

THE STANDARD

Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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NUMBER 1

MEDITATION

Counterfeits of the Kingdom

"For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men."

Romans 14:17, 18

Because of outward, external, unessential things, brother would destroy brother at Rome. (Romans 14)

All because they did not fully understand, that God beholdeth the heart and not the face.

God is God. He cannot be pleased with rivers of oil, ten thousands of rams, nice, pious faces, while the heart of man is far from thoughts of the Almighty. David lifts up his voice and weeps: Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it.

Ah, if God only would desire sacrifice, that is, money, bodily movements, the keeping of the assemblies, new moons and sabbaths: how pleasurable for the flesh would then religion be! Then we could be an object of God's loving-kindness and at the same time we might safely murder the brother! How exceedingly nice that would be! We then might safely damn him and curse him and rail at him, or rather, behind his back so that we reduce his name and repute to frazzlings — and then turn in our prayer-chamber and with honey-sweet words approach the Almighty and sing, ever so sweetly: Oh, how love I thy law.

With the face of an angel and the heart of the devil himself before the great white Throne! Ah, a Paradise for the detestable hypocrite! "I thank Thee, God, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican!" Of course, we all have our publican judging eye. Not only do we reckon ourselves to be better than the rest, on whom we may pour out the vials of our scorn, condemnation and damnation. "Or ever this publican!" But I, oh, God! I am much better. Thy heaven will be heaven only because I adorn it. Art Thou not pleased at the acquisition of my glittering self?

All because it is so difficult to learn the first lesson in the art of pleasing God.

We will keep days and months and years; we will drink and eat the spiritual food; we will hasten our footsteps and keep our face from smiling, while the noisy laughter be damned! We will do all this and at the completion of the day ask the Lord of the heavens and the earth: Am I not nice? And is the rest not abominable? And preening and strutting and glittering in tinsel of selfpraise we continue on our sojourn.

That is the man who pockets the counterfeits of the Kingdom, while the waters of Life eternal flow away under the icy surface of his Pharisaical selfrighteousness. O, God, how longsuffering and forbearing Thou art with us!

And yet we say sometimes: If it lay with me, I would save the entire world and not only the elect. The liars. If it lay with me, I would only save me, for I love only me. The age-old sin: Ye shall be as gods. That is, selfsufficient and allsufficient. Are we not? Another word for it is selfishness, that is, when the creature attempts to clothe himself with Divine virtue.

We might as well admit it: we are all abominable sinners in this respect, and no one is without this pharisaical selfrighteousness, while damning the brother.

Nay, the Kingdom is not meat and drink. Perish the thought. God has something better in store for us.

* * * *

What then is it? What are the things of the Kingdom?

Turn to Romans 14:17, 18 and there we read the definition of the things of the Kingdom: They are: righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Sang the poet: "Hoe zult gij rechtvaardig verschijnen voor God?"

Ah, that is the question! How shall I appear righteous before God's throne?

Nay, there is not a speck of this righteousness with you or with me, brother. We are unrighteous. Hence, the question, the wailing cry: How shall I appear righteous while I am crooked and perverse?

We are crooked. In thought, word and deed. In all the issues of the heart. For the heart itself is: "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who shall know it?" Jer. 17:9.

And the most abominable picture of such a state is when our flesh comes in contact with the Kingdom; and we try to acquire righteousness by the deeds of the flesh. Abhorrible counterfeits! Then the face, bodily movements, deeds of the body and honeyed words form a terrible antithesis to the heart that is like a den of grasping, ravening wolves.

And God's Son utters the indescribable curse on it: Woe, woe unto you!

Righteousness: how different it is from our counterfeits!

It is the will that wills the highest Good!

That is the reason why God is righteous. He wills only the Highest Good, that is, Himself. In all the willing and loving and praising, God is ever directed to Himself. Hence all His ways are righteous: just and right is He.

Nothing can ever come into that path of the Almighty to obstruct it. His eternal will it is to save His own church so that she might be to the praise of His glory. But that church is in the depth of hell! Never mind. But in order to save her, God must come Himself to save her and that through the untold humiliation of the Son! Never mind. But that means that God will have to shed His own blood on the Cross in the nature of man! Never mind, I am RIGHT-EOUSNESS. Hence, the Cross, where the everblessed Jesus becomes a curse for His bride, she who became a whore historically.

It is the righteousness of God revealed in history.

And that righteousness of God that shines in the death and resurrection of the Christ, becomes our own in the way of faith.

Then we draw as it were that righteousness in us, then the Lord imputes that right thinking, willing and desiring before the face of God unto us and we are righteous before Him. Fulfilling His immutable decree where we were righteous in Christ before the world began. Oh, blessed thought.

And on the basis of that justification we become righteous.

Right thinking.

* * * *

Will you notice, my brother, how it acts? Come then with me and we will go to the temple. Behold that wretch! His name is publican. He is the offscouring of respectable (sic!) society. All but the lowest rascals shun him. But listen, nay, look. He remains in obscurity as much as possible. Yonder stands the glory of Israel's commonwealth: the Pharisee. But my publican stands in the shadows. Also, mark you well: he smites his breast which is the outward token of inward penitence. And now listen: Oh, God, be merciful unto me, the sinner!

It is the first inkling of the righteousness of God.

Oh, show me a man or woman who is justified before the throne of God and I will show you a person that is meek and lowly. I will show you that justification before God and His holy angels goes hand in hand with the right evaluation of self and the brother. Ah, then the brotherhood and sisterhood is far superior than I am. I am so wicked. That is the speech. And they are much better than I am. I am the chief of sinners.

Nor could it ever be any different. Of course, I will admit that we see one another's sins. And they grieve us too. But, here is the point: We see our own heart and we cannot see the hearts of our brethren. Therefore the justified soul is much more grieved about himself than about the brother. He leaves the brother to God and hastens to upbraid himself. Oh, God, be merciful to, THE SINNER. That is: the sinner above all sinners.

All because right thinking and right willing has descended through the Holy Ghost into his inmost heart. And by the loveable light of such life he beheld the movements of sin.

And following it he would cleanse himself. In a word: he hungers for more righteousness. He wants to be acceptable to God, nay, not through his own works but through the life and walk of sanctification that is the gift of God and the handiwork of Christ's Spirit.

* * * *

And as a first corollary heavenly peace descends into his turbulent soul.

Peace, how wonderful a boon!

Three things ought to be remembered when we are discussing this wonderful gift of God, this fruit of righteousness.

Firstly, that it is harmony with God. And that ought to be clear. When a soul does the same thing God does, that is, seek God as the highest good as to his willing, thinking, loving and praising, then it must follow that he is in step with God's own life, for God does the very same thing eternally. When my regenerated and justified sinner sings: Oh, God, how good Thou art! then it constitutes the echo of the same speech of the Triune Covenant life. For that is also the recurrent theme in the eternal Song of God's love and friendship. Such is peace, wonderful peace.

And secondly, because such life of harmony with God's own life is ordained by God, is ordered by Him for the rational creature, such peace is the life that is lived according to the Law of God. It is the continuous life of the justified sinner to be in conformity to the Law of the ten commandments. It is his rule of life, his only rule.

And, thirdly, such life springs from the love of God. The same Spirit that justified him spread abroad that love in his heart, causing it to be the mainspring of all his thinking, speaking and acting. His life becomes more and more the manifestation of the love of God.

We sing of all three in one solitary line: "Great peace have they that love Thy law!"

* * * *

Small wonder that such a soul is joyous in the Holy Ghost.

It is the second corollary to the righteousness of God which is his portion.

He is the only one who has the right and the fitting wherewithal to be glad.

No, it is not the boisterous laughing of the worldlings. It is far from the insane yelling of godless glee.

It is the feel of the well-being before the eyes of God and His angels. It is the cause of his song: It is well with my soul. He realizes that all things are for him, because God is for him in Christ. He is joyous because he knows that his indwelling righteousness, wrought by Christ's Spirit is the firstfruits of a wonderful harvest, against the time when he shall dwell in a world and in the midst of a commonwealth that shall abound in this same righteousness.

The firstfruits of more than angelic joy. "They shout for joy, they also sing!"

G.V.

IN MEMORIAM

The School Board of the Free Christian School at Edgerton, Minn., hereby expresses its sincere sympathy to our principal, Mr. John Vis, in the death of his Father,

MR. WM. VIS

May our Heavenly Father comfort the bereaved and may we at all times put our trust in Him.

The School Board:

H. Hueskens, Pres.

Ray Brunsting, Sec.

HOW GREAT THE GOODNESS KEPT IN STORE

How great the goodness kept in store
For those who fear Thee and adore

In meeking humility.

How great the deeds with mercy fraught
Which openly Thy hand has wrought

For those who trust in Thee,

Secured by Thy unfailing grace,
In Thee they find a hiding place

When foes their plots devise;

A sure retreat Thou wilt prepare,

And keep them safely sheltered there,

When strife of tongues shall rise.

Psalm 31:1, 2

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EDITORIALS

A Protest and its Reply

I still want to come back to that sentence of the reply to the protest of brother Meninga by the former consistory of the First Church of Kalamazoo: "And therefore, it may be true, but certainly not the truth."

Camouflage and evasion of the definite truth of Scripture and the Confessions always characterizes heretics.

And this sentence surely shows all the earmarks of camouflage and evasion.

Let us not forget that The Truth to which this sentence refers is the very heart of the Declaration of Principles: That the promise of God is unconditional and for the elect alone.

Of this truth of Scripture and the Confessions the former consistory of Kalamazoo declares, first of all, that "it may be true." They do not say that it is true, but it may be true. This implies, of course, that, as far as they are concerned, it may also be not true. They leave a loophole. They evade the issue. When, later on, someone will say to them: "Once you declared that the promise of God is unconditional and for the elect alone," they can always say: "No, we never said this; all we said was that this may be true." And again, when someone approaches them later on and says to them: "Once you denied that the promise of God is for the elect alone and unconditional," they again can say: "No, we never agreed with this Protestant Reformed truth; all we said was that this may be true."

This double faced and evasive answer must serve as an answer to a protest!

But the rest of this sentence is worse yet.

For there the former consistory reveals that, after all, they do not believe that the Declaration of Principles is the truth of Scripture and the Confessions. For they declare that, although it may be true, it is not THE TRUTH.

What does this mean?

Remember that this statement concerns the Declaration when it maintains that the promise of God is unconditional and for the elect only. This, the former consistory of Kalamazoo declares is NOT THE TRUTH.

Let us put the most charitable construction upon this statement that is at all possible.

In that case, the former consistory of Kalamazoo meant to say that the contention of the Declaration of Principles that the promise of God is unconditional and for the elect alone "may be true" but it is not the WHOLE truth.

In other words, one can also speak the truth, another part of the truth, when he maintains that the promise of God is for all and conditional. This is what De Wolf said and emphatically meant when he declared from the pulpit of the First Church of Grand Rapids that God promises to every single one of the hearers in the audience salvation, "if they believe," i.e. "on condition of faith." Well, then, according

to the former consistory of Kalamazoo, the Declaration states one part of the truth, but the other part is the conditional promise for all.

But this is only more camouflage, for the Declaration of Principles meant exactly, over against the Liberated and all Arminians, to insist that the promise of God is never general but always particular and that it is for the elect only, that this is not part of the truth but the whole of it, and that the Protestant Reformed Churches have always maintained this truth, especially over against the first point of 1924.

We ask: Why could not the former consistory of Kalamazoo be honest with brother Meninga and with the entire church, and answer that they must have nothing of the Declaration of Principles?

Then we could, at least, have respected them.

The same evasion characterizes the last paragraph of this part of the answer by the former consistory of the First Church of Kalamazoo. We will quote it here once more: "That the Declaration of Principles has no bearing on the case in question as is evident from the Preamble of the Declaration which reads as follows: 'Declaration of Principles, to be used only by the Mission Committee and the Missionaries for the organization of prospective Churches on the basis of Scripture and the Confessions as these have always been maintained in the Protestant Reformed Churches and as these are now further explained in regard to certain principles.'"

The Declaration has no bearing on the case?

If the former consistory of Kalamazoo had said that the statement made by De Wolf from the pulpit of First Church could not officially be judged and condemned on the basis of the Declaration of Principles, but only on the ground of Scripture and the Confession, they would have spoken the truth. And their quotation from the preamble of the Declaration suggests that this is what they meant. Nor did the consistory of the First Church of Grand Rapids, or Classis East ever judge those statements on that basis. Throughout their struggle with De Wolf, they referred to Scripture and the Confessions, and to nothing else.

But this is something quite different from saying that the Declaration has no bearing on the case.

Fact is that the contents of the Declaration are in direct contradiction to the statements by De Wolf. Personally, I am confident that the statements were very consciously made for that very purpose.

Let me once more remind you of the two statements made by De Wolf. The first is: "God promises to every one of you that, if you believe, you shall be saved." The second is: "Our act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Now, it surely is evident to all that in these statements De Wolf meant to propagate his conditional theology. The first statement proclaims a general conditional promise. The second statement proclaims the entering into the kingdom of heaven on condition that man converts himself.

Anyone that is at all acquainted with the Declaration of Principles knows very well that this document was composed for the very purpose of condemning this conditional theology. To prove this I will take no time or space, for this is unnecessary.

But how the former consistory of Kalamazoo can make the sweeping statement that the Declaration has no bearing on the question is a mystery to me.

It is true that the Declaration was composed for the Mission Board and for the missionaries.

But does the former consistory of Kalamazoo conceive of the possibility that the missionaries in the field proclaim one gospel, that of unconditional salvation for the elect, while the ministers at home preach another gospel (which is no gospel) that of conditional salvation for all? Do they conceive of the possibility that the Mission Board organize churches on the basis of the Declaration of Principles while the church at home repudiates that Declaration?

What sort of a chaos would be the result, do they think?

Is it not crystal clear, then, that the Declaration, although it be no formal basis for the condemnation of the statements by De Wolf, has very direct bearing on the case, and that the consistory of the First Church of Grand Rapids could not permit its former pastor openly and publicly to refuse the Declaration of Principles officially adopted by the Church.

Let us proceed to the next part of the protest and its reply.

Brother Meninga wrote his consistory as follows:

"By action of the consistory, which took the stand of the Rev. De Wolf who was condemned by Classis East for his heretical statements, our consistory separated itself from the true Protestant Reformed Church. The true Protestant Reformed Church loves the God Who loves the truth. And this is the truth expressed in the Declaration of Principles.

"Therefore, dear consistory, repent of your sins and go back to the true Protestant Reformed Church, to the glory of God Who loves the truth and the Church which is the body of Christ."

To this final part of the protest the former consistory of Kalamazoo has a very lengthy reply which we shall, D.V., quote and discuss in separate parts.

C. In connection with the second paragraph of your protest where it is maintained that we have severed connection with the Protestant Reformed Churches by the action of the majority of the consistory, we maintain the following:

1. That Rev. De Wolf and his elders were not legally deposed

a. The meeting of June 23, 1953, at which Rev. De Wolf and 11 elders were supposed to have been deposed, was not a legal consistory meeting.

1) All the consistory members were not notified of that meeting. . . . it was therefore a secret meeting composed only of those members of the consistory who were known to be sympathetic to the position of Rev. H. Hoeksema and to be

ready to vote for the suspension of Rev. De Wolf and the elders that supported him.

a) It is not held that the rest of the consistory had to be present although in view of the fact that the Fourth Consistory was going to be present it might be argued that those members thought worthy of suspension and deposition should be present to present their case to the Fourth Consistory who was supposed to judge in the matter.

b) But a lack of notification to all the legal members of a certain body irrespective of what action they might be thought worthy, certainly invalidates the actions taken at such a meeting.

2) Those present at the meeting did not constitute a majority of the members of the consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church . . . from the minutes taken by Mr. G. Stadt at the June 23rd meeting, we quote the following:

a) "Article 2; Present at this meeting are: Reverends Hoeksema and Hanko; Elders S. Veltman, Rev. G. M. Ophoff, G. Bylsma, O. Vander Woude, M. Doezeema, D. Rietema, J. Faber, G. Stadt, and G. Vink. Also present, upon our invitation, are Reverends G. Vos and M. Schipper and Elder D. Langeland, as representatives of the Classical committee on advice."

b) "Article 5; Motion is made that the Consistory expresses that the Rev. H. De Wolf is worthy of suspension from his office of Minister of the Word and Sacraments; . . ."

c) "Article 6; Motion is made that the Consistory expresses that the following elders of this congregation are hereby declared worthy of deposition from their office; — F. Sytsma, A. Dykstra, G. Sikkema, H. Knott, H. Bastianse, J. Bouwman, W. Stuursma, S. De Young, A. Voss, A. Vermeer, and L. Mulder."

1) It must be remembered that Mr. John Flikkema was at this time also a member of the consistory. His name appears in neither group.

2) But on the basis of the information contained in the minutes you have a group of 11 elders suspending a deposing a group of 12 . . . members of the same consistory . . . which can never be legal . . . the church order always speaks of a majority vote: see decisions under Article 4 (The Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches); also Article 31.

b. Fourth Consistory gave no advice to proceed with deposition as required by Article 79 of the Church Order . . .

1) From stenographic notes of Classis East, we quote Rev. Richard Veldman as follows: "So we came with this decision: 'It is clear to our Fourth Consistory (we thought we were stating facts) that neither Rev. De Wolf nor the elders involved made the apology demanded by the consistory as advised by Classis.' That was clear. 'That Classis advised the consistory to proceed with suspension in case the Rev. De Wolf should refuse to apologize' and therefore we said '(3) in so far as these facts were concerned and the apology was not made, the consistory has the right, the legal right to proceed with suspension on the basis of the classical

decision.' You don't need Fourth Consistory for this. 'However, we are not prepared to say that a consistory meeting could be called legal, that a suspension can be called in order when those involved were not notified.' '(2) . . .', another reason why we could not say. My point is this: If I say in English 'in so far the consistory has the legal right' and then say 'however' then you get a limitation upon that which has been said. As far as the classis is concerned, they had the legal right, if all was all right. We did not say it was all right. We said we don't know. It must not only be right, but after you have the right, you must do it in the right way; and if you don't do the right thing in the right way, the right thing becomes wrong. I don't say it was wrong. We were not ready to say it was legal. If it were not it could not be done, so we said nothing. We could not."

2) From the same notes: "By no stretch of the imagination was the presentation concerning our Fourth Church the truth and the fair presentation. Rev. Ophoff said, "Why you did nothing.'"

When I read this part of the reply to the protest of brother Meninga I cannot help being amazed, especially for two reasons.

The first is that, at the October session of Classis East, when all the material concerning this particular phase of the case was presented and discussed and finally decided in favor of our consistory, neither the Rev. Knott nor his fellow elder-delegate protested and appealed to synod. On that particular day I was not present at classis, but it is safe to say that they did not even open their mouth. It is true, they finally bolted, when they refused to recognize the legal delegates from the consistory of First Church and refused to submit even with the right of appeal to the decision of classis. But they never protested legally as was not only their right, but also their obligation before God.

The second reason why I am amazed when I read this is the awful corruption and distortion of the facts in the case, a distortion which is effected by quoting the facts only in part.

This is done in spite of the fact the former consistory of Kalamazoo was thoroughly acquainted with all the facts!

For all the facts were in detail reported to the October classis.

Moreover, all the facts have been published black on white.

Let me present them once more.

The former consistory of Kalamazoo presents the flimsy ground that the consistory meeting of the First Church, held on June 23, 1953, was not a legal consistory meeting, and that De Wolf and his elders were not suspended and deposed by a majority vote.

But let us have all the facts.

Then we must begin by the consistory meeting of June 1.

H.H.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On October 15 our beloved parents

MR. AND MRS. PETER DE VRIES

hope to celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary.

We are thankful to our Heavenly Father, Who has seen fit to spare them for us these many years. We pray that He may continue to bless them along the paths that lie ahead, and also that they may experience that there is no peace apart from Him.

Mr. and Mrs. John F. DeVries

Mr. and Mrs. Peter Zandstra
and 4 Grandsons

354 Diamond, S. E., Grand Rapids, Michigan

ANNIVERSARY

The congregation and the consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, hereby extends their heartiest congratulations to their Pastor,

REV. C. HANKO

on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of his ordination into the Ministry of the Gospel. May he continue to experience the Lord's favor upon him as he shepherds the flock of Jesus Christ.

Consistory of the
First Prot. Ref. Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan
J. M. Faber, Clerk.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On September 26 our dear parents

MR. AND MRS. ADRIAN GRIFFIOEN

celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary.

We are thankful to our God who has graciously seen fit to give them to us, and our prayer is that He may bless them in their way, and that they may experience that there is no peace apart from Him.

Their grateful Children:

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas E. Heyboer

Mr. and Mrs. Arie E. Griffioen

Virginia R.

Sharon F.

and 2 grandchildren.

2651 Clyde Park Ave., S. W., Grand Rapids, Mich.

IN MEMORIAM

The consistory of the Prot. Ref. Church at Manhattan hereby wishes to extend to the Pastor, Rev. P. Vis and family, its expression of sympathy in the death of his Father,

MR. WM. VIS

Bearing the bereaved ones up to the Throne of Grace in prayer, we commend them to the comforting presence of our Covenant God.

In name of the Consistory,
P. Flikkema, Vice-President
H. Leep, Clerk.

OUR DOCTRINE

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

AN EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

PART III — OF THANKFULNESS

LORD'S DAY 42

Chapter 2

The Grace of Contentment (cont.)

We cannot do without them. And therefore there is in our hearts a certain measure of desire for them, which is perfectly legitimate: for we are earthy, and have need of earthly things. We want them, expect them, look for them, and strive to acquire them in the way of God's precepts. We need bread to eat and clothing to cover us, a home to shelter us. And we need the means to obtain these. Moreover, we crave for health and strength, that we may go about and labor. We hunger for friendship and love, for happiness and liberty. Contentment has respect to the relation between the things we have and the desires of our hearts with regard to those earthly things. It is the perfect equilibrium between the two, the constant adaptation of the one to the other, the continuous adjustment of our inner state to outward circumstances. It is the positive answer to the question: have you enough? It answers affirmatively to the query: are you satisfied? The very opposite is discontent, which gives the negative answer to these questions in every state. When the inner state of our heart and mind, our desires and longings with respect to earthly things is wholly in accord with the measure of earthly things which we possess, with the circumstances in which we find ourselves, with the way which we must travel, with the experiences we are called to pass through, and when this harmony between outward circumstances and the inner state of our heart and mind is essentially an adjustment of the latter to the former, then we are content.

It is evident, therefore, that the cause of contentment lies not in things, but in the heart. It is not from without, but from within. It does not arise from the fact that all things seem to bend to our slightest wish, but from the spiritual power always to adapt our inner state to our outward conditions. This is evident from the text we quoted above. In that passage the apostle gives a reason for the preceding statement. He had assured the Philippians that he spoke not in respect of want. He knew no want. He had enough. And the reason for this expression of satisfaction lay not in the fact that the apostle had an abundance of things, that he enjoyed the fellowship of friends and brethren, that he could do as he pleased: for he was in prison, and Nero's sword was even at this moment threatening to take his very life. But the reason is expressed in the statement: "For I have learned

to be content with whatsoever state is mine." That is, I have learned to adjust the inner state of my mind and heart to outward things and circumstances. Contentment is not the satisfaction of the Epicurean, who carefully measures the capacity of his inner needs and desires, in order that he may exactly fill them with earthly things. For this Epicurean satisfaction is utterly dependent on outward things. Nor is contentment the proud show of the Stoic, who chokes down the cravings of his heart that they may not appear in his face. For this Stoical pride is inner dissatisfaction; it is not happiness. Nor is contentment the slavish satisfaction of ignorance, that is content with things that are because it knows no better. But it is that state of mind in which we are able correctly to evaluate all earthly things, circumstances, and experiences, and correctly judging of their real significance and value to clearly perceive that we have just enough, that we need what we have. It is a state of profound inner satisfaction with all things, a state of constant tranquillity and happiness, that reflects itself in the very features of its subject.

We understand, of course, that contentment is a gift of grace. It is not a natural trait of character, common to all men. By nature we are not content, and never can be. The natural man is a stranger to this blessed state of mind and heart, and must needs be a stranger.

It is true that even in the world there is found a resemblance of this spiritual power. There certainly is difference between man and man as to the measure of his craving for things of the world. One is more easily satisfied than another. And after men had a taste of abundance and worldly prosperity, it is more difficult than before to adjust their desires to a state of economic depression.

Yet, the contentment of which we speak in this chapter is a gift of grace, and the natural man does not know it. Nor is he capable of learning its secret. You may explain it to him. You may exhort him to be content with whatsoever he may be and whatsoever way he may have to walk. He will not and cannot understand it. In as far as he understands not the blessedness, but the doctrine, of true contentment, he will even despise it. For he is natural, not spiritual. And the natural man is carnal. He has a carnal mind, which is enmity against God. It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Nor is it subject in any way or in any measure to the eighth commandment. The man of the world does not and cannot have his joy in the Lord. The precepts of the Most High are not his delight. To know Him and taste His grace and enter into the secret of His fellowship, to serve Him and love Him with all his heart and mind and soul and strength, to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness and consider all other things as subservient to this highest purpose, also the material things of this world, — these things are hid from him. He cannot see them afar off. He has his delight in the things of the present time. The things of this world, the earthly things, that were ordained to be a mere means to an end, to him are an end in themselves. He seeks them. He wants them. And he wants more

and more, and still more of them. To possess them is inseparable from his happiness to him. Prosperity he craves, and he grumbles if he cannot have it. And still he murmurs and grumbles if he can have all the world may offer, for the things of this world can never satisfy. He has separated the means from the end, the world and himself from God, the things temporal from the things eternal. And temporal things have their end in death. He knows it, and therefore can never find contentment in the material things of this world. There is death in all he has.

But contentment is a gift of grace, bestowed by the God of all grace upon His regenerated child, through Christ Jesus our Lord, and by the power of His Word in the holy gospel. Only the Christian, redeemed from the present world, delivered from the power of sin through our Lord Jesus Christ, by mere and sovereign grace, can be content in principle. He can say: I am content in whatsoever state I am. Contentment is indeed rooted in the principle of the law, written in our hearts, which is the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. This love of God in Christ is spread abroad in our hearts, in the first place, not as our love to Him, but as His love toward us, seeking and finding its response in our love to God. And because of this love of God, our joy is first of all in Him, and it is our highest delight to be well-pleasing to Him, and to glorify Him and serve Him with all our being and with every means, in whatever state we are. Because of it, we know that hope maketh not ashamed; and we do not seek the things that are below, but the things that are above, the things heavenly and eternal, and know that things earthly the things heavenly and eternal, and know that all things earthly are but means to the realization of our eternal glory. And by that love we have confidence that our God in Christ Jesus will surely send us all those things that end to His glory and to our salvation. And thus there arises within our hearts the tranquil assurance that all things work together for good, and the calm confidence that we have just enough, in whatsoever state we may be. Contentment is the perfect victory over all things earthly and transient, and is independence with respect to all outward circumstances. It is able to leave all things to God, and be truly patient in adversity as well as thankful in prosperity.

Of course, we must remember that we have but a small beginning of this new obedience. To be sure, the gift of grace that is called contentment is in our hearts, but it is there only in principle. There is another law in our members, warring against the law of our mind. And according to that other law we always seek the things of the world, and are never satisfied with that which God bestows upon us in the measure of material things. Hence, as it is with all other gifts of grace, so it is with contentment: it always assumes the form of a battle. We must fight the good fight even unto the end. And that battle is a particularly difficult one,—difficult also because God's ways are often dark and rough. Contentment frequently means that we must be satisfied in ways of suffering and grief and tribulation. And this is very

difficult for the Christian, because he has not reached that perfection by which he can live by grace only. Hence, we must learn to be content in the way of sanctification, in which alone we truly seek the things above and have our joy in the Lord. Walking in the way of the Lord, according to His precepts, fighting the good fight in prayer and supplication, we shall be able to say: "I have learned to be content in whatsoever state I am."

It stands to reason that living from the principle of contentment in the true, spiritual sense of the word, we refrain from the sin of stealing in any form, and are willing to be stewards of God in Christ Jesus with regard to our earthly possessions.

Then, in the first place, we certainly are willing to have nothing in our possession which we have not lawfully acquired, and of which we cannot confess that it has been bestowed upon us by the Lord our God. But, in the second place, living from that principle, the Christian is also ready to manage the earthly goods over which he has been placed as before the face of God and according to His precepts. In other words, he manages them as God's steward. The Christian steward, living from the principle of his stewardship, confesses even with regard to that over which he has been placed as steward, that is, with regard to that portion of earthly possessions of which he can honestly say that he has acquired it of the Lord,—he confesses that his earthly possessions do not belong to him in the absolute sense of the word. They are and remain the Lord's. The believer knows that he is in God's employ. And as our Employer, God assigns to us our position and the means necessary to occupy that position in order to be faithful in our employment. The believer is God's officebearer, also with regard to his earthly possessions. And this implies that as officebearers we realize our calling with regard to the earthly goods, whatever they may be, however much they may be, or however little, to serve and glorify our God with them, and walk in the way of His precepts. We do not use them for ourselves and for our own carnal enjoyment, but for the glory of God and the well-being of the neighbor. Such is our calling. In as far as we do not realize that calling, we are thieves, and violate the eighth commandment. Hence, with our earthly possessions,—the homes in which we live the bread we eat, the water we drink, the clothes we put on, the capital we acquire,—we stand as stewards before the face of God, and ask Him humbly: "Lord, what wilt Thou have us do?"

This implies many things.

It certainly implies, as the Catechism has it, that we refrain from all thefts and robberies which are punishable by the magistrate in any form. It also implies that we refrain from that form of stealing which consists in wicked tricks and devices, whereby we design to appropriate to ourselves the goods which rightfully belong to our neighbor. And it implies also that as stewards over our earthly possessions, before the face of God, we refrain from all covetousness and all abuse and waste of our earthly goods.

H.H.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

In answer to Hezekiah's prayer, the Lord rebukes Sennacherib's blasphemies. Isa. XXXVII:21-35.

Then Isaiah the son of Amos sent into Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the Lord, God of Israel, Whereas thou has prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria, this is the word that the Lord has spoken concerning him: (Vss. 21, 22b).

It again shows how that the secrets of the Lord are with them that fear him. If the Godfearing king has taken the Lord's side against Sennacherib, the Lord now also takes the side of His servant against the blasphemer to deliver him out of his clutch.

The virgin, the daughter of Zion, has despised thee, has derided thee; the daughter of Jerusalem has shaken the head after thee. For whom hast thou scorned and reviled? And against whom hast thou lifted up thy voice and raised up thine eyes on high? Against the holy one of Israel (vss. 21, 23).

The appellatives *virgin* etc. denote the true church in whose sanctified mind the world-power stands out as an object worthy of derision, seeing that it exalts itself against the only true God. The nameless folly of it! And the credit of this posture of the saints belongs to the Lord alone. For He sets enmity. And so they too speak concerning the blasphemer the very world that the Lord speaks concerning him. And therefore what they speak will surely come to pass. The world-power is doomed to extinction.

By thy servants thou hast reviled the Lord . . . (vs. 24a).

This blasphemy consisted (36:7, 15) in branding trust in Jehovah foolishness, and in concluding that, because they had conquered heathen nations, it followed logically that the people of God would be conquered, and thus in placing Jehovah in a class with idols. Moreover what they did, they imagined that they had done by their own might, and that what was still to be done could be done in the same way. The prophet sets forth this thought in verses 24, 25.

And said, By the multitude of my chariots have I come to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon; and I will cut down the tall cedars thereof and the choice of the fir trees. And I will enter into the height of his borders and to the forests of his fruitful fields (vs. 25).

In a word, as a conquerer of nations he presses irresistibly on to his chosen destination, now Jerusalem. No one can stop him, either man or God. Such is his boast that to a large extent he already has made good apparently. He has subdued the lands of Lebanon. Hamath, Arphad, Syria, Phoenicia, the kingdom of the Ten Tribes, the greater part of Judah and Philistia are actually in his hands. The conquest of Jerusalem must follow as a matter of course. For there is none to deliver. Such is his reasoning.

I have digged and drunk water, and with the sole of my feet have I dried up the rivers of the besieged places, that

is of the lands that I was in the act of conquering (vs. 25).

He has dug wells to supply his troops with water, because the existing ones were insufficient. Thus he has drained away their water from their inhabitants.

To the vaunt of the Assyrian the Lord replies.

Hast thou not heard that I have made her long ago and that I have formed her of ancient times (vs. 26a)?

I take the meaning of this verse to be this: Hast thou not heard that this people — Jerusalem, the Israel according to the election — is my workmanship? That is, dost thou not know that I brought it out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; led it through the Red Sea, wherein the Egyptians were drowned, and through a howling wilderness, and planted it in the promised land of its abode, driving out before it all the inhabitants thereof. From this thou canst see how precious this people is in my sight and what a simple thing it would be for me to destroy thee instantly in its presence, and that therefore thy conquests must be ascribed to my providence and not to thy power and wisdom. But the verse can also be translated: *Hast thou not heard that I did it long ago and from ancient times formed it*, and the meaning taken to be: Hast thou not heard that there is an almighty God by whose counsel and direction thou art raised up and these wars and destruction ordained and sent.

Now I have brought it to pass, that thou shouldest reduce defenced cities to ruinous heaps (vs. 26b).

That is: thou art operative as my scourge. My ax art thou. I swing thee. For by my power dost thou exist.

And their inhabitants were short of hand; they were terrified and ashamed: they were as grass of the field, and as the green herb, as the grass on the housetops, and *as corn* that is blasted before it is grown up. (vs. 27).

This explains the success of the Assyrian. The Lord gives the inhabitants of the cities into his hand by laying the terror of the conquerer upon their hearts.

But I know thy sitting and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me. Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up unto mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest (vss. 28, 29).

To say that the Lord's knowledge is determinative is to say that the Assyrian comes forth from a sovereign providence; it is to say that he lives and moves and has his being in God. This certainly is the truth represented by the imagery of this text: And I will put a hook in thy nose etc. What was to be the divine working by which this raging beast was to be returned to his own place, time would have to reveal. This much is plain that he will return to his home defeated, dispirited and humbled, a trophy of God's warfare.

Having held out the promise of the disgraceful retreat of the Assyrian out of the Holy Land, the prophet turns to Hezekiah and names a sign to the king that shall be as a pledge of the promise given.

And this shall be a sign to thee, Ye shall eat this year

that which groweth of itself; and the second year that which groweth of itself; and in the third year sow ye, and reap and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof (vs. 30).

It must be supposed that at the time that this word was spoken, shortly before the expulsion of the Assyrian, there was great scarcity of bread in the land. For the people had been robbed of their crops. Yet the command of the Lord is to the effect that there shall be no seeding and harvest before the third year. And the assurance is given that in the meantime there shall be food enough of that which the land as uncultivated shall yield of itself. It was a testing of faith in the wonder-working power of the Lord, as apart from this power Canaan was not that productive. Those first two years would thus be sabbatical in character. The enemy would no more be in the land. According to II Kings 19:35 his expulsion was to follow almost immediately, even that very night. What was promised is an era of rest for God's believing people, — a never ending rest in the final instance.

And those of the house of Judah that escaped and remain shall increase and take root downward and bear fruit upward. For from Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and from Mt. Zion those that escaped *shall go forth*. For the jealousy of the Lord of hosts shall do this (vss. 31, 32).

That all these promises are to the true believers only that at the approach of the invader put their confidence in Jehovah by fleeing to Jerusalem is plain from the statement: *and they shall bear fruit*. The reality signified is Christ the vine and His fruit-bearing branches, the church of the elect, grafted in Him by a faith that is living and indestructible. They are always "the remnant," "those that escaped." They shall increase and be established. And they go forth from Jerusalem whose gates are now open, for the Assyrian is no more. And all is to be the accomplishment of the Lord. For He is a jealous God. He wants His people for Himself only. It is this that moves Him to save His people.

Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, Not shall he come unto this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor go before it with a shield, nor cast a mount against here. By the way that he came, by it shall he return, and shall not come unto the city, saith the Lord. For I will protect this city to save her for mine own sake and for my servant David's sake (vss. 33-35).

Then (that same night. See above) the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred a fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh (vss. 36, 37).

The mention of *the angel of the Lord* reminds of the destruction of the first-born in Egypt (Ex. 12:15 sqq.), and the plague in Jerusalem (2 Sam. 24:15 sqq.). In these three places the angel is said to *smite*. Hence, *angel of destruction*. In 2 Samuel, 24:15 the destruction that was wrought by the angel is called a "Pestilence." A pestilence is to be understood in our passage. It was the sword by which the angel

wrought. The Lord laid His plague upon the Assyrian's heart so that as moved by the terror of God he returned to his own place. That "terror" was the hook in his nose and the bridle in his lips by which the Lord turned him back by the way that he had come. He had seen the finger of God and was afraid. For the great number that perished in one night is something wonderful.

This deliverance from the power of Assyria was permanent. The Assyrian shall not return. God's people have nothing more to fear from him. So it was promised. He shall not come into the city, but by the way he came, by the same he shall return. He was swallowed up in victory. So the imagery of the text presents him to view. The sign too, as it required three years for its realization, signified not merely a momentary but a permanent deliverance of the city from the world-power, — of *the* city — the Jerusalem below was but shadow — that one day will appear with Christ in glory.

So will the Lord save the city for His own sake and for David's sake. For to David, that is to Christ, were the promises.

Sannecherib returned and dwelt in Nineveh. Here he dwelt, that is remained. And here he reigned still twenty years, and undertook five more campaigns. But none of them were directed against Judah and Jerusalem.

And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nishrosh his God, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword; and they escaped unto the land of Ararat; and Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead (vs. 38).

Such was the end of Sennacherib who had dared to revile Israel's God.

As was stated in the previous article, while Rabshakeh and the army under him was laying siege to Jerusalem, his master Sennacherib was warring against Lachish and Libnah a Canaanite city. Thus at the time the king of Assyria had two armies in the field, one at Lachish under his own direct command and another at Jerusalem under the command of Rabshakeh. Perceiving that he had failed by his blasphemies to move Hezekiah to a voluntary surrender of the city, Rabshakeh returned to his master (37:8). The question in whether he returned to the king with the great army with which he appeared before Jerusalem, the sacred narrative leaves unanswered. If he did take his army with him, then Sennacherib met the fearful overthrow of his host not before the walls of Jerusalem but in the vicinity of Libnah. But perhaps Rabshakeh did leave his troops behind while he returned to his master, and that the plague ravaged in both armies. This is the view of some.

The text does not state that in returning to his master Rabshakeh took with him his army. All that we read is that "Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah (37:8). This makes the impression that his troops remained behind while he returned. If this was so, there is some ground for the view that the 185,000 lay dead before the walls of Jerusalem.

What favors the view that Rabshakeh returned with his troops is the following consideration. While Sennacherib was occupied with the siege of Lachish, he received report that Tirhakah king of Ethiopia was come forth to make war against him. What could be more likely that it caused him to send word that Rhabshakeh lift the siege of Jerusalem and hasten to join his forces to those of his master for the impending war as purposing to renew his war against Jerusalem when the Ethiopian menace had been removed? If this is what actually happened, the Assyrian met the fearful overthrow of his army in a region other than that of Jerusalem.

But the promise as it reads at vs. 6, 7 of chapter 37 must also be taken into consideration. I quote, "And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say unto your master, Thus saith the Lord, Be not afraid of the words (of Rabshakeh) that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. Behold I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a report, and return to his own land."

It is not certain that the report that Sennacherib was to hear was the tidings that the king of Ethiopia had come forth to make war against him. It is not unlikely that the reference is to the dreadful tidings that 185,000 of his army that enclosed Jerusalem had died of the pest in one night, and that, as seeing the finger of God in this, he, as activated by the terror of God, slunk away with what was left of his mighty army and returned to his own place.

Then there is the text at 37:22, "The daughter of Zion has shaken her head *after* thee." So reads the Hebrew text. Here the picture seems to be that of the inhabitants of Jerusalem shaking their heads at what remained of Rabshakeh's great army, after the calamity had struck, were withdrawing from before the walls of Jerusalem.

It is plain that no definite answer can be found to the question: where did the overthrow of Sennacherib's army take place? Before the walls of Jerusalem or elsewhere?

Turning now to the Book of the Chronicles for further light on the course of events after the overthrow of the Assyrian, we learn this (2 Chron. 32:22, 23). When the Lord had saved Jerusalem from the hand of the king of Assyria, many brought gifts to the Lord to Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah, so that he was magnified in the sight of all nations. Then follows a brief notice of Hezekiah's sickness. It reads, "In those days Hezekiah was sick unto death, and prayed unto the Lord; and he — the Lord, spake unto him and gave him a sign. Thus according to all the sacred accounts in our possession (the accounts contained in II Kings, II Chronicles and the prophecy of Isaiah) Hezekiah's sickness occurred after the overthrow of Sennacherib's army. It took place, according to each of these accounts, "in those days," that is in the days of the Assyrian invasion and the siege and deliverance of Jerusalem in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign.

In a previous article (The Standard Bearer for July 1) I asserted that the Lord's promise to the smitten king that He will deliver the city proves conclusively that the king's sick-

ness occurred *before* and not after the destruction of the enemy. And so I took the position that the arrangement of the material that forms the historical piece of Isaiah's prophecy is not strictly chronological.

However having studied the entire account, it has become plain to me that Hezekiah's illness could just as well have taken place after the overthrow of Sennacherib's host and that therefore no valid reason can be advanced for the position that the arrangement of the material in question is *not* chronological. The promise that the Lord would deliver the city from the Assyrian was twice given. It was given when Hezekiah was sick (Isa. 38:1 sqq), and just before the overthrow of the Assyrian's army in answer to Hezekiah's prayer that the Lord rebuke the blasphemer (Isa. 37). The fact that after the destruction of the Assyrian's host and his return to his own place, the question must have risen in the minds of God's anxious people whether the tyrant might not return and avenge himself lends support to the position that Hezekiah's sickness and the announcement to the king that in response to his prayer the Lord would heal him and deliver him, took place after the overthrow of Sennacherib's army. It meant that the God-fearing king was once more assured that the Assyrian would never return and that thus the deliverance from his hand was permanent.

G.M.O.

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Announcement

An Office-bearers Conference will be held in the Creston Protestant Reformed Church, October 5, 1954, at 8 P. M. This will comprise the office-bearers of all the churches resorting in Classis East.

The following Topics will D.V. be discussed on this meeting:

"Shaking Hands With The Minister After the Sermon."

"Pronouncement of The Blessing By A Student."

"Excommunication from the Christian Church."

Joe King, Secretary

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Notice

Eastern Ladies League meeting will be held in Hudsonville Church on October 14, at 8 P. M.

Rev. J. Heys will be the speaker.

We look forward to an evening of Christian fellowship, so plan to be present.

All ladies of our churches are invited.

Mrs. G. Pipe, Vice-Sec.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Philippians 1:3-11

There are times and times in the life of a christian. And not less is this true of Apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastors and teachers, while they labor as Christ's gift to the Church for the perfecting of the saints, and the bringing them, under God, to the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God!

There are times of deep distress and cares for all the churches which outweigh all other afflictions together; times when the care of the churches and of the local congregation comes daily upon your soul. When one says: I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of living. In such seasons one quenches his thirst in the promises of God, and says to his soul, committing it unto our faithful Creator: Wait for Jehovah: Be strong, and let thy heart take courage; Yea, wait thou upon Jehovah!

Yes, then one prays: teach me thy way, O Jehovah, and lead me in a plain path, because of them that lie in wait for me. Deliver me not over unto the will of mine adversaries: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty! One then begins to understand the heart of the dying Jacob, speaking of two of his sons, who did not understand that vengeance belongeth unto the Lord; speaking of them Jacob says, "Simeon and Levi are brethren; weapons of violence are their swords. O my soul come not thou into their council; unto their assembly, my glory, be not thou united, for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they hocked an ox. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel. I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel." Gen. 49:5-7

One understands the fear of Jacob's soul, that, as the Church in Canaan, dwelling among the Canaanites and the Perizzites, he would not be a light upon a candle-stick, being as shining lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Hear him moan and sigh his complaint to these cruel sons: Ye have troubled me, to make me odious to the inhabitants of the land . . . and I being few in number, they will gather themselves against me . . ."

Such is the lot of all God's faithful servants. We complain unto the Lord about the destructive work of the enemy, even those that preach Christ because of envy and strife, until we see that one can do nothing against the truth, and see that there is not enough darkness in all the world to extinguish the light and the testimony of the few that are faithful to the word of God and the patience of Jesus. Then we learn to be content in whatsoever state we find ourselves; we know then that godliness with contentment is the great gain.

Thus looking at the chosen saints in the world, the believing Churches, we thank God upon every remembrance of them in our prayers, remembering all the good that we have

seen in the church, never forgetting the past labors of love (which God too does not forget!) waiting upon Jehovah, Who builds up His church and seeks her wandering sons! And then melt in love that is longsuffering and really useful; in a love that believes all things, hopes all things and endures all things. It is a love that only rejoices in the fruit of righteousness in the hearts of the church, a fruit that may abound to her account in the day of Christ Jesus!

Such is the great confidence that makes the apostle Paul look upon the imperfect church at Philippi, being fully persuaded that in the day of Jesus Christ these Philippians will have fully attained to the perfection set before us in a life to come.

Wherefore Paul writes: "*I thank my God upon all my remembrance of you, always in every supplication of mine on behalf of you all making my supplication with joy, for your fellowship in the furtherance of the Gospel from the first day until now; being confident of this very thing, that he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ . . . And this I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and void of offense, unto the day of Jesus Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are through Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.*" Phi. 1:3-11

Concerning this passage from Holy Writ we desire to make some expository observations.

The question arises: why does Paul speak such a profuse praise of these Philippian Christians? Certainly not that he should flatter them. On the contrary Paul is here proceeding from the principle that all things are indeed out of God, through Him and unto Him, that to God be the praise and glory *in the church*, and that in each believer, both now and forever. He is thanking God upon every remembrance of these Christians, because whenever he thinks of them he thinks of them as *God's handiwork!*

But why tell these Philippians this?

There can be no doubt about it that thus Paul is preparing their minds the better, that they may consider that they are as some first-fruits of God's creation, having been brought forth by the Word of truth. Only when they are fully aware that it is God who works effectually in them both to will and to do of His good-pleasure, will they have the *conscious* fear and desire to work out, to polish down in the finest points and details their salvation. Paul employs a different term for "our working out" in Greek, that he does for God's "working in us." The latter term is our english term *energy!* We work out our salvation in the energy of God who empowers us with power. Hence, salvation is wholly of the Lord. And that salvation is wholly of the Lord is the reason for Paul's prayer for the church. And the reminding them of this his prayer for them is to stir up in them this mystery of godliness. For God works grace through admonitions! It is through admonitions that God confers, breaths the grace of readiness in us, stirring up the new life in us! Admnoi-

tions of the Gospel are a part of the preaching of the Word whereby God works faith in our hearts.

Let no one lift his eye-brows over this last observation.

Rather let it sink deep into our hearts. Did not our Fathers say: "As the almighty operation of God, whereby He prolongs and supports this our natural life, does not exclude but requires the use of means, by which God of His infinite mercy and goodness hath chosen to exert His influence, so also the aforementioned supernatural operation of God, by which we are regenerated in no wise excludes or subverts the use of the Gospel, which the most wise God has ordained to be the seed of regeneration, and food of the soul. Wherefore as the apostles and teachers who succeeded them, piously instructed the people concerning the grace of God, to His glory and the abasement of all pride, and in the meantime, however, neglected not to keep them by the sacred *precepts of the Gospel* in the exercise of the Word, sacraments and discipline; so even to this day, be it far from either instructors or instructed to presume to tempt God in the church by separating what he of His good-pleasure hath most intimately joined together. For grace is conferred by means of admonitions; and the more readily we perform our duty, the more eminently usually is this blessing of God working in us, and the more directly is His work advanced; to whom alone be the glory *both of the means* and of their saving fruit and efficacy is forever due. Amen." Canons of Dort, III, IV, Article 17.

Let attention be paid to every word of this precious gem in our Confessions.

Let every one reading this be slow to speech, slow to wrath and swift to hear, lest we tempt God with a rash and tempting walk, separating what He has most intimately joined together.

This Paul did not do.

Hence, we must not read the sixth verse as if it were a thought that simply stands by itself as a dogmatic statement concerning the perseverance of the saints. If we paraphrase this text we can very well say the text teaches, it proves the perseverance of the saints. This it does, thanks be to God! But the text does more! It is here an expression of the living and strong confidence in the heart of Paul, and that, too, under the most adverse circumstances, in God as the Alpha and the Omega of our salvation, and thus a confidence that knows that God will finish the salvation in the hearts of all His own *through His own means*! Without this confidence in God as the Alpha and Omega of our salvation one cannot admonish with the admonitions of the Gospel, joining together the efficacious grace of God and the admonitions in the preaching of the Gospel.

Why do I emphasize this?

Because to my great sorrow, not to say amazement, I not so seldom meet with christians, Protestant Reformed christians, who are very emphatic on the point of the efficacious calling, but fail to know exactly how God works this efficacious grace through admonitions. And since this can-

not be traced out, since the believers in this life cannot fully comprehend this supernatural operation of God's grace, also through admonitions, they are content with the emphatic assertion: God's grace is efficacious, He works it in our hearts. It is then asserted: God energizes in us both to will and to do of His good-pleasure. But they fail to see that God used Peter, working effectually through His preaching among the circumcision, and that He used Paul's preaching to work effectually in the Gentiles.

God employs admonitions. They are a part of the *Media Gratia*. And God's effectual working is never separated from His own means. It remains the principle of full-orbed sanctification, called by our Confessions "regeneration."

It is a pity that some people are confused on this point. And it is time that this point be made very clear in the written word, but also from our pulpits. At the same time let these admonitions not be confused with "pre-requisite acts," but rather as enjoining us, requiring of us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Does Rev. De Wolf thus understand the matter? Let him have the grace to state it and say there are no pre-requisite acts! And if we learn together by means of "controversy," and who doesn't that walks in earnest Godly study, then let us confess this and even in this controversy work out our salvation with fear and trembling! Satan thrives on misunderstandings, and heretics work with them. But teachers in sound doctrine speak the truth in clarity and all sincerity as before God!

Such is the tenor of Paul's writing here in Philipppians. The good work had been begun, but it was far from perfected in them. But Paul builds. And he has something to build on. He has something to appeal to in them. There is a spiritual point of contact. And that deepest point of contact is that God is the Beginning One of the good work in the saints, and he will finish it even to the day of Christ Jesus.

Hence, no anxious exhortations, fearing that God will not finish His work. But earnest exhortation and instruction, planting and watering knowing that God *thus* gives the increase and presently the full harvest.

(to be continued)

G.L.



SING TO THE LORD, SING HIS PRAISE

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.

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

Psalms 96

IN HIS FEAR

Walking in Error

(12)

Our churches split on a very definite doctrinal issue.

In the August issue of the Reformed Guardian, Vol. II, No. 3, Page 13, we come across the amazing statement that "Our churches did not 'split' on any doctrinal issues, that of conditions or any other point of doctrine, but solely on church political issues."

Such an amazing statement may not go unchallenged, for it deceives and covers up the real basic doctrinal issue which is behind the whole sad history through which we have gone recently.

It unjustly casts the blame upon us and makes us look like an evil, conspiring group — while actually they are the ones who met from time to time and conspired — that corrupted the church order in order to cast out in an illegal way those who were doctrinally one with us.

We wrote last time — and not in malice or sarcasm — that even their own do not know anymore upon what it is that they can depend, and that they change their tactics with each new emergency.

We mean every word of that.

And we will show from their own mouths that this is actually true.

Last time we showed along general lines how their church political view is presented as Presbyterian when it fits best in the defense of their case and that when they want to get away from the real meaning of the Church Order, and notably article 31, they defend the Congregational form of church government.

The very same thing is true about the doctrinal issue. When there is a certain class of people they have to try to convince and win for their side, they maintain that there is no doctrinal issue involved, as in the quotation above. But when they approach a different group that is so very outspoken in its hatred of election and of the sovereignty of God, and in its love of the Liberated conditional theology, then they speak quite differently.

You have but to compare the writings of these men over a very short span of time and you will find what we said to be true.

In the Concordia of less than a year ago, November 19, 1953 to be exact, Rev. Kok published a letter which he sent to the Reformed Journal to defend himself against the accusation of Dr. Daane that they with their conditional theology and with Rev. De Wolf's statements are taking one step back to the Christian Reformed Churches.

He makes this astounding statement and thereby tells Rev. Blankespoor that in the Reformed Guardian of August 1954, he is not guarding truth and justice by his statement

about there being no doctrinal issue. He writes, "Not those who now disagree with the Rev. H. Hoeksema have changed their doctrinal position, but in denying all use of the term 'conditions' in the matter of salvation, the Rev. H. Hoeksema has recently changed his doctrinal position, and has thereby not only taken a theological step further away from the Christian Reformed Churches, *but has taken a theological step away from the historical Reformed position, and has caused a shameful breach in the Protestant Reformed Churches.*" The italics are ours. But note that a theological position has caused the breach.

There is more in this statement of Rev. Kok than at first meets the eye. We will not take the time, now, to do any more than to point out one important element. Rev. Kok, in this paragraph, maintains that they with the statements of Rev. De Wolf still have the "historical Reformed position." The Christian Reformed Churches, according to this paragraph departed from that historical Reformed position. And we, by denying conditional theology, have gone even farther from that historical Reformed position than the Christian Reformed Churches. For he says that we have taken a step "further away from the Christian Reformed Churches" by our recent position.

Amazing speech!

We are, in Rev. Kok's estimation, guilty of more false doctrine than the Christian Reformed Churches were when in 1924 they adopted the theory of Common Grace.

How awful!

But Rev. Blankespoor comes to our defense, less than a year later, and says that, though we are so very evil in our church polity, we have no different doctrinal position than they. Who do you believe?

That Rev. Kok's answer to Dr. Daane does not hold at all and that Dr. Daane is absolutely correct in his assertion that Rev. Kok et al with their conditional theology have taken one step back to the Christian Reformed Churches is evident from a little closer look at that amazing paragraph of Rev. Kok. He admits that the Rev. H. Hoeksema took a "*step further away from the Christian Reformed Churches.*" "Further away" means that the first step in '24 was away from the Christian Reformed Churches. It means that Rev. Kok admits that by rejecting the theory of "Common Grace" the Rev. H. Hoeksema took his first step *away* from the Christian Reformed Churches. You agree with that step, do you not, Rev. Kok? It was a step in the right direction, was it not? And now he took, not *another* step, for that could be in the wrong direction, but you say a "*further*" step "*away*" from the Christian Reformed Churches. It must be, then, in the *same* direction.

Does Rev. Kok not prove Dr. Daane to be correct that the Rev. Hoeksema purified his doctrine? And Rev. Kok et al by their defense of the heretical statements of Rev. De Wolf did not remain where the Rev. Hoeksema was with his first step but went back a step toward the well meant offer of salvation to all who hear.

But whichever way you look at that statement of Rev. Kok, he certainly maintains that a doctrinal difference between us and them is the cause of the split, or breach, as he calls it.

Those who follow Rev. Kok and Rev. Blankespoor simply have to choose which one of their men they will believe.

Then, too, Rev. Doezeema is not at all ashamed to publish to all the readers of Concordia that he has changed his doctrinal position since he wrote on the book of Galatians. He made it clear that he considered it a virtue to be able to change your mind on doctrinal matters after further study. But he also made it clear that the split in our churches is due to a doctrinal difference.

Perhaps most glaring of all the proofs that there is a doctrinal issue is the fact that this whole matter began with the differences of opinion concerning the heretical statements of Rev. De Wolf. We claim that, in their literal form, they are contrary to the plain teachings of the Scriptures and the Confessions. Those who left us insist that as they stand, in their literal form, they are not to be condemned as teaching anything contrary to the Scriptures and the Confessions.

That is a doctrinal difference is it not?

And we split upon that issue long before any of the church political action was taken which is now so severely and unjustly criticised. It is Rev. Blankespoor's opinion that all our action is from a church political viewpoint corrupt. He is entitled to his opinion. But let him tell us what became the occasion for our "corrupting" our church political set up. We, so he claims, followed a wrong church political procedure both with Rev. De Wolf and with himself and Rev. Knott and Rev. Kok. But why did we follow that procedure? Did we corrupt the Church Order because Rev. De Wolf had begun to write a series of articles on the Church Order with which we could not agree? Did Rev. De Wolf follow a certain church political procedure for which the consistory called him to task? Or do the *official records* of the Consistory of First Church and of Classis East, do the facts show that what started the whole thing was protests concerning a doctrinal issue?

Rev. Blankespoor, we said, is entitled to his opinion. But he must produce factual evidence to say that our churches split "solely" on church political issues. (And when he does speak of church political issues, he must not ignore important church political issues, facts like June 1, which preceded June 23, and Classis West, September 1953, which preceded Classis East, October 1953.) "Solely" rules out the whole occasion for the split. It ignores the whole seven days of discussion in Classis — to say nothing about the weeks and months in First Church's consistory — about a doctrinal issue. If it is solely a church political issue, why did we spend so much time on the doctrinal question of a conditional promise to all who hear the gospel? Why did he together with Rev. Kok and Rev. De Wolf feel the need of making long speeches on the floor of Classis to defend those statements of Rev. De Wolf? If doctrinally we were not split, let him and Rev. De Wolf publish their condemnation of those

statements of Rev. De Wolf. Let them say with us that there is no defense for them in their literal form, that they militate against all that the Scriptures and the Confessions teach. Otherwise we can never agree that the "split" is "solely on church political issues."

But that is not all. Why did they reject the Declaration of Principles as quickly as they possibly could, when it was adopted to defend our churches from the Liberated Doctrine? We adopted it to defend ourselves against a false *doctrine*. They apparently welcome that doctrine, and lowered the bars.

Why do they show so little interest, especially among the clergy, for instruction in Protestant Reformed Christian Schools? Indeed, excuses before men can be manufactured. But before God to Whom they promised that to the utmost of their power they would help or cause their children to be instructed in the doctrine of the Protestant Reformed Churches there is NO excuse when He has prepared the way. And if we are not split on a doctrinal issue, then the doctrine according to which instruction is given in the Protestant Reformed Christian Schools is also their doctrine. What about it? Why did your children not *return* to a Protestant Reformed School?

Finally there is the testimony of their own followers that it is definitely a doctrinal issue. One of those who left us criticized one of our sermons by asking where we get the idea that faith is the bond that unites us with Christ. Mind you, that is a doctrine taught in the Protestant Reformed Churches as long as they have been in existence! A thing stated literally in Lord's Day 7! Of course, if you deny this truth and add, as this individual did, that faith is simply believing, you can come more readily to the idea of faith as a condition to salvation. Make it *first* the work of God whereby He engrafts us into Christ and you have no room for conditional theology. Another individual who left for doctrinal reasons stated over the telephone "... even though we do not believe the same way you do, we do not ..." And one expressed, as his reason for leaving to join them, his dissatisfaction with the preaching — the preaching, mind you, is doctrine — because he heard enough about God's works and now wanted to hear about man's. He told us that we could preach *that* sovereignty of God and *that* election and reprobation once in a while but most of the time we should approach our text from the viewpoint of man.

These are welcomed with open arms by those who say that our churches did not split on a doctrinal issue.

The issue is "*solely*" church political?

We deny that, and we will go one step further.

All these criticisms of our preaching and of the doctrinal stand of our churches is the result of the "missionary" activity of those who left us. It is the fruit of the writings begun by Rev. Petter who first dared to introduce into our circle the doctrine of faith as a condition. It is the fruit of the defense raised against the heretical statements of Rev. De Wolf and of Rev. Kok. It is the fruit of all the criticism of the *contents*

(Continued on page 17)

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

EARLY VIEWS ON THE SACRAMENT OF THE

LORD'S SUPPER

(Continued)

The idea of sacrifice (continued).

Finally, continuing to quote Irenaeus, we submit to our readers the following rather lengthy quotation which is remarkable because it enables us to understand why the seeds of the later Roman Catholic doctrine of the Mass and of the real, be it bloodless, sacrifice of Christ were sown in this early period of the Church. We must remember, however, that the language of the Apostolic Fathers is highly figurative, so that when Irenaeus writes that our flesh, when nourished with the body of the Lord, becomes incorruptible, he may mean that the Eucharist is simply a means through which the Church receives everlasting life. Be this as it may, we would quote the following: "Inasmuch, then, as the Church offers with single-mindedness, her gift is justly reckoned a pure sacrifice with God. As Paul also says to the Philippians, "I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things that were sent from you, the odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, pleasing to God." For it behoves us to make an oblation to God, and in all things to be found grateful to God our Maker, in a pure mind, and in faith without hypocrisy, in well-grounded hope, in fervent love, offering the first-fruits of His own created things. And the Church alone offers this pure oblation to the Creator, offering to Him, with giving of thanks, (the things taken) from His creation. But the Jews do not offer thus: for their hands are full of blood; for they have not received the Word, through whom it is offered to God (according to one writer, the words: "through whom it is offered to God," must read: "Who is offered to God, "implying that the body of Christ is really offered as a sacrifice to God in the Eucharist. However, there is nothing in the writings of Irenaeus to substantiate this particular translation of what the Church Father had written — H.V.) But how can they be consistent with themselves (when they say) that the bread over which thanks have been given is the body of their Lord, and the cup of His blood, if they do not call Himself the Son of the Creator of the world, that is, His Word, through whom the wood fructifies, and the fountains gush forth, and the earth gives first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." Then, again, how can they say that the flesh, which is nourished with the body of the Lord and with His blood, goes to corruption, and does not partake of life? Let them, therefore, either alter their opinion or cease from offering the things just mentioned. But our opinion is in accord with the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn establishes our opinion. For we offer to Him His own, announcing consistently the fellowship and union of the flesh

and Spirit. For as the bread which is produced from the earth, when it receives the invocation of God, is no longer common bread, but the Euucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly; so also our bodies, when they receive the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, having the hope of the resurrection to eternity." — end of quote. There is much in this quotation of Irenaeus which surely appears to resemble Catholic doctrine of the sacrifice of Christ in the Mass. However, in the first place, Irenaeus declares that sacrifices do not sanctify a man. This is certainly not in harmony with the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist. And we may notice, in the second place, that the author of these words speaks of two realities in the Eucharist, the earthly and the heavenly; hence, the one is not changed into the other. Thirdly, the sacrifices or oblations are the sacrifices offered by the Church to God, and not by Jesus Christ Himself.

We may conclude, therefore, that Irenaeus, in connection with the idea of sacrifice, clearly teaches that Christ has commanded, not for the sake of the Lord, but of the disciples, to offer the first fruits; the early Church recognized the bread and the wine as gifts of God, and returned them unto the Lord in thanksgiving. He emphasized that the principal thing is the disposition of the person who makes the offering.

Origin knows only of *one* sacrifice offered by Christ. It is fitting, however, for Christians to offer spiritual sacrifices unto the Lord. He does not know of a sacrifice of Christ in the Mass as taught by Rome.

Tertullian, too, speaks of sacrifices. However, he calls prayers sacrifices, as in the following passage which we quote from this western Church Father: "Indeed, she prays for his soul, and requests refreshments for him meanwhile, and fellowship (with him) in the first resurrection; and she offers (her sacrifice) on the anniversary of his falling asleep." We will not discuss the ceremony to which Tertullian refers in this passage. It is sufficient for our purpose to remark that he is speaking here of prayers for the dead, and he calls them sacrifices. In fact, this Church Father calls the entire Christian worship a sacrifice. There is no reference to the Roman Catholic conception of the daily sacrifice of Christ which occurs daily in the Mass.

The idea of sacrifice also occurs, as we might surmise, in the writings of Cyprian. He, too, speaks of the life of the Christian as a sacrifice, as in the following quotation: "He has clearly joined herewith and added the law, and has bound us by a certain condition and engagement, that we should ask that our debts be forgiven us in such a manner as we ourselves forgive our debtors, knowing that that which we seek for our sins cannot be obtained unless we ourselves have acted in a similar way in respect of our debtors. Therefore also He says in another place, "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." And the servant who, after having all his debt forgiven him by his master, would not forgive his fellow-servant is cast into prison; because he

would not forgive his fellow-servant, he lost the indulgence that had been shown to himself by his Lord. And these things Christ still more urgently sets forth in His precepts with yet greater power of His rebuke. "When ye stand praying," says He, "forgive if ye have ought against any, that your Father which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses." There remains no ground of excuse in the day of judgment when you will be judged, according to your own sentence; and whatever you have done, that you also will suffer. For God commands us to be peacemakers, and in agreement, and of one mind in His house; and such as He makes us by a second birth, such He wishes us when new-born to continue, that we who have begun to be sons of God may abide in God's peace, and that, having one spirit, we should also have one heart and one mind. Thus God does not receive the sacrifice of a person who is in disagreement, but commands him to go back from the altar and first be reconciled to his brother, that so God may be appeased by the prayers of a peacemaker. Our peace and brotherly agreement is the greater sacrifice to God, — and a people united in one in the unity of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. For even in the sacrifice which Abel and Cain first offered, God looked not at their gifts, but at their hearts, so that he was acceptable in his gift who was acceptable in his heart. Abel, peaceable and righteous in sacrificing in innocence to God, taught others also, when they bring their gift to the altar, thus to come with the fear of God, with a simple heart, with the law of righteousness, with the peace of concord. With reason did he, who was such in respect of God's sacrifice, become subsequently himself a sacrifice to God; so that he who first set forth martyrdom, and initiated the Lord's passion by the glory of his blood, had both the Lord's righteousness and His peace." — end of quote. This, incidentally, is part of Cyprian's explanation of the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer. It is evident that what Cyprian here writes of the sacrifice has nothing in common with the Roman Catholic doctrine of the sacrifice of Christ in the Mass. He declares that our peace and brotherly agreement is the greater sacrifice to God, a people united in one in the unity of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

However, Cyprian with his hierarchical tendencies already expresses the idea that not the Church, but the priest offers an imitation of the sacrifice of the Lord. We may recall that Cyprian taught that a mixture of the water and wine was essential for a proper celebration of the Lord's Supper. He taught that "in the water is understood the people, but in the wine is showed the blood of Christ." Hence, 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. This association and conjunction of water and wine, Cyprian continues, is so mingled in the Lord's cup, that that mixture cannot anymore be separated. Therefore, Cyprian concludes, in thus consecrating the cup of the Lord, water alone cannot be offered, even as wine alone cannot be offered.

Cyprian, however, held the office of bishop very highly. One of his basic teachings was that the bishop is in the Church and the Church is in the bishop. Salvation without the Church and the bishop is impossible. And it is therefore not surprising that he should express the idea that not the Church but the priest offers an imitation of the sacrifice of the Lord. This appears from the following quotation: "But if we may not break even the least of the Lord's commandments, how much rather is it forbidden to infringe such important ones, so great, so pertaining to the very sacrament of our Lord's passion and our own redemption, or to change it by human tradition into anything else than what was divinely appointed! For if Jesus Christ, our Lord and God, is Himself the chief priest of God the Father, and has first offered Himself a sacrifice to the Father, and has commanded this to be done in commemoration of Himself, certainly that priest truly discharges the office of Christ, who imitates that which Christ did; and he then offers a true and full sacrifice in the Church to God the Father, when he proceeds to offer it according to what he sees Christ Himself to have offered." — end of quote. This quotation clearly illustrates why it can be said of this early period of the Church of God that the seeds were sown for the later development of the Roman Catholic conception of the Mass, the daily and actual, though bloodless, sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. We must bear in mind, however, that Cyprian declares in this quotation that the priest, when truly discharging the office of Christ, *imitates* that which Christ did, and this is certainly not the same as the Roman Catholic conception which declares that Jesus Christ is truly and actually sacrificed daily in the Mass, and that this daily sacrifice of Christ is just as real and actual as that which occurred upon the cross of Calvary. H.V.

IN HIS FEAR

(Continued from page 15)

of the Declaration of Principles. And because it is the result of the "misionary" activity of those who left us, those who utter such speech are received with open arms.

But then they must not say that the doctrinal issue has nothing to do with the split so that it is *solely* a church political issue.

We urge them in the name of God not to continue to walk in this error. Let them come out clearly and openly with their different doctrine, and then let the child of God measure their teachings with the Scriptures and with the Confessions.

And if Rev. Blankespoor is doctrinally agreed with us and condemns unequivocally those statements of Rev. De Wolf as insults to the living God and as Liberated Conditional theology that may not be defended, then let him tell us. Then all church political differences and "injustices" can be discussed and be dissolved.

Then there is hope of a reunion of those who are doctrinally agreed. Then there must be a reunion of those doctrinally agreed. J.A.H.

The Voice of Our Fathers

The Canons of Dordrecht

PART TWO

EXPOSITION OF THE CANONS

FIRST HEAD OF DOCTRINE OF DIVINE PREDESTINATION

Art. 12 (continued)

A very crucial question it is, therefore, as to *how* this assurance is attained by the elect. And the *Canons* teach that the elect obtain this assurance of their eternal and unchangeable election, "not by inquisitively prying into the secret and deep things of God, but by observing in themselves with a spiritual joy and holy pleasure, the infallible fruits of election pointed out in the Word of God, — such as a true faith in Christ, filial fear, a godly sorrow for sin, a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, etc."

Negatively, then, this assurance is not obtainable by a curious prying into the secret and deep things of God. We must not mistake this statement of the fathers for the false notion that we may and must have little or nothing to do with the truth of predestination, that it belongs to those things which are only for God, not for us, that it is a "mystery" in the sense that we can and may know nothing about it. As we have remarked before, there are such people, who also piously cloak themselves in the garb of Scripture, and say: "The secret things are for the Lord our God; but the revealed things are for us and our children." This attitude was far from the thoughts of the fathers when they penned these words. They were averse to such language. They counted it false and illegitimate. It was the language of their opponents. And the proof of this you find in this very article: for do they not teach that the elect obtain the assurance of this their eternal and unchangeable election? Let us understand, therefore, that this article does not forbid our *prying* into the mysteries of God's will, but it forbids our *curious*, or *inquisitive*, prying. It does not forbid a spiritually healthy inquiry, but it forbids a sickly and morbid curiosity. It does not forbid that we search the Scriptures concerning God's revelation of His eternal purpose of predestination, but it forbids that we shall pry into the secret and deep things of God outside of and apart from the God-ordained manner of the Scriptures. Fact is that it is certainly healthful and spiritually salutary that we inquire into the mysteries of God's will as they are revealed in Holy Writ with all our powers. Exactly this we may and must do. For God has not given to us His Word in order that we should lay it, or any part of it, aside. Fact is, too, that this healthy inquiry into the mysteries of eternal predestination as revealed in the Holy Word of God is exactly necessary if the Christian is to come to a richer knowledge and more decisive as-

surance of his own election. Not only is it true that the whole of the *Canons*, — and especially, this First Head of Doctrine, — are in themselves a testimony to the truth of the above statement, because, after all, the *Canons* simply systematically inquire into and set forth the truth of Scripture concerning God's purpose of predestination. But it must also be completely obvious that to speak of *assurance* of election while we do not know and understand the *objective truth of election*, and do not inquire into that truth, as revealed in God's Word, is abject nonsense. No more than one can have the assurance that he possesses a house while he does not even know what a house is, no more can he have, in the spiritual sense, the assurance of election without knowing what election is. We may safely conclude, therefore, that not only is it necessary that the elect inquire into this truth, but that they diligently inquire into it and become thoroughly versed in this most essential of Scriptural truths. All other things being equal, the ignorant Christian is not the strongest Christian. All other things being equal, that child of God who is most thoroughly founded in the truth of God's Word will be the strongest Christian. And all other things being equal, that Christian who is most thoroughly acquainted with the Scriptural truth of God's eternal and unchangeable predestination, will also have the richest knowledge and the most decisive assurance of his own, personal, election.

What is condemned in this article is the vain attempt to attain to an assurance of election apart from the Word of God and outside the way set forth in the Word of God. There is, in the first place, in this connection, the false mysticist. He would base his assurance on so-called "experiences": dreams, or special revelations which he has received, or some sign. He may appeal to some text or special Scripture passage, through which God is supposed to have spoken in an extraordinary way, — whispered in his soul, — to him. Or he may appeal to some unusual experience of conversion. By all these means he really tries to look into the book of life, whereas God has not given us and will not give us a special revelation of the names that are there written. He has given us His Word. And through His Word He calls us by His Spirit. That is the way to assurance which He has ordained and it is for Him, not for us, to ordain the way. Besides, what unstable ground the above means furnish for assurance. How soon and how easily one begins to doubt the reality of these "experiences" of the past, especially when he is assailed by the storms of the present! How insecure one becomes when he bases all his assurance on a past event, and really lives in the past, when he ought to be facing the spiritual battle of the present, against the devil, against the world, and against his own flesh! A second danger, however, which is also not by any means without reality, is that of engaging in a vain intellectual process of speculation about predestination. Also this will never lead to assurance. It is very well possible, of course, to understand with a cold, purely intellectual understanding all that is revealed in Scripture of predestination. It is possible to be a theologian and a speci-

alist, an authority, on the subject. It is entirely within the realm of possibility, too, to view the truth of election with a certain natural enthusiasm, to become in a natural way, as far as the intellect is concerned, all wrapped up in the truth of election and in its development and maintenance. And yet, if this is all, if that truth has found no place in our hearts, if it is not apprehended by faith, and if the fruits of election are not manifest in us, then there is something radically wrong, and we can never attain to a real assurance of our own election. Then all that knowledge and intellectual acumen can only be to our condemnation.

All idle speculation and curious prying, then, is to be condemned.

Before we discuss the positive truth concerning the manner of our assurance, as outlined in this article, it is well to give our attention to the fundamental truth concerning assurance itself, and the underlying truth concerning the manner of assurance. The fathers speak here concerning a certain process of *observing* the infallible fruits of election; and this should not be misunderstood. It is not as though assurance were the result of a mere logical process, as though it were the conclusion of a true syllogism. Besides, the fathers make direct mention of the Word of God: "but by observing in themselves . . . the infallible fruits of election *pointed out in the Word of God.*"

And therefore it is well that we understand, in the first place, that not only election, but also the assurance of election is the *work of God*. It is the gift of His own grace. The situation is certainly not thus, that election is the work of God, but that the assurance of election is something which *we* must attain. Then we after all come to sail in Arminian waters. Also the conscious enjoyment of the blessings of salvation, including this blessing of the assurance of election, is absolutely unconditional, and without any prerequisites which we must fulfill. Election is not a sort of elusive pot of gold at the foot of the rainbow, for the conscious possession of and enjoyment of which *we* must consider ourselves solely responsible. Not at all; and when the saints attain to this assurance, they surely will not enjoy it in the consciousness that at least this assurance was of their own attainment, but they will enjoy the assurance of election solely in the consciousness and the conscious confession that also this blessing is pure grace, absolutely the work of God in Christ.

In the second place, we must remember that this work of God whereby He assures us of our election is accomplished by His Word and Spirit. Surely, the Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are the children of God. And as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. But we must remember that the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. And the only Christ there is, is the Christ of the Word. And that Word of Christ must be according to the will of Christ preached. When the fathers speak of the Word of God, therefore, we must also bear in mind that this does not simply mean the Bible, but the Word *preached*. And it is through the preaching of the Word and by the operation of the Spirit

of Christ that God assures us of our election. In close connection with the foregoing, and already implied in it, is the truth that God works this assurance in us as moral, rational, responsible creatures. Otherwise, of course, there would be no sense in the preaching of the Word whatsoever. Who would ever preach to stocks and blocks? But besides, this follows from the very nature of the case: *assurance* is in its very nature something which can be enjoyed and possessed only by a moral, rational creature.

In the third place, we must remember that the assurance of our election is an assurance of *faith*. Faith is essentially assurance. It is a *certain* knowledge of all God has revealed in His Word, and a hearty *confidence* . . . Cf. Heid. Cat., Lord's Day VII. In order, therefore, to have the assurance of my election, my faith must be conscious and healthy.

And this brings us to the point at which our *Canons* take up the manner of our assurance: the elect may obtain this assurance of election "by observing in themselves the infallible fruits of election pointed out in the Word of God." God grants this assurance in a certain way. And that way is *the way of the infallible fruits of election*. Because those fruits are infallible, that is, without fail the fruits of election and exclusively the fruits of election, the assurance of election is certainly obtained in the way of them. Because those fruits of election are of such a kind that they are wrought in us as moral, rational creatures, they tend to assurance. And because those fruits are proclaimed by the Word of Christ as the fruits of election wrought by the Spirit of Christ, that assurance is obtained where those fruits are pointed out, that is, in the way of a diligent attendance upon the means of grace.

The question of assurance, therefore, is not the question whether we *have* the faith, but the question whether we are *in* the faith. It is not a question of *being* of faith, the power of faith, which can never be lost; but it is a question of the *well-being* of faith, the healthy, conscious activity of faith. And it is that *well-being* of faith that is briefly described in the last part of this article as being characterized by: 1) a true faith in Christ, i.e., such a faith whereby we consciously cling to Christ, and know and trust that not only to others, but also to me, remission of sin, everlasting righteousness and salvation, are freely given by God, *merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits*; 2) filial fear, i.e., not the fear of a slave, but the child-like fear and reverence of love; 3) godly sorrow, i.e., not the sorrow of the world, which is a sorrow over the consequences of sin, but sorrow after God, so that we are sorry because we have transgressed against the most high majesty of God; 4) a hunger and thirst after righteousness, i.e., a consciousness of our own utter emptiness, of the fulness of righteousness in Christ, and a longing to be filled with His righteousness.

And thus, observing these fruits in themselves with spiritual joy (because they are fruits of the eternal, and electing love of God), and with holy pleasure (because the believer

(Continued on page 23)

DECENCY and ORDER

The Authority of Major Assemblies

The question of the authority of Synod or Classis is a very significant one that presses for attention repeatedly throughout the history of Reformed Churches. The question itself we purpose to discuss extensively in connection with later articles in the church order but we cannot refrain from commenting upon it here because: (1) Article 15 specifically speaks of "the consent and authority of the synod or classis" and (2) it is a burning issue throughout our recent history as churches.

The question itself is not, first of all, whether or not the major ecclesiastical assemblies have *authority*. Anyone who will but read the eighty-six articles of the church order without prejudice will find that the church order unquestionably recognizes and ascribes to classis and synod authority. Consider the following:

Articles 3, 17, 44, and 79 speak of the *judgment* of major assemblies. In these articles various matters are mentioned over which these assemblies are to judge, including also the matter of deposition of ministers. Even as it is nonsense to speak of a judge without authority, so it would be ridiculous to conclude that these articles do not imply an authority of major ecclesiastical assemblies. To pass a judgment is in the very nature of matters an authoritative act.

Article 15 speaks directly of "the consent and authority of classis or synod" with regard to the right of ministers engaging themselves in indiscriminate preaching.

Articles 9, 11, and 12 mention the "approbation" or "approval" of the major assemblies which also implies authority. Whether or not I approve of my neighbor erecting a saloon adjacent to my residence makes little difference because I have no authority in the matter but whether my neighbor has the approval of the Zoning Board of the local village makes all the difference in the world because said Board has authority to permit or to bar him from realizing his purpose. And so there are matters within the communion of the churches which may not be performed without the approval of the major assemblies because these are vested with authority.

Article 36 speaks pointedly of the "jurisdiction" of one ecclesiastical body over another and "jurisdiction," from "juris" and "dictio", is, to quote Webster: "(1) Law. The legal power, right, or authority to hear and determine a cause or causes. (2) Authority of a sovereign power to govern or legislate; control. (3) Sphere of authority." Apart now from the question, "What kind of jurisdiction do major ecclesiastical assemblies have?", this article certainly means that these bodies do have an authority that makes their decisions more than powerless opinions which those within the communion of churches can take or leave according to personal whims of conscience.

Furthermore, Articles 4, 38, 75, 76 and 77 speak of the "advice" of the major assemblies. It might be objected here that *advice* is not *authority* which, of course, is also true because all advice is not of the same kind. It is one thing that my neighbor advises me as to the color I should paint my house but it is wholly another thing when a teacher advises a misbehaving child to come to attention in her class. The latter advice is backed up by an authority to put the child out of the class. The former I can do with as I please and determine for myself what color I shall paint the house. Now the advice of major ecclesiastical assemblies is also authoritative advice and is not something each individual and consistory can do with as they please and still remain in the federation of churches governed by that body. Article 14 of the church order speaks of the "advice of the consistory" and, as we stated in connection with that article, Dr. Bouwman says, "Het woord 'advies' heeft hier de beteekenis van 'bewilliging', 'toestemming'. An examination of those articles of the church order cited above which speak of the "advice of major assemblies" reveals that this advice is more than simply an expressed opinion which those to whom it is given can take or leave as they see fit without any further consequences. It is backed by the authority of the broad assembly that can include or exclude from its federation. If this were not the case, any church (Baptist, Methodist, Roman Catholic et al) could join the federation of Protestant Reformed Churches and no power on earth could exclude them.

In light of this then, we repeat, it is not firstly a question of whether or not a synod or classis has authority. Of course it has! The church order makes plain that they do possess a real authority, jurisdiction, the right to judge, to give approbation and advise. More significant is the question: "What is the nature and scope of this authority?"

In connection with this question we wish to briefly mention two basic errors which have been committed and which vitally effect us as Protestant Reformed Churches. The first is the error of 1924 which is that the Christian Reformed Church ascribed to the major assemblies the wrong kind of authority. They vested these assemblies with the right to exercise the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven which properly belongs only to the consistory. The second error is of more recent date and is that perpetrated by those that have recently schismatically left our Protestant Reformed Churches. Their church polity disrobes the classis and synod of all authority. The position that if one is convinced before his own mind and conscience that a certain decision is in conflict with the Word of God or with the articles of the church order, that decision cannot, within the denomination, be settled and binding for him, is altogether untenable. That one may simply disregard a decision or the decisions of the major assemblies and remain in the communion of the churches makes the major assemblies nothing but "wax-noses." It is simply unbelievable that an autonomous consistory, under such a church polity, would even send delegates to deliberate and make decisions at a Classical Meeting if,

when those decisions are made each individual and each consistory can do with them as they please and remain unaffected in the denomination. It is a thing unheard of! If it is not pure independentism, rank congregationalism then, pray, tell me what it is. And shame on anyone who would dare to aver that such folly was ever taught in the seminary of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Rather, both of the aforementioned church political heresies we reject with all emphasis. Over against the former, that of Christian Reformed hierarchy, we emphasize the autonomy of the local church. This autonomy is not independentism. It does not mean that each church does what it pleases within the denomination of churches. That would be equal to the anarchism found in Israel and of which we read in Judges 17:6, "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes." Such a conception of autonomy spells ruination and is directly contrary to the sound exhortation of the apostle in I Corinthians 14:40, "Let all things be done decently and in order." Decency and order presuppose rule and authority. That rule as exercised over all matters that in their very nature belong to and concern the local church is the limit of the churches autonomy. Autonomy does not mean that one church is sovereign and can lord it over all the other churches, imposing its will upon the entire federation. Autonomy, within a federation, must necessarily be limited by the mutual recognition of the rights of the other churches and by the mutual concern for the well being of the entire communion of churches. If a church wishes to have absolute autonomy, she must never join a federation of churches but should maintain a separate, independent existence. No church may do this, of course, because it is the calling of the church of Christ to seek the fellowship of those with whom they are one in faith. And in such a communion each church exercises her autonomy. There are many things in the local communion which, in the very nature of matters, belong exclusively to that communion. We have in mind the offices and the administration of the Word and Sacraments and the exercise of discipline. Over such matters the local consistory alone rules.

This does not warrant the conclusion that the major assemblies have no authority over the individual congregations. We also maintain such authority, circumscribed and defined by Article 30 of the D.K.O.

"In these assemblies (ecclesiastical) matters only shall be transacted and that in an ecclesiastical manner. In major assemblies only such matters shall be dealt with as could not be finished in minor assemblies, or such as pertain to the churches of the major assembly in common."

Our purpose is not to discuss this article at this time except to point out that it defines the authority of the major assemblies in a two-fold respect. First, these assemblies have authority in all matters that cannot be finished in the minor assembly. Secondly, they have authority to act in all matters that pertain to the churches of the major assembly in com-

mon. This authority of synod and classis does not overlap or interfere with the autonomy of the individual churches at all. The difficulty comes in when the major assemblies attempt to exceed their authority, as in 1924, and when local churches attempt to extend their autonomy beyond its rightful sphere, as in the recent debacle in our churches, and refuse to recognize the rightful authority of classis and synod.

That the latter is so is abundantly evident to all who sincerely consider the facts in the case of 1953. Rev. Blankespoor must not write in the Guardian, "Remember the things that happened on the evening of June 23, 1953, are the crux of the whole matter. This officially was the beginning of the 'split' in our churches!" Oh, no, Blankespoor! You must correct this and change the date to JUNE 1, 1953. JUNE 1! We know that that is the date you do not want to remember because on it the CONSISTORY properly adopted the ADVICE AND DECISION OF THE CLASSIS. And all that has subsequently taken place has brought to light the rebellion of the opposition which refused to walk in obedience to proper ecclesiastical authorities. Therein lies the church political *crux of the matter*. That is June 22 and that is what happened in the sessions of Classis in October, 1953.

Let us not be deceived!

G.v.d.B.



O LORD, BE THOU MY HELPER TRUE

O Lord, be Thou my Helper true,
For just and godly men are few;
The faithful who can find?
From truth and wisdom men depart,
With flattering lips and double heart
They speak their evil mind.

The lips that speak, the truth to hide,
The tongues of arrogance and pride,
That boastful words employ,
False-speaking tongues that boast their might,
That own no law, that know no right,
Jehovah will destroy.

Because the poor are sore oppressed,
Because the needy are distressed,
And bitter are their cries,
The Lord will be their Helper strong;
To save them from contempt and wrong
Jehovah will arise.

Jehovah's promises are sure,
His words are true, His words are pure
As silver from the flame.
Though base men walk on every side,
His saints are safe, whate'er betide,
Protected by His Name.

Psalm 12

ALL AROUND US

Berkhof Criticizes Daane's Book.

In the Banner of September 10th we read a rather interesting review of Dr. J. Daane's recently published book, titled: *The Theology of Grace*. Dr. L. Berkhof in his review gives the book some severe criticism. He really accuses Daane of being too philosophical and highly speculative. Berkhof claims that this is so evident that he is afraid most of his people will find the book hard to read. Also Berkhof sharply criticizes Daane, and that almost ironically, for his misrepresentation of the conceptions of Dr. C. Van Til, whom Daane takes to task in his book.

I confess that I have read only a small portion of the book and already I can agree with Berkhof's first criticism. When I twice read Van Til's book on Common Grace, I came to the conclusion that it was one mass of philosophic reasoning of which a poor, unlearned man like myself, could not make head or tail. And as I read a little way in the book of Daane, I could not escape the thought that he must have sat for a while at the feet of Van Til. My, oh my, when two philosophers begin to philosophize, what a heap of philosophy you get! I know this little philosopher (for we are all little philosophers, don't you know) got lost in the sea of philosophy.

About Berkhof's second criticism of Daane, I am not so sure. He accuses Dr. Daane of not fairly restating Van Til's conceptions. Unless I understood nothing of Daane's philosophy, which is possible of course, I cannot agree fully with Berkhof's criticism. Berkhof wants to leave the impression that Van Til, though he (Van Til) may differ on some points, is nevertheless in agreement with the Christian Reformed Church on the matter of Common Grace. If I understood anything of Van Til's book, and it's possible that I didn't, I can agree with Daane that he does not agree with the presentation of the Christian Reformed Church on Common Grace. By this I do not mean to say that Van Til agrees entirely with Hoeksema, for I do not believe that he does.

Berkhof's review is rather lengthy but I need to quote all of it in order to offer a little criticism myself. Here follows Berkhof's review:

"Dr. Daane, the author of this book has shown in the past that he is interested in the doctrine of common grace. He is in full agreement with the Three Points accepted by the Synod of 1924, but also realizes that this cannot be regarded as the last word on that doctrine and deems a further study of the problem of common grace necessary. At the same time he is not at all pleased with what Dr. Cornelius Van Til of Westminster Seminary has written to show that there is philosophical justification for that doctrine. This gave him occasion for publishing the present volume.

The purpose of this book is indicated in the Preface. It

is to assess or evaluate the view of Dr. C. Van Til on common grace. To be more specific, in it Dr. Daane intends to show that Dr. C. Van Til did not get away from the Hegelian rationalism which underlies the theology of Rev. Herman Hoeksema, and that he in fact repudiates the Three Points accepted by the Synod of 1924. He finds the proof for this in the philosophical principles which underlie Dr. Van Til's view of common grace. He does not deny that Van Til's position differs in some respects from that of Hoeksema. This is quite evident from statements found on pages 30, 94, 120, 123. He does not maintain that Van Til explicitly denies the existence of common grace, which is exactly what Hoeksema does, but even says on page 117: 'Van Til cannot be quoted as denying common grace,' though he feels constrained to add: 'But his writings show that he does not believe in the reality of common grace.'

This is in harmony with his contention that what Van Til offers us is an attempt to reconstruct the doctrine of common grace, and to promote a better understanding of it by undergirding it with certain philosophical considerations. It is exactly these philosophical presuppositions of Van Til which the author of the present volume submits to a detailed examination, a rather laborious task. And it is exactly because he deals almost exclusively with philosophical questions, and does this in a philosophical and highly speculative manner, that most of our people will find this book hard to read.

For them the problem of common grace is theological rather than philosophical. It is primarily a doctrinal question, and the validity of a doctrine can be settled only by submitting it to the test of Scripture and our confessional standards. And our people in general are far better versed theologically than philosophically. Hence they will be far less interested in the question, whether the philosophy of Van Til bears traces of Hegelian idealism and existentialism than in the question whether Van Til's so-called 'refinement' of the doctrine of common grace is in fact a repudiation of the Three Points adopted by the Synod of 1924. They would like very much to have a direct answer to the question whether Van Til *actually* and not merely *in fact* or *virtually* repudiates the doctrine of common grace, just as Hoeksema does.

Since Dr. Daane himself says that 'Van Til cannot be quoted as denying common grace,' he can do no more than seek to demonstrate that he *must deny* what the Synod of 1934 (that must be 1924 — M.S.) affirmed in view of *his philosophical presuppositions*. This means, however, that his proofs all along the line are purely *inferential*. The Synod of 1924 sought to prove from Scripture and from our Reformed confessional standards that the position of Hoeksema in the denial of common grace is contrary to the Reformed faith. But Dr. Daane, in order to prove the same thing respecting the teachings of Van Til, finds it necessary to lead his readers into a maze of abstract and highly speculative reasoning.

Why not follow the same method which Synod followed? Scripture and our confessional standards by which we can

determine whether a person is true to the Reformed faith or not. It is true that Daane also refers to these occasionally, but only to prove that the views which he feels constrained to ascribe to Van Til are not in harmony with our real and only standards of judgment. The possibility is always there that he does not yet have a correct understanding of Van Til's position. According to a statement in the Preface of his book he had some trouble with this in the past. And in his book he complains more than once that Van Til is not clear in his presentation, is confused in his thinking, and does not express himself with the necessary precision. He finds in the works of Van Til not only careless but also contradictory statements, and intimates that in some instances he does not really say what he means. This would seem to imply that all is not yet clear to him, and that some expressions need clarification. Naturally, Van Til himself can best take care of this. It may be admitted that Van Til's argumentation is not always equally clear, but I wonder how many will say, after reading the volume now under consideration: Now we know exactly where Dr. Van Til stands in the matter of common grace. Sorry to say, the book has not added materially to the insight of the present reviewer. But this may, of course, be due to the fact that his philosophical training has been deficient, which makes it difficult to follow the reasoning of Dr. Daane. But most of our people are in an even more sorry plight.

Dr. Daane is mildly surprised that Dr. Van Til's dangerous views have not been pointed out before, since the latter's book on *Common Grace* has been on the market since 1947. Perhaps the most plausible explanation of this lies in the fact that the readers of that book did not see in the repudiation of the doctrine of common grace which Dr. Daane claims to find in it. The present reviewer read the book on *Common Grace* years ago, but did not discover its dangerous trend. The fact that Dr. Van Til, while agreeing in general whole-heartedly with the theology of such scholars as Kuyper, Bavinck, and Hepp, yet differs with them on some points, certainly does not prove that he is not Reformed. He quotes the Three Points of 1924, and defends them over against the Revs. Henry Danhof and Herman Hoeksema, Rev. S. G. de Graaf, and Dr. Klaas Schilder. While he recognizes a commendable element in the teachings of the last-named scholar, he maintains over against him that common grace testifies to a favorable attitude of God to the reprobate. According to Dr. Daane, Dr. Van Til is by implication guilty of some serious errors. I must confess that I have never seen this, but this may probably be due to my inability to think clearly and incisively; however, it may also be due to the fact that the errors which Dr. Daane discovers are more imaginary than real. To mention but a single instance: What is wrong with the idea of an earlier grace or a grace before the fall? Was not Adam the recipient of divine grace or unmerited favor before the fall? The words in question 12 of the Heidelberg Catechism: 'and again be received in to favor' (Dutch: 'en wederom tot genade komen') certainly

seem to imply that he was. How is it that Dr. Van Til's colleagues at Westminster never discovered his serious errors? Did any of those who owed a part of their theological training to Dr. Van Til ever speak of them? If they have, it did not come to my attention. Moreover, Dr. Berkouwer in his work on *De Voorzienigheid Gods* speaks of Van Til's criticism of Hoeksema and Schilder with approval, page 87 (note), 89, 90, 91 (notes). Ought we not always to assess and interpret the words of others in the most charitable way, and to give the best possible interpretation of expressions which may be interpreted in various ways?" So far the review of Berkhof.

Now, when you read this in the light of the history of the past, the thought cannot be suppressed: How can the professor so severely criticize his former student of being too philosophical, when he himself has been guilty of being the same? Was not Dr. Berkhof father of the Three Points? If my memory serves me correctly, he was. Are the Three Points based on a thorough exegesis of Scripture and the Confessions, or are they the product of Berkhof's philosophical bent? Berkhof may say that he can explain the Three Points in the light of Scripture and the Confessions, and that he did. And the Synod of 1924 may say that it quoted Scripture and the Confessions to prove the Three Points. But is it so sure that Berkhof's exegesis is Scripture and the Confessions? I say it is philosophy. Does the fact that Synod quoted texts of Scripture and parts of the Confessions make the Three Points infallible? I say all heretics follow the same pattern. If you quote certain texts of Scripture, you can make the Scriptures say anything you want to. And the same applies to the Confessions. My contention is that the Three Points are pure philosophy and are both un-Scriptural and un-Confessional. They are the product of Berkhof's philosophy, and of all who agreed with him. It may be true that one can understand Berkhof's philosophy better than that of Van Til and Daane because he roams about, not in the philosopher's heaven, but on the philosopher's earth. But a philosopher he is, nevertheless. And one who has done some severe philosophizing himself should not so severely criticize those who philosophize.

Further, Berkhof insists that the common grace problem is theological, not philosophical. In the light of what I have just written, I am wondering, professor, whether you really believe this.

M.S.

THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS

(Continued from page 19)

hates the life of sin, and goes out with all his soul toward God and toward sanctification), the elect, under the preaching of Christ, by the operation of the Spirit of Christ, spontaneously reach the assurance of their election. Here that assurance is never more than a small beginning. Presently when the infallible fruits of election fill us, that assurance will be forever complete.

H.C.H.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Blikken in 't Verleden

Het is nu zes jaar geleden dat we onze nieuwe Leeraar welkom mochten heeten, en een energieke jongeling zijn arbeid mocht aanvangen als hoofd van onze school. We zullen nooit vergeten bij het in orde maken der pastorie hoe mannen en vrouwen in liefde en eensgezindheid hun krachten inspanden — niets was hun te veel om de woning van den nieuwen Leeraar zoo aantrekkelijk mogelijk te maken, tot zelfs de ice box werd opgevuld met proviand voor vele dagen. Het ontbrak de nieuwe Leeraar niet aan geest en leven, en men was dankbaar onder zijn gehoor weer te mogen drinken uit de fonteynen des heils. Onze nieuwe Principal ontving ook al heel spoedig het vertrouwen der ouders, en de kinderen waren blijde met hun nieuwe teacher. Het was dan ook geen wonder dat een paar jaar later de fungeerende President op een schoolvergadering zeide: We have a brilliant Principal. — Wil de schrijver van die anonieme brief daar nota van nemen? Please! — We zullen dan ook niet vergeten de jaarlijkse graduation avonden, welke door een ieder werden geroemd, tot zelfs buiten de gemeente. Zullen we ook niet even aanstippen de jaarlijkse ouderavonden die we in de basement onzer kerk mochten houden, en waar we met dank aan onzen verbonds God de weldaden mochten gedenken in het bezit van een eigen school?

Of zullen we nog eens memoreeren de gezellige bruiloftsfeesten die we in de basement mochten vieren, wanneer een broeder en zuster een afgerond aantal jaren door den band des huwelijks vereenigd waren? Wanneer we aan die jaren terug denken, dan is er een zekere weemoed in onze ziel. Waarom? Omreden dat die tijd van liefde en vrede zoo kort heeft geduurd en door een wreede hand is verstoord. De geest van haat en jaloezie die achteraf beziën al jaren onder de asch had gesmeuld, kwam door 'n betrekkelijk klein voorval tot openbaring. Had nu de herder en leeraar zijn dure plicht en roeping verstaan en die geest uit de hel de kop ingedrukt, dan had, menschelijkerwijze gesproken, Redlands kerk- en schoolgeschiedenis een heel andere geweest. Doch dat heeft niet zoo mogen zijn. De man van wie men met recht moest verwachten het welzijn van zijn geheele kudde op 't oog te hebben, sloot zich aan bij hen die zich aan partijzucht overgaven. Wat er toen onder de dekmanted der liefde achter de schermen en in vergaderingen is afgespeeld zullen we maar laten rusten, doch dat de naastenliefde het hoofddoel was, betwijfelen we. Om een Hollands spreekwoord te gebruiken, „Barbertje moet hangen”, is gelukt. En wat zijn de resultaten van dit politiek gedoe geweest? Deze: dat sommige families kerkelijk zijn vaneen gescheurd, dat vriendenbanden zijn verbroken, dat zuiver Prot. Reformed leden der Schoolvereeniging vervallen zijn verklaard van hun

lidmaatschap, waaronder ouders van schoolgaande kinderen, 't welk insluit dat ook voor die kinderen de schooldeuren zijn gesloten, dat door dit alles de Principal het onmogelijk is gemaakt langer onder zoo'n bestuur te werken. En om de kroon op hún werk te zetten, heeft het bestuur een baptiste teacher benoemd om de verbondskinderen in de voorzeide leer te onderwijzen. *Hoe is het goud verdonkerd.*

J. R. VanderWal



SAVE ME, O GOD, BECAUSE THE FLOODS

Save me, O God, because the floods

Come in upon my soul,

I sink in depths where none can stand,

Deep waters o'er me roll.

My constant calling wearies me,

My throat is parched and dried;

My eyes grow dim while for my God

Still waiting I abide.

The foes who hate me unprovoked

Are strong and still increase,

Though to disarm their enmity

My right I yield for peace.

O God, my folly and my sin

Thy holy eye can see;

Yet save from shame, Lord God of hosts,

Thy saints that wait on Thee.

Forbid, O God, our covenant God,

That those who seek Thy face

Should see Thy servant put to shame

And share in my disgrace.

It is for Thee I am reproached,

For Thee I suffer shame,

Until my brethren know me not,

And hated is my name.

It is my zeal for Thy abode

That has consumed my life;

Reproached by those reproaching Thee,

I suffer in the strife.

I wept, with fasting bowed my soul,

Yet that was made my shame;

When I in sackcloth clothed myself,

Their byword I became.

The men who sit within the gate

With slander do me wrong,

And they who linger at their cups

Make me their jest and song.

Psalms 69