visitors will remember that repeatedly in his remarks Rev. Blankespoor said, "I had a question yesterday, too, that still has not been answered." And he knows that it was that question about the "promise" to reprobate Jeroboam. If it becomes necessary we can show that plainly. And more! But is it not plain that they want the word "promise," in that first statement, in its meaning of "promise?"

And why must Rev. De Wolf admit that he said more in his second statement than he should have said, if that "more" was sound reformed truth? Why frankly admit that you said more, if it was all good and literally true? Do not admit such a thing as a thing for which you are not pleading (see page 23 of his examination). Be thankful to God that He caused you to say a more wonderful truth than you even realized at the time!

And, now, having defended Rev. De Wolf in all his corruption of the truth and having been judged by the Classis as walking in error by such a defense, Rev. De Wolf and his supporters committed error upon error, and in a schismatic way they left the Protestant Reformed Churches. Of that we wish, the Lord willing, to write next time.

However, we wish to add just a few lines to this writing in anticipation of the next issue's contribution as well as in answer to a recent Reformed Guardian corruption and perversion again of truth and justice.

Does Rev. Kok actually believe that our Church Order is such a ridiculous piece of conflicting laws and regulations that when a minister of the Gospel and elders in the Church of Christ are according to articles 79 and 80 suspended and deposed from their office, that they may appeal to art. 31 and continue to hold their offices *in that denomination* because in their minds the decision of the denomination wherein they were suspended and deposed is contrary to the Scriptures and the Church Order? Does he actually believe that when such men violate art. 31 by refusing to appeal to a higher body, they may yet appeal to the article they violate in order to make null and void their suspension and deposition? And does he think that even if suspended and deposed ministers and elders DO appeal to a higher body they may, on the basis of art. 31, still function in their offices in that denomination because in their minds the decision to suspend and depose is contrary to the Word of God and to the Church Order? What kind of order, or rather, disorder, do you then have? But we are sure that the Rev. Ophoff can defend himself on this point.

J.A.H.

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

EARLY VIEWS OF THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

Other questions that arose.

In our two previous articles we called attention to the views on the baptism of infants as entertained by Tertullian and Cyprian. We noted that, whereas the former presented arguments against this practice of the Christian Church, the latter strongly advocated that infants should be baptized. And we also noted that, whereas the former saw in the innocence of the infant an argument against its baptism, the latter used the same argument in support of its baptism. Attention was also called to the fact that it is an undeniable fact that the baptism of infants was considered customary in the days of the early Christian Church. In the meantime also many other questions arose in connection with the sacrament of baptism.

The question arose with respect to the proper party to administer the sacrament of baptism. It was generally held that the Church only could baptize. We need not discuss this in detail. However, we do wish to call attention to the fact that Tertullian maintained that in case of an emergency any layman could administer the sacrament of baptism, maintaining in the same connection, however, that women were strictly forbidden to do so. It should be remembered, we must bear in mind, that Tertullian advocated the administration of the sacrament by a layman only as a measure of necessity. And even then these laymen must understand that these powers to baptize do not belong to them but only to their superiors, the bishops—they must never act independently of them. Of interest in this connection is the following quotation from Tertullian, and we quote: "For concluding our brief subject, it remains to put you in mind also of the due observance of giving and receiving baptism. Of giving it, the chief priest (who is the bishop) has the right: in the next place, the presbyters and deacons, yet not without the bishop's authority, on account of the honour of the Church, which being preserved, peace is preserved. Besides these, even laymen have the right; for what is equally received can be equally given. Unless bishops, or priests, or deacons, be on the spot, *other* disciples are called i.e. to the the work. The word of the Lord ought not to be hidden by any: in like manner, too, baptism, which is equally God's property, can be administered by all. But how much more is the rule of reverence and modesty incumbent on laymen—seeing that these *powers* belong to their superiors—lest they assume to themselves the *specific* function of the bishop? Emulation of the episcopal office is the mother of schisms, the most holy apostle has said, that "all things are *lawful*, but not all *expedient*." Let it suffice assuredly, in cases of *necessity*, to avail yourself (of that rule), if at any time circumstance either of place, or of time, or of person compels you (so to

do); for *then* the steadfast courage of the succourer, when the situation of the endangered one is urgent, is exceptionally admissible; inasmuch as he will be guilty of a human creature's loss if he shall refrain from bestowing what he had free liberty to bestow. But the woman of pertness, who has usurped the power to teach, will of course not give birth for herself likewise to a right of baptizing, unless some new beast shall arise like the former; so that, just as the one abolished baptism, so some other should in her own right confer it! But if the writings which wrongly go under Paul's name, claim Thecla's example as a licence for women's teaching and baptizing, let them know that, in Asia, the presbyter who composed the writing as if he were augmenting Paul's fame from his own store, after being convicted, and confessing that he had done it from love of Paul, was removed from his office. For how credible would it seem, that he who has not permitted a *woman* even to *learn* with overboldness, should give a *femane* the power of *teaching* and of *baptizing*! "Let them be silent," he says, "and at home consult their own husbands." end of quote. This quotation speaks for itself. Tertullian did declare that a layman could administer the sacrament of baptism, although he also stated at the same time that such could occur only when necessary and that the layman was subject to the bishop. And it is also evident that he forbids women the right to administer the sacrament.

In close connection with the preceding arose the question as to whether heretics should be re-baptized if they should return into the Catholic Church. This was a very important and urgent question during the early period of the Church of God in the New Dispensation. We understand, I am sure, that when we speak of the Catholic Church we do not refer to the Roman Catholic Church. There was only one Church during the early days of the Church of God in the New Dispensation and it was called the Catholic Church because it was the one, universal Church of God and of Christ. And this continued until the Reformation, although it is true that the eastern part of this Church (the Greek part of the Church) broke away from the western or Latin part in the eleventh century. It happens often, also in our present day, that when mention is made of the Catholic Church the Roman Catholic Church is meant. To speak of the Roman Catholic Church as Catholic Church, however, is an error. The "Catholic Church" is simply the universal Church. And we surely belong to the Catholic Church, according to Lord's Day 21 of our Heidelberg Catechism: "I believe an holy, Catholic Church." It would undoubtedly be more correct to speak of the Church of Rome as the Romish Church rather than the Roman Catholic Church. In fact, it is simply a fact that the Romish Church is very limited and therefore can hardly be called the "Catholic Church."

In close connection with the preceding it is well to bear in mind (as we have already remarked in passing in the preceding paragraph) that, in the early period of the New Dispensation, there was only one Church, the Catholic

Church. It is commonly known as the "Old Catholic Church." There was but one Church during the early centuries of the New Testament. The situation is so different today! It is true, of course, that the Roman Catholic Church today is one. Besides, that Church's claim to being the one only, true Church is based, among other things, upon its oneness, and with disdain and scorn it views the many fragments which characterize the Protestant church world of the present time and which had their beginning in the Reformation. Be this as it may, the Church which today confesses the Lord Jesus Christ can hardly be classified as one. We understand that when I speak of the Church which today confesses the Lord Jesus Christ I refer to the Church in the outward and nominal sense of the word. We need not call attention to other "churches" which do not confess the Lord Jesus Christ, such as the Mohammedans, etc. This also explains why the problems which were prevalent during the early period of the Church do not exist today as they existed then. One does not doubt, when a member changes his church affiliations, that he was baptized in the Name of the Triune God and in the Lord Jesus Christ. Things, however, were different in the early years of the New Dispensation. The Church was one then and, apart from the heathens (who, of course, had not been baptized) the other churches were simply heretical, denying the fundamental truths concerning God and the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence, the question was very pressing and acute indeed. What must be done with those members who joined the Catholic Church from these heretical churches; must they be baptized anew, or does their baptism stand?

Many of the early Church Fathers were of the conviction that their baptism was not valid, and that therefore they must be baptized anew. Among these who contended that the baptism of heretics was invalid was Tertullian. We quote him as follows: "I know not whether any further point is mooted to bring baptism into controversy. Permit me to call to mind what I have omitted above, lest I seem to break off the train of impending thoughts in the middle. There is to us one, and but one, baptism; as well according to the Lord's gospel as according to the apostle's letters, inasmuch as he says, "One God, and one baptism, and one church in the heavens." But it must be admitted that the question, "What rules are to be observed with regard to heretics?" is worthy of being treated. For it is to *us* that that assertion refers. Heretics, however, have no fellowship in our discipline, whom the mere fact of their excommunication testifies to be outsiders. I am not bound to recognize in *them* a thing which is enjoined on *me*, because they and we have not the same God, nor one—that is, *the same*—Christ. And therefore their baptism is not one *with ours* either, because it is not *the same*; a *baptism* which, since they have it not duly, doubtless they have *not at all*; nor is that capable of being *counted* which is not *had*. Thus they cannot *receive* it either, because they *have it not*.—end of quote. It is evident from this quotation that Tertullian strongly advo-

cates that the baptism by heretics must not be considered valid.

Cyprian, too, rejected the baptism by heretics. Quintus, a bishop in Mauritania, had written him and asked him for advice concerning the baptism of heretics. He answers him as follows, and we quote: "Cyprian to Quintus his brother, greeting. Lucian, our co-presbyter, has reported to me, dearest brother, that you have wished me to declare to you what I think concerning those who seem to have been baptized by heretics and schismatics (notice that Cyprian in these words speaks of these people who "seemingly" have been baptized by heretics and schismatics—H.V.); of which matter, that you may know what several of us fellow-bishops, with the brother presbyters who were present, lately determined, in council, I have sent you a copy of the same epistle. For I know not by what presumption some of our colleagues are led to think that they who have been dipped by heretics ought not to be baptized when they come to us, for the reason that they say that there is one baptism; which indeed is therefore one, because the Church is one and there cannot be any baptism out of the Church. For since there cannot be two baptisms, if heretics truly baptize, they themselves have this baptism. And he who of his own authority grants this advantage to them, yields and consents to them that the enemy and adversary of Christ would seem to have the power of washing and purifying and sanctifying a man. But we say that those who come thence are not re-baptized among us, but are baptized. For indeed they do not receive anything there, where there is nothing, but they come to us, that here they may receive where there is both grace and all truth, because both grace and truth are one." We will terminate this quotation, for the time being, at this point. Cyprian simply declares that heretics who join the Catholic Church are not re-baptized but simply baptized. He implies of course, that they have never been baptized. For, so he continues, these heretics, when they are baptized, do not receive anything for the simple reason that they have nothing. The heretical churches have nothing, therefore cannot and do not baptize; only the Catholic Church baptizes because all grace and all truth are in the Catholic Church and in that Church alone. The Lord willing, we expect to continue with this quotation in our following article.

H.V



IN MEMORIAM

The Men's Society of the Hope Prot. Ref. Church hereby wishes to express its sincere sympathy to four of its members, Mr. Dewey Engelsma, Mr. George Engelsma, Mr. Melvin Engelsma, and Mr. Jay Bomers, in the loss of their mother and mother-in-law

MRS. LENA ENGELSMA

May the Lord comfort the bereaved with the assurance that He does all things well and sanctify His way unto their hearts.

Rev. J. A. Heys, President.

Mr. G. Korhorn, Secretary.

The Voice of Our Fathers

The Canons of Dordrecht

PART TWO

EXPOSITION OF THE CANONS

FIRST HEAD OF DOCTRINE OF DIVINE PREDESTINATION

Article 7. Election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, before the foundation of the world, he hath out of mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of his own will, chosen, from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault, from their primitive state of rectitude, into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ, whom he from eternity appointed the Mediator and Head of the elect, and the foundation of salvation.

This elect number, though by nature neither better nor more deserving than others, but with them involved in one common misery, God hath decreed to give to Christ, to be saved by him, and effectually to call and draw them to his communion by his Word and Spirit, to bestow upon them true faith, justification and sanctification; and having powerfully preserved them in the fellowship of his Son, finally, to glorify them for the demonstration of his mercy, and for the praise of his glorious grace; as it is written: "According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." Eph. 1:4, 5, 6. And elsewhere: "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified them he also glorified." Rom. 8:30.

In this rather lengthy article there is but one insignificant variation from the original Latin text. In the last phrase before the Scriptural quotations our English version reads: "and for the praise of his glorious grace." This should read: "and for the praise of the riches of his glorious grace." Otherwise the above rendition is substantially correct.

We find in the present article a very thorough and detailed definition of sovereign election, supported by two very pertinent quotations of Scripture. One who studies this article, whether he be *supra* or *infra*, if he is Reformed at heart, cannot help falling in love with this beautiful exposition of the truth of divine election anew, and learns to appreciate in greater measure the meaning of the phrase, "for the praise of the riches of his glorious grace." And yet we must not imagine that it was at Dordrecht that for the first time this truth was expressed by our Reformed Fathers. For a comparison of this article with Article 16 of the *Confessio Belgica*, as well as with Question and Answer 54 of the *Heidelberg Catechism*, will reveal that as far as its essence is concerned, the whole and pure truth of sovereign election had been confessionally established in the Reformed churches long before the *Canons* were formulated. The virtue of the *Canons* lies

not in the fact that they for the first time establish the truth of election in our Reformed confessions, but rather in the fact that they define it in detail and define its relation to and position among the other truths of our salvation as the cornerstone in the structure of the truth.

Let us briefly enumerate the main points of this article:

1) Election is the unchangeable and eternal purpose of God.

2) The objects of this election are a certain definite number of fallen men, fallen through their own fault from their primitive state of rectitude into sin and destruction.

3) The source of this election is the free, or sovereign, good pleasure of God. Election is pure grace.

4) Election includes Christ, Who is eternally elected the Mediator and Head of the elect and the foundation of salvation.

5) Election finds absolutely no reason or ground in its objects why they should be elect: they are neither better nor more deserving than others by nature.

6) Election includes not only the end, final salvation and glory, but also the means unto that end, union with Christ, calling, faith, justification, sanctification, preservation, and glorification of the elect persons.

7) Election is theocentric: it is for the demonstration of God's mercy and for the praise of the riches of His glorious grace.

These in brief are the truths set forth in this seventh article.

* * * *

There are several elements in this paragraph of the *Canons* which receive special attention and emphasis in separate articles in this first chapter. Nevertheless, it is necessary in this connection to stress the positive teachings of the present article, in order in our treatment of the following articles to emphasize the apologetic aspect of these truths, as the *Canons* themselves do. For the *Canons* in the remaining articles of this chapter make a special point of setting the Reformed truth over against various Arminian falsehoods concerning divine election.

And then we may note, first of all, that the fathers speak of election as the "purpose" of God. The term is a Scriptural one, and is but one of several terms which the Bible employs to denote God's counsel in general, and the counsel of election in particular. Scripture also employs the terms *decree* (Ps. 2:7, 8); *determined*, Luke 22:22; *counsel*, Isa. 46:10, Acts 2:23; *good pleasure*, Isa. 46:10, Luke 12:32, Matt. 11:25, 26. And also as far as the counsel of election in particular is concerned, we find more than one word in Scripture. The verb *to know* and *to foreknow*, and that with the connotation of a knowledge in love, is used several times. Gen. 18:19; Amos 3:1, 2; Rom. 8:29, etc. Besides, we find the term *to choose*, *to elect* and the term *election*. Deut. 7:6; Deut. 14:2; Eph. 1:4; Rom. 9:11. And there is also the word which means *to predetermine*, *predestine*, *foreordain*. Rom. 9:29; Eph. 1:4, 11. The term *purpose* occurs in regard to election

in Rom. 9:11, in the phrase, "the purpose of God according to election." It is used, further, in Jer. 4:28; Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1:11; II Tim. 1:9, etc. The term *purpose* denotes God's counsel as the setting forth of things before the divine mind. And it certainly emphasizes the idea that there is nothing arbitrary and unsettled in God's counsel and in God's works, which are accomplished according to His counsel. The Arminians, however, with their doctrine of an indefinite and conditional election, destroy this conception of God's counsel, and make themselves guilty of introducing an element of arbitrariness in the divine mind and counsel. This constitutes one of their fundamental errors. And it is undoubtedly intentional when the fathers employ the term *purpose* in their definition.

When this article further qualifies that counsel of election as "unchangeable" and "before the foundation of the world," or eternal, they only further stress the fact that there is absolutely nothing indefinite and arbitrary in divine election. The two truths are, of course, complementary: that which is unchangeable is necessarily eternal, and that which is eternal is necessarily unchangeable. More than likely the idea of eternity in this article is quantitative, so that it is understood in the sense of "without beginning." This appears from the expression "before the foundation of the world," which, in the infralapsarian construction of the doctrine of predestination, is understood temporally rather than logically. To be sure, the difference between eternity and time consists also in this, that while time has a beginning, and in a sense, always has its end within itself, and can be measured, eternity is "from everlasting to everlasting." But there is a qualitative difference between time and eternity. Eternity is not time. It is not even time infinitely extended. Time is the product of creation, and is not a form for God's being and life. There is no time for God. He is constantly all that He is, and constantly lives all His infinite life with perfect consciousness. He is the eternal I AM. And as He is eternal, so is His purpose. This means, then, not only that God's purpose of election has no beginning, as if God were ever without it. But it implies that from everlasting to everlasting that purpose of election is constantly and fully before the divine consciousness. From eternity to eternity God is the decreeing God.

This at once implies too the immutability, or unchangeable character of God's purpose. God is from eternity to eternity the same in all the infinite fulness of His Being. There is no succession of moments in Him. There is no increase or decrease in His being and power, no changing of His mind and will. And once more, as God is, so is His purpose. He does not change His purpose, nor the course which He has designed to realize that purpose. This may be the case with man. His counsel is often brought to nought by various circumstances. And he may be forced to change his mind and choose a new course of action for various reasons. But as the Immutable One, God is unchangeable in His decree. He knows all things, and that too, in relation

to each other. And nothing can resist His will, and cause Him to change His course. His purpose cannot be thwarted by any outside interference. Nor can it be changed and improved upon for any reason whatsoever. His counsel shall stand, and He will do all His good pleasure.

Inseparably connected with the foregoing, but also intimately related with one another, are the further elements in this definition of election: 1) that it is mere grace that God elects; 2) that election is according to the sovereign good pleasure of His will; and 3) that there is no worthiness in the elect persons which occasions or merits their election. We note, first of all, that this is inseparably connected with the fact that God's purpose is eternal and unchangeable. These attributes of God's elective purpose are not so many loose and unrelated qualities. But just as all God's virtues are one in Him, so they are revealed as one in His decree. It must certainly be maintained that if God's counsel of election is eternal and unchangeable, then He elects His people out of mere grace, according to His sovereign good pleasure, and not because of any worthiness in them. And the converse is also true: if election is of mere grace, and according to His sovereign good pleasure, then it is necessarily eternal and unchangeable. You cannot possibly maintain the one without the other. This too is a fundamental principle which the Arminian fails to consider. The moment that he fails to reckon with any one of the above qualities of God's purpose of election, he loses them all.

But, in the second place, the three elements mentioned in the preceding paragraph are also interrelated and interdependent. If election is not of mere grace, then it is not according to God's sovereign good pleasure. And if it is not according to God's sovereign good pleasure, then it is not without cause or ground in the worthiness of its objects. Also here, you cannot possibly maintain the one without the other. The proposition that election is of mere grace demands, intrinsically, from the very nature of divine grace, that divine election has its source in God's sovereign good pleasure, and not at all in the worthiness and deserving nature of those whom He chooses. Destroy the one concept, and you inevitably must let go of the others.

But let us observe this relationship more in detail, and notice at the same time the infralapsarian character of the fathers' argument in this connection.

(to be continued)

H.C.H.

IN MEMORIAM

The Men's Society of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church herewith wishes to express its sympathy with its fellow member, Mr. Donald Dykstra, in the loss of his Mother,

MRS. ALICE DYKSTRA

May the God of all grace comfort his heart, and may we all heed the call of the Lord to prepare ourselves for His coming.

The Men's Society of the Prot. Ref. Church of Hudsonville, Michigan:

Rev. Gerrit Vos, President.

H. J. Holstege, Secretary.

DECENCY and ORDER

Supporting the Ministry

Article 11 — "On the other hand, the consistory, as representing the congregation, shall also be bound to provide for the proper support of its ministers, and shall not dismiss them from service without the knowledge and approbation of the classis and of the delegates of the (particular) synod."

The connection between the above article and the preceding one is rather self-evident. Whereas a minister, once called by a congregation, may not leave that church without the consent of the consistory, it follows on the other hand that the congregation through her consistory is duty bound to provide proper support for the minister as long as he is engaged in her service. This duty belongs not alone to the consistory and neither must it be considered as one of those generalities that concerns the congregation and all of its members *except me* but rather as Dr. Bouwman expresses it, "The obligation rests upon every member of the congregation". The complete quotation, freely translated, is as follows:

"It is the demand of the Word of God that the congregation shall not only provide for the maintenance of the church in general but also particularly for the subsistence of the minister of the Word and that upon every member of the church, in accordance with his prosperity, rests the obligation to dispose what is necessary for that purpose of his material gifts which the Lord constantly provides". (Vol. I, pg. 448)

That's the rule. It would hardly seem necessary to write any more about this matter because in itself it is clear and indisputable. Even worldly common sense would dictate the rule as set forth in the eleventh article of the church order. Beside, the Word of God is very explicit in regard to this matter as the following passages, selected at random, show:

Deuteronomy 12:19 "Take heed to thyself that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest upon the earth."

Luke 10:7 "And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give; for the labourer is worthy of his hire."

I Corinthians 9:11-14 "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless, we have not used this power, but suffer all things lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? *Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.*" (italics our, G.V.)

Galatians 6:6, 7 "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not

deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

The explanation of the last passage as found in Calvin's Commentary is instructive. Writes he: "It is probable that the teachers and ministers of the word were at that time neglected. This shewed the basest ingratitude. How disgraceful is it to defraud of their temporal support those by whom our souls are fed!—to refuse an earthly recompense to those from whom we receive heavenly benefits! But it is, and always has been, the disposition of the world, freely to bestow on the ministers of Satan every luxury, and hardly to supply godly pastors with necessary food. Though it does not become us to indulge too much in complaint, or to be too tenacious of our rights, yet Paul found himself called upon to exhort the Galatians to perform this part of their duty. He was the more ready to do so, because he had no private interest in the matter, but consulted the universal benefit of the church, without any regard to his own advantage. He saw that the ministers of the word were neglected, because the word itself was despised; for if the word be truly esteemed, its ministers will always receive kind and honourable treatment. It is one of the tricks of Satan to defraud godly ministers of support, that the Church may be deprived of such ministers. An earnest desire to preserve a gospel ministry, led to Paul's recommendation that proper attention should be paid to good and faithful pastors." (Galatians, Pg. 176)

The validity of the rule we are considering is clearly seen in the light of these passages of Scripture. Yet, it will also be seen that a goodly number of practical difficulties arise here which are not and cannot be solved simply by making a rule or citing a few Bible texts. The matter has to do with money and with the material things of life which money buys. When, therefore, the minister or the congregation, or both are carnal and not spiritual, the practical difficulties that arise concerning the matter of support become insolvable. The result is that tensions mount, feelings become bitter and the course of the gospel is hindered in the church. The exodus from such unpleasant situations is usually that the minister accepts the first call he receives.

Now rules multiplied will not change these realities of life. Only the Word of God sanctified in our hearts by the Holy Spirit will make us desirous that our minister is adequately cared for and that the ministry of the Word is supported according to good order and decency as prescribed in the Word of God and the rules of the churches.

That there is much neglect and violation of good order in this regard is then because we are in a relative measure still carnal. Although the church is often guilty, the fault must not be laid entirely at her door. Frequently the minister himself is to be blamed. He may be a mercenary person who "runs greedily after the error of Balaam for reward". He may live lavishly. He spends recklessly and carelessly. He uses the office of the ministry for material gain. When his income proves insufficient to sustain such

conduct he goes to the consistory and complains charging them with failure to adequately support him. If he should be then given an increased income it is not very long before the whole thing repeats itself. Surely no minister who so conducts himself has the right to appeal to either Article 11 or to the Scriptures in support of his demands.

On the other hand, however, the churches are often negligent in their duties. Frequently the matter of adequate support is not considered by the members of the church at all and only by the deaconate or consistory once a year when the budget is compiled. Even then the matter is rather quickly disposed of when it is noted that the minister and his family are *getting by* without complaint on their present support and, consequently, there is apparently no reason why they cannot continue to do so. Hence, the matter is conveniently shelved for another year unless the minister himself raises a complaint. This practice is wrong. It is a plain omission of the duty to investigate whether the support is actually proper.

Other churches will attempt to get by with the minimum. With them it is not a question of what is adequate and proper in accord with the times in which we live and the means which the Lord has given to His people but rather the whole question of supporting a minister is looked at from the perspective of how much does he need? What will suffice? What is the minimum requirement? Needless to say, this view of the matter is very carnal. It means that the appreciation of the spiritual riches ministered unto such a church is very meager. She also must learn that "*proper support*" is not synonymous with "*bare necessities of life*".

Yet, it is here that the real question enters. What is to be considered as *proper support* and how is that to be determined? In shedding light on this question we do well to remember once more these words of Calvin: "Ministers should not revel in superfluous abundance nor should any of the necessary supports of life be withheld. They ought to be satisfied with moderate fare, and the danger which attends pomp and luxury ought to be prevented."

To find this medium of moderation several things must be taken into account. First, it may be assumed that the office bearers of the church are men who are acquainted with the cost of living index and if not they should be. They should know in general what the cost of living will be for their minister. Secondly, the geographic location of the church must be considered because economic conditions are not equal in all geographic locations. Thirdly, the needs of the individual minister must be taken into account. If he is a young minister he very likely has need of funds to build and expand his library. Books are usually expensive. It is not unlikely that he also has student-debts which must be met. If he has a family his needs will be greater than one without children. Furthermore, he should be provided with adequate means so that he may also be able to give liberally as a good example unto others. When all of these things are taken into consideration and the minister is pro-

vided so that he can labor without worry and can live with reasonable comfort we may say that he is *properly supported*.

To provide such support is the duty of every church. A minister of the gospel should not be required to engage in outside work in order to make a livelihood. If one must do that it is a shame and disgrace to the church. This is not because it is beneath the dignity of any man to engage in some secular trade. Not at all. Even the apostle Paul labored as a tent maker in Corinth and worked with his hands in both Ephesus and Thessalonica. (See the ff.: Acts 18:2, 3; 20:34, II Thess. 3:8-14) In one place he did so because the church was poor and under the oppression of persecution did not have the means to provide for him. In another he would set himself forth as an example to the shiftless and lazy who refused to work. In still another place he labored supporting himself so that the enemies of the truth might have no occasion to speak slanderously concerning him or the gospel of Christ. The apostle was not too proud to perform other labor whenever and wherever the occasion demanded but this action of his did not nullify the rule that "those who labor in the gospel shall also eat of the gospel."

G.v.d.B.



IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory of the Second Protestant Reformed Church at Grand Rapids, Michigan, hereby expresses its heartfelt sympathy with our brother, consistory member, deacon Ted Engelsma, in the death of his mother,

MRS. LENA ENGELSMA

May our covenant God abundantly comfort him and his family, so that they may feel that mother's gain is also gain for them.

Hessel DeJong, Vice President.
Nanning Klaver, Clerk.

IN MEMORIAM

The Young People's Society of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church expresses its deepest sympathy to our Vice-president, Mr. M. Engelsma, in the death of his mother,

MRS. L. ENGELSMA

That God through His word and Spirit may comfort the bereaved, is our prayer.

The Young People's Society

Rev. J. A. Heys, President.
Helen Veenstra, Secretary.

ALL AROUND US

Ghyssel's Hodge-podge

For several reasons I generally do not read Rev. J. M. Ghyssel's Meditations in the Banner. However, when the Banner came today I paged through it, and somehow his meditation caught my eye. Perhaps it was the large typed heading that made me take notice. The meditation for the February 19th issue was entitled: Our Duty to Come to Christ. The Scripture text upon which the meditation was based was taken from John 6:37b, and reads as follows: "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." A beautiful promise of Christ, indeed!

But notice how the Reverend robs you of the beauty of this promise. He writes: "These well-known words of our Savior suggest a fearful possibility. They suggest the possibility that one may be cast out. To be cast out means to be rejected at last. And this is indeed a serious possibility. It is about as serious as anything one could contemplate. There is nothing worse than to be rejected at last and to perish forever."

"It is bad enough to become chronically ill, and lie helpless on a bed of illness for many years with no hope of restoration. But there is an end to that. At last death comes to give deliverance at least from this burden. But if after years of suffering one should at last be cast out of the kingdom of God and perish forever, what a fearful thing that would be!"

"Yet this is a possibility. Our Savior says in the first part of this 37th verse of the sixth chapter of John: 'All that which the Father giveth me shall come unto me.' This implies that the Father has not given all men to Christ. There are some who have been excluded. Their names have not been written in the book of life. Jesus says also in this connection: 'This is the will of him that sent me, that of all that which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.' Evidently it is not the will of the Father that all should thus be raised up at the last day. Of all those whom the Father has given the Son, none shall be lost; but not all have been given to the Son by the Father. Some have been passed by, and these will be cast out."

"So the possibility which the text suggests is real and serious."

"Entirely apart from what Jesus himself says about the restricted number of those who are going to be saved, our own consciousness testifies of the possibility that we might perish. Our conscience tells us that we deserve hell rather than heaven. If we are saved at all, we are saved by grace. Feeling doesn't save us. Feeling rather points in the opposite direction. It makes us conscious of our utter unworthiness. It says that if at last we are cast out, it is exactly what we deserve. Oftentimes men base their hope for the future on the supposition that they have done the best they could;

but aside from the fact that this is not so, since no one has ever done the best he could, the best is never good enough to serve as a foundation for our salvation. Even our conscience tells us that if we are ever going to be saved, we shall have to find a ground outside of ourselves."

"So the fearful possibility remains that we may at last be cast out. God says that some will be cast out. My conscience tells me that I deserve to be!"

"The text, however, suggests also another truth; namely, that in spite of what men deserve, many are not going to be cast out. There is hope for a sinner. There is a possibility of being received at last into the heavenly kingdom. This prospect gives us courage and joy. It lightens and brightens our path, and takes much of our fear away."

"In his book, *A Bunch of Everlastings*, F. W. Boreham says that John Bunyan's favorite text was the one: 'Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.'"

"Boreham says that Bunyan felt that he was a blot upon the face of the universe. The toads and the crows could never know such misery as that which bowed him down. He thought that the sun in the heavens and the very stones in the street, and the tiles upon the houses, did band themselves against him, and that they all conspired together to banish him out of the world. They abhorred him; he was unfit to dwell among them, because he had sinned against the Saviour. He says: 'How happy now every creature over me, for they stood fast and kept their station. But I was gone and lost.'"

"It was while lamenting this hopeless condition that the light broke. 'This Scripture,' he says, 'did most sweetly visit my soul: 'Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.' O, what did I now see in that blessed sixth of John. O, the comfort that I had from this word!"

"One wonders whether men today feel their unworthiness and lost condition as deeply as Bunyan did. Whether they do or not, we know that men can feel extremely miserable about it. You can be in the best of health and feel spiritually miserable. You don't have to be sick in body to feel sick in your soul. How wretched Bunyan felt, and how wretched sometimes we can feel!"

"But when we feel thus wretched, how sweet is the promise and how comforting this assurance which we find in this text. If we come to Jesus Christ, the Savior, we shall in no wise be cast out!"

"Boreham says that these words reveal the approachability of Jesus. He is still approachable even though he has left this world. We can come to him by faith, in prayer, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. We can come right now, just as we are, without any plea but that we need him, need his mercy, his pardon, his righteousness, his sustaining grace, his protection, his help in life and death. This is a blessed fact: the approachability of Jesus!"

"Boreham also says that these words reveal the catholicity of Jesus, and by this he means that no one is excluded from the offer. Our Savior rejects no one that comes to

him sincerely. Sometimes men and women say that salvation is only for the elect, and how true that is! But some Christians have made themselves needlessly miserable on this account. Let us believe in the sincerity of the Gospel offer. 'Him that cometh'—any 'him'—the worst sinner on earth—"I will in no wise cast out!"

"Finally, Boreham suggests this thought: the reliability of Jesus. You can depend on these words. His promise does not fail. He never goes back on his word. When we look at ourselves, how miserable we are! How unreliable and unsteady! We are never the same. Even our spiritual life is like the weather—one day warm, the next day cold. But we have a trustworthy Savior. Satan often tempts us to doubt and unbelief. Our minds can be so perplexed. The only thing that is clear to us at such times is our own sad past. Our mistakes rise up to plague us, our feeling of inferiority oppresses us. We feel depressed and dejected; and then Satan finds that a fine time and a fine chance to terrify us with the thought of eternal damnation. Jesus says: 'In no wise!' With this 'in no wise' we must combat the tempter. We can tell him that the words of Christ are reliable and trustworthy, and not for all the devils in the world shall we doubt the Lord. We live by faith, and faith rests on the promise!"

"But we also have here the statement of a solemn responsibility. It says: 'Him that cometh.' So we must come! True, Jesus says: 'All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.' But we must not wait as if we have no responsibility in the matter. We must come, and continue to come. Continued coming is necessary even for the most advanced Christian."

"But some have not yet come. Their responsibility is to come now. Not tomorrow, because tomorrow may be too late. They must come in faith, in self-surrender, with a plea for divine mercy. And believing, they will be saved!"

I call this Ghysel's hodge-podge. I mean, of course, that the entire meditation is one grand mix-up.

Rev. Ghysels tells you the indubitable truths of Scripture, namely, that salvation is only for the elect, and that "all that the Father giveth me shall come to me." He even tells you on the basis of the text that this is a reliable promise of the Savior. But he then turns right around and takes this promise away from you by repeatedly telling you that there is a possibility you will be lost at last. He even says that this possibility is both "real and serious." If you want to be really sure of the promise of Christ you must believe the sincerity of His offer. You must come to Him before it is too late. This is your responsibility.

Frankly, I am left cold when I read stuff like this. The Reverend robs you of all the blessed comfort these words of the Savior were meant to convey. I'm very thankful that it was my Savior Who gave me this blessed promise, and not the Rev. Ghysels.

Natural Blessings And The Well-meant Offer.

In the Torch and Trumpet, Vol. 3, No. 6, pp. 16, 17, the Rev. William Masselink replies to the Rev. Adam Persenaire and writes on "The New 'Common Grace' Issue". Our readers will be particularly interested in what he writes regarding the two issues mentioned above, namely, the issue regarding "Natural Blessings" and the issue regarding the "Well-meant Offer of the Gospel".

Concerning the former the Rev. Masselink has the following to say: "The Bible speaks of natural blessings that are shared by Christians and non-Christians. Regarding these natural blessings there exists some difference of opinion. Van Til (Dr. C. Van Til of Westminster Presbyterian Seminary—M.S.) speaks of this as a "difficult point" (Cf. Introduction to Systematic Theology, p. 25). This point is indeed difficult if one accepts with Van Til "an absolute ethical antithesis" between God and natural man. The ground for the bestowal of such blessings upon the ungodly is thereby obliterated. God can bestow these natural blessings upon the non-Christian because he is still an image-bearer of God in the wider sense of the term. There are still faint traces of the Divine image left in man. God loves himself, and therefore can also love his image wherever it appears. To this Divine image in its less restricted sense belongs God-consciousness and moral-consciousness. Natural man has some civil righteousness. This is the ground for these Divine blessings."

"Van Til with his "absolute ethical antithesis" must find the reason for bestowing these blessings elsewhere. He writes: "God's rain and sunshine come, we know, to his creatures made in his image... it comes upon the unbeliever that he might crucify to himself the Son of God afresh," (cf. idem p. 25ff.). This is basically the same as the position of the Rev. Herman Hoeksema. He writes: "God's Word wills that we shall understand that the Lord enriches the ungodly with earthly blessings in order that he might destroy them in eternity." (Cf. Niet Doopersch maar Gereformeerd, p. 55). Van Til as well as Hoeksema look upon these blessings of common grace upon natural man too exclusively from the point of view of the final judgment. This is a basic error in all such reasoning. We may not fail to appreciate these present blessings."

Regarding the issue of the well-meant offer of the Gospel, Masselink writes as follows: "In 1924 our Christian Reformed Synod confirmed the declarations found in the Canons of Dort that God comes with a well-meant offer of salvation to all. This offer comes to the non-elect, too. According to the well known "Three Points" this offer of salvation is a manifestation of God's common grace. Hepp (Dr. V. Hepp of the Netherlands, now deceased—M.S.) makes the following comment: "Is there not a sort of grace in the hearing of the Gospel by the non-elect? They hear that God has no pleasure in their death, but rather that they may be converted and live. As temporary believers the Word may bring them

joy . . . Let us not look at the lot of the non-elect in the congregation only from the view-point of judgment. Truly that judgment is a reality. But the enjoyments which they sometimes have under the preaching also have temporary reality as a non-saving work, brought about as they are by the Holy Spirit," (Cf. Credo, July 1, 1940). Van Til makes the following comment on what Hepp says: "Hepp here speaks as though it were already known who are and who are not elect. He speaks as though a preacher may approach a certain individual whom he knows to be a reprobate, and tell him that God has no pleasure in his death. But this is to forget the difference between the earlier and the later. *The general presentation comes to a generality*" Cf. Evangelical Quarterly, Nov. 1946, p. 45, (italics mine, W.M.)"

"What Van Til's Criticism of Hepp Involves: (1) Van Til says that a preacher would not be able to say to one whom he knows to be a reprobate (an impossible case, W. M.) that God has no pleasure in his death. Therefore this passage in Ezekiel 33, according to Van Til, is exclusively limited to the elect. Of them only can God say, that he has no pleasure in their death. This interpretation coincides

with that of the Rev. Herman Hoeksema. (2) The offer of salvation, according to Van Til, does not come to the *individual*, but to the "generality". This, too, I regard to be in conflict with the declarations of the Christian Reformed Synod of 1924. The "Three Points" certainly mean that the offer of salvation comes not only to a generality, but to the individual as well. This is also the teaching of Calvin in his commentaries on: Ps. 81:14; Ps. 147: 19, 20; Isa. 65:2; Jer. 7:25, 26; Jer. 23: 33; Ezek. 3:25, 26; Matt. 23: 27; Rom. 10:21."

"Van Til and Hoeksema view the offer of salvation just as they view the natural blessings to the ungodly, too much from the *viewpoint of judgment*. They fail to appreciate the *present blessings* (even though they are not saving) contained in this well-meant offer of the Gospel."

I do not wish to offer any comment on the above quotation except to say that the Rev. Masselink leaves the impression that when one criticizes the "Three Points" he is criticizing the Canons of Dort. There is some difference, don't you think, Reverend?

M.S.



O BLESS THE LORD, MY SOUL, WITH ALL THY POWER

O bless the Lord, my soul, with all thy power!
Exalt the God who is thy strength and tower;
Let all within me bless His holy Name.
Bless Him who heareth all thy supplication;
Forget not thou His kindly ministration,
But all His gracious benefits proclaim.

O bless the Lord, who all thy need supplieth!
Thy soul with good He fully satisfieth,
And, like the eagle's, He renews thy youth.
Jehovah doeth right for He is holy;
His judgments for the sore oppressed and lowly
Are done in perfect righteousness and truth.

He spake to Moses from the midst of thunder,
He brake the bonds of Israel asunder,
And showed to them His mighty works and ways.
The Lord is gracious and of kind compassion,
He saved His own in truly wondrous fashion,
To anger slow, He loved them all their days.

Jehovah will not chide with us forever
Nor always keep His anger, but deliver
His people from their sorrows and distress.
He has not crushed the flock of His possession,
Nor dealt with us according to transgression;
He chastens, but with love and tenderness.

Like as a father looketh with compassion
Upon his children, lo, in such a fashion
The Lord doth look on them that fear and trust.
He knoweth that our frame is weak and humble;
How void of strength, how prone we are to stumble!
And He is mindful that we are but dust.

Lo, as for man, his days are like a shadow,
Like tender grass and flowers of the meadow,
Whose morning-beauty fadeth with the day;
For when the wind but lightly passeth o'er it
'Tis gone anon and nothing can restore it;
'Tis found no more, it vanisheth for aye.

Psalms 103: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

