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MEDITATION

Entrance Into The Kingdom

"Not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven."

Matthew 7:21

There will be many thousands of miserable men and women in the Day of Judgment who will clamor and wail when they see the door of heaven shut in their faces. And at that time they will begin to say: "Lord, Lord, do open unto us! We cannot understand that Thou would thrust us out! Just outside the door; so near and yet so everlastingly far!" these people will at that time recall that they said very often: Lord, Lord! thinking that such pious exercise would assure them an entrance into the Kingdom of heaven. But they shall experience too late that the real entrance into that Kingdom is: "to do the will of Christ's Father which is in Heaven." They shall be people who lived among God's people, for they will say at that dreadful day: "We have eaten and drunk in Thy Presence, Lord! Thou hast taught in our streets! And yet: "ye shall see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God and you yourselves thrust out!"

Dreadful!

But oh so true!

* * *

For it is the Kingdom of Heaven!

Which means first of all that it is not in any sense of the earth earthy. It came forth from the bosom of the holy Triune God Himself. He thought of it eternally in His Counsel. He saw that Kingdom from everlasting to everlasting. Thinking of it, He determined it in all its phases, with all its subjects, with all its enemies, with its entire history. No one appeared to become His counsellor. There is not anything in that Kingdom that is human, earthy or temporal in its origin. Before time, space, earth, heavens and man were created, that Kingdom existed really in God's

counsel. In its entirety, as it will shine and glitter everlastingly. Its origin is entirely heavenly.

Therefore its character is also heavenly. It is true that in creation we have many pictures, symbols of many phases of that Kingdom, but a picture and a symbol are no characteristics. Its flavor and taste, its dimensions and laws are purely heavenly. Therefore the earthy eye cannot see it. It may come very nigh unto that earthly eye in the days of John the Baptist and nearer still in the days of Jesus, still, the human, earthy eye cannot see it. And only because it is heavenly in character. The human, earthly ear cannot hear one single stanza of the heavenly songs that are sung in the midst of that heavenly Kingdom, even though these songs may resound and do resound around about that earthly ear. You may sing of that Kingdom for 6000 years and never will the earthly ear know it. It is folly to the mind that is earthly. The reason is that this Kingdom in its flavor, taste, and all characteristics is only and entirely heavenly. It belongs entirely to other worldly spheres. It belongs to spheres that are not as yet revealed on earth. Not so that the earth can see it. It is revealed on earth, but with the revelation of it you must receive Kingdom ears, eyes, hearts, minds and souls in order to perceive it. Except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of heaven.

That leads us to the third qualification. This Kingdom is heavenly in its King and subjects.

Christ Jesus, the Son of God is the heavenly ordained King and the Christians are its subjects.

And Christ Jesus is heavenly. Why, Is He called the Lord of heaven? It is because His blessed life from all eternity is only heavenly. He is the essential Son of God, Second Blessed Person of the everblessed heavenly Trinity. And for that Son heaven is His throne.

Moreover, that Christ as to His humanity is ordained from eternity by the father to be the King of that heavenly Kingdom. Of that Son the Father hath said: Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion! And that holy hill of Zion is but another name for the heavenly Kingdom.

And the Christians are also heavenly. They hail from heaven because they are eternal thoughts of the heavenly

God. From all eternity the Lord God thought of them in thoughts of heavenly peace. They are thoughts of the Almighty. Their birth as Christians is from the heavens. They are born not by the will of man, but by the Spirit of Christ that is heavenly. Therefore their life, their aspirations, their longings and yearnings are all heavenward. And when they look around them they cry: Father which art in heaven, give that Thy will be done here on earth as it is done in heaven. They would never be satisfied except heaven appears around them and entirely within them. Their Lord is in heaven and so their walk is in heaven. Their brethren, very many of them, are in heaven and so they are entirely, as to the new man heavenly creatures.

And finally, that kingdom is heavenly in its obligations. In all of them. For the body and for the soul and for all the time we spend in this miserable world, in connection with our dear ones and friends, but also in connection with our enemies, in connection with the Law of God and all His statutes, in connection with the devil and his angels, but also in connection with the holy angels of God—in all the ramifications of our entire life, the call is to be heavenly throughout. Never may we assume the viewpoint of the earth. Always we hear the resounding cry from the heavenly Lord: Set your affections on the things above and not on the things below. Quit yourself as heavenly soldiers, fighting the heavenly battle till the very end, so that you may be worthy citizens of the heavenly kingdom.

* * *

That Kingdom made history and its history is not yet finished.

It was announced by God in very creation, so that Paradise was a picture, a visible symbol of that Kingdom. The first page of Genesis and the last page of Revelations fit. The one is the picture and the other is the spiritual, eternal, glorious, heavenly realization of it. And between these two you have the history of its coming.

After the announcement in creation and the earthly Adam we have the fall. But immediately we see the unfolding of the same Kingdom in types throughout the Old Dispensation.

And we learn ever clearer that its foundation is blood. For a while, it is true, we only see the blood of lambs and goats, but finally we see the heavenly blood, as it were. And Hebrews tells us that Christ went into the heavenly sanctuary with His precious blood.

The Kingdom, that is, the realization of God dwelling with us in His eternal palaces as friends, is founded in the blood of Jesus. And that blood spells obedience to God's will from the motive of purest love. When the elect of God, elect to become citizens, became sinners and worthy unto death, Jesus came, the heavenly King, in order that He might liberate them from the prison of sin, guilt and death and bring them into the Kingdom. That is the meaning of

the Blood that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.

And this Kingdom is still future in the days of Jesus. True, its foundation, its basis He laid, but it is still future as to its full realization. He builds on the foundation of His blood throughout the ages. And its principle is in our hearts. The Kingdom of heaven is within you.

You must enter into that Kingdom if it is going to be well with you and me.

You must enter it. What does that mean?

Its entrance does not consist of outward things in the first place, and as to its idea it is spiritual, invisible, of the inmost heart.

The text says that its entrance does not consist of saying Lord, Lord. And when you read the same history in Luke 13:26-28, you hear the very same thing. There will be people in the Judgment Day who will say to the heavenly King; We have eaten and drunk in Thy presence and Thou hast taught in our streets. But He shall say, I tell you, I know not whence ye are, depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God and you yourselves thrust out.

Also from that Scripture we learn that entrance into that heavenly Kingdom does not consist of external observances. True, we cannot do without externals. But Jesus does not condemn externals as such, nay, He condemns it when you have nothing *but* externals. Externals are good when they reveal what lives in the heart.

Therefore birth in the line of the Covenant, to have God-fearing parents, church attendance, catechism teaching, confessing the Name of God, partaking of Christ's Supper—all these things are nothing but terrible condemnation if they are all you possess. Then you surely will not enter the blessed Kingdom of heaven.

* * *

What then is the entrance?

Doing the will of God constitutes the entrance according to the text. And we realize that this answer has a pelagian sound, as though after all man by his own work of obedience could enter the Kingdom of heaven. And I would make answer that I do not care how much it sounds like pelagianism, that obedience to the will of God is the only door heaven possesses. There is no other entrance. And the door to hell is the door of disobedience to God's will. That is the truth which you will find on every page of the Bible.

But let us explain.

We find the whole matter beautifully stated in Psalm 24:3-6. There we read: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand at His holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart, who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity nor sworn deceitfully."

There is the answer. And you have noticed that also

there we have the matter of entrance into the Kingdom, that is, the holy hill of Zion. The only answer is purest obedience, from the love of God.

But then I hear you make answer and say: Who can then be saved? For we have very filthy hands; our hearts are cesspools of unholiness; continually I lift up my soul unto vanity; and as for truth in the inward parts: all men are liars and I am one of them! And we would say: that is true of all natural men. But there is one man among men who is not so. He fulfills the requirements of the heavenly entrance to the very last and minutest detail. And that Man is the God-Man, the Immanuel. It is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

And here is the blessedness of the Gospel: He ascends the holy hill of Zion in purest obedience substitutionally for you and me. For all the elect of God. He pays the awful price for all your and my disobedience and that is the story of His Blood. That is shed for me, even for me!

When He became obedient unto the death of the cross, He did it in my stead. And when He has finished all the labor of His soul, it is as though I have done it. That is the sweetest strain of the Gospel. Henceforward Paul determines not to know anything but Christ and Him crucified. Do you see the blessed reason? The Cross of Christ is the entrance. Hallelujah!

But this is not all.

Because, even if Christ is the Obedient One, we are on the contrary very disobedient by nature. And so He comes by His Holy Spirit and regenerates us so that His life of perfect obedience enters us and recreates us unto new creatures. And through daily conversion we are taught by the Selfsame Spirit to be sorry for our sins and to fight the fight of faith against all unrighteousness. Instead of lifting up our souls unto vanity we receive the wisdom from heaven so that we may walk in the right direction, having our reborn souls filled with the sweet meditations of righteousness, holiness and spiritual knowledge. And we become lovers and speakers of the truth, every one with his neighbor.

And this is principally true of every child of God. As to the new man he sinneth not, but doeth the will of Christ's Father in heaven. As to the old man, we fight against him every day and mortify him, so that haply we may enter into the Kingdom of heaven.

For Jesus' sake.

G.V.

IN MEMORIAM

The consistory of the Fourth Protestant Reformed Church extends its sincere sympathy to its fellow brother and consistory member, John Hager, in the loss of his mother,

MRS. JENNIE HAGER

Ps. 4:8: "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety."

R. Veldman, President
J. Veltman, Secretary

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EDITORIALS

The Future Of Our Churches

I.

A few years ago I delivered a speech on the above mentioned subject. It was, I think on the occasion of a young people's convention.

It is not my purpose, in this editorial to give a resume or recapitulation of this speech.

But it seems to me that the question concerning the future of our churches has, in the light of our history of the last few years, become more urgent and also, for all of us, become more concretely interesting. What is going to become of the Protestant Reformed Churches? In 1924 we were small. Our beginning was with only three congregations, the present First Church of Grand Rapids, the churches of Kalamazoo and Hope. Since then, till recently we enjoyed a rather healthy growth. But now our outward growth has been rather seriously stunted. We formerly consisted of twenty-four churches, now we have only seventeen left, with the prospect of two more coming. The membership has, however, just about split in half, chiefly because a large contingent of the membership of the First Church has become apostate from the truth under the leadership of DeWolf and some of his former consistory members. In Classis East we still have twelve churches as formerly, most of them quite intact, the exceptions being those under the leadership of DeWolf, Blankespoor, Knott, and Kok. In Classis West, however, we have only five congregations left, with the possibility of one or two more coming. Of ministers we have, at present fifteen, one of whom has accepted the call as home missionary, and two of whom are professors at the seminary in Grand Rapids. The result is that we have five vacant churches, Creston, Hope, Kalamazoo, South Holland, and Lynden. The theological school, however, and every one of the students remained with us.

Such is the situation at present.

And it is with a view to that situation and to our recent history that we ask the question: what is the future of our churches?

You understand, of course, that in the absolute sense of the word, I cannot answer that question. For the future of our churches is determined, even before the foundation of the world, by the counsel of God, and that counsel of the Most High is hid from us. We cannot read it.

Yet, I can certainly say something about our future for two reasons. In the first place, our future is certainly related to our past as is always the case. As one of the Dutch poets had it:

"In 't verleden ligt het heden,
In het nu wat worden zal."

That is translated:

"In the past lies the present,
In the now what will be."

In other words, the past ought to determine in what direction our churches ought to develop if they wish to maintain their *raison d'être*, their reason for existence. And, secondly, the promises of God to His church are always for those that are faithful to His truth, and those promises relate to the future of our churches.

The beginning of our history lies, of course, in the year 1924.

In that year, the Synod of the Christian Reformed Churches adopted the notorious Three Points.

In these Three Points they attempted to express and officially to adopt the theory of common grace. But actually they did much more than set their stamp of approval upon what was, before 1924, known as "common grace." They really adopted, especially in the first point of the three, the Arminian view of grace for all.

It may be well, especially in the light of our recent history, to refresh our memory on this first point and the so-called proof for it which the Synod of Kalamazoo adopted.

That first point reads literally as follows:

"Relative to the first point which concerns the favorable attitude of God to humanity in general and not only towards the elect, synod declares it to be established according to Scripture and the Confessions that, apart from the saving grace of God shown only to those that are elect unto eternal life, there is also a certain favor or grace of God which He shows to His creatures in general. This is evident from the Scriptural passages quoted and from the Canons of Dordrecht II, 5, III, IV, 8 and 9, which deal with the general offer of the gospel, while it also appears from the citations made from Reformed writers of the most flourishing period of Reformed Theology that our Reformed writers from the past favored this view."

Now, in the present editorial we are not concerned with a criticism of the whole of the First Point. It evidently adopts two doctrines which we may well distinguish as the doctrine of common grace and that of general grace. By the former is meant the grace of God, not saving, that is common both to the elect and to the reprobate without distinction, alleged to be manifest in all the things of this present time as they are common to all men. By the latter is meant the theory that the saving grace of God is general, that is that it is intended for all men individually. The latter theory is a denial of sovereign election and reprobation, of particular atonement and of the application of all the blessings of salvation only to the elect, and holds that Christ died for all and that the receiving of the blessings of salvation depends on the free will of the sinner.

The later theory, which is that of the Arminians, is implied in the latter part of the first point especially when taken in connection with its alleged proof.

It teaches that it is evident from the general offer of the

gospel that God is gracious to all men, particularly to all that hear the gospel.

This is not Reformed but Arminian.

Reformed it is to maintain that the preaching of the gospel is, both in God's intention as well as in respect to its actual application, not grace to all men, but grace only to the elect, while it is a savor of death unto death for the reprobate.

It is purely Reformed to teach that, from all eternity, God sovereignly loved and chose a people in Christ, and ordained them unto the glory of eternal life in the deep way of sin and grace.

It is Reformed to maintain that Christ died and rose again only for the elect, and not for all men, and thus merited for them and for them alone all the blessings of salvation.

It is Reformed to teach that only upon the elect the Spirit of grace is bestowed, so that they and they only are regenerated, are called into the fellowship of Christ, receive the true faith through the preaching of the gospel, so that they are justified, sanctified and finally glorified.

It is Reformed to maintain that the elect and they only are surely preserved unto the end by God's sovereign and efficacious grace, so that they can never fall away but will surely inherit eternal glory.

Hence, it is Reformed to hold that the preaching of the gospel is surely no gracious offer of salvation to all men, but it is the means whereby God calls the elect, and them only, to faith and salvation in Christ.

It is a very serious error to teach that the preaching of the gospel is a gracious offer of salvation, on the part of God well-meant, to all without distinction.

That is the teaching of the First Point.

And that this teaching of the First Point is not Reformed but condemned by the confessions of the Reformed Churches you may verify by reading those confessions. I refer you especially to Canons of Dordrecht I, A, 6; II, A, 8; III, IV, A, 10; V, A, 8.

Let me quote just one article, namely II, A, 8:

"For this was the sovereign counsel and most gracious will and purpose of God the Father that the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of His Son should extend to all the elect, for bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith, thereby to bring them infallibly to salvation; that is, it was the will of God, that Christ, by the blood of the cross, whereby He confirmed the new covenant, should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation and language, all those and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation, and given to Him by the father; that He should confer upon them faith, which together with all the other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, He purchased for them by His death; should purge them from all sin, both original and actual, whether committed before or after believing; and having faithfully preserved them even to the end, should at last bring them free from every spot

and blemish to the enjoyment of glory in his own presence forever."

This is the very heart of the Reformed truth.

Nor is this contradicted by those parts of the Canons to which the Synod of 1924 referred in support of their Arminian theory that the preaching of the gospel is well-meant offer of salvation, on the part of God well-meant, by which He shows grace to all that hear.

Let me quote just one of their references, Canons II, 5:

"Moreover the promise of the gospel is that whosoever believeth in Christ crucified, shall not perish but have everlasting life. This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be declared and published to all nations and persons promiscuously and without distinction, to whom God out of His good pleasure sends the gospel."

Does this, as the Synod of 1924 would have it, teach a general grace of God to all that hear the gospel, and thus contradict the rest of the Canons?

By no means.

It teaches, indeed, that the command to repent and believe, must be published to all that hear the gospel. But a command is no grace. Moreover, this command can be obeyed only by those whom God efficaciously calls, that is, the elect.

It further teaches that the course of the gospel is directed by the good pleasure of God for the positive purpose, evidently, that all the elect might hear it.

Further, it declares that the promise of the gospel must be proclaimed to all nations and persons promiscuously without distinction.

Nevertheless, the promise of the gospel is presented, not as general and, on the part of God, well-meant for all but as only for those that, by the grace of God believe and, therefore, only for the elect.

This doctrine of general grace, as well as that of common grace, we rejected in 1924.

Instead we maintained, and still do, that the grace of God, whether as revealed in the preaching of the gospel or in the things of this present life, is always particular and for the elect only.

Because we taught and maintained this truth we were ejected from the Christian Reformed Church in 1924, even though the Synod of Kalamazoo gave us the testimony along that we are confessionally Reformed.

This is the origin of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

And the answer to the question as to our future stands inseparably connected, not with the question whether we grow in numbers (this is entirely irrelevant), but whether we still maintain this definite truth and are developing along its line.

For upon this depends our very reason for existence as Protestant Reformed Churches.

But about this next time, the Lord willing.

H.H.

(Continued on page 206)

OUR DOCTRINE

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

AN EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

PART III — OF THANKFULNESS

LORD'S DAY 44

Chapter 2

The Imperfect Perfect Christian

And as soon as any evil thought enters into our mind, and as soon as any evil inclination or desire enters into our soul, it is present before God, even though by grace we immediately fought against it. The question is not whether you are fighting the thoughts and desires that arise in your soul. The question is whether they were there at all. And if they were, we certainly have not kept the law of God perfectly, but have sinned."

Can you, — not: do you, — keep the law perfectly? In other words, is the spiritual condition of the Christian in this life, as long as he is in this world, such, that he at least is able to keep the law of God perfectly? Perhaps he does not always keep it perfectly. Perhaps he sins often actually. But nevertheless, is his spiritual state such that he is able to keep all the commandments of God perfectly? When a man is regenerated, so that he has a new heart; when he is called by the efficacious calling of God through the gospel; when he is converted, and lives from faith; when he is sanctified, so that he lives from Christ, and his life is hid with Christ in God; — is he then able to live in perfection?

To this question the perfectionist, — at least, a certain class of them; for they do not all agree among themselves, — gives a positive answer. That such perfection is attainable in this life was taught already by certain Roman Catholics, such as the Franciscans, the Jesuits, and the Molinists. But is it preeminently the teaching of the Methodists. They teach not only the perfection in Christ, juridically, by imputation. But they also teach the spiritual, ethical perfection of sanctification. As far as his spiritual condition is concerned, according to them, the Christian can keep the law of God perfectly. This was the doctrine of John Wesley himself. That complete perfection is attainable in this life he maintains in a sermon preached by him on Hebrews 6:1: "Let us go on to perfection." He contends for this chiefly by arguments based on the commandments and promises of God in Scripture concerning sanctification. He indeed makes a distinction there between angelic and adamic perfection, on the one hand, and evangelical or Christian perfection, on the other hand. The perfection of the Christian does not exclude ignorance and error of judgment, with consequent wrong affections. He also admits that not all believers actually

attain to this perfection. But nevertheless, as far as his spiritual condition is concerned, the Christian is able to attain to a perfect keeping of the law of God. He even asserts that "several persons have enjoyed this blessing, without interruption, for many years, several enjoy it at this day, and not a few have enjoyed it unto their death, as they have declared with their latest breath, calmly witnessing that God had saved them from all sin, till their spirit returned to God." Does the Christian, then, in this life no longer have need of the atoning blood of Christ and the forgiveness of sins? To this question Wesley answers as follows: Christians are not in the state of angelic or adamic perfection. They are not free from ignorance or from making mistakes. We can no more expect any man to be infallible than to be omniscient. From infirmities none are perfectly freed till their spirits return to God. Till then no one is wholly freed from temptation. In this angelic or adamic sense of the word there is no absolute perfection on earth. There is no perfection which does not admit of a continual increase. Writes Wesley: "The proposition which I will hold is this: 'Any person may be cleansed from all sinful tempers, and yet need the atoning blood.' For what? For negligence and ignorances; for both words and actions as well as omissions, which are, in a sense, transgressions of the perfect law. And I believe no one is clear from these till he lays down this corruptible body." But he is certainly capable in this life of loving the Lord his God with all his heart, with all his mind, with all his soul, and with all his strength. And this is really the doctrine of the perfectionist. A Christian is able in this life to attain to the perfection in which he no longer sins, but keeps the law of God perfectly. And often he appeals to the text in I John 3:9: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."

Nevertheless, Scripture gives quite a different picture of the present state and condition of the believer in Christ. And the experience of the Christian himself agrees with this. And in harmony with Holy Writ, the Catechism replies in answer to the question, "But can those who are converted to God perfectly keep these commandments?" with an emphatic, "No."

That this answer is the answer of Holy Writ there can be no doubt. Just turn to the inspired record of the experience of the apostle Paul, preserved for the benefit of all believers in Romans 7:14, ff: "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth

in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." With this the emphatic "No" of the Heidelberg Catechism is quite in harmony.

And with this is also in accord the explanation which the Catechism offers for this negative answer. It explains that "even the holiest men, while in this life, have only a small beginning of this obedience." Let us understand this answer. It means, in the first place, that according to the inmost principle of our regenerated heart we are perfect, and can no more sin. To this principle the Catechism refers when it speaks of a small beginning. It is a beginning of perfection. It is small, but it is a beginning nevertheless. And let us understand that this beginning is not merely a start to perfection. It is not the beginning in the sense of the start of a series, or the beginning of a ball of twine. But rather it is the beginning in the sense of a seed, or of a principle. The Christian has a new heart, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, principally sanctified in Christ. And in that new heart is the seed the principle, the root of all perfection. In this lies the principal difference between all mere, moral reformatory work and the work of the grace of God in the heart of the sinner. All moral, reformatory work is after all superficial and outward. The work of grace is inward, concerns the deepest heart. Reformation begins by amending certain bad habits; the work of grace begins by cutting out sin itself. Moral reform is after all nothing but a superficial start; all work of grace is a principle.

This is what the Catechism means when it says that the holiest of men have but a small beginning. It is not so that the Christian has two hearts, a new and an old. But he has one heart. And that one heart is regenerated. And that one regenerated heart is the beginning, the principle, of all perfection and of all good works. In that new heart is the beginning to live with a sincere resolution, not only according to some, but according to all the commandments of God. The beginning of all true, spiritual obedience is in that new heart. It is the beginning of perfect conformation to the whole law of God. Such is the power of the seed of regeneration implanted in the heart of the Christian.

Nevertheless, we must not deceive ourselves. After all, it is only a beginning, though the beginning be a principle. According to that principle of new life in the heart of the Christian, he cannot sin: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin." God's seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God. Principally, therefore, it is impossible for the Christian to sin. It is not a question of his free will, but it is a question of the grace of God that has completely changed his will. The Christian has been

liberated from sin, and has been granted perfect liberty in Christ Jesus according to his inmost heart. But this is not the last word concerning the Christian as he lives in this life and in this world. If it were so, then the perfectionist would indeed be right. If nothing else were to be said about the Christian but that he has a new heart, and that in that heart is the principle of perfection, then indeed we could say that he is able to keep the law of God perfectly. But this is not the case. That small beginning, that seed of regeneration, even when it is quickened through the Word of God, that liveth and abideth forever, still dwells in the old nature, in the old soul and in the old body. And in that old nature, which Scripture calls the flesh of the Christian, there are the old operations of sin. And as soon as the thoughts, inclinations, the plans, aspirations, and desires that are born from that new, regenerated heart of the Christian enter into that flesh, into that old mind, that old will, that old soul and body of the Christian, in which there are the operations of sin, they are defiled and corrupted by these. They are taken captive by them, and often twisted into a totally different direction. And thus we can indeed speak, as we did in the heading of this chapter, of the imperfect perfect Christian. The Christian is perfect in principle. Nor are there two principles in him, the principle of holiness and the principle of sin. Principally he is holy. But that principle of holiness still dwells in the flesh, in his unholy nature, soul and body. And with that unholy nature he dwells in the midst of a world of sin, surrounding him on every side. And thus it happens that not only for certain mistakes and sins of ignorance, but for all his works, even the best of them, the Christian has need of forgiveness, and always he cries out: "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner." If it were not for the atoning blood of Christ, there would be no good work left, performed by the Christian.

And notice too that the Catechism tells us that the very holiest of the children of God have but a small beginning of the new obedience in this life. Even he that is farthest advanced on the way of sanctification, and is most consecrated to God and to His service, still has but a small beginning. There is, therefore, principally no difference, according to the Catechism, between the holiest and the less holy, between the beginner and the advanced Christian. It is not true that there are believers who have a very small beginning of the new obedience, and people that have a bigger beginning. On the contrary; according to the Catechism, evidently, all believers, no matter how far they are advanced, are alike in this respect. All have but a small beginning of the new obedience, until the day of their death. It also means that sanctification does not consist in this, that that principle, that small beginning, gradually develops and increases. It remains a beginning. It remains a principle. It remains small until the day that we put off the earthy tabernacle, and enter into the house of God in heaven. Sanctification consists in this, that through the power of the Holy Spirit and the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ that new

principle of life in the heart of the believer, that small beginning, fights the good fight of faith, and more and more overcomes the operations and the power of sin that is in our members.

And therefore, it is certainly true that the believer wholeheartedly subscribes to what the Scriptures teach us in I John 1:8, 9: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

It is in this deception that the perfectionist lives. O, it is true, even the perfectionist does not say that he never has any sin, that he always lives perfectly. Nevertheless, in actual life he assumes that attitude. His view, that it is possible for the Christian in this life to attain to perfection, leads to the conclusion that he often lives a sinless life. Did you never hear them say that he has not sinned for a week, that he lived perfectly for a whole year, for several years? In this he deceives himself. In not recognizing and seeing sin in his own heart and mind, in being satisfied with a superficial, outward righteousness, he deceived himself in imagining that he has no need of the forgiveness of sins in the blood of Christ. And therefore he does not lay hold on the promise contained in I John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Mark you well, the believer does not refer to this small beginning of the new obedience in his heart in order to excuse himself. He does not speak of that small beginning in order to cover up his sins, or to find an excuse for his walking in the way of sin. God forbid! Although the Christian certainly sins, he does not deliberately walk in sin. And if any man would appeal to that small beginning in order to cover up his sinful walk, he would thereby reveal that he has not even begun to understand the experience of the believer. For although the believer confesses that he has but a small beginning of the new obedience in this life, he at once adds that because of that same small beginning, or principle, of new life in his heart, he finds in himself a sincere resolution to begin to live not only according to some, but all the commandments of God. And he hears the truth in Jesus: "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness, and true holiness." He fights the good fight of faith, that no one may take his crown.

Chapter 3

The Preaching of the Perfect Law

The final question which the Heidelberg Catechism discusses is that of the value of the preaching of the law in the church. Is there any use in preaching the law of the

Christian? If it is impossible for any Christian to keep the law perfectly, why must it be preached in the church? Or, as the Catechism has it in Qu. 115: "Why will God then have the ten commandments so strictly preached, since no man in this life can keep them?" And to this question the Catechism gives a three-fold answer. First of all, the preaching of the law in the church must have the fruit that it deepens the knowledge of sin: "First, that all our lifetime we may learn more and more to know our sinful nature, and thus become the more earnest in seeking the remission of sin, and righteousness in Christ." Secondly, the Heidelberg teaches us that the preaching of the law, provided it is done properly, must have the fruit of sanctification: "likewise, that we constantly endeavor and pray to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, that we may become more and more conformable to the image of God." And finally, the answer to Qu 115 teaches us that the preaching of the law must have the fruit of strengthening in the heart of the Christian the hope of perfection in the life to come: "till we arrive at the perfection proposed to us, in a life to come."

There are indeed those who are opposed to the preaching of the law in the church in any sense of the word. In this respect, although in other respects they are entirely opposites, they are like the perfectionists. Both are opposed to the law, or to the preaching of the law, although from different motives, and although the perfectionist would probably not admit it. The one, the antinomian, positively does not want the preaching of the law because, according to him, it is not only of no value, but it is also dangerous. The perfectionist is really against the preaching of the law because he claims that he does not need it. The antinomian claims that the preaching of the law is dangerous because, according to him, it tends to create a certain superficial idea of righteousness, and must inevitably leave the impression with the people of God that they can keep the law perfectly. It is dangerous too, because it tends to leave the impression that somehow we must be saved by our works, rather than only by the blood of Jesus Christ our Lord. According to them, the preaching of the law implies a denial of the cross of Christ. And of course, we must all admit that if such should be the fruit of the preaching of the law, it should never be proclaimed again. If the preaching of the law would leave the impression with the church of Jesus Christ that somehow we must add to the righteousness that is in Christ our Lord, then, of course, it would be far better that we never heard at all of the law again.

Antinomians existed in the church in a very early age. Even the epistle of James is apparently directed against those that revealed antinomian tendencies. And some of the writings of Augustine indicate the existence of antinomian opinions in the fourth century. Yet, the complete development of the antinomian doctrine was not effected till the time of the Reformation. It is connected with the name of Agricola. Luther, and also Melancthon, used some very strong expressions, which, if interpreted apart from their context,

might very well be taken as the expressions of antinomian doctrine. These expressions concerned especially the truth of justification over against the law. Thus, Luther declared that "in the new covenant there is no longer a constraining and forcing law; and those who must be sacred and driven by laws are unworthy of the name of Christians." Opposing the Zwickau enthusiasts, he did not hesitate to say: "These teachers of sin annoy us with Moses; we do not wish to see or hear Moses; for Moses was given to the Jews, not to us Gentiles and Christians; we have our gospel and New Testament; they wish to make Jews of us through Moses; but they shall not." Nevertheless, it is a well known fact that Luther certainly was not opposed to the preaching of the law to the church. But when in his "Instructions to the Pastors of the Saxon Electorate" he enjoined that "all pastors must teach and enforce diligently the ten commandments," it was Agricola who disagreed emphatically. He saw in these instructions nothing but a backsliding from the true doctrine of justification by faith only. He affirmed that the Decalogue is not binding on Christians, and that true repentance comes not from preaching of the law, but by faith. And although later Agricola recanted his views, he really was never changed. And after his death antinomian opinions were advocated in Germany by other Lutheran pastors.

Although no Reformed man can agree with the antinomians as they are represented, and although in the Reformed churches it was always held that the law is related to the gospel as a rule of gratitude, nevertheless I am afraid that the so-called antinomians were frequently unfairly criticized and misrepresented. This is especially true of the Calvinists that were considered antinomians in England in the seventeenth century. Their critics were usually those that denied the doctrine of election and of sovereign grace. Many of their expressions, even when isolated from the rest of their writings, can very well be interpreted in a sound sense. Thus, for instance, Dr. Crisp, who was a Calvinist of the seventeenth century, was criticized for his antinomianism. Some of the following extracts are taken from his sermons to prove this contention: "The law is cruel and tyrannical, requiring what is naturally impossible." But this is perfectly true: for the natural man it is impossible to keep the law of God. Again he writes: "The sins of the elect were so imputed to Christ, as that, though He did not commit them, yet they became actually His transgressions, and ceased to be theirs." Even this is undoubtedly true: the elect were certainly in Christ at the cross. He died for them, and His righteousness is freely imputed to them, so that their sins juridically are no more in existence before the face of God. Once more he writes: "It is but the voice of a lying spirit in the hearts of believers that saith they have yet sin, wasting their consciences, and lying as burden too heavy for them to bear." And again: "Christ's righteousness is so imputed to the elect, that they, ceasing to be sinners are as righteous as He was and all that He was." All these expressions can

certainly be interpreted in a sound sense. In fact for the Reformed Christian there is nothing wrong in them.

We feel however, that the following criticism of the so-called high Calvinists in England that occurs in the *Life of Baxter*, by Orme, is certainly entirely unfair, and undoubtedly inspired by a hatred of all Calvinism: "It withers and destroys the consciousness of human responsibility. It confounds moral with natural impotency, forgetting that the former is a crime, the latter only a misfortune; and thus treats the man dead in trespasses and sins as if he were already in his grave. It prophesies smooth things to the sinner going on in his transgressions, and soothes to slumber and the repose of death the souls of such as are at ease in Zion. It assumes that, because men can neither believe, repent, nor pray acceptably, unless aided by the grace of God, it is useless to call upon them to do so. It maintains that the gospel is only intended for elect sinners, and therefore it ought to be preached to none but such. In defiance, therefore, of the command of God, it refuses to preach the glad tidings of mercy to every sinner. In opposition to Scripture and to every rational consideration, it contends that it is not man's duty to believe the truth of God—justifying the obvious inference that it is not a sin to reject it. In short, its whole tendency is to produce an impression on the sinner's mind that, if he is not saved it is not his fault, but God's; that, if he is condemned, it is more for the glory of the divine sovereignty than as the punishment of his guilt. So far from regarding the moral cure of human nature as the great object and design of the gospel, antinomianism does not take it in at all, but as it exists in Christ, and becomes ours by a figure of speech. It regards the grace and the pardon as everything the spiritual design or effect as nothing. Hence, its opposition to progressive, and its zeal for imputed sanctification: the former is intelligible and tangible, but the latter a mere figment of the imagination. Hence, its delight in expatiating on the eternity of the divine decrees, which it does not understand, but which serve to amuse and to deceive, and its dislike to all the sober realities of God's present dealings and commands. It exults in the contemplation of a Christ who is a kind of concretion of all the moral attributes of his people; to the overlooking of that Christ who is the head of all that in heaven and on earth bear his likeness, and while unconscious of possessing it. It boasts in the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, while it believes in no saint but one, that is Jesus, and neglects to persevere."

That, although we do not deny that with those higher Calvinists, as they are called, there were indeed antinomian tendencies, the above criticism is more one-sided and false than antinomianism itself, and is inspired by a hatred of all that Calvinism stands for, is evident on the very face of it. Besides, in the writings of Dr. Crisp, whom we quoted above, also the following sentiments are expressed: "In respect of the rules of righteousness, or the matter of obedience, we are under the law still, or else we are lawless, to live every

man as seems good in his own eyes, which no true Christian dares so much as to think of."

Sentiments like these, though perhaps in other respects the so-called higher Calvinists may have revealed Antinomian tendencies, certainly are not apt to destroy the consciousness of human responsibility. They do not prophesy smooth things to the sinner or soothe to slumber and the repose of them that are at ease in Zion. Although "Higher Calvinism" does not agree with the Arminians that God, on His part is willing to save every sinner and that, therefore, the gospel is a mere well-meaning offer of salvation on the part of God to all, yet it is an error to maintain that it refuses to preach the gospel of mercy to all. It is certainly Arminian slander that those "Higher Calvinists" should ever contend that it is not man's duty to believe the truth of God and that it is no sin to reject it. In short, the evaluation of the Antinomians by the Arminians cannot be trusted.

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that Antinomians of every shade are inclined to minimize, to say the least, the significance of the law of God for the Christian, and the calling of the people of God to walk in sanctification of life.

It is well, therefore, that we never forget the proper place of the law in Reformed preaching. It always must serve only as a rule for a life of thankfulness to God for the great salvation which He has sovereignly wrought in Christ Jesus, and equally sovereignly bestowed upon His people. The effect of the preaching of the law may never be that the people of God attempt to add to the righteousness which they have in Christ, and that they begin to imagine that their own good works have anything to do with their salvation, except as a fruit of thankfulness, wrought by the grace of God in their hearts. The righteousness of Christ is perfect. No one can ever add to it. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and ye shall be saved. Such is the truth. No preaching of the law can or ever may detract from that truth. In the sight of God, and as far as our juridical state before Him is concerned, we are forever perfectly righteous through Jesus Christ our Lord.

But, as I remarked before, this is not the effect of the proper preaching of the law of God in the church upon the Christian. The fruit of such preaching is rather, in the first place, a deepening of the knowledge of sin and more earnest appreciation by faith of the blood of Jesus Christ our Lord, in Whom we have reconciliation and the forgiveness of sin and perfect righteousness. As the Catechism has it: "First, that all our lifetime we learn more and more to know our sinful nature, and thus become the more earnest in seeking the remission of sin, and righteousness in Christ." The order of the Heidelberg Catechism is that of sin, redemption, and gratitude, which is not the objective and logical order of the truth of salvation, but rather the order of the experience of the Christian. But we must never conceive of this order as merely chronological, as merely an order in time,

as if first we learned to know our sin and misery, and after we came to know this we are forever finished with this part of the knowledge of our salvation; next in time the knowledge of our redemption, and when we learned to know that, learned to know that we are reconciled to God through the blood of the cross, that our sins are forgiven, and that we have the perfect righteousness in Christ, we are through with this too, so that we never learn to know about this in our experience any more; and that, lastly, we stand in the knowledge of thankfulness, and that in this state we remain until the end of our life, and, in fact, until the state of eternal glory. It is true, of course, that there is also a certain time order in this experience of the Christian according to the Word of God. Nevertheless, it also is and remains simultaneous; constantly and continually we learn to know our sin and we learn to know our miserable state by nature more and more deeply and completely. This spiritual lesson we learn all our life long. And the same is true in regard to redemption and thankfulness. This is also the idea of the Heidelberg Catechism in this 115th Question and Answer. Just as from the preaching of the law of God the sinner learns to know his sin and misery in the first place, so through the preaching of the same law we learn to know our sin and misery more deeply. We always learn to know new sins. That which formerly we perhaps did not consider to be sin now becomes sin unto us before God. And, as we begin to know our sins and our sinful nature more deeply and more completely, we also learn to abhor ourselves and our sins before God more earnestly, and cry out every day, "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" And in that state we daily seek our refuge in the cross of Christ. Through the preaching of the law that cross becomes ever more precious to us. The more we realize that all our works are of no value for our righteousness before God, that in fact they are but filthy rags, the more deeply we will appreciate the righteousness, the perfect righteousness before God that we have in the cross of Jesus Christ our Lord. And therefore, through the preaching of the law we learn to seek more earnestly and every day our refuge in the blood of our Lord.

Secondly, the proper preaching of the law has through the grace of God a sanctifying influence upon the Christian. As the Catechism has it: "likewise, that we constantly endeavor and pray to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, that we may become more and more conformable to the image of God." The preaching of the law holds before us the perfect way of God. Through it Christ admonishes us to put off the old man, which is corrupt, and to put on the new man, which is renewed according to the image of God in true righteousness and holiness. It always holds before us the constant admonition of Scripture: "Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." This creates in the Christian a sincere longing for and endeavor to perfection, to fight the battle of faith even unto the end. It strengthens him in the sincere resolution to walk in all good works. But at the same time it makes him realize his own impotence to

fight that battle and to overcome and have the victory. And therefore, the preaching of the law, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, bears the fruit that the Christian daily seeks the grace of the Holy Spirit. He prays for grace to strive and to fight the battle. And thus the preaching of the law, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, has a sanctifying influence upon the believer, the child of God.

And so, finally, through the preaching of the law the Christian will be quickened and strengthened in the hope of everlasting life and glory. The Catechism does not mention this directly. But it nevertheless suggests it when it holds before the Christian the final goal of perfection in the words: "till we arrive at the perfection proposed to us, in a life to come." This stands to reason. In this life the Christian is never perfectly sanctified. Sin always cleaves unto him. He is very imperfectly perfect. Forevermore he has to struggle with his sinful nature in soul and body. On this side of the grave there is no perfection. And for that perfection he nevertheless longs. In this life there is always a tension between perfection and imperfection, between holiness and corruption. And this tension is the tension of hope. In that hope he becomes prepared and willing to lay down the earthly house of this tabernacle. For in faith he cries out: "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And visualizing the perfection that is on the other side of the grave in life everlasting, he longs for it in hope. That hope will surely be realized: he shall never be put to shame. For in that life to come he shall be clothed with perfect righteousness and holiness, and enjoy the everlasting fellowship with God in His tabernacle forevermore.

H.H.

IN MEMORIAM

On December 11, 1954 it pleased the Lord to take from our family circle our beloved wife, daughter, and sister,

MRS. JOAN VROOM

at the age of 24 years.

We miss her so, but in our sorrow we know and experience that our God causes all things to work together for good unto them that love Him, who are the called according to His purpose. Rom. 8:28.

Pvt. George Vroom
Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert Van Baren
Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Zandstra
Mr. and Mrs. Anthony De Young
Mr. and Mrs. Seymour Vroegh
Agnes Van Baren
Gertrude Van Baren
Gise Van Baren
Mr. and Mrs. Melvin Hugen
Gilbert Van Baren, Jr.
Frank Van Baren
Anna Mae Van Baren

IN MEMORIAM

On January 20, 1955, it pleased the Lord to take unto Himself our beloved husband, father and grandfather,

MR. JOHN R. EZINGA

Although his loss is felt keenly by the family, we know that our loss is his gain. Our earnest prayer is that the Lord will supply our every need for comfort in the hours of loneliness and that He will be our constant aid.

Mrs. John Ezinga
Children and Grandchildren

IN MEMORIAM

The Sr. Young People's Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., desires hereby to express their sympathy to Joanne Ezinga in the loss of her father,

MR. JOHN EZINGA

May our covenant God, Whose ways are higher than our ways, comfort her with His Word and Spirit.

Rev. C. Hanko, President
Jeannette Faber, Secretary

IN MEMORIAM

The English Men's Society of the First Prot. Ref. Church hereby expresses its sympathy with hope that God will be gracious toward the wife and family of

JOHN EZINGA

Ps. 12:28, "In the way of righteousness is life: and in the pathway thereof there is no death."

Rev. G. M. Ophoff, President
Richard Teitsma, Secretary

IN MEMORIAM

The Mr. and Mrs. Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, hereby expresses their sincere sympathy with one of their members, Mrs. R. Dykstra, in the loss of her husband,

MR. RICHARD DYKSTRA

May our gracious God comfort and sustain her in the conviction that when God is for us, nothing can be against us. But also in all these things, though they are grievous according to the flesh, we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. Rom. 8:31, 37.

The Mr. and Mrs. Society,
Rev. C. Hanko, President
Mrs. C. Jonker, Secretary

IN MEMORIAM

The members of the Mr. and Mrs. Society of Hope hereby express their desire and sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. John Dykstra in the death of their son,

RICHARD DYKSTRA

Ps. 27:14, "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart; wait I say, on the Lord."

Rev. J. A. Heys, President
Mrs. Arie Griffioen, Secretary

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Prophecy of Isaiah

2. He shall not cry, nor lift up,
Nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.
3. A broken reed shall he not break in pieces,
And the dim *burning wick* shall he not extinguish:
According to truth shall he bring forth judgment.
4. Not shall he be weak nor shall he be crushed,
Till he have set judgment in the earth:
And the isles shall wait for his law.

The task of the servant of the Lord is to bring forth judgment to the gentiles. Our prophecy describes how he performs his task, his manner of working. He cries not and raises not his voice and lets it not be heard upon the street. Matthew quotes these lines to show that Christ's methods were as here described and foretold and that therefore He was the Christ (Matt. XII:14-21).

He shall not cry . . . (vs 2). To rightly understand this prophetic description of the conduct of Christ we must have regard to the fact of His sinlessness. Being pure of heart, loving God perfectly, He was not activated by sinful ambition. He sought not Himself. He had no cause to promote other than that of His Father. He was wholly absorbed in doing His will, which was that He redeem His people from all their sins by His suffering and death on the cross. To that work, given Him of the Father, He was consecrated with all His heart. For He had His affections set upon the heavenly, heavenly city, people, glory that could only become His in the way of obedience unto death — death of the cross.

Such being the posture of His heart, He behaved altogether different from ordinary men in quest of earthly power, fame and glory. He did not advertise Himself. He performed miracles but always to God's glory and never to promote His own interests, for He had none. Hence, He was not found going up and down the land making speeches in behalf of Himself to get the Jews to crown Him king. He did not heatedly wrangle with His opponents that denied His divine mission. But always He was calm, quit, serene, and self-possessed in replying to His critics as resting in the firm conviction that all that the Father had given Him would come to Him. He forbade those whom He healed to publish who it was that had healed them. It would only incite the false messianic hopes of the people, should they come to know. He was retiring and elusive. When they would make Him forcibly king, He would go into hiding, so that He was then nowhere to be found. In a word, He did not cry. He did not cause His voice to be heard in the streets. So does the demagogue. In his lust for power and political influence, he causes his voice to be heard in the streets, orates in the public squares of the cities, making promises that he does not intend to keep, all in an effort to get himself elec-

ted. But the servant of the Lord is of a different mould. He is the Lord from Heaven. That this is the idea is plain from the fact that Matthew saw in Christ's mandate that those healed by Him refrain from making Him known the fulfilment of our prophecy (He shall not cry, etc.).

By the "broken reed" and the "faintly burning" and thus smoldering, smoking, stinking wick the prophet is held by commenators in general to mean the weak and dying sick and lastly God's believing people of little faith. The thought conveyed by this imagery is then taken to be that so far is the "Servant" from destroying, making an end, of these weak and dying ones, that in His mercy He heals them. And in His pity of His believing people, He causes their faith to blossom instead of extinguishing it.

But this does not seem to me to be the meaning. For both figures are used by Isaiah also of the Egyptians. XXXVI:6, "Lo, thou trustest in the staff of the broken reed, in Egypt , , ,?" XLII:17, "which (the Egyptians) bringeth forth the chariot and the horse . . . they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched as tow," that is, as a smoking, stinking wick.

We must take notice of the setting in which our prophecy appears in Matthew's Gospel. This will help us to understand it. Jesus had healed the man with the withered hand. It embittered the Pharisees. Going out, they took counsel together how they might destroy Him. Knowing about it, Jesus withdrew Himself from thence (12:10-15). In this retreat of Jesus from before His enemies, Matthew saw the fulfilment of our prophecy (see 12:20 where it is quoted). If so, the "broken reed" and the "smoking, ill-smelling wick or tow" are the Pharisees, the adversaries of the "Servant" (lastly the reprobated world, the anti-christian world-power). He could have destroyed them in a moment; for He had the power. But then He would have made impossible His cross. He would have been aligning Himself with Satan, who had said that he would give Him all his kingdoms, should He worship him. But the Lord, the triune Jehovah was upholding His servant, He being His elect (see vs. 1). The "servant" was therefore infallible. He could be tempted but without sin. So, He did not destroy the "broken reed." He did not extinguish the smoking tow or wick. But He forbore and withdrew Himself from thence. He persisted in His choice to bring forth judgment according to truth (vs. 3b) by His suffering and death on the cross.

And He shall not be weak nor shall He be crushed while engaged in establishing judgment in the earth (vs. 4). The task was not interrupted by His expiring on the cross but finished. And therefore the Lord also raised up His "Servant" and set Him at His own right hand to make the judgment actual in the earth on the ground of His atonement.

But what is to be understood by "judgment?" The word used in the original has the following meanings: judgment, the act of judging, the place of judgment, justice, right, privilege, law, institution, usage, custom.

Here judgment is the reprobated as judged, sentenced

and cast into the abyss. It is the elect of God justified at Christ's appearing. Thus it is the new earth as cleansed from the race of men that now corrupt it and as peopled by the redeemed and glorified saints. And so it is the earth on which righteousness dwells and that accordingly is covered with the knowledge of God.

The "servant" shall bring forth this "judgment," that is, He shall reveal it, implying that it is hidden in the counsel of God its fountain and cause. And He shall establish it in the earth so securely that it will endure forever. Never will its sun set as it did in the first paradise.

He will bring forth judgment *according to truth*. It will be true judgment, right, genuine, characterized by strictest veracity. For its standard is the only true God, His will and good pleasure.

And the isles shall wait for His law. The isles, signified is Gentile nations. Law here is the Gospel of Christ as comprehending His commandments. The Gentiles will wait for it, meaning that they will put their trust in the Christ that it sets forth and expect all their salvation from His as keeping His commandments by His grace, — the Gentiles, the church of the elect in the Gentile world that the "servant" will gather Him by His Spirit and His word. They will wait for His law as His gathered ones. This must be emphasized. The text lends no support to the view that unregenerated men wait for the Gospel nor to the view that there was always present in the Gentile world heathen men, a spiritual Israel, with hearts prepared for Christ not by the Gospel but by the light of the Logos that shone also in their darkness and that therefore they were waiting for Christ so that when He finally appeared and was presented to them by the preaching of the Gospel they received Him with open arms, so to say.

The term law as a designation of the Gospel was taken over from the revelations of God to Moses at Mt. Sinai. It can be explained. This revelation in part was Gospel. It contained the promises of the Gospel. In the institutions and ritual that is prescribed it reflected the glory of Christ.

The personal servant of God given for a covenant of the people, vss. 5-7.

5. Thus saith the Lord God,
He that created the heavens, and stretched them out;
He that stretched forth the earth, and the products thereof;
He that giveth breath to the people upon it,
And spirit to them that walk thereon:
6. I have called thee in righteousness,
And I will hold thine hand,
And will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people,
And for a light of the Gentiles;
7. To open the blind eyes,
To bring out the prisoners from the prison,
And them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.

Prophecy here makes a new beginning to introduce the words that the Lord has spoken to His servant, here again the personal servant of Jehovah. The Lord has assigned to Him an amazing task. He will open the eyes of the blind, etc. But it shall come to pass on the following grounds.

First, the Lord that calls Him is *the* God. His aloneness is absolute. To His power there is no limit. And the evidence? He created the heavens and the earth and the fulness thereof. He giveth breath to its inhabitants. By His power they exist.

Second, it is *He* that called His servant. It implies that by His will He formed Him, brought Him into being — the man Jesus — and further that He directed to His mind and spake in His heart the word that set forth His whole task, so that He responded with, "I come to do thy will." And He called Him in righteousness. The calling was a righteous doing. Its standard was the goodness of His own blessed being. And the task assigned — the work of redemption — is, will be, to the praise of His righteousness in all its phases. For it will be the accomplishment of His righteous servant, who will love and do righteousness and thereby save His people.

Third, He the true Jehovah will hold the hand of His servant and keep Him, meaning that He will sustain and preserve Him always by the power of His grace.

For these reasons the task shall be accomplished.

And the Lord will give His servant for a covenant of the people. By this statement the covenant is identified with the servant. There is reason. First, He is *the* seed to whom are all the promises of the covenant and in whom they are yea and amen. Second, all the blessings of the covenant — the virtues of His cross — are comprehended in Him so that He is the true bread. Third, the Scriptures identify these blessings with His very person. They declare not alone that He sanctifies, justifies and redeems us, gives us life and enlightens us His people, but that He *is* our sanctification, justification and redemption, our life and light. He is the covenant personified, so to say. Hence, in the language of our prophecy, *He Himself* is given for a covenant of the people (the Jews) and for a light of the Gentiles. For a covenant *of the people* is He given. This can only mean that the servant and the covenant, its promises and blessings belong to the people as the Lord's gift to them. The "people" and the "Gentiles" are thus the church of the elect and not the Gentiles head for head. By nature these chosen ones are blind and therefore they sit in darkness — of the prison house of spiritual death. But the covenant and the servant it theirs to bring them salvation, open the eyes of the blind, etc. This is the purpose which is always achieved.

The initial fulfilment of these promises was the deliverance from the captivity of the exile. That, too, was the work of the servant, the Christ. But only a small number of the Jews, a "remnant," received from Him the grace to hate their prison and return. The others chose to live out their lives in Babylon. For in their blindness they loved their

prison house. The turning of Judah's captivity was a work of the Lord that He wrought largely on a spiritual plain. The liberation that resulted from the overthrow of Babylon as a world power was outward and physical as to its character. It consisted in the right to remove to Jerusalem that was granted to the exiles by Cyrus. The true liberation was the work of Christ by which He gave unto His people the redeeming grace to avail themselves of that right.

It is already plain that the "servant" is also God and not a mere man.

The Lord set on His glory and praise, vss. 8, 9.

8. I *am* the Lord: that is my name:
And my glory to another not will I give,
Neither my praise to graven images.
9. The former things, behold they are come to pass,
And new things do I declare.
Before they spring forth, I make you to hear them.

The Lord is what His name denotes, the *I am* who keepeth covenant trust. He will not give His glory — it belongs to Him alone, He being the God — to another, to the world-power of which Satan is the prince, by leaving His people in their clutch. Then He would make it appear as if these evil powers were stronger than He and as if they were the God and not He. Then He would be giving them ground for their vile doing of denying His divinity and of deifying themselves. Then, in a word, He would be giving His glory to them. But this He cannot do. And therefore He will send salvation and thereby show that He is the God and that they are as nothing before Him. Then every tongue will give Him the glory.

Nor will He give His praise to idols by not exposing them as vain and by not proving that He is God and none else. This proof is His ability to declare things that are new — the salvation of the church as preindicated by the turning of Judah's captivity. They spring forth from His counsel, as do all things, and are His work. Therefore He can declare them before they spring forth. And the proof that they shall surely come to pass is His prophecies as already fulfilled. In the language of the text: The former things, behold they are come to pass.

A summons to sing unto the Lord a new song, vss. 10-12.

10. Sing unto the Lord a new song,
And His praise from the end of the earth,
Ye that go down on the sea, and the fulness thereof;
The isles and the inhabitants thereof.
11. Let the wilderness and the cities thereof *lift up their*
voice, The villages that Kedar doth inhabit;
Let the inhabitants of the rock sing,
Let them shout from the top of the mountains.
12. Let them give glory unto the Lord,
And declare His praise in the islands.

These verses are a song that exalts the Lord because of the great things that He will perform, — things new, that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man. Accordingly the song is new, seeing that it will treat of these things. Summoned is the entire humanity, sea and earth. They that sail the sea shall sing His praise as also the fulness of the sea, the fishes, etc., the inhabitants of the islands the wilderness and their cities the villages of Kedar the rock and the top of the mountains in a word all men and the creatures from one end of the earth to the other.

Kedar was one of the sons of Ishmael. Indicated therefore are the Arabians. It is doubtful whether by "the inhabitants of the rock" is to be understood the Edomites, seeing that they were a people against whom the Lord had indignation forever.

That the whole creation is summoned to praise the Lord is indicative of the universality of His salvation.

G.M.O.

EDITORIALS

(Continued from page 197)

Poor Kok!

I sincerely pity him.

Evidently, he is so raving mad at having lost the case of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, that he vents his wrath upon the Rev. Ophoff and myself by heaping upon their heads all kinds of terrible slander.

I will not consider his ravings worthy of a reply.

Let him, however, consider that he himself was by far the poorest witness in court by denying the Church Order and consistently defending the independentistic form of church government as the records, when they are published, will clearly show.

I will not sue him for libel.

Nor can I appeal to his consistory to bring him to repentance, for he has no consistory.

But if the fear of God is in his heart I would urge him to repent of this terrible sin.

Remember, Kok, lying and slander are the very works of the devil!

H.H.

IN MEMORIAM

The Eunice Society of First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids expresses its sincere sympathy to its President, Mrs. D. Jonker, in the loss of her Mother,

MRS. JOHN FLOKSTRA

age 88 years. May our God of grace abundantly comfort her by His Word and Spirit.

Mrs. R. H. Meyer, Vice President
Mrs. George Spruyt, Secretary

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Galatians 5:16-26

I.

If there is one thing that the great Apostle Paul insists on in this letter to the Galatians, it is this: as the believers in Christ, the Church in the New Testament Dispensation, we are free. We are no longer “under law” but we are “under grace!”

That we are under grace brings with it a certain *new* obligation for the saints. It is: that we walk in the *newness* of life in Christ Jesus. For, mark well, Paul says: ye have been *called* unto liberty. Efficaciously the Holy Ghost has called us out of the darkness and “dominion of sin” (Canons V:1) and from its “slavery,” yea, from its terrible bondage! For Jehovah is our God, who hath delivered us out of this present evil world. Gal. 1:4. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that we be constantly spiritually sensitive to the truth that we have “liberty” without having “licence!” These may be neither identified nor confused. They are as far apart as light from darkness, as distant as the poles! There is no need that these two be confused. When this is the case, it is simply due to the blindness of sin’s folly, to being taken “captive” by the flesh. Rom. 7:23. It is the law of sin in our members that then takes us captive. And these must be crucified!

True faith is always such that it is *energized by love* through the power of the Holy Spirit of Christ, and, therefore, such faith will always manifest itself as a *living faith*! And such living faith manifests itself in the pleroma of love, briefly summed up in one word: Thou shalt love Thy neighbor as thyself! Thus alone shall we be perfect even as our Father in heaven is perfect, manifesting that we are free-born sons from the Seed, in Sarah.

This is the truth of the Gospel which our fathers from the “most flourishing period of Reformed Confession’s” state so beautifully, when they speak of the *nature* of true faith. In Question 64 of the Heidelberg Catechism they confess “for it is impossible that those, who are implanted into Christ by a true faith, should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness.” Why impossible? Because the “faith,” *justifying* faith is such, that it is energized by the love of God, and this love is the fulfilment of the law, it is the New Testament written in our hearts, making us very willing in the day of God’s power! Such is the “mystery of faith” which is to be kept in a pure conscience!

Let every man try his works according to this touchstone and see whether his works stands approved? Do you with holy pleasure and spiritual joy observe in yourself this infallible fruit of election pointed out in God’s Word concerning the nature of faith? If any man think to be something, that is, if he think that he is a fruitful branch in the

Vine, and is nothing, having no love *energizing* his faith, he is nothing! Such unfruitful branches are cast out and trodden under foot of men. They do not “inherit” the Kingdom of God! Why not? Because they did not perform “prerequisite acts?” God forbid, lest the Cross be made of none effect! What then? They do not “inherit” because in the Testament of God to Abraham they are not included amongst the children. In Isaac shall the seed be called. And these reveal themselves as “new creatures!” Such heirs the unfruitful are not!

Wherefore our Reformed Fathers state so beautifully in the Belgic Confession, “We believe that this true faith being wrought in man by the hearing of the Word of God, and the operation of the Holy Ghost, doth regenerate and make him a *new man*, causing him to live a *new life*, and freeing him from the bondage of sin. Therefore it is so far from being true, that this justifying faith makes men remiss in a pious and holy life, that on the contrary without it they would never do anything out of love to God, but only out of self-love and fear of condemnation. Therefore it is *impossible* that this holy faith can be unfruitful in man: for we do not speak of a vain faith, but of such a faith, which is called in Scripture, a *faith that worketh by love*, which excites man to the practice of those works, which God has commanded in His Word!” (Italics of me).

The central and all inclusive expression of the “good works unto which we have been created in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:10) is that given in Lev. 19:18 where we read: “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” True faith manifests itself in perfect love, which casts out all fear! Here is the deepest principle of the spiritual-ethical psychology of the redeemed soul. And all pedagogical approach must be accordingly. Let those who would practice christian “psychiatry” take notice, lest they place the burdens and trammels of “psychosomatic medicine” upon the souls of men, which conflicts with the true nature of faith, which is energized by love. Would to God that all ministers and elders would understand this nature of faith, and the corresponding pedagogy that is necessary to help those who are bewildered or have fallen into melancholy falls of sin and littleness of faith. Men talk very sanctimoniously about the science of soul-care, while they themselves seem to not understand the mystery of faith by which the healing of Christ’s wings is experienced. Small wonder that these learned(?) doctors are themselves like men seeing from afar or groping in perplexity! When the “first principles” of Christ are trodden underfoot or misapprehended, how shall there be a dawning of the day in the night of despair?

At bottom all perplexity of the souls of God’s children it due to a littleness of faith, or due to the interruption of the exercise of faith, to a wounded conscience, and to the loss of the sense of God’s favor for a time, until on their returning to the right way of serious repentance the light of God’s fatherly countenance again shines upon them. Canons V, Art. 5.

But true faith which is energized by love casts out all fear; it is the manifestation of the pleroma of love!

God is not mocked. Let us, therefore, as the free-born sons stand in our freedom. This means that we believe that we are justified freely by God's grace and in the joy of this justification now say: I am free from sin. I *may* walk at liberty and I "ought" to walk thus too. Thus *faith* speaks! O, how "faith" understands the secret of godliness! Our fathers express this in Canons V, Art. 13, "Neither does renewed confidence of persevering produce *licentiousness*, or a disregard to piety in those who are recovering from backsliding; but it renders them much more careful and solicitous to continue in the ways of the Lord, which He hath ordained, that *they who walk therein* may maintain an assurance of persevering, lest by abusing his fatherly kindness, God should turn away his gracious countenance from them, to behold which is to the godly dearer than life: the withdrawing whereof is more bitter than death, and they in consequence hereof should fall into more grievous torments of conscience."

Here we have the believers, the church, expressing their need of a circumspect walk, fearing to use their liberty as an occasion to the flesh, but rather by love serve one another. And unto this serving of one another Paul admonishes in this entire section of verses 16-26. On the one hand Paul does not say: that this walk is a "prerequisite" for entering into the Kingdom. God forbid. Nor does he say: I need not tell you what to do, ye are Christians, ye are Sons of Sarah, and have the law so written in your hearts that no one need to teach you or admonish you. Paul is writing a letter of admonition that Christ be formed in them, is he not? (Gal. 4:19) What is the purpose of this writing in relationship to this their walking in the love, serving one another?

It is that Christ may thus be formed in them through the Holy Spirit and they walk in their liberty. How clearly the fathers of Dort saw this use of the precepts of the Gospel (not to be identified with *command of law*) is evident from Canons V, 14 where we read: "And as it hath pleased God, by the preaching of the Gospel, to begin this work of grace in us, so he preserves, continues and perfects it by the hearing and reading of His Word, by meditation thereon, and by exhortations, threatenings and the promises thereof, as well as by the use of the sacraments."

God thus preserves his own work.

Thus he causes us to walk in the "ways of the Lord, which he hath ordained, that they who walk therein may maintain an assurance of persevering." It is the way of the Lord, His means of grace to cause us, who are "under grace," to walk in this grace of election, calling, justification and sanctification.

It is the admonition of the Gospel to those who have been translated out of the power of Satan into the Kingdom of Christ.

Such are we; we are free. Only, let us not use our liberty as an occasion to the flesh to serve the flesh, but by

love serve one another! Such is the true faith that is energized by love. There was room for this exhortation in the churches of Galatia.

There was a certain disunity in the congregation; the striving to keep the unity, wrought by the Spirit in one faith and love, was on low par. The necessary meekness and long-suffering was not in evidence. Faith working by love was not being "exercized!" What then?

There was a very present "biting and devouring one another." That is was not simply a possible disunity, but a very actual one, is evident from the fact that Paul employs a conditional sentence of the "First Class," expressing determined reality. There was a carping fault-finding of one another. Paul characterizes it as being a dog fight. "Biting and devouring" are strong terms, a metaphor taken from the conduct of wolves and dogs. It is then a do or die proposition. Paul's irony is beautiful and cutting: Beware lest ye be consumed of each-other! There might not be anything left of either beast in such a fight!

Keeping such dogs tied on a chain of being "under law" would not cause the "beast" in them to die. Nor would letting these dogs at each other change the "wolf" in them. It might make a lonesome wolf if he were the only one left of the pack. If you can kill the "wolf" in the wolf and make him live peaceably with the little child then the wolf is no longer "under law" but under a miracle of God. Such are they, who do not walk according to the "flesh," the "wolf" in them, but who walk in the Spirit and do not bring to completion the works of the flesh. What is that wolf in us?

His name is "being full of vain-glory." Verse 26. Their pride, their prestige, their position and honor amongst the brethren was "at stake" Of course this was all nonsense. The humble are raised up by the Lord. You want to teach this? Well, brethren, don't let your insistence on teaching this be so done that you fall into temptation of defending your "honor" and prestige! This folly and sin lies very near to our door. Let us not be ignorant of Satan's wiles. Rather let us truly pray for humility lest we walk headlong into temptation.

Where this being vain-glorious is manifested you will surely have the great "wolf" in us growl challenges at the other imaginary great "wolf." Then there is provoking of one another to further evil. We then hear snorting challenges at one another!

And thus we would become sick with the health of our neighbor. A strange sickness is malice. It is rottenness of the bones. It is the green eyed monster. Destruction and misery is in his way and the way of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace it doth not know!

How timely and fitting is this exhortation of Paul: only use no liberty as an occasion of the flesh, but by love serve one the other. Where this is lacking there is confusion and every evil work. But the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of those making peace.

That is truly being free "under grace!"

G.C.L.

IN HIS FEAR

The Gate Is Open

(Continued)

The more that is written by those who deceived countless hundreds to follow them out of the Protestant Reformed Churches the clearer it becomes that they have no moral right to refuse the congregations of Chatham and Hamilton, Ontario—and those affiliated with them—the right to join with them as sister churches of one denomination.

Let us have more of those “fine” essays delivered at the “ministers’ conference”—(and why were elders excluded from some of these meetings and allowed to attend others?)—held at Oskaloosa, Iowa. It does a truly Protestant Reformed man a tremendous amount of good to read them. For it encourages us in our conviction that our cause is God’s cause. Let them write their convictions. Let them try to defend their impossible stand. Let them continue to contradict themselves and each other. They only reveal the more clearly that the gate is open and that they are incapable of closing it and are becoming increasingly opposed to closing it. It is the only avenue left for them.

Whether you look at it from a church political viewpoint or from a doctrinal viewpoint, they have no moral right to refuse Chatham and Hamilton a place in their denomination. What is more, they have no moral right to live separately from each other as two denominations.

Doctrinally they are of the same opinion: The *whole* Word of God teaches a promise to every baptized child on the condition of faith. “God promises every one of you that if you believe you will be saved.”

By the way, Rev. Blankespoor, you strike the same note in your “fine” essay that the Liberated send forth. That phrase of yours “the *whole* Word of God” which you carefully and deliberately presented as your “conviction” of what really happened in our churches is so very revealing. It is so characteristic of those who want something more than the stand that their churches have taken and that want to bring in some new theory.

That was 1924.

Did you forget that the cry then was that we were one-sided? They wanted, so they said, the *whole* Word of God and not this emphasis upon election and reprobation. No, so they said, you must preach the *whole* Word of God, and then you will find that there are invitations, offers of salvation to all who hear on the condition that they believe. Sounds rather familiar does it not, Rev. Blankespoor? It is your argument. It is your chief argument, your conviction as to what really happened in our churches. You and your constituency you say, sincerely attempted to live out of the *whole* Word of God. The Declaration was inclined to one-

sidedness. O, you agreed with its contents, but it did not say enough. You wanted the *whole* Word of God. That does sound pious and God-glorifying. But why, Rev. Blankespoor, do you not tell us then what in that *whole* Word of God, you want that we do not want? Admonitions? You know better. We have been rebuking, admonishing and exhorting you all these months since the “split” to forsake your evil way, your walk of error, your schismatic action. You do not want admonitions. Nor do you really in the depth of your soul believe that we do not want that part of the *whole* Word of God. You know that we can admonish, rebuke and exhort. You know that we believe that God works faith and repentance in us by these admonitions which He applies by His Spirit.

But be honest. You want prerequisites. You want our act of conversion as a prerequisite to entering the kingdom.

And by talking about the “*whole* Word of God” you can come up with texts that seem to teach this when looked at by themselves without letting Scripture interpret Scripture.

Walls have a purpose, you know.

And they are built high for a reason.

Denominational walls also have a purpose. And they are built high for a reason, for a good reason.

Confessions have a definite purpose.

Doctrinal standards are therefore always in the way of those that want to bring into the denomination that which the confessions of the church forbid.

That is why we had such a prolonged battle to get the Declaration of Principles adopted. The interpretation of the Confessions that the Declaration gives is too onesided, so they said. But until the heretical statements of Rev. De Wolf were defended, no one dared to *reveal* that he thought that the Declaration was false doctrine. Rev. De Wolf put them all on the spot—and they must see that now. They must see that he turned things into a different channel from the one into which they were engineering things. But the moment they went on record as defending Rev. De Wolf’s statements, that moment they *condemned* the Declaration which declares that the promise is unconditional. That moment they said that the Declaration was false doctrine. They did not simply reject it. They condemned it.

And so the gate must be opened somehow, somewhere.

We ask once again: Do people inside the walls ever complain that the walls are too high? Does a man ever complain that his life is too safe?

But as soon as those inside the walls want to bring in those who do not belong there, then they begin to call the Confessions onesided. Then they begin to talk about the *whole* Word of God. When those brought up in Reformed circles want to introduce the “altar call,” the “invitation,” the “offer and promise to everyone who hears on the condition of faith” they always set the Confessions aside and speak about the *whole* Word of God. And before long they have the creed; No creed but Christ. Their very slogan is

their creed. And by that creed they can believe anything about Christ that they please. That is mighty broad!

Indeed, Rev. Blankespoor says that they sincerely attempted to "live out of and according to the *whole* Word of God as interpreted in the Three Forms of Unity." He has regard for the Confessions, so it seems. But why that strange emphasis upon the *Whole* Word of God. And remember that in that "*whole*" Word of God he finds the promise to all who hear on the condition of faith and the prerequisite man fulfills to enter the kingdom. He finds in that *whole* Word of God defense for Rev. De Wolf's statements. He finds in the *whole* Word of God a defense for that which the Three Forms of Unity, our Confessions *condemn*.

In this connection let it escape no one's attention that by synodical decision those who left us rejected that Declaration, stating that the Three Forms of Unity express "more fully and better" the doctrines which the Declaration treats. That is so much nonsense again and deceptive propaganda for an open gate, for lower walls. And anyone who takes the time to think about it will realize that.

They do not need the Declaration to defend these doctrines? They can defend themselves over against the Liberated Conditional theology without the Declaration?

Listen! Had we said that, had we who were spiritually and doctrinally strong enough by God's grace to condemn the statements of Rev. De Wolf without the Declaration, if we had said we did not need it, that would have been an entirely different story. But these men who can see no evil in those statements of Rev. De Wolf and who will defend him with them tooth and nail, they can defend themselves over against the Liberated conditional theology? Let any one of them or all of them together show us one slightest difference between those statements of Rev. De Wolf and Prof. Veenhof's promise to every baptized child. They cannot do it.

And, Rev. Howerzyl, do not deliberately mislead God's people by making them think that we used the Declaration to condemn Rev. Kok's and Rev. De Wolf's heretical statements. Just because one man in our whole denomination referred to it in his protest does not mean that the Classis and Synod referred to it. Give us proof. We condemned that heresy without even mentioning the Declaration. And with those same Confessions which we used *you* were not able to see the evil of those statements. We must not have any of that talk, then, of the *whole* Word of God as interpreted in the Three Forms of Unity. If you cannot interpret, and cannot see that the Three forms of Unity interpret the Word of God in any other way than that they set the seal of approval upon the literal statements of Rev. De Wolf, then it is high time that you approach Chatham and Hamilton and tell them that before God you may not remain separate denominations because you both interpret Scripture and the Confessions as the statements of Rev. De Wolf do. Before

God you may not be separate denominations when your doctrine is so similar.

Let me prove that to you from another angle.

I have here the advice of Chatham in re the adoption of the Declaration. It speaks Rev. Blankespoor's language.

We translate freely and quote from it:

The Consistory of the Chatham Protestant Reformed Church . . . declares herewith that she has serious grievances against the above mentioned 'Declaration,' and that:

A. church politically:

B. Doctrinally:

1. because she cannot escape the conclusion that the 'Declaration' is characterized by a onesided presentation of the Scriptures and the confessions.
2. because according to the Scriptures the promise comes to us also conditionally."

That is far enough in the advice of Chatham to our Classis for the time being. As you read along the case only builds up to a stronger evidence that the gate is *open*; and Rev. Blankespoor must in all honesty say that the sentiments of these Liberated are exactly his. We will continue with this document next time in the light of Rev. Blankespoor's appeal to the "*whole* Word of God." Space permits only a few remarks about Chatham's advice as far as we quoted it and Rev. Blankespoor's conviction as to what really happened in our churches.

Note the same sentiment that the Declaration is onesided. Of course it is! It is God-centered. It is God-glorifying. It puts man on the side and confesses God always to be first. It denies *prerequisites*. And point 2 indicates what the other side must be: a conditional promise. Unless you have a conditional promise as well as an unconditional promise you do not have the whole Word of God according to the Liberated in Chatham. You are onesided, if you do not have a conditional promise.

Rev. Blankespoor and Chatham see eye to eye on that score.

The only difference is that Chatham says that we are onesided, as did the Christian Reformed Churches in 1924. So we did not change after all, did we? And Rev. Blankespoor says that we do not have the *whole* Word of God. Both ascribe a lack to us. And although Rev. Blankespoor does not dare to reveal what that lack is for fear that truly Protestant Reformed people will cease to follow him, Chatham which has no such scruples declares that the *thing* which we leave out of the word of God is the conditional promise, the prerequisite of man for entering the kingdom, the fulfilling of the condition of faith that the covenant promise of baptism may be obtained.

Sister churches they surely can be!

Before God they have no right to be separate when they believe the same conditional theology.

J.A.H.

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

VIEWS DURING THE SECOND PERIOD (300-750 A.D.)

THE CHURCH

How the position of the Church changed!

Prior to Constantine the Great the "powers that be" were pagan and Christianity was outlawed and the object of relentless persecution. The world-empire during the early centuries of the New Dispensation was the Roman empire. It was thoroughly pagan. And it exerted every effort, during these three early centuries of the New Dispensation, to destroy the Cause of Christ in the midst of the world.

The entire picture changes, however, with the ascendancy to the throne of Constantine the Great. His Edict of Milan, issued in the year, 313, placed Christianity on an equal footing with heathen religions before the law. Constantine was sufficiently shrewd to recognize the value of Christianity to his empire. It was to his advantage rather than to his disadvantage to recognize and encourage the Christian religion. Having formally embraced it he is known as the first Christian emperor.

Julian made a final desperate effort to destroy Christianity. This effort, we have seen, ended in dismal failure.

From now on the position of the Church in the midst of the world undergoes a radical change. It becomes an institution of power and glory in the world. Whereas until now the powers of the world had ruled over the Church and sought to destroy it, the situation now is exactly reversed. The Church, more and more, began to rule over the world. And the leader in this new set-up of things was, as we may conjecture, the bishop of Rome. It is true that the barbarians later seek to destroy all civilization of the old Roman empire. First, it was the terrible Attila, leading the Huns, who sought the overthrow of the empire. Other barbarians also invaded Italy and the West, and were undeniably successful to a large extent. In the seventh and early part of the eighth century the Mohammedans swept in from the East, conquered North Africa, Spain, and swept in France. However, this mad onrush was checked in the year, 732, at the famous battle of Tours. And ultimately these barbarian attacks merely served to strengthen the position of the bishop of Rome, who emerged out of all these terrible wars with unbelievable power and authority. We will have opportunity, later, to call attention to this in greater detail. The Church became the dominating factor in the history of the world, and it continued as such well into the period of the Reformation. Historically, during this period, the Church developed in external power and glory. It assumed more and more the form of a kingdom of this world.

The doctrine of the "Church" during this second period, 300-750 A.D.

It is at this time that we would present our readers with a sketch of the life of Augustine. It is said that Augustine is the first ecclesiastical author the whole course of whose development can be clearly traced, as well as the first in whose case we are able to determine the exact period covered by his career, to this very day. The influence which he has exerted upon the Church, not only in the period, 300-750 A.D., but throughout the New Dispensation, is tremendous. And it may be of interest to present to our readers a sketch of the life of this famous Church Father. In presenting this sketch we quote from the History of the Christian Church by Philip Schaff.

AUGUSTINE.

It is a venturesome and delicate undertaking to write one's own life, even though that life be a masterpiece of nature or of the grace of God, and therefore most worthy to be described. Of all autobiographies none has so happily avoided the reef of vanity and self-praise, and none has won so much esteem and love through its honesty and humility as that of St. Augustine.

The "Confessions," which he wrote in the forty-sixth year of his life, still burning in the ardor of his first love, are full of the fire and unction of the Holy Ghost. They are a sublime effusion, in which Augustine, like David in the fifty-first Psalm, confesses to God, in view of his own and of succeeding generations, without reserve the sins of his youth; and they are at the same time a hymn of praise to the grace of God, which led him out of darkness into light, and called him to service in the kingdom of Christ. Here we see the great church teacher at all times "prostrate in the dust, conversing with God, basking in His love; his readers hovering before him only as a shadow." He puts away from himself all honor, all greatness, all beauty, and lays them gratefully at the feet of the All-merciful. The reader feels on every hand that Christianity is no dream nor illusion, but truth and life, and he is carried along in adoration of the wonderful grace of God.

Aurelius Augustine, born on the 13th of November, 354, at Tagaste, an unimportant village of the fertile province Numidia in North Africa, not far from Hippo Regius, inherited from heathen father, Patricius, a passionate sensibility, from his Christian mother, Monica (one of the noblest women in the history of Christianity, of a highly intellectual and spiritual cast, of fervent piety, most tender affection, and all-conquering love), the deep yearning towards God so grandly expressed in his sentence: "Thou hast made us for Thee, and our heart is restless till it rest in Thee" (one may well question this remark of the learned historian that Augustine inherited his yearning towards God from his mother, — H.V.) This yearning, and his reverence for the sweet and holy name of Jesus, though crowded into the

background, attended him in his studies at the schools of Madaura and Carthage, on his journeys to Rome and Milan, and on his tedious wanderings through the labyrinth of carnal pleasures, Manicheean mock-wisdom, Academic skepticism, and Platonic idealism; till at last the prayers of his mother, the sermons of Ambrose, the biography of St. Anthony, and, above all, the Epistle of Paul, as so many instruments in the hand of the Holy Ghost, wrought in the man of three and thirty years that wonderful change which made him an incalculable blessing to the whole Christian world, and brought even the sins and errors of his youth into the service of the truth.

A son of so many prayers and tears could not be lost, and the faithful mother who travailed with him in spirit with greater pain than her body had in bringing him into the world, was permitted for the encouragement of future mothers, to receive shortly before her death an answer to her prayers and expectations, and was able to leave this world with joy without revisiting her earthly home. For Monica died on a homeward journey, in Ostia at the mouth of the Tiber in her fifty-sixth year in the arms of her son, after enjoying with him a glorious conversation that soared above the confines of space and time, and was a foretaste of the eternal Sabbathrest of the saints. She regreted not to die in a foreign land, because she was not far from God, Who would raise her up at the last day. "Bury my body anywhere," was her last request, "and trouble not yourselves for it; only this one thing I ask, that you remember me at the altar of my God, wherever you may be." Augustine, in his Confessions, has erected to Monica the noblest monument that can never perish.

If ever there was a thorough and fruitful conversion, next to that of Paul on the way to Damascus, it was that of Augustine, when, in a garden of the Villa Cassiciacum, not far from Milan, in September of the year 386, amidst the most violent struggles of mind and heart—the birth-throes of the new life—he heard that divine voice of a child: "Take, read!" and he "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 13:14). It is a touching lamentation of his: "I have loved Thee late, Thou Beauty, so old and so new; I have loved Thee late! And lo! Thou was within, but I was without, and was seeking Thee there. And into Thy fair creation I plunged myself in my ugliness; for Thou wast with me, and I was not with Thee! Those things kept me away from Thee, which had not been, except they had been in Thee! Thou didst call, and didst cry aloud, and break through my deafness. Thou didst glimmer, Thou didst shine, and didst drive away my blindness. Thou didst breathe, and I drew breath, and breathed in Thee. I tasted Thee, and I hunger and thirst. Thou didst touch me, and I burn for Thy peace. If I, with all that is within me, may once live in Thee, then shall pain and trouble forsake me; entirely filled with Thee, all shall be life to me."

He received baptism from Ambrose in Milan on Easter

Sunday, 387, in company with his friend and fellow-convert, Alypius, and his natural son Adeodatus (*given by God*). It impressed the divine seal upon the inward transformation. He broke radically with the world; abandoned the brilliant and lucrative vocation of a teacher of rhetoric, which he had followed in Rome and Milan; sold his goods for the benefit of the poor: and thenceforth devoted his rare gifts exclusively to the service of Christ, and to that service he continued faithful to his latest breath. After the death of his mother, whom he revered and loved with the most tender affection, he went a second time to Rome for several months, and wrote books in defense of true Christianity against false philosophy and the Manicheean heresy. Returning to Africa, he spent three years, with his friend Alypius and Evodius, on an estate in his native Tagaste, in contemplative and literary retirement.

Then, in 391, he was chosen presbyter against his will, by the voice of the people, which, as in the similar cases of Cyprian and Ambrose, proved to be the voice of God, in the Numidian maritime city of Hippo Regius (now Bona); and in 395 he was elected bishop in the same city. For eight and thirty years, until his death, he labored in this place, and made it the intellectual centre of Western Christendom.

His outward mode of life was extremely simple, and mildly ascetic. He lived with his clergy in one house in an apostolic community of goods, and made this house a seminary of theology, out of which ten bishops and many lower clergy went forth. Females, even his sister, were excluded from his house, and could see him only in the presence of others. But he founded religious societies of women; and over one of these his sister, a saintly widow, presided. He once said in a sermon, that he had nowhere found better men, and he had nowhere found worse, than in monasteries. Combining, as he did, the clerical life with the monastic, he became unwittingly the founder of the Augustinian order, which gave the reformer, Luther to the world.

The Lord willing, we will continue with this sketch of Augustine's life the next time.

H.V.

IN MEMORIAM

The Senior Young People's Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids hereby expresses its sympathy with two members, Ruth and Shirley Dykstra, in the loss of their sister

BETTY DYKSTRA

May our God comfort them with his abiding grace and the blessed assurance that there remaineth a rest for the people of God.

Jeannette Faber, Secretary
Rev. C. Hanko, President

The Voice of Our Fathers

The Canons of Dordrecht

PART TWO

EXPOSITION OF THE CANONS FIRST HEAD OF DOCTRINE OF DIVINE PREDESTINATION

Article 15 (continued)

Let us briefly take note of each of these attributes of the decree of reprobation.

First of all, let us not overlook the most important thought in this expression of the *Canons*, namely, that this decree of God proceeds “out of his . . . good pleasure.” A truly Reformed man may be inclined to say that this is a mere platitude, that it is simply an axiom of the truth of Scripture that God’s decree proceeds out of His good pleasure. Nevertheless, this can well stand emphasis, especially in regard to the decree of reprobation. This means that it was God’s good pleasure, that it seemed good to Him, that He eternally should decree to damn some forever. It means that the Holy One of Israel eternally took pleasure in this. This is not a deduction which may be drawn or may not be drawn from this article. But it is the statement,—plain for all who can read,—of the fathers themselves. Whether one agrees with the statement or not, whether one likes the statement or not, it stands there. If you do not like it and do not agree with it, that may be your privilege. But you must not corrupt the Reformed truth. And you must not attribute that view merely to some “super supralapsarians,” who do not really represent the main line of Reformed truth. The statement stands there in all its naked factualness. It is as Reformed as the fathers of Dordrecht were. It is their own confession. And all who do not agree with it simply are not Reformed. For who, pray, is Reformed that does not agree with the literal expressions of Dordt?

But now compare with this the proposition of a general offer of grace and salvation that is well-meant on the part of God also for the reprobate. Compare with this the contention that God also intends the salvation of the reprobate. Compare with this the proposition that, according to Ezekiel 33:11, God does not, in the view of some, desire or take pleasure in the death of *any* wicked, but takes pleasure in this, that *all* wicked shall live. Compare with this the proposition that God’s promise, which is His oath, is general, comes to all, elect and reprobate alike, upon condition of faith. Compare with this the contention that in the sacrament of holy baptism God declares His love to everyone that is baptized! And take no refuge, then, in the claim that this matter belongs to the sphere of the mystery. For there is nothing mysterious about this at all: it is very obviously not a mystery, but a contradiction. The very thought of crediting the divine mind with such obvious contradictions is blasphemous. How can God offer grace and salvation

well-meaningly to all, while His good pleasure is that the reprobate shall be damned forever? How can God promise, mark you, swear an oath, an immutable oath, that He will save all, while it is His equally immutable good pleasure that some shall be forever lost? Or, to phrase it somewhat differently, how can the contents of the gospel, the *good tidings*, ever be anything else than the contents of His decree, His *good pleasure*?

In the second place, this good pleasure of God concerning reprobation is marked by the following characteristics:

1) It is *sovereign*, or, as the original has it, *most free*. This means, as it did in the case of the decree of election, that it is neither determined nor limited by anything outside of God Himself. The reason for reprobation is not to be sought or found outside of God,—for example, in the devil, or in sin. Nor does the devil or sin,—not even the sin of the reprobate persons themselves,—in any way determine, limit, or necessitate the divine decree of reprobation. God is absolutely free and sovereign in all His doings, also in the act of reprobation. It is certainly incorrect and not Reformed to say that the wicked are reprobated on account of their sin, whether that be sin in general or the particular sin of unbelief. The latter is the Arminian position. And when the *Canons* emphasize that God’s decree of reprobation proceeds out of His *sovereign* good pleasure, they exactly contradict that Arminian position.

It is well that we understand the above truth, especially in view of the fact that there are those who present this as being peculiarly supralapsarian, and who like to pretend that infralapsarianism really teaches that reprobation finds its reason in sin and unbelief. The latter is neither supra nor infra, but Arminian. And while we freely admit that the *Canons* are infralapsarian in their view of the decrees, we at the same time must insist that it is characteristic of genuine infralapsarianism, as well as of the supra view, that the decree of reprobation is absolutely sovereign, and finds its reason nowhere else than in God’s free good pleasure. And it is indeed striking that even as this truth is maintained by genuine infralapsarianism, there are few today who will assume this position and consistently maintain it. The very men who are supposed to subscribe to the *Canons* literally contradict them. Thus, for example, under the binding influence of the First Point of 1924, and logically forced to make a choice between two obviously contradictory dogmas, the Rev. A. C. De Jong, in his book “The Well-Meant Gospel Offer — The Views of H. Hoeksema and K. Schilder,” chooses for Kalamazoo rather than for Dordrecht, when he writes: “No one disbelieves because he is a reprobate. He is a reprobate because he does not want to believe.” And to choose for Kalamazoo is principally the same as choosing for Gouda. The same must be said of the following statement from the pen of Ds. T. Bos, in his explanation of the *Canons*, page 60, who in his explanation of this very article on reprobation writes: „De mensch wordt alzoo niet verworpen, omdat God dat zoo wilde, zonder daarvoor rechtvaardige re-

denen te hebben; *neen hij wordt verworpen, omdat hij zichzelf verdoemelijk gemaakt heeft*, en nu niets en niemand God kon beletten, te besluiten, hem the verdoemen, in onderscheiding van sommigen, die Hij besloot, uit den verdoemlijken staat te redden" (Italics mine, H.C.H.). Hence, let the Reformed believer beware such open denials of the spirit and letter of Dordrecht!

2) It is righteous, or, "most just." This must be maintained as an *a priori* truth, of course. That is, we may not approach the subject of sovereign reprobation with the *question* in our soul, whether there is unrighteousness with God. To do so is nothing short of blasphemous. Whether we can understand the relation between God's righteousness and His sovereign decree, or not, makes absolutely no difference: the Most High is righteous in all His ways. And this is certainly the spirit of the apostle Paul in Romans 9:14, in dealing with this very subject of sovereign election and reprobation: "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid." Only then may we go on, and say, in the first place, that it is impossible to charge the Sovereign Potter with unrighteousness when He exercises His power to make of the same lump of clay one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor. In the second place, however, we find in the *Canons* a slightly different *viewpoint* in regard to this subject. This view is perfectly legitimate. Only it must be carefully understood. The *Canons* really view this attribute of the righteousness of reprobation not from the point of view of the righteousness of *the act of sovereignly decreeing*, but from the point of view of the righteousness of *the contents* of the decree of reprobation. And therefore, they emphasize: a) That the reprobate have *wilfully plunged themselves* into the common misery in which they are left. This is, of course, a characteristically infralapsarian statement. But do not forget that this is, in the first place, not a judicial reason for God's sovereign decree *as such*, for then the decree would no more be sovereign. But it is a judicial reason for the *contents* of the decree, namely, that they should be *left* in the common misery. Nor should we forget, in the second place, that, also according to the *infra* view, which, of course, places the fall and sin logically before predestination in the counsel of God, the fact that the reprobate are in the common misery is not to be separated from the sovereign decree of God. And no genuine *infra*, whether he likes to speak of a "permissive" will of God, or not, will deny this. b) In close connection with the preceding, that they are left in their own ways "under his just judgment." See our remarks concerning the translation made in the beginning of this chapter c) That they are damned and punished both on account of "their own unbelief, but also for all their other sins." And here it is of crucial importance once more that we clearly understand that this is not a judicial ground for the sovereign decree, but a judicial ground for the *contents* of that decree. To say that men are *reprobated* on account of their sins and unbelief is to sail in Arminian waters. To say that men are *damned* and

punished on account of their own unbelief and/or all their other sins is simply to maintain the Reformed and Scriptural truth of divinely just retribution. This latter truth the *Canons* here maintain. Only they insert this truth into the divine decree of reprobation, as its contents. The terminal of reprobation, the goal at which it points, is the damnation of the reprobate. But to that decree of reprobation belongs the fact that this is a damnation to be reached in the way of willful sin and to be wreaked on account of willful sin. And to safeguard the truth of the sovereignty of the decree of reprobation let us remind ourselves once more that also infralapsarianism does not by any means place this sin, on account of which the reprobate are damned and punished, outside of the decree of God, even if it be by means of the weak expression, "permissive will."

3) Again in close connection with the preceding attribute of righteousness, the *Canons* characterize this sovereign decree of reprobation as being irreprehensible, (*onberispelijk* in the Dutch). Also this, of course, can be understood in a two-fold sense. In the first place, it must surely be maintained that God is *a priori* irreprehensible, that is, whether we can fathom this irreprehensibility or not. God is never to be blamed or charged by the creature. And let us note, once again, that this is the viewpoint of the apostle Paul in Romans 9:19, 20, where the apostle treats an objection to the truth that God has mercy on whom He will have mercy, and hardens whom He will. There we read: "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" And following this we find the example of the potter's power over the clay to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor. God is God. And He does all His good pleasure. And man can certainly not reprehend Him. Mark you well, while it is true that the *sinner* cannot reprehend God, the apostle in Romans 9 does not speak of the *sinner*, but of *man*. Even apart, therefore, from the matter of sin and from the truth that the reprobate is damned on account of his own sin, it must be maintained that man can never reply against God. We may safely say, however, in the second place, that the *Canons* view this irreprehensibility of the divine decree of reprobation in the same way that they speak of its righteousness. In the light of the fact that ethically sin is man's own fault, and in the light of the fact that man's damnation and punishment are visited upon him according to strictest justice, the reprobate can never *blame* God when their reprobation reaches its terminal in the day of judgment, but will surely have to admit the justice of their lot.

4) Finally, this decree is characterized as unchangeable. About this we may be brief. God is eternally unchangeable. And therefore His decree, also of reprobation, is as eternally unchangeable as Himself. And this the fathers of Dordt maintain in opposition to Arminianism, which really teaches a constant flux between election and reprobation. H.C.H.

ALL AROUND US

What Really Happened In Our Churches.

The reader will remember that in the last two issues of the Standard Bearer I have been quoting and commenting on an essay of the Rev. J. Blankespoor which he delivered at a conference of schismatic ministers and appearing in Concordia of December 2, 1954.

I now wish to continue the quotation and make a few pertinent remarks. Rev. Blankespoor now begins to present his positive answer to the question: What really happened in our Churches? I quote him:

"Now I will be positive. Personally I would answer this important question as to what really happened in our circles with the following sentence: On our part it was and is a sincere attempt to live out of and according to the *whole* Word of God, as explained in our Three Forms of Unity. This we tried to do with the doctrinal difficulties but also with the church-political issues. I realize that this is a tremendous accusation of those who no longer wished to live with us under one ecclesiastical roof, but it is my conviction, nevertheless.

"The underlying causes of this sad history are much greater than a difference of opinion on conditions, and some phase of the promise, etc.

"Let me first of all delineate on this subject in connection with the doctrinal difficulties.

"I am convinced that everyone of our leaders to this day wants to live out of and preach only the Word of God as explained by our Three Forms of Unity. And if any of us is to be examined, or when we were approached on the matter or actually were examined we gladly submitted to be examined in re these Standards. But we would not be examined whether we agreed with some personal opinions, or ideas, of some individuals. I am convinced that we all want all of our Standards, which speak of the cardinal truths of Scripture, reprobation as well as election, the unconditional election and salvation of God's people as well as some phase of conditions in a Reformed sense. Perhaps some of us are weak on some points of these Standards, and if we are we do well to take inventory of ourselves. I think it is true that the church often goes astray not because of what she says, but because of what she doesn't say. But all of our history, with all the literature that has been published has not proven that anyone of us disagrees with these Standards, and it surely is our sincere desire, I repeat to live and preach everything they teach."

Before I proceed to quote any more let me call your attention to two or three things relative to the above quotation.

In the first place the reader should take particular notice of what Rev. Blankespoor says in the first paragraph, as well as how he says it. Blankespoor is convinced that on the part of the schismatic leaders, himself included, they en-

deavored sincerely "to live out of and according to the *whole* Word of God, as explained in our Three Forms of Unity." The word "whole" is underscored by the Rev. Blankespoor. He means to tell us that they, the schismatics, want the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, while at the same time he means to show that those who remained faithful to our Protestant Reformed doctrine do not and did not endeavor to live sincerely out of and according to the WHOLE Word of God as explained in our Three Forms of Unity. That this is what he means is evident from what he further says in this paragraph, namely, "I realize that this is a tremendous accusation of those who no longer wished to live with us under one ecclesiastical roof." Indeed, this is not only a "tremendous accusation", it is also a most ridiculous lie! Blankespoor makes accusation again without an atom of proof.

But let me show you what Rev. Blankespoor really means. He means that they do not want the Declaration of Principles. Because we want that Declaration, and believe now that we should have had it many years ago, according to Blankespoor we want more than the Three Forms of Unity. This latter is also a perversion of the truth. The only grain of truth in the entire first paragraph of the quotation above is the fact that we did not wish to live under one ecclesiastical roof with them. And the only reason why we did not wish to do this is because they subscribed to the heretical doctrine condemned by Classis East and the Church-political error of what was formerly Classis West, as well as the false church polity of Rev. Kok, which allows ministers and churches to do as they please, to live as revolutionists in the Church of Christ.

In the second place, when the Rev. Blankespoor writes that "the underlying causes of this sad history are much greater than a difference of opinion on conditions, and some phase of the promise, etc.", I agree with him. We have always said, and we say it again, that the fundamental and historical reason for the schismatics having left us is their infatuation for the Liberated Churches of the Netherlands and Canada, upon whom the schismatics even now, according to Rev. Howerzyl in the latest Concordia, are setting their eyes in the hope of becoming sister churches with them. Nothing but the Word of God and the Three Forms of Unity as the Liberated interpret them, and a Church Polity in which everyone can do what is right in his own eyes, that is what Blankespoor et al want, and that is what they had their mind set on for a long time. The controversy re conditions and the promise, etc., was, as far as they were concerned, only a stick to hit with.

And, relative to the last paragraph of the above quotation where Rev. Blankespoor again asserts that he wants only the Word of God as interpreted in the Three Forms of Unity, I have only one question: Where in the Scriptures and the Three Forms does one find the two statements of the Rev. De Wolf? I realize that Rev. Blankespoor admits that some of their men may be "weak" on some points of these Stand-

ards, and perhaps he is one of these weak ones so that he cannot answer my question. But I do believe, however, that he is a master at hokum. So maybe he can fish out a few articles of our Confessions where the "two statements" will nicely fit in? Rev. Blankespoor must not try to make us believe that it was a question whether he or anyone else could pass an examination on our Standards. It was solely the question: Are the two statements of De Wolf Scriptural and Confessional? Blankespoor and his colleagues said they were, and that, too, without a grain of proof or proof enough to satisfy our churches; while the Classis by a majority decision declared that the two statements were per se heretical. If Blankespoor et al have gone astray "because of what he did not say," why doesn't he say it now?

But the Rev. Blankespoor has more to say about this holding only to the Scriptures and the Standards. "Let me insert here, before I go further, that due to this desire we also of late have become more ecumenically minded, and think not only of our little churches, but of the one mighty church of Christ. In connection with this one cannot help but think about the history of the Reformed Churches in the past, since the days of the Reformation. For some time Calvinism and Reformed truth were strong in several countries, in Calvin's adopted country, Switzerland, and in Germany, France, England, and of course the Netherlands. But where are they all today? History teaches that the Netherlands remained the stronghold for this precious heritage. And what was it that this church confessed during all these years? Ever since 1618, i.e. for more than three hundred years, it was the Standard of the Three Forms of Unity. This teaches us that with this truth God has gathered and defended the one church of our Savior. And we with our children surely desire to be found in this one line."

Now what does Blankespoor mean to tell us? That we have those Standards no more? That is evidently what is implied in this paragraph. He means to say that they still want them and have them only, while we do not. What Rev. Blankespoor really implies is that because we have adopted the Declaration of Principles we either have more than the Three Forms of Unity, or, by giving them our own interpretation we have departed from these Standards. If this is not his meaning, the entire paragraph has little or no significance. In the past we have been accused by some of manufacturing a Fourth Form, by others of reading into the Three Forms what they do not contain, or of neglecting to say all that they contain. Nothing, of course, could be farther from the truth. Let our opponents show wherein the Declaration of Principles is not a true interpretation of the Three Forms, or that the principles which the Declaration sets forth are not in harmony with the truth expressed in the Three Forms of Unity. Let Blankespoor show us where the Confessions teach the conditional doctrine of the Liberated or the common grace theory of the Christian Reformed. Neither he nor any one else is able to do this. Why did

Blankespoor et al leave us? Because we departed from the Scriptures and the Three Forms of Unity? Nonsense! This is why they left us, because we would not budge an inch to allow them to introduce their Liberated conceptions in our churches. O, there is more, of course, and now Blankespoor admits it. He tells us that they, the schismatics, have become "ecumenically minded." They were not satisfied, to borrow an expression that appeared in the Standard Bearer several years ago, to be big frogs in a little pond. They desired no longer to think only "of our little churches." They had bigger aspirations. As one of their ministers told me in the year 1951, "there are a hundred thousand dutchmen across the pond that we ought to seek union with. See what we could do if we became sister churches with them. Why, we would have a Foreign Mission field dumped right in our lap. All we would have to do is take up the collections for it." O, indeed, they were ecumenically minded. So much so that they began to see visions and dream dreams. They dreamt how nice it would be if our two professors could be kicked out of their chair in our Seminary, and some of these Dutch professors from the Liberated come over and take their place, maybe a Dr. Schilder, Holwerda, or Veenhof or others. Yes, they were ecumenically minded alright, but I make bold to say, not in the true Reformed sense of the word. Blankespoor speaks the truth when he tells us that he and others were no longer satisfied to "think only of our little churches." Fact is, he and others thought nothing of them, nor of the truth they maintain. If he did, he could not possibly have desired to see them torn apart by an act of schism. If he had any thought at all for these little churches, he would have stood with us and helped to ban out of our midst the false doctrine of conditionalism. He would have insisted with us that the Declaration of Principles was absolutely necessary to keep our denominational walls so high that our purity of doctrine be maintained. But he was a big frog in a little pool, and he needed more water.

That this is the viewpoint of the Rev. Blankespoor and those who are with him, is established by what he writes in the sequence of his essay. There he accuses us of being sectarian. But of this we will have more to say next time, D.V. M.S.

IN MEMORIAM

The English Men's Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church hereby expresses its heartfelt sympathy to its fellow member, John Dykstra, and family in the loss of his son and daughter

RICHARD DYKSTRA
BETTY DYKSTRA

Isaiah 41:10: "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness."

G. M. Ophoff, President
Richard Teitsma, Secretary