

# THE STANDARD

*Bearer*

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## MEDITATION

### Walking in the Light

"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." I John 1:5-7

God is a light!

That is the ground of all that the apostle John writes to the church. At bottom, if only the church understands that God is light, and that in Him is no darkness at all, then her joy shall be full.

For having fellowship with that God, by reason of that fellowship we also walk in the light. If we do that not, and still maintain that we have fellowship with Him, we lie in a very real and practical and serious sense, and we do not the truth. But walking in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.

Church of Jesus Christ, walk in the light, then!

\* \* \* \*

Actually the light of our universe with which we are constantly surrounded is a constant parable and an incessant reminder of Him Who is absolute Light. And the meaning of this figure is unmistakable.

Light does not merely symbolize knowledge. Light is knowledge, to be sure, but it is much more than that. There are those who, proceeding from the idea that light is that which reveals, while darkness is that which hides, maintain that light is simply knowledge. In darkness men know not; where light is, things are revealed. God is absolute light, absolute knowledge. He knows Himself and all things with eternal perfection. There is nothing in Him or outside of Him that is hidden. There is no darkness in Him at all. Thus, if God reveals Himself, then He gives us the light of

knowledge, and then we have fellowship with Him. And if then we walk in that knowledge, we know one another also, and have fellowship with one another.

Now, while God, also in respect to knowledge, is the absolute Light, because He knows Himself and all things and lives a life of perfect consciousness, and while it is in His light that we see light, so that we know Him and all things in relation to Him, nevertheless we are mistaken if we imagine that light is merely knowledge.

Then indeed, knowledge would be virtue, and ignorance would be vice.

But knowledge is not virtue!

Nor is knowledge the only and most important element of light. It certainly is not on the foreground here in Holy Writ.

And you discern the danger, do you not? Take one more step along that path, and you land in the camp of modernism. Then sin becomes a question of the head, rather than the will. Then the way of salvation is the way of training and instruction and education. If only you educate the poor fool, then all will be well. Then Jesus Christ becomes the Great Teacher; and if only we learn of Him, then we can and will walk in the light.

And such a philosophy is not of God, but of the devil!

An educated fool is still a fool!

And the fool hath said in his heart, "There is no God."

And with that carnal wisdom and knowledge he goes to hell!

For he is in darkness, and hath never seen the light!

\* \* \* \*

No, light has spiritual, ethical meaning in Scripture. It stands opposite darkness. And darkness is the image of sin in all its horror. Sin seeks darkness because it works are evil. It can not stand the light. It seeks cover. That is even literally true, so that the sinner actually seeks the cover of the night. The thief and the fornicator prefer to commit their evil works in the darkness of the night. Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. Darkness includes, therefore, everything that is of sin: impurity, unrighteousness, hatred, envy, enmity against the living God.

He that is in darkness hates his brother; he has pleasure in iniquity. Darkness is death. And outer darkness is hell.

Light is its direct opposite. Light is, in one word, all that is good in the spiritual, ethical sense. It is holiness, righteousness, truth, wisdom and knowledge, love and mercy and grace. He who walks in the light loves the truth; he does righteousness; he reveals himself in the sphere of love; he has pleasure in all that is pure. To walk in the light is life, just as to walk in darkness is death. Eternal life is the eternal light of heaven!

\* \* \* \*

A pertinent question is. do you walk in the light?

God's Word often speaks of our walk and our way, in order to picture the entire spiritual direction of our life, and that too, not only as that life is revealed before men, but as it is before God, Who knows the innermost secrets of our hearts.

That life, to which Scripture often refers under the figure of our walk, issues forth from our heart, that is, from the spiritual center of our being. From the heart are the issues of life. Out of that heart are determined the spiritual, ethical direction of our every thought and desire, inclination and plan. Our joy and our sorrow, our happiness and our grief, yea, all our life, receives its spiritual content from our heart.

Would you answer the question concerning your walk?

Really?

Then, first of all, observe whether your inner life is dominated and controlled by the light, whether it is such that your entire heart is in harmony with the light!

By nature our inner life is ruled by darkness, by hatred and enmity against the living God and against one another. The powers of impurity and wickedness, unrighteousness and filth hold it captive. The bands of death encircle it. Lies and darkness and deceit control it. We therefore walk in darkness, and we love the darkness. It is not so that we are good at heart. Man, all men, ourselves included, is darkness in himself. In his deepest heart he is darkness. Principally he is so that he cannot sleep without doing evil. He hates the light. And he cannot, and will not, and cannot will to do the good.

But a walk in the light means that our inmost being is light. It means that our heart is changed, and with it our whole inward life. It implies the reality of which the apostle Paul speaks when he says: "Ye were once darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord!"

And of the greatest importance it is that we remember this aspect of our walk. Remember this: to walk in the light is not first of all a matter of our outward life. It is a question of our internal life and existence. What is only superficial and outward has no root in the heart, and it is an abomination to the Lord! For the Lord God is such a God that He searches the hearts! The Lord God is not superficial! He is superficial neither in His accomplishments nor in His searchings. That is why it is a terrible doctrine to teach that God

in "common grace" improves the natural man without renewing his heart. The Lord our God is concerned with the heart! To Him there can be really no "inner" and "outer." The darkness and the light of day are both alike to Him. The secrets of the heart are as open to Him as the outward deeds!

Hence, a walk in the light is a matter of the heart. And then, but only then, is it a matter to the outward walk. To love righteousness with the heart, and then to do unrighteousness in our walk is a contradiction. To love the truth in our heart, and then to speak the lie is spiritually incongruous. To seek after holiness in the heart, and then in outward walk to wallow in the mire of sin is impossible. A walk in the light as respects our outward conversation can only arise out of a heart that is filled with the light of the love of God, righteousness, holiness, truth!

Now answer the question!

You say, perhaps, that you are afraid to say you walk in the light? You are so imperfect, so sinful?

Answer this: is that really your life? Are you at home in the sphere of darkness? Does your life go out toward sin? is there an inner harmony of heart between you and sin?

If the latter is true, so that you never felt even a longing to be delivered, then you are indeed a child of darkness. Then you must not say that you walk in the light. Then there is one thing necessary: the grace of God unto salvation!

But if you are filled with true sorrow of heart, not because of the results of your sin, but because of your sin itself, that can only be because inwardly you love the light. That sorrow is the very first and unmistakeable sign of a walk in the light. The apostle John does not mean that the children of light have attained to perfection. Nay, we deceive ourselves if we say that we are without sin. But he who walks in the light deeply abhors sin, confesses sin, may believe that God is faithful and just to forgive sin, and in the hope of eternal perfection fights the good fight of faith against sin, having a hearty desire to live according to God's precepts in the midst of the world?

Do you walk in the light?

\* \* \* \*

Well now, that walk in the light can have but one source! God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all!

Mark you, the text speaks facts, not admonitions!

Whoever walks in darkness is no child of God. He must not say that he is. If he does, he lies and does not the truth. Only he that walketh in the light is a child of God. Only he has fellowship with God. You may not say that you have fellowship with God while you walk in darkness!

Why is this all so certain? Because God is Light!

That is God's very Being. It is His entire infinite life! As the Triune One God lives a perfect light-life. There is in Him,—if you could fathom His divine depths,—no darkness at all. He lives a life of perfect fellowship in the light.

Hence, nothing else than light ever comes from God. You

can never say that the lie and unrighteousness and unholiness is out of God. He is only the fountain of all good. Hence, what comes from God, has fellowship with Him, must be light. For He is the Light!

Then it is plain too that walking in the light you have fellowship with Him. That follows. If you are in the light and of the light, there can be only one reason: you have fellowship with Him!

And thus it is with the child of God: in Christ he has fellowship with God!

Yes, Christ is the center of that fellowship. For apart from Him we were in darkness. But in Christ crucified, raised from the dead, exalted into heaven, Who sends forth His Spirit to abide with us, to regenerate us, and to call us out of darkness into the light, — in Christ, God's own Son, Light of Light, we have a communion of light-life with the living God.

Therefore it is that we walk in the light. As far as that life is concerned, that new life which we have in fellowship with Him, there is no darkness in us. Darkness is not out of light. And the light is of God, in Whom is no darkness at all.

If we walk in the light, we have fellowship, first of all, with God!

\* \* \* \*

And thus we also have fellowship with one another . . .

Sharing that same light-life in Christ Jesus, we are bound together in the light. We love one another with the love of God in Christ by His grace. Together we love the light, because we love God. And in that love we are united by something which far transcends any affinity of character or personality, or whatever it may be. We love one another in the light, in as far as God's life is revealed in our lives. That is the unity of the brethren!

And in that same light we experience the cleansing power of the blood of Christ. For the more we strive to walk in the light, the more our sins are made manifest to us in the light. And the more we see our sins, the more deliverance becomes the burning desire of our hearts.

And the more deliverance becomes the burning desire of our hearts, the more we experience the blessed cleansing power of His precious blood!

Here that is all only in beginning, — the light and the walk in the light, the fellowship with God and one another, and the experience of the cleansing power of His blood!

But presently, when we are freed from all sin, then we shall also walk perfectly in the light.

Then our fellowship with God and with one another shall be full!

And our joy shall be full!

H.C.H.

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## EDITORIALS

### Autonomy

Strange to say, but true nevertheless, the court case in Grand Rapids that is to determine who shall be the First Protestant Reformed Church in that city, chiefly became concerned with the question of the autonomy of the local congregation.

Kok c.s. presented to the court a view of autonomy that amounts to independentism. Even within the denomination, the local congregation remains absolutely autonomous and sovereign in its own sphere. Article thirty six of the Church Order which states that the classis has the same jurisdiction over the consistory as the synod has over the classis was roundly denied or, at least, interpreted in such a way that jurisdiction means the same thing as advice. Even though it was granted that classis and synod could declare that Kok and his consistory are outside of the denomination, they could, so he claimed, still function as the First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, Mich. Article thirty-one of the Church Order, which states that whatever is determined by majority vote in a major assembly shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proved to be in conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order, was interpreted by them as establishing unlimited freedom of conscience even within the denomination. If anyone judges for himself that a certain decision is in conflict with the Word of God or with the articles of the Church Order, he is not bound by it, nor does he have to prove to the major assembly that the decision is in error. He must be allowed, within the church connection, to go his own sweet way and let his conscience be his guide.

Such was the caricature Kok c.s. presented to court under the name of Reformed Church Polity.

It is independentism, nominalism, pelegianism, applied to the government of the church.

It is anarchy, nothing less.

They tried to prove, by partial quotations from the writings of the Rev. Ophoff and the undersigned, that this caricature of Reformed Church Polity had always been taught them in the seminary of the Protestant Reformed Churches. But in this they failed, for the simple reason that it was immediately exposed in court that their quotations were partial and that, if only the quotations were read in their entirety, they taught something quite different from what Kok c.s. made them to teach.

In the meantime, in the light of the corrupt Church Polity, one can understand several wanton and lawless actions on the part of Kok c.s. committed both in the past and in the present.

One can understand the error of the consistory of Hudsonville when Kok was its pastor and president of receiving,

quite independently, certain members from the congregation of Byron Center that had been placed under censure by the consistory of the last mentioned congregation. For about four years, I believe, this matter was brought before the classis and, finally, before synod. The Synod of 1944 condemned Kok and Hudsonville's consistory, and advised a public apology. And although Kok recorded his negative vote he, nevertheless, pursued the course of practical wisdom and said *peccavi*.

Then one can also understand that Kok and De Jong, quite independently, undertook to do the work of the committee of correspondence and sold our churches to the Liberated, something which perhaps would never have been discovered if it had not been for the well-known letter of the late prof. Holwerda.

Then one can understand the corruption of Doezeema and his consistory, Howerzyl and his consistory, Gritters and his consistory, and the former Classis West. The Consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church served notice to all the consistories in the Protestant Reformed Churches of the suspension of the Rev. De Wolf. The purpose of such notice is certainly not to give all the other consistories an opportunity to express judgment in the case, but merely to have them refrain from allowing the suspended minister to preach in their pulpits. The only way they could possibly be required to express judgment in the case would be the way of synod. A minister can be suspended by a consistory, but not deposed. The deposition must take place at the classis in the presence of and with the advice of the deputies *ad examina* which are the synodical delegates of Classis West. Hence, in either of two ways the matter of the suspension and deposition could have been brought to the attention of synod: 1. De Wolf could have appealed to synod even if his suspension and deposition had been confirmed by Classis East; 2. the deputies *ad examina* from Classis West could have refused to advise the deposition of De Wolf, in which case the matter would have had to be finally determined by the Synod of 1954.

That would have been the proper, the only lawful way according to Church Order.

But the consistories of Bellflower, Oskaloosa, Pella, and also that of Orange City, under the leadership of their respective ministers, refused to walk the orderly and lawful way, took matters, quite independently, in their own hands and, disregarding the Church Order, became lawless.

They let us know that they judged the matter, for which they had neither the right nor the competence. They let us know that, not we, but De Wolf and his deposed elders were the legal consistory. They let us know that they recognized De Wolf as being still in the office of the ministry and that they would, therefore, allow him on their pulpits. And they virtually declared us outside of the communion of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Classis West followed in their wake. They broke the tie with Classis East.

All this they tried to defend in court.

Over against this, when finally I was on the stand, I testified as follows (literally taken from the record):

Q. You have heard the testimony of Rev. Howerzyl and Kok and DeWolf, and others here, that you and the Rev. Ophoff taught that the local churches were autonomous?

A. Mr. Tubbs .....

Mr. Linsey: Now, you answer that, will you please?

Mr. Tubbs: He is my witness.

The witness: Don't interfere. Mr. Tubbs is asking me the questions, not you.

A. Mr. Tubbs, all I want to say is this, first of all, that all the testimony I have heard in this Court about that church polity by my former disciples makes me thoroughly ashamed of them.

Mr. Linsey: I ask to have that stricken out.

The Witness: I don't want it stricken out, because .....

Mr. Vander Wal: We have a right to object here.

The witness: Mr. Tubbs, you are asking me the questions, aren't you?

Mr. Vander Wal: I ask to have that stricken out.

The witness: Mr. Tubbs, I am thoroughly ashamed of that, because to my mind .....

Mr. Vander Wal: Just a moment. Do we have a ruling? Are we going to have some decorum, or is this man going to keep on talking?

The court: Mr. Tubbs, I think as you well realize, of course, that that is not an answer to the question.

Mr. Tubbs: No, he is coming to that now, sir.

Mr. Vander Wal: Just a moment, can we have that stricken?

The court: I think it should be.

Mr. Tubbs: I don't know why it should be stricken. Every single one of these people has flaunted his reputation at large here, and why can't we answer in kind? All right.

A. Mr. Tubbs, may I answer it this way. The testimony to the Court here is a caricature of all Reformed Church Polity.

Q. (By Mr. Tubbs) A caricature?

A. A caricature.

Q. Is it true that the highest church ecclesiastical body is the consistory?

A. Mr. Tubbs, that is so absurd in every respect that there are no words for it. I know that the sentence, the expression that the synod is below the classis, and the classis is below the consistory was originally made by Dr. A. Kuyper about 1880 an authority in almost everything in the Reformed Churches at that time. Nevertheless, Dr. Kuyper did not mean that at all. I can show that, Mr. Tubbs, from a quotation I have, and several quotations of his books. I certainly studied this matter, especially since this thing has

been up in Court here, and I would like to quote what the same Dr. Kuyper said. Quote.....

Mr. Vander Wal: Just a moment, your honor. I don't know what he is reading from. If he is reading from the book, we want the book.

Mr. Tubbs: You may have the book.

The witness: Yes, that's the book.

Mr. Tubbs: (indicating) Is that Dr. Kuyper's book?

A. Yes, that is the book.

Q. (By Mr. Tubbs) It is printed in the Holland Language?

A. Holland language, and I think you find the quotation marked.

Q. Where the two of paper are?

A. Where the papers are.

(Mr. Tubbs hands books to Mr. Vander Wal)

A. This quotation is from Dr. Kuyper, Sr. (Reading) „Tractaat van de Reformatie der Kerken.”

Q. (By Mr. Tubbs) Can you give the translation of that title so the reporter can get it?

A. “Treatise on the Reformation of the Churches.”

Q. And what page is your first quotation from?

A. Well, it is marked. I don't have the pages. I marked it right there, (indicating) right there. You can follow me if you want to. I have the translation here. Oh, I have it here, page 50. On page 50 Dr. Kuyper compares the system of the independentist with the Reformed system in the following words: (Reading) “In the fifth place, they were of the opinion” — the independentists — “that more churches could indeed hold conferences, but that the deputation of more churches could never exercise classical or synodical *authority*” — Dr. Kuyper underscores authority — “over the individual churches, not even so long as they were united in official church connection. Over against which the Reformed held fast to the principle, that the authority of Christ is over His entire church, and thus also the discipline of more churches was necessary in order to keep the individual churches in the path of the Word of God.” That's Dr. Kuyper. Again — don't know whether I have the quotation, but the second quotation you will find marked, undoubtedly, in the chapter on “Concerning Reformation Through Breach With The Church Connection” as I translate it. Dr. Kuyper writes as follows:

Rev. Kok: What page? You haven't got it marked. Is it a paragraph under that sub-title?

(Mr. Tubbs hands book to witness.)

A. This is the paragraph (indicating).

Q. (By Mr. Tubbs): Right here?

A. Yes, that is right.

(Mr. Tubbs hands book to opposing counsel and witnesses).

A. (Reading): “After all, such a church connection binds. Churches living in such a connection are no longer free in their movements. They live under common rules, and

stand under the power of commonly conditioned gatherings in classis and synod. Through these common rules the door of the one church is opened for the members of the other churches. For the sake of the influence which they exercise mutually upon each other, their manner of government is regulated by one common church order, and the changing of that church order is not the right of one church but of all the churches together." This in answer, Mr. Tubbs, to your question about the autonomy of the church. Let me say this first of all, there is no Reformed church in the world that does not confess the autonomy of the church — no Reformed church. That was taught me even by Prof. Heyns. Prof. Heyns was my professor at Calvin College and Seminary. He emphasized the autonomy of the local church. But at the same time, there is no Reformed man under the sun that makes of the autonomy of the local church anarchy. And this — what we have heard here is anarchy. Let me explain that Mr. Tubbs. I am very much interested in this business because my name was mentioned more than once in this connection. The autonomy of the local church is limited on every side by the church order which all the churches adopt. It is certainly true that, in regard to the internal affairs of the local church, the consistory is the only power — no question about it. Every Reformed man believes that, Mr. Tubbs. No exception. Nevertheless, in the church connection, the individual churches relinquish several of their rights, and even in such a way that in many instances, the synod is considered the supreme ruling body, not of the local congregation, but certainly of the churches in common. This is true, for instance, of the matter of doctrine. This is true of the theological school. The school is instituted as a synodical institution. The synod appoints the professors without any advice of the churches. In 1949 they appointed professors without any advice of the churches right on the floor of the synod. The synod rules absolutely over all mission work. Mission work is in the hands of the synod. Moreover, Mr. Tubbs, according to the Church Order, no Protestant Reformed minister can enter upon his ministry without the synod. According to Art. 4, he must be examined by the synod. Without that examination he can never enter upon his ministry. Art. 11 states very plainly that no local church, no local consistory has the right to dismiss the minister without the approbation of the classis or of the synod. Article 36 states that the synod shall have the same jurisdiction over the classis as the classis has over the consistory. I am very well aware, and every Reformed man acknowledges that, that jurisdiction of the synod over the classis, and of the classis over the consistory, is not the same as the jurisdiction which the consistory has over the congregation. It does not say that either. But, Mr. Tubbs, jurisdiction is not advice. Jurisdiction is jurisdiction, and jurisdiction means in the Dutch „zeggenschap," that is the power to have to say, to lay down the law. That is the meaning of jurisdiction in Art. 36. Moreover, in Article 79 it states very plainly that

although the suspension of a minister must begin in normal circumstances with the consistory, as was done here, nevertheless, no one can depose a minister except by the jurisdiction of the classis. You can call this advice if you please; but if it should happen that a consistory should suspend a minister, and an appeal would be made or the matter of his deposition would normally come before classis, and the classis with the advice of the delegates *ad examina* would decide against it, the consistory would either have to abide by the decision or get out ultimately, that's all. No question about it. Moreover, how foolish that one could appeal from a higher to a lower body. Everybody understands that that is folly. We never taught such a thing.

Nevertheless, Mr. Tubbs, I said that in Court here before, and I testified the same thing in Court in 1924, as I can prove from the records which I have, there has always been a controversy in the Reformed churches about the question whether the classis or the synod may depose officebearers, may depose a consistory. That is really the question: can a classis depose a consistory. The opinions were divided. On the one hand, there were those that insisted that the classis could not depose from office, but declare a consistory outside of the association of the churches. That is the same as deposition except that the man will still be in office, but he will not be in office in the association of the churches. On the other hand, there were those that claimed that the classis could depose a consistory. Now, that is really a fundamental question in Reformed Church Polity, yet, in a practical sense, it is a very minor question. It does not interfere with the Church Order whatsoever. That is a question. Opinions have been divided. And, therefore, I said in Court in 1924, when the classis had deposed my consistory, and I was not in agreement with that, I said that I admitted the power of the classis over the consistory for the sake of the argument in Court. That is what I said, and I maintained it all the way. I think that you will find the testimony in that book Mr. Linsey has there (indicating), in which I literally, for the sake of the Court, said that the classis had power to depose the consistory.

Mr. Linsey: He has been talking here.....

The Witness: I am not through.

Mr. Linsey: He has been talking about ten minutes. I would.....

The Witness: I want to answer the questions of Mr. Tubbs. I don't answer the questions.....

Mr. Linsey: Can't I make an observation, and an objection? It seems to me that this is going beyond anything I have ever seen in Court. Here is — we ask questions, and ask for answers, and now here is a long lecture that no questions asked. I have no chance to object with this kind of a harangue here by this man, and it seems to me it isn't the proper way to proceed.

The Witness: Mr. Tubbs, this is not a harangue.

The Court: I think, Mr. Linsey, that what the witness



is stating here is his version or his interpretation of the jurisdiction of these various bodies.

Mr. Linsey: I don't know whether he is referring to that, or what he is, because he covers everything.

The Court: I think I am going along with him.

Mr. Tubbs: If the Court please, we have listened to many days of speeches in which this man had been quoted in directly opposite views. He has got a chance now to explain his views.

The Court: All right, go ahead.

Mr. Linsey: Maybe we could adjourn while he goes on.

Q. (By Mr. Tubbs) But does Article 31.....

A. I had one more argument to add. There was one more remark I wanted to make in this connection, and that is about the difference between the name Christian Reformed *Church* and Protestant Reformed *Churches*. Now, we certainly maintain that the name "Churches" is better than the name "Church." But also that is not a fundamental difference, but that the name Christian Reformed Church is always in official documents is not because of that at all. That is simply because the name Christian Reformed Church was adopted in the Netherlands in 1834, and the churches here in 1847 and 1857 adopted that name. That is the only reason why the name was ever adopted. That's all.

(To be continued)

H.H.

### Synodical Letter

The following letter has been adopted by our Synod of 1954, and we thought the contents to be of interest to our readers. Therefore, it appears here in the space where normally our Editorials appear. The letter will be printed in pamphlet form, and mailed to all our former fellow-members of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

It reads as follows:

Esteemed Brethren:

Your committee received the mandate, first of all, to prepare a proposed letter of admonition to the schismatics, in harmony with the overture from Classis West (see Agenda). Our proposed letter here follows:

To our former fellow-members of the Protestant Reformed Churches:

The Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, in its session of June 22, 1954, decided to address to you the here following words of explanation and admonition. You have become schismatic, and separated yourselves from the Protestant Reformed Churches, so that you have no longer any right to the name "Protestant Reformed," a name which we on our part mean to keep and protect, if necessary through legal channels. We do not know in how far you are acquainted with the facts that caused the schism in our churches. Many of you are undoubtedly misinformed. And therefore, in the following pamphlet our first purpose is to

acquaint you with the bare facts and causes of the schism. And, whether you know the facts or are still ignorant of them, in this pamphlet we come to you with a word of admonition, to repent of your evil way and to return to the truth and the fellowship of the Protestant Reformed Churches in the only proper way, which we hope to describe below.

The beginning of the schism, as you most probably know, was occasioned by a sermon preached by the Rev. H. De Wolf on the evening of April 15, 1951, in which he, among other dubious and insulting statements, literally said: "God promises everyone of you that, if you believe, you shall be saved." Then, in a second sermon, preached by him in the evening of September 14, 1952, he emphasized that "our act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter into the kingdom of God." On both these sermons the Consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church received protests. These protests were treated at length. We shall not trouble you now by a rehearsal of all that took place in the Consistory. We would rather call your attention to the decision of Classis East in the case. For to this Classis the matter was finally referred, and it rendered the following decision in May, 1953:

"In our opinion both the statements which the protestants condemn are literally heretical regardless of what the Rev. De Wolf meant by them, regardless of how he explains them because:

"The first teaches a general promise of God unto salvation to all that externally hear the preaching of the gospel, head for head and soul for soul limited by a condition which man must fulfill, while Scripture and our confessions plainly teach:

1) That, indeed, the proclamation of the gospel comes to all to whom God in His good pleasure sends it.

2) That, however, in our proclamation of the gospel, we may never say that God promises salvation to everyone of the hearers, on condition of faith, for the promise itself is particular, unconditional, of and only for the elect; for it is an oath of God which He, in His everlasting mercy and grace, fulfills only to and in them, without any condition or prerequisite to be fulfilled by them; and which promise implies that, by His Holy Spirit, He causes them to receive and appropriate salvation by a true and living faith.

"The second teaches that our act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter the kingdom of God, which means that we convert and humble ourselves before we are translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son, while Scripture and the Confessions plainly teach:

1) That the whole work of our conversion, regeneration in its narrower as well as in its wider sense, in virtue of which we humble ourselves, is sovereignly wrought by God, by His Spirit and Word through the preaching of the gospel in His elect.

2) That this entire work of conversion is our translation and entering into the kingdom of God. Hence, it is not,

cannot be AFTER but THROUGH our conversion that we enter the kingdom. We humble ourselves IN the light, never IN darkness; we humble ourselves, whether initially or repeatedly, IN the kingdom, never OUTSIDE of it. Hence, our ACT of conversion is never antecedent to our entering in, but always is performed IN the kingdom of God, and there are no prerequisites.

"Grounds:

a. the protestants have clearly shown from Scripture and the confessions that the literal statements are heretical.

b. we believe this is necessary for us to state in the light of our past experiences and history with the Liberated churches who use these arminian expressions.

"2. Classis advises the Consistory of the First Church:

a. to demand that the Rev. De Wolf make a public apology for having made the two statements in question.

b. that the Consistory also publicly apologize for having supported the Rev. De Wolf with respect to the two statements in question.

"Grounds in the first statement:

a. Scripture: Heb. 6:16-18, which teaches very emphatically that the promise is an oath of God which, according to His immutable counsel, He swears only to the elect, and therefore cannot possibly be conditional; Rom. 9:6-8, 16, 18, which texts speak of the children of the promise in distinction from the carnal seed in the church, and the children of the promise according to this passage are none other than the elect of God. We can never say, therefore, that God promises to "everyone of you" that if you believe you shall be saved. The promise is for the elect, and is absolutely unconditional. This same is taught by many other passages of Holy Writ. Confer Acts 13:48; John 6:36 and 37; John 10:26-30. (The explanations offered of the texts in Heb. 6:16-18 and Rom. 9:6-8, 16, 18, are not in the original documents, but are added by the Synod.)

b. Confessions: Heid. Cat. 20, 65, 66; Confession 22, 33-35; Canons I, A, 6, 7, 10; I, B, 2, 3, 5; II, A, 5, 8. In all these passages it is emphasized that faith is not a condition, but a means whereby we are ingrafted into Christ, a gift of God which He sovereignly bestows only upon the elect. Thus, for instance, in Qu. 20 of the Heid. Cat.: "Are all men then, as they have perished in Adam, saved by Christ? No, only those who are ingrafted into Him, and receive all his benefits, by a true faith." The same is true of Qu. and Ans. 65 and 66. From the Confession, Art. 22, we quote the following: "However, to speak more clearly, we do not mean, that faith itself justifies us, for it is only an instrument with which we embrace Christ our righteousness. But Jesus Christ, imputing to us all his merits, and so many holy works which he has done for us, and in our stead, is our righteousness. And faith is an instrument that keeps us in communion with him in all his benefits, which, when become ours, are more than sufficient to acquit us of our sins." The Canons of Dordrecht, as is well known, em-

phasize that faith is a gift of God which He bestows only upon the elect. From Article 6 of Canons I we quote: "That some receive the gift of faith from God and others do not receive it proceeds from God's eternal decree." And from Article 7 of Canons I we quote the following: "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, and 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." The same is true of Canons II, 5, which is often quoted erroneously to support a certain general and conditional promise. However, even this article teaches that the promise of the gospel is only for those that believe, that is, therefore, the elect. This is the teaching of all our confessions. And therefore, the first statement by the Rev. De Wolf, "God promises to everyone of you that, if you believe, you shall be saved," must be regarded and was regarded by Classis East as literally heretical. And such it is. (The explanations with part of these confessional passages are not in the original document of Classis East, but are added by Synod.)

"Grounds in re the second statement:

a. Scripture: Col. 1:13, Eph. 2:1-3, John 3:3-5, Phil. 2:12, 13. Remember that the second statement made by the Rev. De Wolf presents our act of conversion as a prerequisite to enter the kingdom of God, which means, of course, that our act of conversion is required of us before we ever enter into the kingdom. In other words, it is required of us while we are still in darkness. Now all the passages of Scripture which we quoted plainly contradict and condemn this teaching. In John 3:3 we are even taught that unless we are born again we cannot *see* the kingdom of God. And in John 3:5 we are taught that unless we are born of water and of the Spirit we cannot enter into the kingdom of God. This is also very evident from Col. 1:13, which reads: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." It certainly is not in darkness, but in the light, into which we are translated by the power of God's grace, that we can possibly convert ourselves and actively enter into the kingdom of God. Hence, there are no prerequisites to enter into that kingdom. Only the power of God's grace translates us, so that we are in the kingdom, and walk in the light. (The explanations are added.)

b. <sup>44</sup>Confessions: Heid. Cat. 8, Canons III-IV, 1-3, 10-12; V, 6-8. In all these passages from the confessions we are plainly taught that by nature we are totally in darkness, corrupt and depraved, and will not and cannot and cannot will to turn to God and enter into the kingdom of God unless we are first regenerated by the Spirit of God. Literally this



is taught in Canons III, IV, 10: "But that others who are called by the gospel, obey the call, and are converted, is not to be ascribed to the proper exercise of free will, whereby one distinguishes himself above others, equally furnished with grace sufficient for faith and conversion, as the proud heresy of Pelagius maintains; but it must be wholly ascribed to God, who as he has chosen his own from eternity in Christ, so he confers upon them faith and repentance, rescues them from the power of darkness, and translates them into the kingdom of his own Son." And this is also emphatically and most beautifully taught in III, IV, 11 and 12, which speaks of the grace of regeneration as a resurrection from the dead. From all this it is abundantly evident that also this second statement made by the Rev. De Wolf is certainly literally heretical. (Explanations added.)"

Now, what happened further? Did the Rev. De Wolf retract his heretical statements and apologize, as the Classis advised? Did the elders that supported him in his heresy also apologize, as the Classis advised? Let us first of all continue to quote the advice of the Classis in this matter:

"3. Classis further advises the Consistory of First Church:

a. that in case the Rev. De Wolf should refuse to apologize, which our God graciously forbid, the Consistory proceed to suspend him from the office of the ministry of the Word and the Sacraments, according to the pertinent articles of the D.K.O.

b. that in case any elder or elders should refuse to submit to the proposed action stipulated under No. 2, b, which God graciously forbid, such elder or elders be disciplined according to the articles of the D.K.O. pertaining thereto.

"Grounds: Art. 79, 80, D.K.O.

"4. That Classis appoint a delegation of three ministers and two elders to personally acquaint the Consistory with the above decisions and advice at the earliest consistory meeting:

"Grounds:

a. Almost all the elders of the First Church are absent from Classis Meeting, and thus are not aware of the five days of deliberation which preceded the above advice.

b. The matter is one of great magnitude and importance.

c. We owe the mother church of our entire denomination such courtesy and respect.

d. We should spare no efforts on our behalf, under the blessings of our Covenant God, to save the dear brethren involved."

On the evening of June 1, 1953, the Consistory met with the committee of Classis, as per above decision. At that meeting, first of all, the Rev. Vos informed the Consistory that the Classis had appointed a committee to make the case pending with the Consistory, and that said committee appointed him to address the Consistory, which he did in an appeal to the Rev. De Wolf and the elders that followed him

to preserve the unity of the churches, and apologize for their heretical doctrine as the Classis had decided. Immediately upon the speech by the Rev. Vos, one of the elders that followed the Rev. De Wolf made a motion to adjourn, evidently with the purpose of stalling for time. You must remember that after all the elders that followed the Rev. De Wolf were in the minority. One of the good elders in the meantime had died, and the consistory had already nominated a duo of brethren, both of whom were of the De Wolf faction, and which included Mr. A. Vermeer, a brother-in-law of the Rev. De Wolf, who was chosen at the congregational meeting of June 5, 1953, and installed a few weeks later. To this the opposing elders evidently looked forward, thinking that then they could possibly have a majority in the Consistory. This motion to adjourn, however, was defeated by a majority vote of the Consistory. Then the Consistory adopted a motion to adopt the advice of Classis and to act accordingly. This meant, of course, that the Rev. De Wolf and the elders that followed him were declared guilty, and that unless they apologized they were suspended and deposed. Again the opposing faction attempted to stall for time: for a motion was made by one of them to table the motion expressed above. Now, there certainly could not be any reason to wait with the adoption of the motion to accept the decision of Classis and to act accordingly, for the whole matter involved in that motion had been discussed for many months. There was nothing to be discussed any more. But this motion to table was also defeated. And after that the motion to adopt the decision of Classis and act accordingly was adopted by the majority vote of the Consistory. And here the Consistory made an error. From that time on it should not have allowed the Rev. De Wolf to preach, at least not before he made his apology. And it should not have allowed the elders to function in their office before they had made their apology. But the Consistory was lenient. And especially since the Rev. De Wolf and the elders that followed him asked for time to consider, they took no further action at the June 1 meeting. The Consistory gave them time, supposing that they acted in good faith and would really consider the matter of an apology, especially after they had heard the heart-appealing speech of the Rev. G. Vos at the same meeting. Nevertheless, it became evident later that they still stalled for time, until Mr. Vermeer had been installed as elder, thinking that then they could probably have the majority in the Consistory. The next meeting of the Consistory was on June 15. At that meeting the Committee appointed for the case referred to our error as Consistory of not removing the guilty minister and elders from office until they had apologized. However, at that same meeting it became very evident that the guilty parties had not even considered the matter of an apology. For after two weeks they had done nothing about it, and were still stalling for time.

On Sunday evening, June 21, 1953, the Rev. De Wolf made a statement at the close of his sermon which many at

the time understood to be an apology, but which was no apology at all, seeing that the Rev. De Wolf did not retract his statements nor express regret for them, but rather apologized for the misunderstanding on the part of those that protested against his preaching.

The next meeting of the Consistory in the presence of the classical committee above-mentioned was held on June 22, 1953. There the Rev. De Wolf offered the following would-be apology, which the Consistory did not adopt: "As far as those statements are concerned I am ready to say that I am sorry that they were not clear and therefore left room for a wrong interpretation. I would like to explain that by the first statement I had no intention at all to teach that God promises salvation to all men and that it depends on man's own will whether or not he will be saved. I have never taught this and could not have intended to teach this by that statement. By the second statement I did not mean to teach that a natural man must convert himself while he is in the power of darkness, outside of the kingdom of God. Also this is contrary to anything that I have ever preached. If therefore I have offended anyone by not stating clearly what I meant and thus giving occasion for misinterpretation, I am sorry." This, of course, was no retraction of his heretical statements, which according to Classis were literally heretical, and was therefore no apology whatsoever. Again and again the Consistory emphasized that all it demanded of the Rev. De Wolf was a retraction and an apology for those heretical statements. This he stubbornly refused. There was with him not even a sign of repentance. Instead he raved at and slandered the protestants in a most terrible speech.

At this meeting of June 22 a motion was made and supported, although it was, of course, entirely illegal, seeing the matter had all been decided at the meeting of June 1, — a motion was made and supported to place the Rev. De Wolf and his elders that followed him before the alternative of either apologizing or being suspended and deposed. It was remarked that of course the guilty elders and the Rev. De Wolf could not possibly vote on this motion. First the motion was made in reference to Rev. De Wolf that he apologize now for the statements he made as advised by the Classis and adopted by the Consistory at its June 1st meeting. In spite of the fact that the guilty elders had no right to vote on this motion, they did so nevertheless, and thereby declared that they were not willing to have the Rev. De Wolf apologize for his heretical statements. And when the Chair addressed the Rev. De Wolf and asked him whether he was ready to apologize, the Rev. De Wolf flatly refused. A second motion was adopted, the guilty elders again voting in their own case, that also these now should apologize. That they voted in their own case against the motion to apologize was sufficient evidence of the plain fact that they would never apologize for their supporting the Rev. De Wolf. And since by their attempted illegal vote all the condemned elders clearly expressed that they did not intend to submit to the decision

of Classis and Consistory and to apologize, there was no need of asking each of them personally. Hence, according to the advice of Classis, adopted by the Consistory in the meeting of June 1, 1953, the Rev. De Wolf and the part of the Consistory supporting him were worthy of suspension and deposition.

On the following evening, June 23, 1953, the Consistory adopted the following motion: "The Consistory expresses that the Rev. De Wolf is worthy of suspension from his office of minister of the Word and of the Sacraments.

#### Grounds:

1. The two heretical statements made in two sermons preached on April 15, 1951 and September 14, 1952.
2. His refusal to apologize for those statements as advised by Classis.
3. The advice of Classis regarding this case.
4. The decision of the Consistory of June 1, to adopt the advice of Classis and act accordingly.
5. Arts. 79 and 80 of the Church Order."

Also the following motion was adopted: "The Consistory expresses that the following elders of this congregation are hereby declared worthy of deposition from their office: A. Vermeer, F. Sytsma, A. Dykstra, G. Sikkema, H. Knott, H. Bastiaanse, I. Bouwman, W. Stuursma, S. De Young, A. Viss, L. Mulder. Grounds:

1. Their refusal to apologize for supporting and defending the Rev. De Wolf in maintaining the two statements declared by Classis to be literally heretical.
2. The advice of Classis East regarding this case.
3. The decision of this Consistory made on June 1 to adopt the advice of Classis and act accordingly.
4. Arts. 79 and 80 of the Church Order."

At this meeting the Consistory of the Fourth Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, was called in for its advice. That Consistory advised as follows:

"It is clear to our Fourth Consistory:

"1. That neither the Rev. De Wolf nor the elders involved have made the apology demanded by the Consistory as advised by Classis.

"2. That Classis advised the Consistory to proceed with suspension in case the Rev. De Wolf and the elders involved should refuse to apologize.

"3. That in so far the Consistory has the right to proceed with suspension on the basis of the classical decisions.

"However, we are not prepared to say:

"a. That the consistory meeting can be called legal when half of its members were not notified that it should be held.

"b. That a suspension can be called in order when the involved were not notified that the double consistory meeting would be held and the suspension be decided on."

From this it is evident that the Fourth Consistory positively advised to proceed with suspension. In the negative part of its advice the Fourth Consistory does not say that the consistory meeting of June 23 was not legal, and that the

suspension was not in order because the guilty parties were not present at the meeting of the double consistory. That part of its advice was merely negative. And certainly the Church Order does not require that ministers and elders should be present at their own final deposition. Before this the whole matter of their suspension and deposition had been discussed at length in Consistory and Classis in their presence. There was nothing more to be discussed about the whole matter. And therefore, at the same meeting the Consistory decided as follows:

"It is moved that we hereby suspend the Rev. De Wolf from his office of minister in the Prot. Ref. Churches and also hereby depose the aforementioned elders from their office. Grounds: the same as above."

This motion was adopted unanimously.

Of this decision the Consistory formally notified the Rev. De Wolf and his guilty elders on June 24, 1953, by letter, in which letter the decision together with the grounds were stated.

The Rev. De Wolf and the elders that supported him did not appeal to Classis or Synod. Nor could they possibly have an appeal, for they never submitted to their suspension and deposition, as is required by Article 53 of the Church Order and the Formula of Subscription. Article 53 of the Church Order demands that all office bearers shall sign the Formula of Subscription. And that Formula of Subscription states that in case of discipline all officebearers shall have the right to appeal, but "until a decision is made upon such an appeal, we will acquiesce in the determination and judgment already passed." Rev. De Wolf and his guilty elders did not submit and acquiesce. And therefore they could not possibly appeal any more. The matter was definitely settled.

Next we must call your attention to the meeting of Classis East in October, 1953. On that Classis there were two sets of delegates present, the one set from the legal Consistory of the First Prot. Ref. Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and the other set from the suspended and deposed members of that consistory. The question before Classis therefore was to determine who were the legal delegates. There was a document of the legal Consistory of the First Prot. Ref. Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, read by the Rev. C. Hanko. There was a second document read by the Rev. H. De Wolf. And there was, in the third place, a report in re the matter of the First Prot. Ref. Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, by the committee appointed by the previous session of Classis to make the case pending with the Consistory. All these documents were read. The committee appointed by Classis to make the case pending with the Consistory of the First Church advised that not the Rev. De Wolf and his elder, but the Rev. Hanko and elder G. Bylsma, of the legal Consistory of the First Prot. Ref. Church, should be seated as delegates to Classis. This advice was adopted on the grounds that the Rev. De Wolf and his elder were legally under censure, and that therefore they

could not function as delegates to Classis, that they refused to submit to their censure and rebelled against their Consistory and that therefore they had become schismatic and severed themselves from the communion of the Prot. Ref. Churches. Hence, the Rev. C. Hanko and Mr. G. Bylsma were recognized as the legal delegates to Classis. And in the minutes of Classis East, October, 1953, Art. 315, is found the following decision: "It is moved that on the basis of our previous decision under Art. 309 Classis East declares that the Consistory of which Revs. H. Hoeksema and C. Hanko are presidents and of which Mr. G. Stadt is clerk is the legal Consistory of the First Prot. Ref. Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan." And when the Revs. B. Kok, J. Blankspeer, and E. Knott refused to abide by this decision of Classis and declared that they would not and could not recognize the delegates of the legal Consistory of the First Prot. Ref. Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, as delegates to Classis East, the final result was that these too were unseated, and severed themselves from the communion of the Prot. Ref. Churches in Classis East.

Finally, as far as the legal side of this whole matter is concerned, we must still call your attention to the very illegal action by Classis West in September, 1953. You must remember that when a minister is suspended by a certain local congregation, notice must be sent to all the consistories in the denomination of that suspension, lest they allow the suspended minister to preach in their pulpits.

This the Consistory of the First Church did. Instead of accepting this notification from the Consistory of the First Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, for information, the Consistories of Pella, Oskaloosa, Orange City, and Bellflower, took matters in their own hands. And without having any proper jurisdiction in the matter, they decided that not those that recognized the Revs. H. Hoeksema, C. Hanko, as pastors, and G. Stadt, as clerk, were the legal consistory, but that, on the contrary, the suspended minister and the group of elders that followed him would be recognized by them as the legal consistory of the First Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan. They thereby virtually ousted the legal Consistory of the First Church of Grand Rapids. And, in its September meeting, 1953, Classis West decided as follows:

"That we cannot recognize the suspension of the Rev. De Wolf and the deposition of the elders supporting him, but on the contrary must consider the Rev. De Wolf with his consistory and congregation as the legal and proper continuation of the First Prot. Ref. Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan." The grounds for this decision were entirely mistaken, and based upon utterly wrong information. They are as follows:

"1. This action of suspension and deposition was taken at an illegal consistory meeting, since many of the legal officebearers of that consistory were not notified of this meeting.

"2. The Revs. H. Hoeksema and C. Hanko and the elders following them failed to follow the proper church political order of appeal when:

"a. The Rev. Hoeksema deserted the legal consistory meeting discussing the case.

"b. The Revs. H. Hoeksema and C. Hanko with the consistory members following them severed themselves from the rest of the congregation and organized separate meetings and activities."

By this action they completely violated the Church Order. The consistories of Pella, Oskaloosa, Orange City, and Bellflower, and Classis West had no jurisdiction at all in the matter. This is evident from the following articles of the Church Order:

"Art. 36. The Classis has the same jurisdiction over the Consistory as the Particular Synod has over the Classis and the General Synod over the Particular." It is evident that Classis West assumed jurisdiction which it did not possibly have over the Consistory of the First Prot. Ref. Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Hence, they violated this article of the Church Order.

"Art. 84. No Church shall in any way lord it over other Churches, no Minister over other Ministers, no Elder or Deacon over other Elders or Deacons." The Churches of Bellflower, Oskaloosa, Pella, and Orange City, as well as all the churches of the former Classis West attempted to lord it over the consistory and church of the First Prot. Ref. Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and therefore violated also this article of the Church Order.

The only way in which they possibly could have anything to do with the suspension of the Rev. De Wolf and the deposition of his elders was either by way of appeal to Classis and Synod while in the meantime they submitted to their suspension and deposition, or by way of the dissenting vote of the delegates ad examina from Classis West to Classis East, by whose advice only the deposition of the Rev. De Wolf could have taken place. Also in this way the matter would have come before Synod, and Synod would have had the final decision. And therefore, also the former Classis West has become schismatic, and severed themselves from the communion of the Prot. Ref. Churches. They have become schismatic in doctrine by following and supporting the statements made by the Rev. De Wolf that have been condemned by the Consistory of the First Prot. Ref. Church and by Classis East. And besides, they have become schismatic because they violated the Church Order of the Prot. Ref. Churches, when they tried to exercise jurisdiction over the Consistory of the First Prot. Ref. Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Hence, we must remember that the name "Protestant Reformed" belongs, first of all, to the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, whose pastors are the Revs. H. Hoeksema and C. Hanko, and whose clerk is at present Mr. John M. Faber. Secondly, it belongs to Classis East, that condemned the Rev. De Wolf and his

deposed elders. And thirdly, it is the right of those congregations and consistories that refused to adopt the decisions of the former Classis West and that re-organized the Classis. This right to the name of Protestant Reformed Churches we will, as we said before, maintain and defend, even in legal channels if necessary.

Hereby the Synod of the Prot. Ref. Churches, held in Hudsonville in its session of June 22, 1954, considers its task of acquainting you with the facts of the present schism in the Prot. Ref. Churches accomplished. Nevertheless, we cannot consider our task completed before we have addressed to you a word of brotherly admonition in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of His church. We cannot forget that you once walked with us in the same way of the same truth for which we were ousted in 1924 from the fellowship of the Chr. Ref. Churches, and that has always been and still is very dear to our hearts. You are walking in the way of schism and of rebellion, which is very sinful before God. And therefore we appeal to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you return from your evil way, and at the same time in true repentance return to the fold of the Prot. Ref. Churches, of which once you were all members. But you must do this in the proper way, by confessing before God and us:

1. That you have grievously erred when you subscribed to the heretical statements made by the Rev. H. De Wolf in his sermons of April, 1951 and September, 1952.

2. That you have erred when you condemned the legal action of the Consistory of the First Prot. Ref. Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, by which they suspended the Rev. De Wolf and deposed some of his elders, an action which was sustained by the sessions of Classis East in April-May, 1953, and sealed in its session of October 6, 7, 1953.

3. That you recognize as the legal Consistory of the First Prot. Ref. Church the body whose pastors are Rev. H. Hoeksema and C. Hanko and whose clerk is at present J. M. Faber.

4. That you recognize as the only and legal Synod of the Prot. Ref. Churches the churches that were gathered in Hudsonville from June 16 to June 22, and which consisted of the delegates from the legal Classis East and the legal Classis West, the latter comprising the churches of Doon, Edgerton, Hull, Lynden, and Redlands.

May the Lord God so impress this missive of the Synod of the Prot. Ref. Churches upon your heart that you give heed, repent and return to the fold of our churches. This is our prayer.

Synod of the Prot. Ref. Churches,  
in session, Hudsonville, Mich., June 22, '54

Rev. Gerrit Vos, Pres.,  
Rev. Corn. Hanko, Vice-Pres.,  
Rev. Herman Veldman, 1st Clerk,  
Rev. H. H. Kuiper, 2nd Clerk.

## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

### The Prophecy of Isaiah

*The historical section: presenting the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecies concerning Assyria and the prelude to the Babylonian period. Chapters XXXVI-XXXIX.*

These four chapters run parallel with II Kings 18:13-20:9 and with II Chron. 32:1-26. This gives us three sources to draw from.

*The invasion of Judah by Sennacherib king of Assyria. Isa. XXXVI:1; II Chron. XXXII:1; 2 Kings XVIII:13.*

The text in Isaiah reads, "And it came to pass in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, that Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah, and took them."

Hezekiah was tributary to Assyria. But he had rebelled (2 Kings XXXVIII:7b). His revolt must be considered praiseworthy. Being faithful to Jehovah, he was not living in dread of this worldpower. It had been different with his apostate father Ahaz. As driven by fear, he had subjected his kingdom to it. But Hezekiah dared to make himself independent from the Assyrian yoke. It was a bold act that bespoke his faith in the Lord.

But afterwards the apostate counselors that surrounded Hezekiah went to promoting a covenant with Egypt as a means of protection against the Assyrians (Isa. 29:13-24). Without inquiring of the Lord and despite the fact that the venture was forbidden, they had gone down to Egypt with a view to inclining Pharaoh by their gifts to protect Judah with his strength in order that they might put their confidence in Egypt's shadow (Isa. 30:2).

Hezekiah must have known about the venture. But it does not appear that he joined Isaiah in condemning and forbidding it. It can't be that he was free from the guilt of leaning upon Pharaoh as the apostates were doing.

But Pharaoh's strength was to be their shame and their trust in the shadow of Egypt their confusion (Isa. 30:3). It had come to pass as the prophet had foretold. Judah was now in dire distress. But there was no sign of any Egyptian force to meet Sennacherib. Judah was abandoned by Egypt.

The Book of Kings (2 Kings 38:14-16) reveals that in his extremity Hezekiah now sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish, a city in Judah that he was in the act of besieging, saying, "I have offended; return from me: that which thou puttest on me, I will bear."

"I have offended," meaning, "my revolt was a mistake. I am again thy servant."

The tyrant demanded the sum of 300 talents of silver and 30 talents in gold. To raise this heavy tribute Hezekiah had to give all the silver that was found in the house of the Lord, and in the treasures of the king's house. The gold had to come from the pillars and doors of the temple. What

a shame! Here Hezekiah's faith again faltered. Essentially he was again guilty of making flesh his arm. He expected favors from Sennacherib. But the latter refused to stop the war and return to his own place as he must have agreed to do. It was plain that he was purposed to fight against Jerusalem. Thus had Hezekiah's disgraceful attempt to extricate himself out of his troubles again ended in dismal failure. He had still to learn to put his confidence solely in the Lord. This brings us to Hezekiah's illness.

*Hezekiah sick unto death. His life is prolonged in answer to his prayer. [The promise and its sign. Isa. XXXVIII; 2 Kings XX:1-2; Chron. XXXII:24.]*

In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death (Isa. 38:1a).

*In those days* i.e., in the very days of the Assyrian invasion and the siege and deliverance of Jerusalem. Like these events Hezekiah's sickness occurred in the fourteenth year of his reign. It took place, doubtless right after his attempt to purchase Sennacherib's withdrawal with gold taken from the temple.

And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amos came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Give command to thine house, for thou shalt die and not live (vs. 1b).

*Thou shalt die.* As the sequel reveals, this was not a prediction setting forth the Lord's decision to kill Hezekiah. Were that true the Lord would have to be charged with being induced by Hezekiah's prayer to change his counsel. It was a statement descriptive of the nature of the illness. Like cancer, let us say, it was an illness unto death from which Hezekiah would have died.

The tidings was unspeakably dreadful. For it was the days of shadows, the dispensation in which "the fear of the Lord prolonged days but in which the years of the wicked were shortened" (Prov. 10:27). And Hezekiah at the time was but 38 years old. As he saw it, his sickness could only mean that the Lord dealt with him as if he were wicked. Besides, as he was still without an offspring to succeed him in the throne, it also seemed to him to be the proof that the Lord had cast off His people and had abandoned Jerusalem to the enemy. Manasseh was only twelve years old when Hezekiah finally died in the twenty-ninth year of his reign (2 Kings 20:1), that is, he was born three years after this illness. What would have become of the Lord's promise to David, had Hezekiah died childless and left the kingdom without an heir — the promise, "And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee: thy throne shall be established forever" (2 Sam. 7:16). Had the illness been fatal, the Christ could not have been born.

Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, and prayed to the Lord, and said, "I pray, O Jehovah, remember I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a whole heart and that good in thy eyes I have done. And Hezekiah wept with a great weeping" (Isa. 38:2, 3).

The prayer bespeaks not the pharasaic posture as if the petitioner were building on his own goodness in the vain

imagining that in keeping God's commandments he had established his own righteousness before God. But what he meant is that in principle and by the Lord's mercy he had kept His covenant. And this was true. Hence, by the Spirit that was given him he had obtained witness that he was righteous and the testimony that in Christ he pleased God. So what he was asking is that the Lord remember that *He himself* had witnessed with his spirit that he had done good in the Lord's own eyes. In a word, what he asked is that the Lord remember that according to His own testimony he as a saint was the Lord's own workmanship and as so remembering have pity on him and His people in the present crisis.

That this analysis of the prayer is correct is evident. The Lord loved the prayer. He was glad with it. And He hastened to reply to it.

For it came to pass, afore Isaiah was gone out in the middle court that the word of the Lord came to him saying, Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the captain of my people, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the Lord. And I will add unto thy days fifteen years; and I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake" (II Kings 20:4-6); Isa. 38:4-6).

*I have seen thy tears . . .* Tears they were of contrition, and tears that had been made to flow by the torturous thought of the petitioner that the Lord in His anger was about to cut him off through death from the land of the (spiritually) living, him and His people, and from His holy temple, so that he should behold God's face no more. The thought caused him unutterable grief. For his soul, like the soul of every saint, thirsted after God. His longing was to dwell in the house of the Lord forever and there to inquire after His beauties. And that he shall, ill-deserving though he was in himself. The Lord shall heal him. The third day he shall go up unto the Lord's house. For the Lord had heard his prayer and will deliver the city for David's, that is for Christ's sake and for His Own sake.

The dreadful tidings was thus pedagogical as to its purpose. The petitioner had deserved this chastisement. For as was stated he was not free of the sin of the apostates that surrounded him—the sin of putting his trust in Egypt's might and the sin of leaning on his own understanding as evidenced by his attempt to purchase the withdrawal of Sennacherib with the gold from the Lord's temple. But the Lord now had him where He wanted him,—in the dust before His throne, a penitent sinner hanging to the Lord and expecting all his salvation from Him alone. And the Lord will now deliver the city indeed. For God cannot cast off His people which He foreknew. His mercies to David are sure. He has promised, unconditionally promised. Rightly

considered, it was as holding the promise that Hezekiah had prayed.

The promise that the Lord will deliver the city from the Assyrians proves conclusively that Hezekiah's sickness occurred before and not after the destruction of the enemy before the gates of Jerusalem. It means that the arrangement of the material that forms this historical piece of Isaiah's prophecy is not strictly chronological. There can be no doubt that the chronological order of what is presented in this section is the following: XXXVI:1, XXXVIII, XXXVI:2-22, XXXIX. It may indeed be that the reason Isaiah placed the account of Sennacherib's retreat first is that "he desired to finish up the story of the Assyrian invasion, so as not to be obliged to return to it" (Knobel). Some reject the conception that Hezekiah was still childless, doing so on the ground that it is not necessary to assume that Manasseh was the oldest son, that it is possible that the older sons had died before Hezekiah did, and that his song of thanksgiving mentions as the reason of his tears only his sickness. But the incorrectness of this reasoning is proved by the fact that also to Hezekiah's mind the deliverance of the city was contingent upon his healing. Why should this be so, if at the time of his illness he already had sons. That his prayer was also a petition for the deliverance of the city follows from the fact that in reply to his prayer this deliverance was promised him.

*Hezekiah's illness treated. His recovery assured by a sign. II Kings XX:7-11; and Isaiah said, Bring a compressed mass of figs. And they brought and laid it on the inflammation. Isa. XXXVIII:7, 8; II Chron. XXXII:24.*

*Inflammation*—doubtless a boil or ulcer symptomatic of a fatal disease, humanly speaking. But the Lord would heal Hezekiah and deliver the "city," however ill-deserving. Hezekiah wanted to believe that, but the Lord must help his unbelief. So he asked for a sign.

And Hezekiah said unto Isaiah, What shall be the sign that the Lord will heal me, and that I shall go up to the house of the Lord the third day? And Isaiah said, This sign thou shalt have of the Lord, that the Lord will do the thing that he has spoken. Shall the shadow advance ten steps or return backward ten steps (II Kings 20:8, 9)?

The promised sign involved an instrument that the ancients called shadow-measurer because the day was estimated by the length of the shadow. It is not known how it was contrived. The best conjecture is that it was a column with twenty circular steps of varying widths surrounding it.

And Hezekiah answered, It is a light thing for the shadow to extend ten steps; nay but let the shadow return backward ten steps. And Isaiah the prophet cried unto the Lord: and he brought the shadow ten steps backward according to the steps by which it had been down on the steps of Ahaz (vss. 10, 11).

"The steps of Ahaz," i.e., the shadow-measurer of Ahaz, (Continued on page 425)



## IN HIS FEAR

### Walking in Error

(8)

It is with a heavy heart that we write these lines.

No, it is not with a heart that is heavy with fear and that is troubled as to the outcome of the court trial which at this writing is still in progress.

About that we have perfect peace. We are neither filled with fear as to the decision to be made, nor are we much concerned about winning a decision from a civil court.

We write with a heavy heart because of what the court trial revealed.

Almost all incentive to continue to write our present series of "walking in error" is gone.

For we did not write it in a vindictive mood.

Were that the case then that which the court trial revealed would surely set us on fire to write more vigorously than ever before.

That was not our attitude. We had hoped that by our writings we might open a few eyes as to the truth of the matter. We had hoped that there might yet be some discussion to determine how far those who departed from us would dare to go in walking in their error.

We requested them to show us any difference between their conditional theology and that of the Liberated.

We received no answer.

We tried to warn them that to continue in their present way would result in walking in even worse errors.

And now the utter hopelessness — and we speak of hopelessness as far as man is concerned, not as far as God is concerned — is so plain, and so is their intent to walk in error to the very bitter end, that we write with a heavy heart and with little incentive to continue to warn and remind.

So fully have they sold themselves to the lie of Rev. De Wolf's cross bill that Rev. Hoeksema set out to destroy our churches, as Mr. Linsey their attorney repeatedly declared for them, by "conspiracy and fraud" and, as one former Elder testified under oath, that Classis East was guilty of underhanded work and characterized by "one-man rule" — although under cross examination he admitted that he never attended any of the sessions of Classis in April and May — that some of them did not even hesitate in their walk of error to speak that which is not the "whole truth and nothing but the truth" even under oath before God.

That is what makes it that we write with a heavy heart.

That is a thing we did NOT expect, and therefore we repeatedly called their attention in previous articles to things for which they would have to answer under oath.

Now we are forced to believe what we did not want to believe of them.

Now we have to accept the only possible explanation for their tenacious holding on to those statements of Rev. De Wolf which are such insults to the Sovereign and Almighty God.

It was a public sin in a public gathering.

And yet we will mention no names. We write not in a vindictive mood and the shame is so great that we do not want to publish names unless it becomes necessary. Then we are ready to do so and to prove them with the court records of which we already have some in our possession. Let us warn those who have opposed us all these years not to appeal their case to the Supreme Court of the State of Michigan, for then by the Superior Court all their sinful testimony will be published with their names for all to read to their unending shame.

But let us give you some examples of what kind of defense was made before a civil court.

The shame is especially great in that these were formerly Elders and Ministers in one of our Protestant Reformed Churches.

Questioned as to whether Rev. De Wolf and Mr. Sikkesma presented themselves to Classis East in October of '53 to be seated as delegates from their group, one of Rev. De Wolf's "Elders" said that *he did not know*. Pressed by Mr. Tubbs, the attorney for First Church, how he could say that when he signed one of the documents they took along, he gave the flimsy excuse for an answer, that was so contrary to the "whole truth and nothing but the truth" oath he had taken, that he was not there himself and could not be sure that they had appeared to be seated at that session of Classis. When asked whether Classis did seat them or not he answered again that he did not know.

Did he not know? Was his memory so poor? Just because he was not there, did he not have knowledge of both facts? Why, the very next Sunday their bulletin had a statement of regret upon it that Rev. De Wolf and Mr. Sikkesma were not seated by Classis! And this particular "Elder," if we are not sadly mistaken, exactly because of his position in the "consistory" has much to do with the bulletins. But at any rate, why is this court trial in progress, if it is not certain whether Rev. De Wolf and Mr. Sikkesma were not seated by Classis? Where has he been all these months?

Of all the subterfuge to which to resort UNDER OATH because they know that there are things they must hide to defend their own case.

These are the men, if you please, who put out a pamphlet which they claimed was "guarding truth and justice." Is that the way they guarded truth? If under oath before God they will resort to such trickery — and we will reveal more in a few moments — what must we think of all that which is written in that "Reformed Guardian" without taking an oath before God?

Or, if you will, pass your own judgment upon this excerpt

from the court records which Miss Coffee, the court stenographer, took for Judge Taylor and which she transcribed for us. This testimony(?) was given *under oath* to speak the *whole* truth and *nothing but the truth* by one who resides west of the Mississippi and was formerly a minister in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

He had been telling Mr. Tubbs during his cross examination that he had been requested to give out copies of the Acts of Synod of 1953. Then this evasive testimony followed:

Question: Who was it who asked you:

Answer: Reverend — first of all, I believe it was the printer that called me, and asked me whether he might give the copies.

Question: Will you stop making speeches and answer my question? Didn't Rev. Vos ask you for copies of the Minutes of Acts of Synod of 1953?

Answer: My dear sir, you asked me who did, and I was telling you.

Question: No, you were telling about the printer and everybody else. Did Rev. Vos ask you for copies of the Acts of Synod?

(Now note the apparent attempt again to evade and not to speak the whole truth and nothing but the truth. J.A.H.)

Answer: Rev. Vos — someone —

(Mr. Tubbs interrupts in order to get the truth. J.A.H.)

Question: No, I am asking you if Rev. Vos —

Answer: Someone who claimed (get that "claimed," J.A.H.) to be Rev. Vos over the telephone and asked me over the phone at ..... (We eliminate the name of the city. J.A.H.) I assumed it was Rev. Vos — asked me whether he might have a copy of the Acts.

Question: And you told him he could have a copy?

Answer: And on the basis of the decision of our Synod, (He means the group that met in Fuller Ave. church last March. J.A.H.) would have been, in the first place they had separated themselves from the —

Question: I am asking you to relate what you told him.

Answer: I wrote him a letter.

What must you think of men who answer like that? Do they not reveal themselves as men who know that they have something to hide and that therefore they must be careful even how they answer such questions which are so far removed from the issues in the case itself?

Someone claimed to be Rev. Vos! But is it not the truth and the whole truth that the printer in that same phone conversation just a minute or two before told this witness that he had Rev. Vos there with him? And does not this witness trust fully that printer who is with him in this schism? And is not his admission that he sent Rev. Vos a letter indicative of the fact that he knew more than that someone claimed to be Rev. Vos. Did he not by writing Rev. Vos a letter give himself away as to the fact that the truth of the matter is that it WAS Rev. Vos and not someone that claimed to be him?

But Mr. Tubbs knew how to handle such and very ably exposed their corrupt testimony. For after cross examining this witness somewhat further in regard to the actions and decisions of Classis East and having received from the witness his judgment that this and that and everything else was illegal, Mr. Tubbs again asked a question which required simply as "yes" or "no" answer and which to the witness seemed to indicate a sore spot and danger for their cause. The questions was simply as to whether certain matters of the De Wolf case came before Classis in its sessions. The witness suddenly found that he did not know. Whereupon Mr. Tubbs made the correct observation that this witness could judge whether the action of Classis on these matters was right or wrong but that he did not know whether these matters themselves ever got to the Classis. Did the witness not show by giving his opinion as to the legality of Classis' action on these matters that he did know that these matters were before Classis? Can you take action at Classis on matters not treated or not appearing before or at Classis?

Later witnesses, also former ministers in the Protestant Reformed Churches either through special coaching or else by mutual consent, not daring to continue this deliberate refraining from speaking the whole truth and nothing but the truth replied to such questions that they knew these things only by "hearsay."

Another perversion of the truth was the sinful quoting from the works of Rev. Hoeksema and Rev. Ophoff to show that they taught the anarchistic church government for which Rev. Kok was called to the stand four separate times. It seems it was Rev. Kok's case and not Rev. De Wolf's and his "consistory's." Indeed, what these men wrote, they taught. But they never taught that distinction between the "Association" and the "Denomination" which Rev. Kok and his disciples tried to sell to Judge Taylor. Nowhere in the hundreds of lines and scores of pages read did it appear that Rev. Hoeksema and Rev. Ophoff ever taught that when a consistory refuses to abide by the decision of its Classis that it can be put outside the Association and yet remain in the Denomination. Here again, when cross examined, Rev. Kok even made the foolish statement, in answer to the question as to whether such a consistory, and others that agreed with it, could still call themselves the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, that they could not do that; but that they could call themselves the Protestant Reformed Churches of Grand Rapids or of Holland.

Now and then a witness would make a slip, when asked whether the Classis and Synod had the right to put a consistory outside the denomination if it refused to abide by the decisions of the Classis, and would answer in the affirmative. Then Mr. Linsey, their lawyer, was always quick to jump in and say, "You mean outside the 'Association' but not outside the 'Denomination.'"

And so it went.

We have much, much more, three notebooks full of notes

and more of the official records of the court taken by Miss Coffee. We are fully aware that if this matter goes to the Supreme Court it will all be published. And though we are not writing under oath, we are confident that those printed court records will verify everything we have written.

And now that we already have some of the court records, we are in a better position to show the corruption of Revs. Kok, Blankespoor and Knott of which we intended to write at this time.

Sad to say, what a member of the undersigned's congregation said is true, that "although we have always been accused of overestimating what these men have done, we have underestimated rather than overestimated." And he said that after being at the court trial only one day.

And of Rev. Kok's idea of church government in Classis and Synod, a fifteen year lad in our congregation, after listening to some of their testimony for one day, said, "Those fellows want to play ball, but they do not want an umpire." Rev. Hoeksema, we understand, will take up that part of the court trial and show how Rev. Kok et al have become congregational in their church government.

Of course, such a church government as that of Rev. Kok is a handy thing when there are those in your denomination that ought to be out and yet you, for what they call "brotherly love," want to keep them in the denomination. Then it is nice to be your own umpire.

J.A.H.

### THE DAY OF SHADOWS

(Continued from page 422)

so called because he had been the first to set it up in the palace of the court. The meaning is simply that the Lord caused the shadow to return backward ten steps on this instrument.

*And Hezekiah recovered*, as the Lord had promised by word and the sign (vs. 7b).

The miracle consisted in the shadow receding, going down. How it was worked is not explained. But that the sun was brought back ten degrees and not merely the shadow, as some try to make out, is plainly stated at Isa. XXXVIII: 8b. Here the text reads, "So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it had gone down."

The sign that was given Hezekiah had remarkable agreement with the promise that it confirmed. Every human span of life is like a day. It has morning, noon and evening, Death ends it. Hezekiah's life-day was ending much too soon. When but thirty eight years old he was sick unto death and was told that he must die. Humbling himself before God he received the promise that his age would again rise above the noonday, that he would shine forth, that he would again be as the morning (Job 11:17). And he was given a sign.

The shadow turned backward ten steps; the evening of the solar day was changed into morning. It meant that the symbol, the picture, of his healing was before his eyes. At that moment the whole creation was proclaiming that the Lord would recover him and save the "city." And the sign still speaks. And its speech still is that the Lord will heal His people and deliver the "city."

In the light of these observations we can understand that puzzling statement of Hezekiah, "It is a light thing for the shadow to go down ten steps . . ." He did not mean that in the point of view of His power it was much easier for God to bring the shadow forward than to bring it backward. What he meant is that the Lord's bringing the shadow forward would have been purposeless in that such a doing could not serve as a confirmation and symbol of the promise. It would have been a light thing, i.e., light in the sense of purposeless.

G.M.O.

### SING TO THE LORD, SING HIS PRAISE

Sing to the Lord, sing His praise, all ye peoples,  
New be your song as new honors ye pay;  
Sing of His majesty, bless Him forever,  
Show His salvation from day to day.

Tell of His wondrous works, tell of His glory,  
Till through the nations His Name is revered;  
Praise and exalt Him, for He is almighty,  
God over all let the Lord be feared.

Vain are the heathen gods, idols and helpless;  
God made the heavens, and His glory they tell;  
Honor and majesty shine out before Him,  
Beauty and strength in His temple dwell.

Give unto God Most High glory and honor,  
Come with your offerings and humbly draw near;  
In holy beauty now worship Jehovah,  
Tremble before Him with godly fear.

Make all the nations know God reigns forever;  
Earth is established as He did decree;  
Righteous and just is the King of the nations,  
Judging the people with equity.

Let heaven and earth be glad; waves of the ocean,  
Forest and field, exaltation express;  
For God is coming, the Judge of the nations,  
Coming to judge in His righteousness.

Psalms 96

## Contending For The Faith

### The Church and the Sacraments

#### EARLY VIEWS OF THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

(Continued)

*These views in the early Church (continued).*

We concluded our preceding article with the observation that the four different views concerning the sacrament of the Lord's Supper had not been distinctly and fully developed in the earliest period of the Church of God. This, of course, need not surprise us. It lies in the nature of the case that the Church, in the days of its New Testament infancy, could not have a clear and concise conception and understanding of the truth of God as revealed in Christ Jesus.

It may be observed, however, that also to this sacrament a profound significance was attached by the Church generally, although it must be conceded that it did not have a clear conception of its idea. The same mystical approach, which characterized the early Church Fathers in their conception of the sacrament of Baptism, also characterized their views on the Lord's Supper. In support of our observation concerning this profoundly mystical approach of the early Church Fathers we would place before our readers a few quotations from these early eminent church leaders. Justin Martyr, the renowned apologist of this early period, writing on the Eucharist (the Lord's Supper), expresses himself as follows: "And this food is called among us *Eucharistia* (the Eucharist), of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Saviour, having been made flesh by the Word of God had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His Word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh. For the apostle, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them; that Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, said, "This do ye in remembrance of Me, this is My body;" and that, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, "This is My blood;" and gave it to them alone. Which the wicked devils have imitated in the mysteries of Mithras (Mithraism was a pagan religion which contested with Christianity for supremacy in the old Roman empire—H.V.), commanding the same thing to be done. For, that bread and a cup of water are placed with certain incantations

in the mystic rites of who is being initiated, you either know or can learn." — thus far the quotation from Justin Martyr. The mystical approach of the early Church Fathers is evident from this quotation of the eminent apologist.

Also Cyprian, an eminent Church Father whom we have quoted extensively in previous articles and a very prolific writer, expressed himself on this subject. He writes, for example, that partaking of this sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a safeguard against persecution, and we quote him as follows: "Nor let any one say, "that he who accepts martyrdom is baptized in his own blood, and peace is not necessary to him from the bishop, since he is about to have the peace of his own glory, and about to receive a greater reward from the condescension of the Lord." First of all, he cannot be fitted for martyrdom who is not armed for the contest by the Church; and his spirit is deficient which the Eucharist received does not raise and stimulate." end of quote. We can, of course, easily understand that the subject of martyrdom was a very lively and pertinent subject in those days—we all know how common it was in those early days of the New Dispensation to suffer martyrdom because of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. In this quotation Cyprian denies that to accept martyrdom and be baptized in his own blood is all that is necessary, and that such martyrdom is sufficient to grant peace unto the child of the Lord. One may also learn from this particular quotation how this learned Church Father (we have already called attention to this in previous articles) emphasizes the importance of the bishop in the life of the Church.

Interesting also, I am sure, is what Cyprian has to teach us, in opposition to those who used water in the Lord's Supper, that not water alone but wine mixed with water was to be offered. In this particular quotation, in which the eminent Church Father refers us to several types and shadows in the Old Testament from which the conclusion is drawn that the use of the wine is illustrated in the sacrament of the Lord's body, we quote the following: "Moreover, the Holy Spirit by Solomon shows before the type of the Lord's sacrifice, making mention of the immolated (offered or sacrificed—H.V.) victim, and of the bread and wine, and, moreover, of the altar and of the apostles, and says, "Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath underlaid her seven pillars; she hath killed her victims; she hath mingled her wine in the chalice (communion cup—H.V.); she hath also furnished her table: and she hath sent forth her servants, calling together with a lofty announcement to her cup, saying, Whoso is simple, let him turn to me; and to those that want understanding she hath said, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled for you." He declares the wine mingled, that is, he foretells with prophetic voice the cup of the Lord mingled with water and wine, that it may appear that that was done in our Lord's passion which had been before predicted. In the blessing of Judah also this same thing is signified, where there also is expressed a figure of

Christ, that He should have praise and worship from his brethren; that He should press down the back of His enemies, yielding and fleeing, with the hands with which He bore the cross and conquered death; and that He Himself is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and should couch sleeping in His passion, and should rise up, and should Himself be the hope of the Gentiles. To which things divine Scripture adds, and says, "He shall wash His garment in wine, and His clothing in the blood of the grape." But when the blood of the grape is mentioned, what else is set forth than the wine of the cup of the blood of the Lord? In Isaiah also the Holy Spirit testifies this same thing concerning the Lord's passion, saying, "Wherefore are Thy garments red, and Thy apparel as from the treading of the wine-press which is trodden by the feet, or pressed out by the press? Assuredly, therefore, mention is made of wine, that the Lord's blood may be understood, and that which was afterwards manifested in the cup of the Lord might be foretold by the prophets who announced it. The treading also, and pressure of the wine-press, is repeatedly dwelt on; because just as the drinking of wine cannot be attained to unless the bunch of grapes be first trodden and pressed, so neither could we drink the blood of Christ unless Christ had first been trampled upon and pressed, and had first drunk the cup of which He should also give believers to drink." — end of this quotation. We will not at this time call attention to Cyprian's presentation of the blood of Christ and that the believers drink of it. The question whether the Roman Catholic doctrine of Transubstantiation is supported by the early Church Fathers will come up later. It is, however, obvious from this interesting quotation that this learned Church Father laid great emphasis upon the profoundly spiritual significance of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. How strangely it would sound in the ears of our people today if a preacher, preaching on the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, were to avail himself of the language and terminology which appear in this quotation of Cyprian. His approach, too, is deeply and profoundly mystical.

Continuing with the writings of Cyprian and calling attention to his refutation of the opponent who maintained that water alone is sufficient in the administration of the Lord's Supper, we quote: "But how perverse and how contrary it is, that although the Lord at the marriage made wine of water, we should make water of wine, when even the sacrament of that thing ought to admonish and instruct us rather to offer wine in the sacrifice of the Lord. For because among the Jews there was a want of spiritual grace, wine also was wanting. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts was the house of Israel; but Christ, when teaching and showing that the people of the Gentiles should succeed them, and that by the merit of faith we should subsequently attain to the place which the Jews had lost, of water made wine; that is, He showed that at the marriage of Christ and the Church, as the Jews failed, the people of the nations should rather flow together and assemble: for the divine Scripture in the Apo-

calypse (Revelation — H.V.) declares that the waters signify the people, saying, "the waters which thou sawest, upon which the whore sitteth, are peoples and multitudes and nations of the Gentiles, and tongues," which we evidently see to be contained also in the sacrament of the cup. For because Christ bore us all, in that He also bore our sins, we see that in the water is understood the people, but in the wine is showed the blood of Christ. But when the water is mingled in the cup with wine, the people is made one with Christ, and the assembly of believers is associated and conjoined with Him on whom it believes; which association and conjunction of water and wine is so mingled in the Lord's cup that that mixture cannot anymore be separated. Whence, moreover, nothing can separate the Church — that is, the people established in the Church, faithfully and firmly persevering in that which they have believed — from Christ, in such a way as to prevent their undivided love from always abiding and adhering. Thus, therefore, in consecrating the cup of the Lord, water alone cannot be offered, even as wine alone cannot be offered. For if any one offer wine only, the blood of Christ is dissociated from us; but if the water be alone, the people are dissociated from Christ; but when both are mingled, and are joined with one another by a close union, there is completed a spiritual and heavenly sacrament. Thus the cup of the Lord is not indeed water alone, nor wine alone, unless each be mingled with the other; just as, on the other hand, the body of the Lord cannot be flour alone or water alone, unless both should be united and joined together and compacted in the mass of one bread; in which very sacrament our people are shown to be made one, so that in like manner as many grains' collected, and ground, and mixed together into one mass, make one bread; so in Christ, Who is the heavenly bread, we may know that there is one body, with which our number is joined and united." — end of quotation. This is an interesting, be it somewhat philosophic, discussion on the use of a mixture of wine and water in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Whatever our appraisal of this presentation may be, it certainly indicates the profoundly spiritual approach of this great Church Father toward the sacrament of the holy Supper.

H.V.



### Announcement

Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in regular July session in the Creston Protestant Reformed Church on July 7, 1954 at 9 o'clock a. m. Will the delegates kindly regard this as a personal reminder to them.

Rev. G. Lubbers, Stated Clerk

## DECENCY and ORDER

### Emeritation Of Ministers

(Concluded)

We were discussing the last time the various methods which are used to support emeritus ministers. The most common practice is that such support is taken from a common fund which is set up by all the churches for this purpose. This practice is in usage in our churches and is also in accord with the provisions of our church order, "... and shall provide out of the common fund of the churches, according to the general ecclesiastical ordinances in this matter." From a practical point of view, however, this method encounters serious difficulties just as soon as the number of emeritations in the denomination becomes large. Either the ministers are not provided adequately "in their need" or the burden of assessment for this fund weighs so heavily upon the churches that other important activities must necessarily be retarded. There is, of course, a reasonable limitation to all things. Although our churches as yet have not been confronted by this problem it may be time to do some serious thinking and planning along these lines as some of our ministers are advancing in years and we do not know how soon the occasion may present itself when we will have to properly support several who may become inactive. When that becomes necessary the resources built up in a fund over a period of years are soon depleted. What then?

In the previous issue of the Standard Bearer we also introduced the Pension Plan which is in current use in the Christian Reformed Churches. Concerning this plan we must now make a few comments. The plan itself is no doubt a sincere attempt to solve a difficult problem but our opinion of it is that it is both a wrong attempt and an inadequate solution. That it is inadequate is evident from just a precursory study of the limitations specified in the plan as these are applied to concrete situations. For example, just recently a young minister in the Christian Reformed Church met with sudden death. He leaves a widow and five small children. She must be provided with housing and support for the family. If she is able to draw from both the Pension and Relief Funds the limitation is specified that she is to receive no more than fifty per cent of the average minister's salary in that denomination plus one hundred and seventy five dollars per year for each child until they attain to majority. (Unless these figures have been changed in late years). This is the maximum to which she is entitled and when this income is compared to the current cost of living index it will become apparent that it will have to be subsidized in some other way or will fail to adequately provide for this family. For this kind of security (?) a minister is requested to contribute three per cent of his annual income. From a purely material point of view he would be wiser to invest the same premium in

some life insurance policy where the dividends far exceed those the church is able to pay. Insurance companies have capital assets to back up these investments which the church does not. When the church attempts to mimic these corporations, she makes a rather poor showing. By comparison she is unable to compete. To meet with any degree of success she must necessarily enter into the field of business itself which does not belong to her domain. As long as she does not do this any investment in such a plan would be worldly-wise foolish. Materially speaking one can find more sound security and more profitable investments than those embodied in the Pension Plan.

There is, it seems to me, a still more serious defection in this plan. The principle upon which the rule in our church order governing emeritation rests is that a minister who has given his life to the service of the church is entitled to honorable support when by reason of age or other infirmities he is no longer able to be active in the work of the ministry of the Word. The churches are duty-bound to care for him in his need. He has the right to that support. It is proper that those who labor in the gospel should live of the gospel. (I Cor. 9:14) It is not, as we wrote before, a matter of charity but rather a matter of the obligation of the church toward the ministry of the gospel of Christ. Now this principle the Pension Plan in part destroys when it requires the ministers of the Word to provide for their own emeritation. To deprive the church of either her spiritual or material obligations is a serious injustice. To lay aside principle for reasons of expediency can only result in the demoralization of all concerned. If, therefore, our present system of providing for emeritation is to be abandoned for another, we must proceed cautiously and carefully so that no principle is abused and make sure before initiating any change that it will really be an improvement. We do concede that there is room for serious consideration of this problem but that we are ready to enact any radical change in the method we have followed we are not prepared to admit. As the Dutch saying has it, „Alle verandering is geene verbetering."

#### E. Conclusion.

In concluding this subject there are yet two things which are worthy of brief comment. The first of these is the phrase appearing in Article 13 of the D.K.O., "... shall provide honorably in their need." We have in mind particularly the last three words. Concerning the meaning of this phrase there is some difference of opinion. Some opine that "in their need" in Art. 13 is equivalent in meaning to the expression "proper support" in Art. 11 and if that is so the thought conveyed is that a retired minister and his dependents are entitled to full support from the churches whether they have need of it or not. Even though they may have other sources of income which will adequately provide for them, they can claim support in addition to this from the church which he last served. This view rests upon the



axiom that the support implicit in emeritation is not a charity but a right.

Others, however, understand this phrase to mean just what it says. It then refers to actual needs, needs which exist because the parties concerned have no other means of support. This interpretation means that an emeritus minister who is financially in a position to provide for his own needs is not entitled to material support from the churches and the churches are not obligated to provide for him. This view appears to be the most reasonable although it is not without difficulty. The difficulty is this. The *right* that a minister has to support after emeritation is derived from his having given his life to the services of the churches. How can the mere fact that he has a certain amount of this earth's goods deprive him of that right? Certainly this right is not determined by the measure of one's wealth. Didn't the one who has much give his services just as fully as the one who has need? Are they not both, by virtue of this service, entitled to the same rights? On the other hand, it is difficult to conceive of a minister of the gospel who has sufficient earthly provisions desiring to be an added burden to the churches in the years of his retirement. Consequently a real problem on this score is not likely to arise although the possibility of such a problem does exist. Beside this it may be said that the idea of "providing" or "supporting" seems to imply the circumstances of need. The request for such support it seems would arise out of the need that exists. Hence where no need exists there very likely would be no request and likewise no obligation to provide. The Church Order Commentary gives three reasons validating this view. They are:

"1. The adverb 'honorably' in the phrase points to the fact that our fathers were anxious that their incapacitated ministers should be able to live honorably. Not, that they should be supported by the churches concerned, even if the minister is in question had an income sufficient for him and his dependents."

"2. The rulings of Synods prior to 1618-1619, the essence of which is expressed in this article incorporated in our church order."

"3. The expression is a translation of the original, 'in hunne nooddruft.' Admittedly this word is all-important for the present question. According to Van Dale's dictionary it means: 'dringende behoefte, datgene wat tot onderhoud van het leven noodig is, levensbehoefte, levensmiddelen.'"

It would appear, therefore, that the churches are obliged to support only those who upon emeritation have no adequate means of self-support that they may live out their days free from worldly cares.

Finally, we would consider the question whether a minister who is given emeritation must remain affiliated with the church he last served and from whom he receives his support? It is perhaps impossible to answer this question with either a definite affirmation or negation. There are both pros

and cons that can be advanced. The strongest argument supporting the position that he must remain with the church last served is that his status by emeritation is that of minister of the word of that church and it is difficult to conceive of one being the minister of a church where he is not even a member. On the other hand a practical argument favoring the position that he may leave is that an aged minister may have relatives in another place who can provide him with both a home and care which he needs and which he cannot obtain if he remains in the communion of the church he last served. Reason dictates, therefore, that circumstances must be taken into consideration in answering this question. The Reformed churches have always taken the position that the emeritus-minister is free to leave the flock that gave him his emeritation and to join himself to another church and that if he chooses to leave he nevertheless remains minister of his last charge. Preponderant reasons, however, ought to be given for taking his step.

G.v.d.B.

## CHURCH NEWS

HOLLAND—The Consistory announces the following Trio was selected by them in their meeting of June 1:—Rev. C. Hanko, Candidate R. Harbach and Candidate J. McCollam.

RANDOLPH—Rev. E. Emanuel has accepted the call of this Congregation. The Reverend and his family are planning to move from Grand Rapids July 12. The installation service is planned to be held July 15.

Mr. and Mrs. T. Westra left for the Netherlands where they will make their residence.

2nd of GRAND RAPIDS—Rev. G. Vanden Berg declined the call of this congregation extended to him.

1st of GRAND RAPIDS—The Court hearings in our case against the De Wolf group which began May 25 came to a close June 15. We rested our case and testimony during the third day of the nine and one-half days of testimony heard by Judge Taylor in the Superior Court of Grand Rapids. All the matter in this case won't be in the hands of the Court until the Attorneys file their briefs. Our Attorney, Mr. Tubbs, was given till July 5 to submit his brief and Mr. Linsey, Attorney for the DeWolf group, was given three weeks thereafter for presenting his. No expression from the Court can be expected until after the briefs are filed.

## Trio

The following have been placed on trio by the Second Protestant Reformed Church:

Rev. Gerrit Vos,  
Rev. H. C. Hoeksema,  
Rev. Marinus Schipper.

## ALL AROUND US

### *The Covenant of Grace.*

In the June 1st issue of the Standard Bearer I began a review of a booklet written by Professor Murray of Westminster Theological Seminary, entitled, *The Covenant of Grace*. I wish now to continue this review as I had promised.

I wish to remind our readers that I informed them last time that I had made only a hasty perusal of the booklet, and my first impression was very favorable. I had concluded as I believed Professor Murray had after careful study of the doctrine of the covenant, that the covenant was both unilateral and unconditional. However, since my last writing I have read the booklet again, and I now confess that I was mistaken in my judgment of the booklet's contents. It is not difficult for me to apologize to our readers for misleading them into concluding that there were others outside our own circles who agreed with us in their conception of the covenant, while the case of Murray now appears quite differently to me. When Murray writes on page 13 that the Noahic covenant is "intensely and pervasively monergistic" and "It is an unconditional covenant," you would conclude as I did that he would consistently say this about every other phase of the covenant. When he writes on page 14, "The perpetuity is bound up with its divinely unilateral and monergistic character," and again "These features of the covenant plainly evince that this covenant (namely with Noah — M.S.) is a sovereign, divine administration, that it is such in its conception, determination, disclosure, confirmation, and fulfillment, that it is an administration or dispensation of forbearance and goodness, that it is not conditioned by or dependent upon faith or obedience on the part of men," then you would suppose that he would say the same all the way through. But you become not a little disappointed when you read carefully what he writes about the other phases of the covenant. I therefore concluded that the booklet of Murray is not so good after all. And one wonders whether the Professor was not a little mixed up in his conclusions.

Read what he writes about the Abrahamic Covenant. "When we come to the Abrahamic covenant we find features which are entirely new in connection with covenant administration. The first distinctive feature appears in connection with the initial reference to the covenant (Gn. XV: 8-18). It is the solemn sanction by which the Lord confirmed to Abraham the certainty of the promise that he would inherit the land of Canaan. It is perhaps the most striking sanction that we have in the whole of Scripture, particularly if we interpret it as a self-maledictory oath in which, anthropomorphically, God calls upon Himself the curse of dismemberment if He does not fulfil to Abraham the promise of possessing the land. The second distinctive

feature is the reference to keeping and breaking the covenant (Gn. XVII: 9, 10, 14)."

Now notice what Murray writes about this second feature: "With reference to the second distinctive feature, namely, the necessity of keeping the covenant and the warning against breaking it, we cannot suppress the inference that the necessity of keeping is complementary to the added richness, intimacy, and spirituality of the covenant itself. The spirituality of the Abrahamic covenant in contrast with the Noahic consists in the fact that the Abrahamic is concerned with religious relationship on the highest level, union and communion with God . . . . We are led to the conclusion that in the Abrahamic covenant there is no deviation from the idea of covenant as a sovereign dispensation of grace . . . . The necessity of keeping the covenant on the part of men does not interfere with the divine monergism of dispensation . . . . Even in this case the notion of compact or agreement is alien to the nature of the covenant constitution."

"It may plausibly be objected, however, that the breaking of the covenant envisaged in this case interferes with the perpetuity of the covenant. For does not the possibility of breaking the covenant imply conditional perpetuity? . . . . Without question the blessings of the covenant and the relation which the covenant entails cannot be enjoyed or maintained apart from the fulfilment of certain conditions on the part of the beneficiaries. For when we think of the promise which is the central element of the covenant, 'I will be your God, and ye shall be my people', there is necessarily involved, as we have seen, mutuality in the highest sense. Fellowship is always mutual and when mutuality ceases fellowship ceases. Hence the reciprocal response of faith and obedience arises from the nature of the relationship which the covenant contemplates (cf Gen. XVIII:17-19; XXII:16-18). The obedience of Abraham is represented as the condition upon which the fulfilment of the promise given to him was contingent and the obedience of Abraham's seed is represented as the means through which the promise given to Abraham would be accomplished. There is undoubtedly the fulfilment of certain conditions and these are summed up in obeying the Lord's voice and keeping His covenant."

"It is not quite congruous, however, to speak of these conditions as conditions of the covenant. For when we speak thus we are distinctly liable to be understood as implying that the covenant is not to be regarded as dispensed until the conditions are fulfilled and that the conditions are integral to the establishment of the covenant relation. And this would not provide a true or accurate account of the covenant. The covenant is a sovereign dispensation of God's grace. It is grace bestowed and a relation established. The grace dispensed and the relation established do not wait for the fulfilment of certain conditions on the part of those to whom the grace is dispensed. Grace is bestowed and the relation established by sovereign divine administration. How then are we to construe the conditions of which we have spoken?

The continued enjoyment of this grace and of the relation established is contingent upon the fulfilment of certain conditions. For apart from the fulfilment of these conditions the grace bestowed and the relation established are meaningless. Grace bestowed implies a subject and reception on the part of that subject. The relation established implies mutuality. But the conditions in view are not really conditions of bestowal. They are simply the reciprocal responses of faith, love and obedience, apart from which the enjoyment of the covenant blessing and of the covenant relation is inconceivable. In a word, keeping the covenant presupposes the covenant relation as established rather than the condition upon which its establishment is contingent."

"It is when viewed in this light that the breaking of the covenant takes on an entirely different complexion. It is not the failure to meet the terms of a pact nor failure to respond to the offer of favourable terms of contractual agreement. It is unfaithfulness to a relation constituted and to grace dispensed. By breaking the covenant what is broken is not the condition of bestowal but the condition of consummated fruition."

"It should be noted also that the necessity of keeping the covenant is bound up with the particularism of this covenant. The covenant does not yield its blessing to all indiscriminately. The discrimination which this covenant exemplifies accentuates the sovereignty of God in the bestowal of its grace and the fulfilment of its promises. This particularization is correlative with the spirituality of the grace bestowed and the relation constituted and it is also consonant with the exactitude of its demands. A covenant which yields its blessing indiscriminately is not one that can be kept or broken. We see again, therefore, that the intensification which particularism illustrates serves to accentuate the keeping which is indispensable to the fruition of the covenant grace."

Respecting the Mosaic Covenant, Murray writes among other things the following: "The first express reference to the covenant made with Israel at Sinai occurs in connection with keeping the covenant. 'Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation' (Ex. XIX:5, 6) The next explicit reference appears as the sequel to the promise of the people, 'All that the Lord hath spoken will we do, and be obedient' (Ex. XXIV:7, R.V.) and Moses sprinkled the blood and said, 'Behold, the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words' (Ex. XXIV:8)."

The foregoing references as well as other considerations might create the impression that the making of the covenant had to wait for the voluntary acceptance on the part of the people and their promise to obey and keep it. A close study of these passages will not bear out such an interpretation. It is an importation contrary to the texts themselves and one

that has deflected the course of thought on this subject . . . . The covenant is conceived of as dispensed, as in operation, and as constituting a certain relation, in the keeping of it and in obeying God's voice. The covenant is actually presupposed in the keeping of it. Undoubtedly there is a conditional feature to the words, 'If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant.' But what is conditioned upon obedience and keeping of the covenant is the enjoyment of the blessing which the covenant contemplates. In like manner in Ex. XXIV:7, 8, the covenant is not to be regarded as contingent upon the promise of the people, so that the dispensing of the covenant had to wait for this promise. And verse 8 is not to be construed as if then the covenant had been inaugurated or as if acceptance on the part of the people completed the process of constituting the covenant relation. The covenant had already been established and the blood was simply the confirmation or seal of the covenant established and of the relation constituted. This gives a different perspective to our interpretation of the Mosaic covenant, and we find that the Mosaic covenant also is a sovereign administration of grace, divinely initiated, established, confirmed and fulfilled. Later references in the Pentateuch confirm this interpretation of sovereign appointment or dispensation . . . ."

"The question of the condition referred to above does call however, for some considerations. How does the condition of obedience comport with the concept of a monergistic administration of grace? The answer must follow the lines which have been delineated above in connection with the keeping of the Abrahamic covenant. What needs to be emphasized now is that the Mosaic covenant in respect of the condition of obedience is not in a different category from the Abrahamic . . . ."

After dwelling briefly on the idea of the Davidic Covenant and the idea of the Covenant in the New Testament, the writer brings his study of the covenant to a close, with what he calls a Conclusion. In this brief paragraph we read the following: "As Covenant revelation has progressed throughout the ages it has reached its consummation in the new covenant and the new covenant is not wholly diverse in principle and character from the covenants which have preceded it and prepared for it but it is itself the complete realization and embodiment of that sovereign grace which was the constitutive principle of all the covenants. And when we remember that covenant is not only bestowment of grace, not only oath-bound promise, but also relationship with God in that which is the crown and goal of the whole process of religion, namely, union and communion with God, we discover again that the new covenant brings this relationship also to the highest level of achievement. At the centre of covenant revelation as its constant refrain is the assurance 'I will be your God, and ye shall be my people . . . .'"

Now if I have understood Professor Murray correctly, though he speaks of certain conditions in the covenant, he

does not understand by them conditions which man fulfills before he receives the promise of the covenant, or that the covenant is contingent upon conditions man fulfills before there is covenant bestowal. Rather he views them simply as reciprocal responses of faith, love and obedience "apart from which the enjoyment of the covenant blessing and of the covenant relation is inconceivable. In a word, keeping the covenant presupposes the covenant relation as established rather than the condition upon which its establishment is contingent." It would appear then that he does not believe in conditions in the sense that they are explained of late in our circles by those who have left us. He uses the term, but understands by it merely the response of the child of God to the work of Grace performed by our Covenant God. My reason for this conclusion is the fact that Murray does not believe in a bi-lateral covenant. By the latter he understands a pact or agreement in which man takes part. Of this the professor will have nothing. Though the booklet he wrote is not above criticism, we nevertheless enjoyed reading it.

M.S.

## CONTRIBUTIONS

Grand Rapids, Mich.  
May 29, 1954.

Rev. Herman Hoeksema  
1139 Franklin, S. E., City

Dear Rev. Hoeksema:

The editor of the Banner refused to accept the following letter for Voices column. I have heard it said that graduating seminary students from Calvin do not even know the Canons of Dort. And now that The Banner refuses to publish a few statements based upon the Canons, we begin to wonder how far has the Christian Reformed Church departed from its glorious Reformed heritage as symbolized in the Canons of Dort.

This writer is being convicted more and more that the controversy and split of 1924 was the best thing that could have happened for the cause of Reformed truth. Our sovereign God wills to have His truth of absolute sovereignty preached and if the Christian Reformed Church will not and cannot preach it because of its entanglement with the false and erroneous doctrine of common grace — then God will raise up congregations who with zeal and joy shall proclaim this wonderful truth of God's sovereignty and unconditional election unto salvation.

The letter in question reads as follows:

Grand Rapids, Mich.  
April 3, 1954.

Dear Rev. Kuiper: Please accept for "Voices":

It seems that the great all-important doctrine of the sovereignty of God and the sovereign election of grace has

been pushed aside and its study neglected in favor of what is called "man's responsibility." The gospel is said to be an offer of the gift of salvation and stress is laid upon man to accept this offer in the same manner in which a birthday gift is offered — it is up to you to accept it or reject it.

The Canons of Dort firmly declare that believing is not to be considered as the prerequisite, cause or condition on which salvation depends; but rather that men are chosen to faith and to obedience of faith and holiness; election is the fountain of every saving good from which proceed the new birth, faith, holiness and all the gifts of salvation. Faith, then is to be looked at as the gift of God not on account of its being offered by God to man to be accepted or rejected at his pleasure but because it is in reality conferred upon him, breathed and infused into him; God works in him both to will and to work and so produces both the will and the act of believing.

Our regeneration, repenting, believing, sanctification and glorification are the fruits of God's election unto salvation, for by grace are ye saved; not of yourselves and also Eph. 1:3, we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ according as He has chosen us in Him. For as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

The gospel then is not an offer but rather the power of God unto salvation. If it is an offer, then man when he accepts this gift can really boast in his own good work of having fulfilled a condition.

Formerly, pastors in catechism classes were satisfied with only one answer to the question, Why are you saved? Because God elected me from before the foundation of the world. In the light of the whole of God's revelation, we can teach that man is not saved because he believes, but man believes because he is saved.

May I please ask the reader to first read the Canons of Dort before he criticizes the above presentation? The gift of God is eternal life thru Jesus Christ our Lord. He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

Harold Tilma.

## O COME BEFORE THE LORD, OUR KING

O come before the Lord, our King,  
And in His presence let us sing;  
Let us in glad joyful lays  
The Rock of our salvation praise;  
Before Him come with thankful song,  
In joyful psalms His praise prolong.

Almighty power the Lord maintains,  
Exalted over all He reigns;  
He holds the valleys in His hand,  
He makes the mighty mountains stand;  
To Him belong both land and sea,  
Creator of the world is He.

Psalm 95:1, 2