

THE STANDARD

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MEDITATION

Blessing God

"When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which He hath given thee." Deut. 8:10

How utterly dependent are we!

And also: how utterly foolish when the mouth of such a dependent creature "boasteth great things!"

God created all things utterly dependent upon many things, and in the last and constant analysis, dependent upon Him.

According to His ordinances we have a definite need of many things at all moments of our existence. Where would we be but for a little space, a little air, a crust of bread and a little water? What misery without any company at all of man and beast? How dependent upon the green foliage around about us, the blue firmament above and "terra firma" below our feet?

Moreover, where would we be but for the everpresent providence of God, Who upholdeth, preserveth us as in the hollow of His hand? Constantly He causes us to be and to continue to be. He it is Who changeth food into blood and strength and energy. Continually He walks beside our pathway, makes the pathway and keeps our feet from stumbling. Before and behind, to the right and the left of us, without and within us, He is working in our behalf. When night is dark and my consciousness has fled: He slumbers not and never sleeps. Also when my time (ah! my time?) draws near, He wakes me every morning and calls me back to conscious life. He points silently and invisibly to my clothing and ushers me unto the board where food and drink beckon.

* * *

And I am full.

Yes, indeed, "when thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which He hath given thee!"

It happened often in the past, that we pleaded with our God and begged of Him to give us "food convenient for us." And we understood that convenient food was after all the best, knowing our frame. We realized that if we became satiated with riches we would be in danger of becoming proud and ask: Who is the Lord? Would you kindly tell me where He is? Also what need have I of Him? For I really do not need Him.

No, we did not dare ask for riches. For more than we absolutely need according to His own ordinances for the body and the soul.

Neither did we ask for poverty.

Poverty is when we receive less than we have need of according to these same ordinances. A poor man is he that chatters of the cold and is famished with hunger. When you have too much to die and not enough to live. No, we did not ask for poverty.

But we desired of the Lord food convenient.

And He heard our prayers. Only, He revealed Himself as the God Who is the overflowing Fountain of all good things. As He does in nature when the ground is strewn with fruit that will never be eaten, so also with us: time and again mother would gather the pieces that were left. Every day of the blessed year we ate and ate and ate.

When thou art full. We have been full to overflowing. Even the dogs refused the dainty morsels at times and turned back from overflowing bowls of delicate food.

But, Father, we have not always blessed Thee when we were full. Yes, we did go through the motions of blessing Thee, but our heart was oftentimes so far away from Thee and Thy blessed virtues!

Bathing ourselves in God's wealth, we forgot. Moreover, we would sometimes boast great things! For we are so utterly foolish!

The wealth of God in food and drink, air and light, space and time, with all the good gifts that are as a veritable rain descending upon us for years and years: how they ought to lead us to the blessing of God, the praising of His name and the telling of His wondrous works!

But, hark!

All these things are as nothing compared to the blessings of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ!

All the earthly things are but for a time. They cannot nurture the soul and spirit, made in the similitude of God.

When thou shalt have eaten and art full. Again we hear the same word, but ah, how different a tone!

I remember that we also pleaded with God to give us convenient food for our souls. We have begged the Lord to give us a harvest of spiritual blessings in the Beloved. We called upon the Living God to give us Himself. "When shall I come and appear before God?" We longed for the communion of love and friendship with the Everblessed One. We asked Him for the pure and unadulterated preaching of His Divine Word. We longed for communion of saints and the walk in the light. We prayed that He indeed might forgive our transgressions and blot them out in boundless grace. A petition went up to Him for regeneration and calling, for faith and hope and love for the generation following so that they might take up the banner of the cross when falling away from our feeble and dying hands. "And Thy glory unto our children!" We pleaded for Jesus, Jehovah-Salvation, for ever.

Food, spiritual food convenient for us and our generations.

* * *

And He heard in His Holy heaven.

And He gave.

While the world loved her sin and the godless forgot, while the devils would gather the poor deluded souls unto violence: the Lord gave us the light of His countenance so that even the widow and orphan would sing for joy.

Throughout the blessed year He gave us the Cross.

Its power humbled all our pride; and this again and again. Powerfully, efficaciously, He humbled us into the dust so that the angels heard the cry: Oh God! Be merciful unto me, the sinner! And they rejoiced when sinners, when we were converted unto God.

Its power showed us the love of God that finds its object. When we studied the Cross again and again we saw the everlasting arms of God grasping us underneath and drawing us out of the mire of sin and filth unto the beauty of holiness.

But best of all, its power showed us that God is God and that God is good.

The Cross of Jesus showed us that God loves Himself and the creature, His own darling creature, for His own name's sake. That all these things were to the praise of His glory. "For Mine own Name's sake I will do it!" And: "I will not give My honor unto another!" Oh, blessed Jehovah, Thou art Good, eternally, blessedly Good!

* * *

When thou art full.

Then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God!

To bless, what else is but to sing "eulogiums" unto the praise of God? It means that we shall speak a beautiful word unto God about God.

And did we?

Have we continually, holily and wholly blessed the Lord our God when we had eaten and were full?

Ah, this is the tragedy of our lives! No, a thousand times no, we have not blessed the Lord our God!

Instead we have murmured and criticised the Lord our God. In the midst of the unspotted purely white of His sanctuary we have besmirched His very dainties with our filth and sin and manifold wickedness. Ah, our very righteousnesses were as filthy rags before Him and we know it.

And again and again we have heard His tender voice: Brethren, these things ought not to be! With our mouths we have cursed the brother made in the similitude of the ever-blessed God.

Oh, beloved reader, we have sinned grievously. That is the tragedy of the life of the Christian. It seems I hear again that wailing complaint of Paul, wrung from his breast in tears and sighs: "for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not."

Do I forget the strivings of the new man in Christ? Do I shut mine eyes to the good works in which the Christian walks and which were afore prepared that he should walk in them? No, reader, but I see these works as they are leaving me. Certainly these works are good as God has prepared them, but when they leave me, when I have walked with them and they return unto God to be written down in His book of remembrance, they are polluted by the sin that is everpresent in my members. Our sins rise up against us prevailing day by day. God be merciful to me!

Oh, there is only One who is definitely and beautifully religious. And that One is Jesus. Listen to Him. He has come out of the great tribulation. He comes back from hellish torment: "I will declare Thy Name unto My brethren: in the midst of the congregation will praise Thee!" Ps. 22:22

And He did. And He does.

Were it not for His perfect work of blessing Jehovah, where would we be? In the midst of our tragedy, this is my comfort: Who maketh intercession for us. Unto Him who always heareth the voice of Christ. For His is the perfect praise.

And He continues to teach us how to bless Jehovah. And when we cry and weep: "Ah, that all that is within me might praise His holy Name!" Then He comes and instructs us and places the songs of praise, mind you, His songs of praise upon our lips and enthuses us unto the love of God. What uphill struggle!

* * *

But He is Jehovah-salvation. He has the victory. And He continues to gather and to instruct, until all the saints

shall be liberated from indwelling sin, until this world that now is shall be transformed into "the good land."

Because there is a land that is fairer than day and by faith we can see it afar. And when you arrive there, brother, when you shall stand in body and soul, liberated at the river of God . . . then the elder brother Christ shall sing His song of praise, blessing Jehovah. And we shall sing the chorus.

How unspeakably lovely!

There we shall receive the wish and longing of our inmost heart.

G.V.

FRIEND AND FOE

A friend, it is a precious thing,
But if to this I'd add my prayer
'Twould be a strange request I bring —
That God would give a goodly share
Of enemies, all filled with hate
A hundred, rather than just eight.

Oh, precious mirrors for my mind —
Oh, faithful watchers who abide;
Oh, goads that every weakness find —
Oh, spurs who lazy members chide;
Thanks be to you, for now I know
The best I gave, to you I owe.

Who finds a friend, may do all right,
But he who meets the enemy,
Is strong in spirit, through the fight;
Is steel and gold through 'dversity;
If only he has understood
That hate he must reward with good.

Give all of us, Oh Lord, we pray
A faithful friend, but do provide —
(As long as sins and evil stay)
Some wicked enemies to chide;
So that, where friends may lull to sleep
They prod us on, awake to keep.

GREAT SHEPHERD WHO LEADEST THY PEOPLE IN LOVE

Great Shepherd who ledest Thy people in love,
'Mid cherubim dwelling, shine Thou from above;
In might come and save us, Thy people restore,
And we shall be saved when Thy face shines once more.

O haste, Lord, to hear us and pity our woes,
Affliction our portion, despised by our foes.
O Lord God Almighty, in mercy restore,
And we shall be saved when Thy face shines once more.

Psalm 80:1, 2

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EDITORIALS

Kok is a Hopeless Case

The more I read what flows from the pen of Bernard Kok the more I actually receive the impression that he is a hopeless case.

As long as a man still reveals an inkling of understanding of what he is writing or talking about, you can, at least, discuss matters with him. But I now must conclude that this is no longer the case.

For a time I actually thought that the trouble with Kok was ethical, and that he intentionally distorted and misquoted me in the hope that his readers would be sufficiently dense and ignorant simply to accept what he writes in good faith. Even now, I would not deny that there is an element of truth in this impression of him.

Yet, I now begin more and more to believe that Kok, in a large measure is honestly dense and ignorant in respect to most of the things he produces by his pen. Just one instance in proof of this.

In a private epistle to one of my members, Kok makes and translates the following quotation from an article of mine in the *Standard Bearer*:

"God speaks to him through that gospel. In His Word He calls unto penitance and contrition, unto repentance and faith. In that Gospel He presents unto him in an unmistakably clear manner, the way of sin as the way which displeases God, which incites His terrible wrath, and as the way in which the sinner gathers unto himself treasures of wrath unto the day of vengeance. Moreover He opens in that Gospel a way unto the penitent to be reconciled to God, and to return unto the father's heart assuring him that He will in no wise cast him out and even promises him eternal life. No sinner who converts himself shall be able to say that God has pleasure in his death. This all is proclaimed in the gospel and is proclaimed unto all who come under the preaching of the Word, without distinction, also to the reprobate."

So I indeed wrote.

Anything wrong with it? Not in my opinion. I could literally write the same language today.

Why then, did Kok make this quotation to the brother from whom I received the above mentioned letter?

Because, according to him, in the above quoted lines I teach the same thing as did DeWolf when he preached: "God promises every one of you that, if you believe, you shall be saved."

Only, I make it worse yet. For, in the above quotation, according to Kok, I "literally affirm(s) that God in preaching the gospel to the reprobate even promises him eternal life!" The quotation is from Kok's above mentioned letter.

O tempora! O mores! Cicero would exclaim.

When I preach that God promises in the gospel, eternal

life to the penitent sinner, than, according to Kok, I preach that God promises eternal life to the reprobate!

O, indeed, the same gospel is proclaimed to all. But in that gospel God does not promise salvation to every one of you on condition that you believe.

But why try to repeat all this.

The intelligent reader has no need of it.

The brother to whom Kok wrote this letter was not for a moment deceived. And Kok? . . .

I really believe that it is a hopeless case to make him see the light.

H.H.

OPEN LETTER

The following letter was sent, by the Consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Mich. to all its former church-members:

Open letter to the former members of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan. To whom it may concern:

The Consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan comes to you, in the name of the Lord, with the following:

1. First of all, we wish to say that the fact that we address you as members apart from what you call your consistory, is because we cannot possibly recognize the latter as a consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church, and also because you are individually concerned in the matter about which we wish to address you. We also wish to impress upon your mind that this letter is not written to you from any ulterior or selfish motives, but because we feel sincerely sorry for you and still have your real, spiritual interests at heart. This is true of the whole consistory, especially of our pastors, more especially of the Rev. H. Hoeksema, who has been your pastor for thirty-five years, and who cannot forget his former sheep, who, moreover, feels deeply grieved that so many of you are deceived.

2. Secondly we write this letter to you because we have heard that you have decided very foolishly to appeal the case concerning the property of the First Protestant Reformed Church to the Supreme Court of the State of Michigan:

a. Again we wish to emphasize and we sincerely may say this before the face of God and our Savior Jesus Christ that we do not address you in our own but in your interest, when we advise you not to appeal. Because we feel perfectly confident that the decision of Judge Taylor will never be reversed.

b. However, your decision to appeal to the Supreme Court we consider very foolish for the following reasons:

(1) You are not, and were not since June 23, 1953, a Church, but a mere group of people, for you function under the name of the First Protestant Reformed Church, which you were not since June 23, 1953, are not now, and never

can be. And even the worldly court has now decided that you are not.

(2) This means that ever since June 23, 1953, you had no legal officebearers, and have not now. You have no minister and no elders, for they were legally deposed, and you have no deacons for they were never elected by the legal congregation and installed by the legal consistory. And the worldly court now also ruled that they are not officebearers of the First Protestant Reformed Church.

(3) This means that, ever since June 23, 1953, you never had preaching of the Word for the gospel can be preached only by a legally ordained minister; you had no baptism or celebration of the Lord's Supper; the marriages which your deposed minister performs are illegal, and you cannot receive or issue membership papers under the name of the First Protestant Reformed Church. All this is now confirmed by the worldly court.

(4) Do not say that we did the same thing in the years 1924-26, for this is not true. At that time the consistory also functioned, and continued in their office but not under the name of Eastern Ave. Christian Reformed Church. We became a new Church under the name Protestant Christian Reformed Church which later was changed to Protestant Reformed Church.*

3. Thirdly we write you this letter because reliable reports have it that at your congregational meeting of January 5, 1955, it was stated that from your group several overtures, three or four, were sent to us to the effect that you desired to settle the matter of the property outside of the worldly court. Concerning this we wish to state:

a. That this is a gross untruth. Let those that made this claim produce the evidence. We were simply locked out and to prevent riot we remained out.

b. That the only overture to this effect came from us. In our overture we offered that we retain the name Protestant Reformed Church, that we get possession of the archives, that we sell the property and divide the proceeds equally between you and us. This proposition was made through our attorney. We never even received an answer.

4. Fourthly, we wish to admonish you, in the name of the Lord, not to continue any farther in this evil way but to rescind your decision to appeal to the Supreme Court.

5. Fifthly, many of you are under the impression that you are indebted to us all the money you collected during the entire period since June 23, 1953. That is not true. The decree of the judge affords us, besides the property, all money, goods, bank account, bonds, and other property, of whatsoever kind or nature which you now hold or possess," plus the expenses of the case in court.

6. Finally, we feel that many of you have simply been deceived. Therefore, we pray you, if there still is the love of the Protestant Reformed truth in your heart, return to us, in the way of repentance and confession, that once more

we may be united in the faith, the angels in heaven may rejoice, and God's name may be glorified.

The consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church,

Rev. H. Hoeksema, Pres.

Rev. C. Hanko, Pres.

Mr. J. M. Faber, Clerk.

*Editorial note: It might be added here that, in 1924, the consistory never deposed its pastor, not any of its elders. This was done in 1953 with DeWolf and the elders that followed him.

H.H.

AS TO BOOKS

De Triomf der Genade in de Theologie van Karl Barth (De triumph of grace in the theology of Karl Barth) by Dr. G. C. Berkhouwer. Publishel by J. H. Kok, Kampen, Nederland, Price f 12.50.

This is one of the best books on the theology of Karl Barth, from a Reformed viewpoint, I have ever read. It is clear exposition of this theology as well as a rather thorough criticism of it. Yet, it is not unfair but rather sympathetic. Though he does warn against the danger of this theology, yet he does not go into the extreme of other criticisms like Van Til's "The New Modernism." It is evident from Dr. Berkhouwer's book that he does not agree with Van Til.

The book consists of two parts. After an introduction, it offers, first of all an analysis of Barth's theology in which the author discusses the Theology of Crisis, and then the Triumph of creation, of Election, of Reconciliation, of the Future and of Grace in antithesis with Rome. After an "intermezzo" the author offers his criticism of Barth's theology discussing the nature of the triumph and its universality, the divine and the eschatological triumph, and he concludes with a chapter on "The Triumph and the Kingdom."

This book is certainly worthy of a further discussion, for which I have no time at present, but which I would like to take up is some future time. In my opinion, it is also worthy of a translation into English.

I most heartily recommend this book to all that are interested in informing themselves about the theology of Karl Barth from a Reformed point of view.

H.H.

NOTICE

The Holland Protestant Reformed Ladies' Society desires several copies of "Outlines on the Book of Revelations" by Rev. H. Hoeksema. Anyone wishing to sell or loan some, please write or contact Rev. J. Mc Collam, 246 W. 33rd St., Holland, Michigan.

OUR DOCTRINE

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

AN EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

PART III — OF THANKFULNESS

LORD'S DAY 45

Q. 116. Why is prayer necessary for christians?

A. Because it is the chief part of thankfulness which God requires of us: and also, because God will give his grace and Holy Spirit to those only, who with sincere desires continually ask them of him, and are thankful for them.

Q. 117. What are the requisites of that prayer, which he will hear?

A. First, that we from the heart pray to the one true God only, who hath manifested himself in his word, for all things, he hath commanded us to ask of him; secondly, that we rightly and thoroughly know our need and misery, that so we may deeply humble ourselves in the presence of his divine majesty; thirdly, that we be fully persuaded that he, notwithstanding that we are unworthy of it, will, for the sake of Christ our Lord, certainly hear our prayer, as he has promised us in his word.

Q. 118. What hath God commanded us to ask him?

A. All things necessary for soul and body; which Christ our Lord has comprised in that prayer he himself has taught us.

Q. 119. What are the words of that prayer?

A. Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Chapter 1

The Necessity of Prayer

All the rest of the Heidelberg Catechism is devoted to the subject of prayer. To this the present Lord's Day serves as an introduction.

We may well understand and realize clearly from the outset that the subject of prayer is very difficult to treat. It is difficult, in the first place, because of the very nature of the subject itself. And secondly, there is probably not a subject about which there is more misunderstanding and misapprehension than the subject of prayer. Prayer is a holy art. And if we would analyze it and expound some of its underlying principles, we will have to approach our task in an attitude of holy reverence. For, as the Heidelberg Catechism expresses it, it is the highest expression of gratitude. It is the highest possible expression of what lives in the believer's heart by grace. It is not in our good works;

it is not in our gifts, in our sacrifices and our offerings; but it is in our speech, in the word of our mouth, and particularly in our prayers, that God is glorified in the highest sense of the word. And because it is an art, and besides, a holy art, which only the regenerated man can acquire and practice, the Christian will have to become truly efficient in prayer by practice and experience. Of course, as in every art, so in the holy art of prayer there are underlying principles that control and govern it. And these underlying principles must be observed by those that are engaged in it. These principles can only be derived from the Word of God itself. We must allow ourselves to be instructed only by Scripture, in order to bring into practice more consciously and fully the underlying principles of the holy art of prayer, that thus we may become more efficient in this spiritual art. It is in the light of Scripture that we must seek an answer to such questions as: What is prayer? To whom do we pray? For what may we pray? What is the proper contents of our prayer? What is the proper attitude in prayer? But, as I said, difficult this subject is, too, because there is perhaps no subject of which there is so much misunderstanding as on this subject of prayer. How often is prayer which properly is the chief medium for the expression of thankfulness and for the glorification of God considered as a means to obtain the fulfillment of our own, and that too, of our carnal, desires. How frequently, while it should be the most humble expression of submission to the will of God, of our Father in heaven, it appears to be an attempt to impose our will upon the Almighty. And how frequently, while prayer is properly the seeking of the things of the kingdom of God and His righteousness, the seeking of His grace and Holy Spirit, it is nothing but the expression of earthly desires. The reason is, of course, that we are still largely carnal, and that carnal and earthly things often weigh more heavily with us than things that are spiritual and heavenly. And therefore, it is expedient that we always compare our own prayers with that most perfect prayer which the Lord taught us to pray. And in our discussion we do well to follow its lead, as also does the Heidelberg Catechism.

In the present Lord's Day the Heidelberg Catechism speaks, in the first place, of the necessity of prayer, or of the need of prayer for a Christian: "Why is prayer necessary for Christians?" To this question the Heidelberg Catechism gives a two-fold answer: first, prayer is necessary for a Christian because it is the chief part of thankfulness. It is not in what we do, but in what we speak that God is thanked and adored and glorified in the highest sense of the word. And secondly, prayer is necessary for Christians, according to the Heidelberg Catechism, because the grace of God's Spirit in Jesus Christ can be received only in the way of prayer. In Question and Answer 117 the Catechism discusses the requisites of all true prayer: what must characterize this holy art of prayer? To this the Catechism answers that prayer must be the expression of the heart. It must not

be mere outward form. We must not merely pray with our mouth or with the attitude of the body. But prayer must be from the heart. Secondly, prayer must be directed only to the true God. And He is the One that has revealed Himself in His Word. Thirdly, in our prayers, as far as their contents are concerned, we must pray for all things which God has commanded us in His Word: not for all things that may arise in our sinful heart or in our corrupt imagination, but only for those things which He Himself in His Word has commanded us. In the fourth place and in close connection with the preceding our prayers must be rooted in a deep sense of our real need, our spiritual need and our misery, lest we become proud in the imagination of our heart and assume the attitude of the pharisee in the parable. In prayer we must humble ourselves deeply before the majesty of God. And finally according to the Catechism, and in close connection with all the preceding, our prayers must also be characterized by perfect confidence that although we are in ourselves unworthy of it, God will nevertheless grant unto us all that we ask of Him in the name of Jesus Christ and according to His Word. In the last two questions and answers of this Lord's Day the Catechism briefly refers to the proper contents of our prayer. And it tells us that we may pray for all things necessary for soul and body. But these necessities are comprehended in the prayer which the Lord Himself has taught us.

Let us, then, first of all, ask the question in the light of Scripture: what is prayer, and how and why is prayer the highest expression of gratitude before God?

Innumerable passages of Holy Writ speak of prayer, both in the Old and in the New Testament. Throughout Scripture we find that the people of God are a praying people, even from the earliest times. Without prayer they cannot and do not live. It is the very breath of their spiritual life. They cry to Jehovah in their distress. They call upon His name in the day of trouble. They seek His grace and fellowship. They worship and adore Him. They praise Him and give Him thanks. And they glorify His holy name. Almost all the psalms assume the form of prayer and praise. Besides, many other prayers of eminent saints are preserved to us in Scripture, such as the prayers of Abraham and Moses, of David and Solomon, of Isaiah and Hezekiah, of Daniel and Nehemiah, of Elijah and of the remnant according to the election of grace, of the church in Jerusalem and of Paul. And surpassing them all, both in spiritual beauty and perfection of contents, we have the prayers of the Lord Jesus: His marvellous sacerdotal prayer, as recorded in John 17, and that profound expression of perfect submission to the will of the Father which He uttered in the hour of His agony in Gethsemane. And of course, we have the Lord's Prayer, the prayer in which He teaches His people how and for what to pray. The Lord once spake a parable to teach us that we should always pray and never faint, even though God is longsuffering over His people. Lu. 18:1-8. In the Ser-

mon on the Mount He assures us: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." Matt. 7:7, 8. We are admonished to continue instant in prayer, Rom. 12:12; and to pray without ceasing, I Thess. 5:17. And, according to James 5:16, "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." And in the prayer which the Lord hath left us we find a concrete illustration of all the principles that should underlie our prayers.

There are, of course, different forms of prayer, as well as different occasions for prayer. Scripture accordingly employs different terms to express different aspects of this holy engagement of the whole soul. In the Old Testament a word is used that denotes the act of exhibiting or exposing one's cause before the Lord. Another term has the same root in it as the word of *grace*, and is often translated by our English word *supplication*. It denotes the act of invoking God's favor, grace, pity, or mercy. Still another word, translated by *cry*, is used to denote the prayer of him that is in distress or tribulation, so that he cries to Jehovah for help and deliverance from trouble or from the enemy. Also in the New Testament we find several words for prayer. There is the word that is translated by our English term *worship*, which vividly expresses the proper attitude of him that presents himself before the face of the Most High, the attitude of deep humility and profound reverence. Other terms emphasize such ideas as those of confidence, trust, or of fellowship with God, or of devotion to the Most High. The activity of prayer as such is also variously expressed in Scripture. Prayer is called a lifting up of one's soul to God, a calling upon the name of the Lord, a seeking of Him or of His face, a bowing toward His holy place, an entering into His sanctuary, a drawing near unto the Lord, a crying unto Him from the depths, a pouring out of one's heart before Him, a waiting patiently for Him, and even a thirsting and panting of the soul after Him.

In the light of all these different Scriptural data, we may conclude that all true prayer contains the following elements: in the first place, it is a holy activity of the entire soul, proceeding from the regenerated heart and dominated by the Spirit of Christ. Needless to say, the natural man cannot pray. He cannot practice this holy art of prayer. It requires the regenerated child of God, that longs for Him and seeks His face. In the second place, it is such an activity of the believer that brings him consciously into the presence of God in the face of Jesus Christ, so that he may enter into His sanctuary, into His tabernacle, have fellowship with Him, and present himself before His face. Thirdly, all true prayer is always an act of worship whereby the soul prostrates itself before the glory of God's infinite majesty in humble reverence. In the fourth place it is the expression of a real sense of our deep need, a need principally of God and

of His grace and of a profound longing for Him and for His fellowship, and at the same time, of the heartfelt desire that He hear us and grant us what we ask and fulfill our need. And finally, true prayer is always the heartfelt assurance and confidence that He will surely receive us in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, and that He will give unto us that which we ask of Him, rooted in the consciousness of His great love to us. Briefly, prayer is the activity of the believer whereby he acknowledges the living God as He has revealed Himself in Christ Jesus as the God of our salvation, as the sole and overflowing fountain of all good, and approaches that fountain with an earnest desire to drink from its blessed water of life.

In the light of the above, we begin to understand why the Catechism is undoubtedly correct when it states that prayer is the chief part of thankfulness.

The Catechism asks the question why prayer is necessary for Christians. And this necessity may be considered from a two-fold point of view. It may be asked why God requires of us to pray, why prayer is our calling in all our life and walk before God. And secondly, the question may mean: why does a Christian need prayer for himself?

The first question is answered in the statement of the Heidelberg Catechism that prayer is the chief expression of thankfulness to God.

The idea of thankfulness, of gratitude, we have explained in another part of this work on the Heidelberg Catechism. True gratitude is never motivated by the desire to recompense, to requite, to remunerate, or to do something in return for the benefits we have received from God. If this were the case, it would be foolish to say that prayer is the chief part of thankfulness. For then the emphasis would rather fall on good works. But let us understand that it is forever impossible to recompense God, to do anything for Him whatever. Do you approach the fountain in order after you have drunken from its delicious refreshment to refill it? God is the fountain. And for the creature He is never anything else than the fountain. He is the sole fountain of all goodness, of all blessing, of all life. Never can you give anything to Him. Never can you add anything to His fullness. Never may you live in the vain imagination that you can do something for Him. This is strongly expressed in Scripture. Thus, for instance, we read in Psalm 50:7-15: "Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me. I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God

thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the Most High: And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." And the psalmist of Psalm 116, after he has related how the Lord has redeemed him from the depths of misery and death, asks the question: "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?" And immediately he answers: "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people." But true gratitude is simply the joyful acknowledgement that God is good. To adore Him as the only fountain of all blessings and to express this our adoration not only before His face, but also publicly, before all His people and before the whole creation, that is gratitude. Gratitude is the acknowledgement of the fact that He has revealed His great mercy and His unfathomable love in Jesus Christ our Lord, and that we have experienced that love, so that we say: "O give thanks unto the Lord: for he is good: because his mercy endureth for ever."

In this sense prayer is, of course, the chief part of thankfulness to God. For prayer means that we drink from the fountain and are satisfied, and then acknowledge it and express it with joy.

This, of course, does not exclude good works in the proper and Scriptural sense of the word. For also prayer is a good work, and, in fact, is the highest good work. The works of true conversion, repentance, hatred of all sin, joy in God, a hearty desire to walk according to all the commandments of God,—in these also we express our gratitude to God. And besides, a walk in all good works is necessary for the exercise of a life in prayer.

But the chief part of thankfulness is not in what we accomplish, not in our acts, but in what we express in prayer. This is the most important part of thankfulness. And this means that prayer *par excellence* is chiefly the acknowledgement that God is God. Always it is the recognition of the fact that we can never do anything for Him, or give Him anything, but that all we can do is to acknowledge Him and give thanks to Him and glorify Him. Prayer as the chief part of thankfulness certainly is not the expression of the desire to receive some earthly or carnal thing from God, but it is the hunger and thirst for God Himself.

Only in that light can we understand the language of the Heidelberg Catechism.

But, according to the Catechism, this is not the only reason why prayer is necessary for the Christian. It is not only objectively necessary because prayer must be the expression of thankfulness to God which God requires of us; but it is also subjectively the expression of a deep need. For so the Catechism explains, that prayer is necessary "because God will give his grace and Holy Spirit to those only, who with sincere desires continually ask them of him, and are thankful for them."

H.H.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Galatians 5:19-21

In these verses Paul makes clear to his readers, the churches in Galatia, what our "new ought" is in Christ Jesus our Lord. We are indeed the free-born sons in Christ, born from above, from the heavenly Jerusalem and therefore we ought to walk also with our conversation of the heavenly Jerusalem. Hence, the very earnest exhortation of Paul "only use not your liberty as a strategic point of attack for the flesh, but rather by love serve one another."

We are indeed not *under law*!

Let us then by all means beware that our walk and life and deepest attitude be not such against which there is law. Then to all practical extent we would be walking as those walk who are under law. Such a walk is not that of faith working by love, revealing itself in the "loving our neighbor as ourselves" which is the "pleroma," the fulfilling of the law.

Let none deceive himself; the Lord is not mocked!

Hence, to thus walk in this faith energized by love we need a great deal of spiritual self-knowledge. We must be thoroughly acquainted with the great fundamental difference between the "new man" in us and the "old man" the flesh in us, which must be crucified. If only we are "spiritual" and not "fleshly" then we shall sense the things that differ with a great spiritual sensitiveness. And this latter must surely not be lacking in us!

We believe that an exposition of this battle of the christian against the flesh is very timely; to be forewarned in this respect is for the believer to be fore-armed. That is why Paul says in verse 21 "of which I forewarn you, even as I did forwarn you, that they who practice such things shall not *inherit* the kingdom of God." Here we have the "warnings" of Paul, which the fathers have in mind when they speak of the "warnings, threatenings" etc., as we pointed out in our former article, February 1 issue.

Paul points out the "works of the flesh" here in verse 19. Says he: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest." That he speaks here of "works" of the flesh in distinction from "fruits" of the spirit is very suggestive and instructive. It calls to mind that these actions which proceed from the flesh are indeed acts of the mind and of the will of the one who performs them. They are "works," expressive of the evil nature of man, as we are, due to the wrath and curse of sin. They are "works." Yet, they are, as such, works which never in any way are "fruits." They cannot ever be used by God as acceptable to Him in our "reasonable" service whereby we prove what is the good, acceptable and perfect will of God. Rom. 12:1, 2. They are such because they are as the thorns and thistles in distinction from the wheat and corn of the land. And so this distinction immediately calls to attention that every man must give account of what

he has done, whether it be good or evil. For all must be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ.

You ask: What are these works, and wherein are they "manifest?" Then attend to what Paul has to teach us in these verses concerning this throbbing question!

In the first place, we should notice very carefully and believingly that these works are "manifest." They are not at all "hidden." It is not so that they are not passed in review before others to judge of, nor are they such that we ourselves are not fully cognizant of them. They stand out in bold relief, even as being punishable by the *worldly magistrates*! The Greeks and the Roman writers on social conduct were fully aware of this list of sins and wrote treatises on them, which today are known in "philosophy" as the "ethics" of the Greek writers and philosophers. It is true, this truth they kept down in unrighteousness, but even so these vices of the flesh were manifest to them also. It is true their evaluation of them was wholly different than that of Christians, but this only proves that they came face to face with these "works of the flesh."

And in God's church they too are often manifest. Many a Minute Book of Consistories in God's church through the ages testifies of this fact. And the godly are sorry for this fact that these sins are "manifest." For they know and confess that these things ought not so to be. They so greatly desire to walk by the Holy Spirit so that these sins of the flesh are not brought to full fruition. And the true saints, says Paul, "have crucified the flesh with the passions and lusts thereof."

Paul here gives these sins of the flesh grouping them in four classes. For convenience's sake we shall follow this order, and call attention to the sins here enumerated one by one.

First of all these are the class of works of the flesh which may be called sexual, immoral sins. They are as follows: *fornication, uncleanness and lasciviousness*! Fornication properly is the sin of having illicit sexual relations. It is living as married while not in the state of wedlock, or living improperly outside of proper wedlock. While "uncleanness" is sexual and moral uncleanness in whatever form it may come, in thoughts, words and actions and gestures and deeds. Of "lasciviousness" we may remark that it is open and reckless contempt of propriety, unbridled lust, outrageous, shameless forms of immoral carnality.

Such are the sins of the first group. And upon these sins comes the wrath of God against the children of disobedience! Eph. 5:3-6.

The next group are the sins of idolatry. Here we have the worshipping of dumb idols, placing trust not in the invisible God, but rather in the things that can be seen. Then there are all kinds of covetousness, trusting in Mammon. And in heathendom there is also the sin of trying to predict the future by means of witch-craft instead of looking to the Word of prophecy. Also these sins are not compatible with faith energized by the love of God.

Next Paul cites a rather large class of sins which may be characterized as personal, spiritual sins! These sins are the following: *Hatred, strife, jealousies, outburst of anger, plottings, splits, parties!*

Of each of these we would make a few expository remarks.

We notice that the term "hatred" is a general expression representing all *personal animosities*! This is what roughly stands for that which in our day is designated to be "matters of personalities." The former expression is far more expressive and exact, and it emphasizes the moral integrity, while the term "personalities" leaves the matter hang in a moral indifference. It shies away from the matter of personal *guilt* in personalities. It is, therefore, not the language of Holy Writ. Wherefore let it be remembered: the term means personal *animosities*! From these "animosities" all campaigns of hate spring forth, sometimes with a sanctimonious sugar-coating of "love!" But these are works of the flesh nonetheless. Let us beware for this "manifest sin." For it is the first indication, when manifested in the church, of using the liberty in Christ as an occasion to the flesh, if not worse.

This sin will surely reveal itself in the sin of strife, rivalry and discord, if not crucified. Hence, Paul cites this sin as the next one in the ascending scale of vices in the church, born from personal animosities. For as soon as there is personal animosity the question is: who will be the greatest, and who shall have the last word. The question is then not to champion the cause of God's truth, but then it is "he wants me to say that he is a wonderful man, but that I'm not going to say." Whether this is true or not of the real or imaginary opponent, the battle is on. The battle of the flesh against all that is holy; the battle of rivalry, discord and strife. Those who engage in it in a "church battle" will be heard to say: "I know I should not have presented the truth of Scripture as I did, but the real question here is: who is going to be boss." And thus those engaging in this rivalry rooted in personal animosities scream: personalities, personalities. Liberty in Christ is no longer distinguished from licence. And this personal enmity works through as doth a canker!

Such rivalry, because it is rooted in personal animosity in which there is not one bit of faith working by love, surely progresses to the next step: it shows itself is a great false zeal, which is *jealousy*! Once a rivalist has "stuck his neck out" he has to save his face. A great deal of zeal comes to manifestation fighting the battle; but it is not fighting the battle of Jehovah God against, Satan, the world and our own flesh. Such a one is not on bended knee, praying to God that he be not led into temptation. This prayer has died upon his lips. As big as life he has walked headlong into temptation. He walks in jealousy and with a cruel zeal; he will not rest till he can claim his victory, while the sad truth is that he has not fought the real battle, due to his personal animosities. And these things are manifest. They

cause Paul to say: when ye bite and devour one another, beware lest ye be consumed one of another! Then there are unseemly wranglings in which all *discussions* are impossible. See "Word Pictures," T. Robertson, Page 72, I Cor. 1:11. And when the foundations are thus destroyed what can the righteous do? Then the church sings: Because Thy statutes are despised, with overwhelming grief I weep! Compare Rom. 1:29, 13:13; I Cor. 1:11, 3:3, Phil. 1:15. When this evil enters into the lives of preachers in Paul's day, this great apostle does not become involved in it. He sees the things that differ with keen spiritual sensitiveness. Even when Christ and the Gospel are preached out of "rivalry, he can still say: Christ is preached and herein I rejoice." Of course, Paul knows that when another Gospel is proclaimed than he has proclaimed, though he be an angel from heaven, that such a one is Anathema. Then Paul is not engaged in rivalry. He knows no competition between true preachers, but he does know the difference between true and false preachers.

Where such rivalry is, personal animosities and jealousy, you will surely see: outburst of anger. And this is not the outburst of the zeal of a Phinehas, who loves Jehovah's name and will cleanse the temple and exercise discipline, but they are the *angry outbursts* of the flesh! Here are the outbursts where there is no accurate account given of the facts, but an anger that roots from the stubborn maintainance of a wrong position, due to falling into ways of error, which stem forth from personal animosities. Such outburst in brochures, and weekly periodicals are not the manifestation of strength that taketh in a city, but they are the choking gasps of anger of the man who is being strangled by his own sin! The dying embers will then burn out and one can then sit in the ruins of his burnt house awaiting its own resurrection.

Yes, then there can be some more plottings, intrigue and conspiracy. Each may then champion his cause as do politicians; caballings there will be a plenty, but honest and forthright approach such as desired and sought by godly and sane men can not be found among such. Then there are "splits" and "parties" in which the "sword of divisions" of Christ is not handled with true dignity in Consistory, but is becomes "below our dignity" to answer with a word that is fitting to those who stand in the office of Christ.

Here is Paul's analysis of the works of the flesh.

Here is the ascending scale of those who walk in personal animosities. Here there is no walk in liberty. But the word of Jesus remains true: He that doeth sin is a servant of sin!

But Paul warns They who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God. Why? Because they do not have the *pre-requisite* act of faith? Nay, but because they are trees on which no fruit appears, for they have not the Spirit and are none of His. For only the sons are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.

Let us be warned seeing the lot of the wicked, lest we fall into the hands of the living God, before whose eyes things are naked and open.

G.L.

IN HIS FEAR

The Gate Is Open

(Continued)

At this time we will give you the complete advice of what at one time was called the Protestant Reformed Church of Chatham, Ontario. We say "was called" this because it was Protestant Reformed in name alone.

We give you the consistory of that congregation's advice concerning the Declaration of Principles to which all truly Protestant Reformed people subscribe. Its advice was to reject this document and never let it make the walls of our denomination so high that they with their Arminian conditional theology might not come in and remain in. They pleaded for an open gate. For they were Protestant Reformed only in name. The Protestant Reformed truth they hated. And every preaching engagement the undersigned had in Chatham brought this out more clearly. We may have occasion in the future to relate some of the arguments and events which revealed this.

At present we are quoting the whole advice again — with the exception of the church political aspect — to show you how fully those who schismatically left us and who also rejected the Declaration are in agreement with the Liberated conception of Scripture and the Confessions and with them want an open gate, lowered walls.

Here then is the advice:

"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.
 3. The promise seen in that light (of point B, 2) touches all baptized persons also in connection with the significance of the Sacraments.
 4. The acceptance of this 'Declaration' means that the principle of christian liberty is curtailed in the churches, since members of the church who hold the different conception with regard to the matters mentioned above will see themselves bound to an exposition of the Confessions which they cannot personally accept according to the Holy Scriptures.
 5. That through an eventual acceptance of the 'Declaration' a new principle would be added to the confessions of our churches.
- C. The Consistory is convinced that the Holy Scriptures and the Three Forms of Unity are sufficient for the

expression of our confessing, which formerly also seems to have been the conviction of our Mission Committee (see the booklet published by this committee: The Protestant Reformed Churches, page 15, line 2.)."

So far the advice of Chatham in regard to the Declaration. It is both interesting and revealing then to look up what those who also rejected that Declaration and defend the literally heretical statements of Rev. De Wolf wrote in regard to that Declaration. Is it not amazing and revealing that those who defend the statements of Rev. De Wolf also have no use for the Declaration? So it must be, for the Declaration condemns Rev. De Wolf's statements and Rev. De Wolf's statements ARE liberated, Arminian conditional theology.

We would have you note these lines first of all of Rev. Blankespoor in the Acts of Synod 1951. On page 104 you have the advice of Second Church in Grand Rapids in regard to that Declaration. It is signed by Rev. Blankespoor and no doubt is his work which the consistory with a small majority adopted. At any rate he signed it and agrees with it, while three of his consistory members drew up a minority report in which they advise the very opposite to Synod. On the top of the page you read:

"In the second place we must remember that the Liberated churches to this day maintain that we fail to fully understand them and therefore misinterpret them. Would it be proper for us to adopt a declaration of our views with a repudiation of theirs as we now understand them? We don't think so. If we need a declaration, we should surely give them all the benefit of the doubt."

What amazing language!

If we misunderstand them, it can only be that we ascribe Arminianism to them when they are not guilty of it. Rev. Blankespoor surely does not mean that the Liberated maintain that we ascribe a more Reformed and Scriptural stand to them than their view — notably Prof. Veenhof's — warrants. The language of this advice of Second Church can only mean that we must not be too hasty to ascribe Arminianism to these Liberated.

Why then is Rev. Blankespoor so afraid of the Declaration? If these Liberated are more soundly Reformed than we have been willing to concede, why is he so afraid that they will not welcome that truth of the Declaration and say with us that it is the only possible explanation of the Confessions which the Scriptures will allow?

And give *them* benefit of the doubt?

There are two things that should not escape our attention. The first is that this document of Second Church was adopted AFTER it knew what the advice of Chatham was in regard to the Declaration. Art. 113 of the Acts of Synod, 1951 reveals that "The advice of Second Church which was not ready at the January Classis (Chatham had hers at that January Classis, J.A.H.) is now read on the floor of Classis before discussion on the motion fails." The motion that failed

and with it, what is better, a heart full of Christian love and humility. He stands of right by the side of the greatest philosophers of antiquity and of modern times. We meet him alike on the broad highways and the narrow footpaths, on the giddy Alpine heights and in the awful depths of speculation, wherever philosophical thinkers before him or after him have trod. As a theologian he is the acknowledged leader, at least surpassed by no church father, scholastic, or reformer. With royal munificence he scattered ideas in passing, which have set in mighty motion other lands and later times. He combined the creative power of Tertullian with the churchly spirit of Cyprian, the speculative intellect of the Greek church with the practical tact of the Latin. He was a Christian philosopher and a philosophical theologian to the full. It was his need and his delight to wrestle again and again with the hardest problems of thought, and to comprehend to the utmost the divinely revealed matter of the faith. He always asserted, indeed, the primacy; appealing, with theologians before him, to the well-known passage of Isaiah 7:9. But to him faith itself was an acting of reason, and from faith to knowledge, therefore, there was a necessary transition. He constantly looked below the surface to the hidden motives of actions and to the universal laws of diverse events. The metaphysician and the Christian believer coalesced in him. His meditation passes with the utmost ease into oratory, and his oratory into meditation. With profundity he combined an equal clearness and sharpness of thought. He was an extremely skilful and a successful dialectician, inexhaustible in arguments and in answers to the objections of his adversaries.

He had enriched Latin literature with a greater store of beautiful, original, and pregnant proverbial sayings, than any classic author, or any other teacher of the church.

He had a creative and decisive hand in almost every dogma of the church, completing some, and advancing others. The centre of his system is the FREE REDEEMING GRACE OF GOD IN CHRIST, OPERATING THROUGH THE ACTUAL, HISTORICAL CHURCH. He is evangelical or Pauline in his doctrine of sin and grace, but catholic (that is, old-catholic, not Roman Catholic) in his doctrine of the church. The Pauline element comes forward mainly in the Pelagian controversy, the catholic-churchly in the Donatist; but each is modified by the other.

Dr. Baur incorrectly makes *freedom* the fundamental idea of the Augustinian system (it much better suits the Pelagian), and founds on this view an ingenious, but only half true, comparison between Augustine and Origen. "There is no church teacher of the ancient period," says he, "who, in intellect and in grandeur and consistency of view, can more justly be placed by the side of Origen than Augustine; none who, with all the difference in individuality and in mode of thought, so closely resembles him. How far both towered above their times, is most clearly manifest in the very fact that they alone, of all the theologians of the first six centuries, became the creators of distinct systems, each proceed-

ing from its definite idea, and each completely carried out; and this fact proves also how much the one system has that is analogous to the other. The one system, like the other, is founded upon the idea of *freedom*; in both there is a specific act, by which the entire development of human life is determined; and in both this is an act which lies far outside of the temporal consciousness of the individual

The learning of Augustine was not equal to his genius, nor as extensive as that of Origen and Eusebius, but still considerable for his time, and superior to that of any of the Latin fathers, with the single exception of Jerome. He had received in the schools of Madaura and Carthage a good theoretical and rhetorical preparation for the forum, which stood him in good stead also in theology. He was familiar with Latin literature, and was by no means blind to the excellencies of the classics, though he placed them far below the higher beauty of the Holy Scriptures. The Hortensius of Cicero (a lost work) inspired him during his university course with enthusiasm for philosophy and for the knowledge of truth for its own sake; the study of Platonic and Neo-Platonic works (in the Latin version of the rhetorician Victorinus) kindled in him an incredible fire; though in both he missed the holy name of Jesus and the cardinal virtues of love and humility, and found in them only beautiful ideals without power to conform him to them. His City of God, his book on heresies, and other writings, show an extensive knowledge of ancient philosophy, and history, sacred and secular. He refers to the most distinguished persons of Greece and Rome But his knowledge of Greek literature was mostly derived from Latin translations. With the Greek language, as he himself frankly and modestly confesses, he had, in comparison with Jerome, but a superficial acquaintance. Hebrew he did not understand at all. Hence, with all his extraordinary familiarity with the Latin Bible, he made many mistakes in exposition. He was rather a thinker than a scholar, and depended mainly on his own resources, which were always abundant.

This concludes our sketch on Augustine as quoted from Philip Schaff.

H.V.

IN HIS FEAR

(Continued from page 228)

Man's salvation is first. The glory of God is secondary consideration. Man's works and what he must do are on the foreground. God's works may be talked about but come at the end and after we have said what man must do.

Beware of such a modernistic, humanistic philosophy.

Keep the gate closed to it.

And look for an amalgamation with the Liberated.

Unless for utilitarian reasons they dare not link up with them.

J.A.H.

The Voice of Our Fathers

The Canons of Dordrecht

PART TWO

EXPOSITION OF THE CANONS

FIRST HEAD OF DOCTRINE

OF DIVINE PREDESTINATION

Article 15 (continued)

It is in the light of what the fathers state as to the attributes of the decree of reprobation that we must also understand what this article states as to the relation between election and reprobation, and, in connection therewith, the purpose of the decree of reprobation. Of these two subjects the *Canons* surely speak in this 15th Article. In the first place, they state that the express testimony of Scripture concerning the decree of reprobation "peculiarly tends to illustrate and recommend to us the eternal and unmerited grace of election." This statement plainly declares something concerning both the relation between election and reprobation and the purpose of reprobation. And as to the reprobation, the fathers say, in the second place, that the decree of reprobation "by no means makes God the author of sin (the very thought of which is blasphemy), but declares him to be an awful, irreprehensible, and righteous judge and avenger thereof."

The above statements are especially interesting because they touch on a subject that is discussed once again in our time, and which seems to be an issue peculiarly involved in the difference between supra and infra in the opinion of some. The question is: what is the relation between election and reprobation, between the elect and the reprobate? Are they coordinate? Do election and reprobation stand in every way on a par in the counsel of God? Or is reprobation subordinate to election? If so, in what respect is it subordinate? And of course, in close connection with the above subject, there is the question as to the purpose of reprobation.

In answer to some of these questions, we may safely state, first of all, that election and reprobation are very much coordinate in respect to their attributes. In fact, we may add that this is the position of the *Canons* also in so far as they speak on the subject. For both election and reprobation proceed out of God's eternal good pleasure. And in both instances it must surely be maintained that the divine good pleasure was "most free, most just, irreprehensible, and unchangeable." If in any respect one does violence to this truth, whatever else he may say about the question as the relative rank and the purpose of reprobation in the decree of God, he flaunts Dordrecht. And to oppose Dordrecht is to oppose the Reformed faith.

With the above established, we may next make some observations concerning the opening proposition of this 15th Article, quoted above, namely, that reprobation "peculiarly

tends to illustrate and recommend to us the eternal and unmerited grace of election." It strikes us immediately that here we have a statement which presents reprobation as standing in some respect in the service of election, and therefore as being subordinate to election. The statement must be carefully analysed, however. The idea is that the Scriptural testimony concerning a sovereign, just, irreprehensible, and unchangeable reprobation, that proceeds from God's good pleasure, peculiarly illustrates and recommends, that is, causes to be seen more clearly, magnifies, enhances, the glory of the grace of election. In the second place, the statement limits this enhancement of the grace of election to two aspects, namely: the fact that it is *eternal*, and the fact that it is gratuitous (free, unmerited). And in the third place, this illustration and recommendation of the eternal and free grace of election takes place, according to the article, by *contrast*. For it states in this connection that reprobation means "that not all men are elect, but that some certain ones are not elect, or in the eternal election of God passed by." Hence, the idea is that the eternal and gratuitous character of the grace of election stands in a brighter light by reason of the fact that not all are elect, but that some are passed by in the elective decree of God. Reprobation strongly emphasizes how completely unmerited the grace of election is. And it at the same time emphasizes that election must be from eternity. God might also have sovereignly decreed to damn and to punish us forever. And therefore it must forever be in the consciousness of the elect, and they must forever acknowledge that there was no more reason in us than in the reprobate why God should choose us. Our election is of God alone, out of altogether free grace, according to His eternal good pleasure. No flesh may ever glory in His presence. The doctrine of reprobation, therefore, leads the elect to humble thanksgiving and complete self-negation before God. And it teaches us to beware of all self-exaltation, either before God or over against the reprobate. Such is the view of the fathers with regard to the decree of reprobation. Its spirit certainly imitates that of the apostle Paul, who could, in great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart, wish himself accursed from Christ for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh. Romans 9:1, ff.

When all this is established, however, we may also note the following: 1) The maintenance of this view of the relation between election and reprobation, and of the purpose of reprobation, is not the unique property of the infralapsarian view. Supralapsarianism can very well, and perhaps more strongly, maintain the same truth. It is by no means necessary to say that God in His counsel elected and reprobated men that were already created and fallen, as infra maintains, in order to say that reprobation enhances the eternal and undeserved character of the grace of election. Confer also our remarks in this same connection under Article 7. 2) It is indeed necessary, however, to maintain an absolutely sovereign and eternal reprobation in order to say that reprobation enhances the glory of eternal and gracious election.

The contrast which the fathers here posit is not between a *deserved* reprobation and an *undeserved* election. For the doctrine of a *deserved* reprobation would logically require the doctrine of a *deserved* election also. But the intention of the article is to stress the fact that reprobation is most free, sovereign. And if reprobation is of such a character, that is, determined by God's good pleasure and not by man's unworthiness, then election must surely be seen in the same light: that is, it is absolutely unconditional, not based upon foreseen faith, entirely gratuitous, gracious, undeserved, and from eternity. And if it be objected that according to the *infra* conception of the counsel of God, the Lord reprobates a fallen and damnable race even as He elects out of a fallen and in themselves damnable race, then we must remind ourselves that this is a fallen and damnable race "in the divine counsel." For also *infralapsarianism* includes the fall and sin among the sovereign decrees of God. Anything else is not *infra*, but *Arminian*. 3) It is further true that this eternal and undeserved character of the grace of election is enhanced as well, on the one hand, by our own total depravity and total unworthiness of any of the blessings of salvation. The doctrine of total depravity indeed teaches us that it required an absolutely sovereign and eternal and gratuitous election to save sinners such as we. And, on the other hand, that free and eternal character of the grace of election is manifest most clearly and most greatly magnified by the light that streams from Calvary's cross. For the cross itself is the revelation of a sovereign love: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." I John 4:10.

And therefore, while we agree that, as the *Canons* here teach, reprobation stands in the service of election in this respect, and while we by no means would say that the statement of the *Canons* is contrary to the thought of Scripture, we nevertheless say that the fathers do not here teach an *essential* relationship between election and reprobation, do not at this point essentially subordinate reprobation to election in the counsel of God. Rather do we discover a rather arbitrary and incidental relationship maintained in this opening statement of Article 15.

To an extent the same is true of the closing statement of this article, namely, that the decree of reprobation "declares him (God) to be an awful, irreprehensible, and righteous judge and avenger" of sin. This statement speaks of the purpose of reprobation, but does not say anything about the relation of reprobation to election in the counsel of God. And it must certainly be granted in the light of Scripture that when reprobation reaches the goal, its terminus, in the day of judgment, the day of revelation of the righteous judgment of God, that judgment, as it has its origin in the decree of reprobation, shall reveal that God is the awful, unblameable, and righteous Judge and Avenger of sin. In fact, the Scriptures go a little further and speak of reprobation as serving the purpose of the revelation of God's *wrath* and His *power*. Romans 9:21, 22. Always, and also in regard

to the decree of reprobation, it must be remembered that God's work, both in eternity and in time, serve the purpose of revealing and magnifying His glorious virtues. Nevertheless, also here it may be remarked: 1) That the reprobate evidently are not necessary to reveal God's power and wrath and righteousness. And, 2) that these virtues certainly never came to a clearer, more definite revelation than at the cross of Jesus Christ. He certainly satisfied the justice and the righteousness of God and bore all His wrath. And therefore, in this way we still cannot escape the impression that there is arbitrariness in God. We do not have in this way a final answer to the question: why reprobation? Nor is it true that the passage in Romans 9:21, 22 teaches nothing more about the purpose of reprobation. For mark you well, this passage plainly teaches that in His dealings with the vessels of wrath, God from eternity had His eye fixed in mercy and love upon the elect. For He endured *with much longsuffering* the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. Long-suffering toward whom? Certainly not toward the vessels of wrath: for they divinely fitted unto destruction. He endures them, forbears with regard to them, because in His long-suffering He wills to make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, afore prepared unto glory.

In this light we say without reservation, therefore, that election and reprobation are as to their purpose by no means coordinate, but rather that reprobation follows election in the order of the divine decrees, and is subordinate to it. And we believe that this subordination is not incidental and arbitrary, but *essential*. Further, we believe that when this essential subordination of reprobation to election in the counsel of God is clearly seen, and we obtain an essential and principal answer to the question why reprobation is necessary, we may also maintain in a deeper and more beautiful sense that the decree of reprobation enhances the eternal and gracious character of divine election.

H.C.H.

Attention, Classis West!

Because of Edgerton's Court trial, the classical committee found it necessary to postpone the meeting of Classis West to March 16.

New Addresses

Rev. H. H. Kuiper, 28 University Place, Redlands, Cal.
Mr. M. Gastra (clerk), 302 W. Lugonia, Redlands, Cal.
Mr. H. Sawyer (Treasurer), 407 E. Colton, Redlands, California.

IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory of the Fourth Protestant Reformed Church hereby express its sincere sympathy to Elder John Hager in the death of his Mother,

MRS. JENNIE HAGER

We pray that the Word of God will be his comfort.

DECENCY and ORDER

Professors of Theology

"The office of the professors of theology is to expound the Holy Scriptures and to vindicate sound doctrine against heresies and errors." — Article 18, D.K.O.

It is not necessary in this connection to discuss the status of professors of theology. We wrote about this in connection with Art. 2, Vol. 29, pg. 381 of the Standard Bearer. Here we briefly reiterate the following points:

1. The reason that our Church Order speaks of the office of Professors of Theology separately from that of the ministers of the Word is due to the influence of Calvin. The Church Order distinguishes four separate offices in the church.

2. Calvin's view, based on his incorrect interpretation of Ephesians 4:11 and 12, was that Professors of Theology occupy a separate Ecclesiastical Office. Although the Genevan Reformer did not deny that there is an intimate relation between the office of professor and that of minister, he, nevertheless, kept the two distinct. A Professor of Theology might also be a minister of the Word but this was not necessary. For various reasons, cited in our former writing, this view of Calvin must be rejected.

3. Our view is that the office of Professors of Theology and that of the Minister of the Word are essentially one. This does not mean, of course, that every minister is a professor of theology or even that he has the makings of one. I would rather look at the matter this way. The task of the Professor of Theology belongs to the ministry of the Word but is according to its character a special kind of ministry and is, therefore, assigned to specially gifted and equipped ministers who are capable of performing this specialized work. In connection with the sixteenth article of our church order we discussed the task of the minister of the Word. His principal function is to preach the Word. In connection with that discussion we brought out various ways in which the preaching takes place. Foremost he preaches to the congregation in the assembly of public worship. He also ministers the Word to his catechumens, to the sick, etc. And so we understand the task of the ministry to also include those labors that are essential toward preparing men for the ministry. But every minister is not equal unto this prodigious task and so it is given unto a certain few who make it their special concern. These men are called the Professors of Theology. One minister is called to labor in the ministry of the Word in the established church; another is called to engage in missionary and church extension labor; and, still others are called to minister in the theological school. It is the task of the latter minister that is defined in the eighteenth article of our church order.

The rise of theological schools was at first a slow process. The earliest christian training was limited to means of per-

sonal contact and instruction such as Jesus gave to his disciples and Paul to his companions. Ofttimes the leaders of the congregations were chosen simply for their spiritual gifts. Education was not required. Professors of theology were unknown. Even today you still find some people who like to ignore all further development and progress which the church has made and return to these times. What they are obviously ignorant of is the fact that in those times the Holy Spirit gave extraordinary gifts and used extraordinary methods to establish the church in the faith. And, as the Form for Ordination correctly states: "Because these extraordinary methods, however, lasted only as long as the Lord judged them to be necessary for the founding of His church among the nations, the necessity was soon felt of training youths and men for the holy ministry under the ordinary dispensation of the Spirit by the regular methods of education. And this especially in virtue of what Paul wrote in II Timothy 2:2, 'And the things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.' The apostle here points to what he had himself done and what he required of his disciple Timothy."

For a time this practice prevailed but as the faith of the church began to crystalize into systematic doctrine and the Canon of Holy Writ demanded a clear interpretation, it became necessary to establish theological schools. Before the end of the second century the debates with the Gnostics and pagan philosophers made it clear that the leaders of the church must be well-trained in theology and its interpretation. And, as a matter of practical order, it was understood that what could be accomplished by the individual church or minister only with considerable difficulty could be much more effectively done by the churches collectively with comparative ease.

Schools began to spring up. The oldest and perhaps most prominent is that of Alexandria. Pantaenus was its first known teacher. Better known are Clement and Origen whose names are also associated with this institution. Later a school arose in Antioch where many of the most illustrious of the church fathers received their training. Thus did the schools of theology have their beginning and today all of the countless denominations of churches have their denominational and inter-denominational seminaries where professors are appointed to teach and men are trained for the ministry.

The task of the professors of theology is to expound the Holy Scriptures and to vindicate sound doctrine against heresies and errors. By the very failure of many professors to adhere to and fulfill this calling, many once illustrious and reputable institutions of theology have reverted from seminaries into modern day cemeteries. Heresies are vindicated. Errors are lauded. The truth is rejected and the sciences of men, apart from the wisdom of God, are expounded. The result of all this is that the products from these schools are trained to fill the churches with vain philosophies and damnable heresies and each succeeding generation, imbibing all

this, reveals itself as more apostate than the preceeding until the end of absolute modernism is reached. To the selfishly ambitious and carnal man this all is very appealing because in this way flourishing schools of world recognition are easily built wherein men honor each other with self-made and flattering titles of vanity. Schools are built on a competitive basis for recognition with the ungodly world.

However, we should not ignore the fact that history shows how true theology has flourished and come to its highest development, not in such illustrious institutions, but rather in times of struggle and in schools of non-repute. The true professors of theology are not set upon a pedestal in the world and crowned with honorary titles but are persecuted, imprisoned, despised and hated of men. They are compelled to labor under difficult and trying circumstances. The Lord Himself oft uses these very circumstances to bring out their best labors. We have only to think of the apostle Paul, of Luther, of Calvin, of Guido de Breas and a host of others. We may cite a twofold reason for this. On the human side it may be said that the theology produced and vindicated by faithful men is hated and unacceptable to the world because the latter lies in darkness. On the Divine side it may be pointed out that God is pleased always to manifest His wisdom and truth through the base and despised things of this world in order that "no flesh should glory in His presence." (I Cor. 1:29) We need never then be ashamed because our Seminary does not rise to world recognition but rather rejoice that God has given unto us professors of theology who would rather vindicate sound doctrine against heresies and errors and be reproached for it than to gain the praises of men. It is a wonderful omen of grace that the world scorns our theology.

Our professors are charged in the Form of Installation with the "task of instructing and establishing in the knowledge of God's Word, the students who hope once to minister in His church. They must expound to them the mysteries of the faith; caution them in regard to the errors and heresies of the old, but especially of the new day." It is not so difficult to expose heresies that are centuries old and which the church has always branded as such. More important, however, is it that the heresies of the present day be exposed and the truth vindicated overagainst them. This is a different matter because heresy is always assuming a more subtil appearance so as to mislead and deceive many. Thus, i.e., the promise of God to all restricted by the condition of faith appears to have such a semblance to the truth "that he who believes shall be saved" that many are unable to distinguish any difference. Yet, it is per se heretical as our professors and others have time and again clearly shown. Or, again how many are easily deceived by such talk as "subjective, experiential, conscious pre-requisites unto salvation?" We can thank God for men who are not lured by such duplicity but who faithfully instruct the church in the simple truth of the Word of God overagainst the lie.

In conclusion we quote once more from the Form for

Ordination. Professors are therein further charged: "Seek to explain how they (students) not alone as teachers are to instruct but also as pastors are to shepherd the flock of the Lord. Assist in maintaining order and discipline among the disciples, that our Seminary may continue to enjoy the respect, the support, the appreciation, the love and the prayer of the Church. Be a good example to the students, that they may not only profit from thy learning, but also find in thee a living illustration of the power and practice of true godliness."

"Be engaged in all of this according to the measure of the gifts God gave thee, in dependence on the Lord's help and the light of The Holy Spirit."

May the Lord bless and strengthen our professors who have rendered the churches an estimable service and may He further furnish us with others like them to fill their place when their days in the militant church are expired!

G.v.d.B.

IN MEMORIAM

The Men's Society of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church hereby wishes to express its sincere sympathy to one of its members, Mr. J. Dykstra, in the loss of his brother,

MR. R. DYKSTRA

May the Lord sustain and strengthen him, and comfort him with the blessed assurance that His work is perfect and is done in love to His children.

Rev. J. A. Heys, President
Mr. G. Korhorn, Secretary

IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, hereby expresses its sincere sympathy to elder John Dykstra in the loss of his son,

RICHARD DYKSTRA

May the Lord comfort the bereaved with His all-sufficient grace that they may know that all things work together for good to those who are called according to His Sovereign Election.

Rev. C. Hanko, President
John M. Faber, Clerk

IN MEMORIAM

The Priscilla Society of First Protestant Reformed Church hereby expresses heartfelt sympathy to its member, Mrs. John Ezinga and family, in the death of their husband and father,

MR. JOHN EZINGA,

and to Mrs. Ernest Pluger in the death of her sister and brother,

MISS ELIZABETH DYKSTRA

and

MR. RICHARD DYKSTRA

May the grace of God strengthen and comfort them in their sorrow.

Mrs. B. Woudenberg, President
Mrs. A. Heemstra, Secretary

ALL AROUND US

What Really Happened In Our Churches.

In the last three issues of the Standard Bearer I have been commenting on an essay of the Rev. J. Blankespoor which appeared in Concordia of December 2, 1954. When we began this series we expected that Concordia would publish other "fine" essays that were delivered at the minister's conference where Rev. Blankespoor's essay was read. Rev. Howerzyl really promised that they would be forthcoming. But to date none have appeared except the one I have been criticizing. Perhaps the editor of Concordia has decided that they were not such "fine" papers after all. And surely it were better he did not publish them if Blankespoor's paper is a sample of the rest.

It may become a bit tiresome for the reader to see the same subject in this department over such a long period. And I can assure you we also would like to bring our comments to a close. However, since most of our readers no longer subscribe to Concordia, we felt that Blankespoor's essay should be quoted in its entirety, and then shown up for what it really is. And so, we ask your indulgence a little longer until we finish this quotation and comment.

In the last issue we quoted Rev. Blankespoor's essay relative to the doctrinal issues involved. He was attempting to show that the Three Forms of Unity as the expression of the Word of God was the sole basis upon which the Reformed Churches of the past have stood. We concluded our quotation with the statements: "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." Rev. Blankespoor then proceeds to show us that we have departed from that line, and have become sectarian, or "have a tendency towards sectarianism." Writes he:

"This thought automatically brings me to the next point, namely that we want to maintain this truth over against sectarianism. What are sects? Surely one cannot call them false churches in every sense of the word. No doubt many sects have many truths of Scripture, and many of God's people are found in their midst. But this is not the point in question. Concerning sects let me say three things.

1. The word sect is derived from the Greek word *airesis*, which denotes the action of taking or capturing a chosen course of thought or action. Of course, the kind of sects we have in mind profess to believe in the Bible, yes the whole Bible. But they always have a certain banner motto, a pet notion or doctrine by which they swear and this becomes their slogan. Our Reformed fathers surely weren't sectarian. They didn't place any pet notion or one truth of Scripture over against the Roman Catholic Church, but came only with the whole Word of God. It is possible to be a strong predestinarian and yet be sectarian, i.e. when one isolates this

truth from the Bible or doesn't give it its proper place in the whole of God's revelation and *manner* of salvation.

For proof, think for example of Anabaptism. This movement shows us that it is possible to have good motives and a sincere desire to live out of the whole Word of God and still in time to go astray, foster one or more "pet" notions and eventually fall by the wayside as far as the gathering of one church of Christ through the ages is concerned. In that same way there were other movements in the Netherlands, such as that for the Pietists. Think also of the Bultema movement in our country. This movement would project its slogan of Premillennialism into the system of Reformed truth. And where is the movement today as far as the Reformed Churches are concerned? To go much farther from home, think of the sects of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Remember how the Bible designates them by merely mentioning their pet ideas and slogans. Think also e.g. of the movement of the Jehovah Witnesses, the Mormons, the Mennonites and others. Each one has his pet notion or doctrine which is almost equivalent to all of their doctrine or religion.

2. A sect is usually a group of people that finds the origin of its doctrine in, and is led by one or at the most a few individuals. They are called the leaders. And their word and teaching often almost becomes the equivalent of the Gospel. The result is that people don't ask first of all what does the Word teach, but what does our leader say. Very striking it is what we find little or none of this with the Reformation, even with strong men like Luther and Calvin. (The word "what" is most likely a typographical error. It should be "that" — M.S.) It is very well possible that they didn't see all these dangers, and perhaps they did, but we must thank God that the movement of the Reformation was not sectarian, but a movement which showed only the exalted Christ as our Lord and teacher as given in the Scriptures. The spirit that was found in Corinth, where one said that he was of Paul, another that he was of Apollos and another that he was of Cephas and still another that he was of Christ is not only dangerous but definitely erroneous. The leaders which God gives are given only to serve the whole Word of God.

How well Christ realized such dangers and practices is evident from His Word in Mark 7 and similar passages. There he speaks of the Pharisees and Jews with their maintenance of the tradition of the elders, but they lay aside the commandments of God. These traditions of course were the interpretations of the great teachers and rabbis of the church. But practice taught that these traditions of these leaders were often prized with the same reverence as were the O.T. Scriptures, in fact often they were held even higher and the commandments of the word were laid aside, according to Christ's own words. What would the movement of the Jehovah Witnesses be without a Rutherford, of Christian Science without a Mary Baker Eddy, of Mormonism without a Smith and a Young, and of the Mennonites without a Simmons? The answer is that without these leaders and without their teach-

ings the movements would very soon disappear. Such is sectarianism.

3. A sect is usually known for being denunciatory in character. It is more negative than positive. It always has an "ax to grind" with others. Often this seems to be the reason for their existence. They are always condemning others. Now we naturally must also be negative. The church must always fight heresy, but she must also build. And the relation of these two must always be such that the negative serves the positive teachings of all the Scripture, and the proportion must be such that the positive surely receives the most prominence and emphasis in our teachings. The Church of Christ doesn't exist because she doesn't agree with other religious groups, but simply because she is the church of Christ. She has one goal in mind with the Word to build and positively construct.

Christ does throughout the ages. And He breaks down the works of the devil to build that one church.

In the light of such observation I cannot help but think that those who have left us have a tendency towards sectarianism, even though possibly most of their members don't realize this. Naturally we wouldn't begin to compare them with movements like that of the Mormons, etc. But there may be a similarity between them and other sectarian movements found in history of the Church in the past. One can't help but think of the history of the Hackensack group during the first part of the 19th century. Neither would we say, of course, that those who left us are not a church, or that God's people are no longer found there. Neither is this the question. However, when one thinks of the three points mentioned that are characteristic of sectarianism one can't help but come to the conclusion that there is a tendency in that direction among those who left us. I'm sure each one of us can make some application. How well we have learned by experience some of these things!

Over against all evil we desire to employ only one weapon, the whole Word of God. *On this Word we stand.* Always in the history of the church there has been the danger of doctrines and dogmas, (which of course are necessary), *ruling over* the Word instead of *serving* the Word. Think again of Mark 7, Gal. 1:14 and other passages.

Then there has also always been the danger of following men instead of Christ as given in the Word. The basic reason for all this is that we all by nature are so idolatrous, and we would see something of that in which we believe. Think of the golden calf. Idolatry is always warned against in Scripture as being such a big sin. Isn't it appealing to human nature to have a visible church rule over us, or some individual. All of this is tangible to our earthly senses. Instead of this we have the Word of God only as our guide, which gives us the invisible Christ. Therefore it is a matter of faith, and faith only." So far for this time Rev. Blankespoor. There is yet the church political viewpoint which he treats in this essay, to which I will call attention, D.V., the

next time. But in respect to the quotation above I wish now to make several comments.

First of all, I am not too interested in what Rev. Blankespoor says about a sect. As far as his definition is concerned, it may pass, though I did notice that he left out an important element. He no doubt borrowed his definition from Thayer's Lexicon. If he did he failed to say all that Thayer gives as a definition. Blankespoor says: "the word sect is derived from the Greek word *airesis*, which denotes the action of taking or capturing a chosen course of thought or action." Thayer adds: "an opinion varying from the true exposition of the Christian faith." Didn't Blankespoor dare to say this about us? He did dare to say what no one else in his group has so far dared to say publicly that we "have a tendency towards sectarianism." But did he not dare to say the rest, namely, that we have an opinion varying from the true exposition of the Christian faith? I said, he dared to say more than anyone else has dared to say publicly. O, no doubt there are others who had the evil thought of accusing us of being a sect, even among Blankespoor's colleagues, but I am not aware that any have dared to publicly accuse us of being sectarian. Even Blankespoor dare not to do that though he came dangerously close to it. Is this perhaps the reason why Rev. Howerzyl called his essay a "fine" paper?

But notice if you please once more that definition. A sect has "an opinion varying from the true exposition of the Christian faith." I ask the reader: who in the case at hand is the sect? Who has an opinion that varies, is different from the true exposition of the Christian faith? Is it we, or Blankespoor and his schismatic brethren? The *Classis East*, by a majority decision has declared that the doctrine of the Rev. De Wolf, to which Rev. Blankespoor subscribes, is *per se* heretical. That means that it is contrary to Scripture and our Reformed faith. That makes Blankespoor and those with him a sect doesn't it? Indeed, Blankespoor's essay back-fired! That first of all.

In the second place, I am particularly interested to know just wherein we have a tendency toward sectarianism. Blankespoor again does not really dare to say what he thinks. He finagles a little bit. He says we are not a sect in the same category with the Mormons, Russellites, Mennonites and others. He knew his readers would certainly take objection if he so designated us. These sects are well-known for what they are. So he says we remind him of the Hackensack group. Now he knew that most likely most of the ministers at the conference, if not all of them, would not know what he was talking about. Least of all the readers of *Concordia*. And I have a feeling that Blankespoor himself did not know what he was talking about. If he did he certainly would not have accused us of being like them after living with us so long as he did. If I know my history a little bit, that Hackensack group was known to have had Anabaptistic tendencies. They are probably to be identified with the True Reformed Dutch Church that in the early part of the 19th century settled in the Eastern States. Is that our tendency? To be

like them? I thought Blankespoor et al have with us denied this for years over against the accusation of some in the Christian Reformed Church. What is Blankespoor doing now? Trying to make a play for the Christian Reformed Church? Is he trying to say to them: "Well, brehtren, I have to confess after all you were right when you accused the Prot. Ref. Churches of anabaptistic tendencies. I see now how wrong I have been ever to defend these churches who have always not only denied this accusation but have shown in deed how wrong this accusation is." It seems that is what Blankespoor is saying, for he concludes this paragraph with the remarks: "However, when one thinks of the three points mentioned that are characteristic of sectarianism one can't help but come to the conclusion that there is a tendency in that direction among those who left us. I'm sure each one of us can make some application. How well we have learned by experience some of these things."

Well we have learned a few things too. We learn now that Blankespoor has really poured out his soul and cries on the shoulder of the Christian Reformed Church his sorrow for ever having been a member with us. But his tear-dimmed eyes have made it impossible for him to see that not we but he belongs to a sect, a sect which, according to Judge Taylor, is operating illegally, ruthlessly taking over the properties that rightfully belong to us.

Finally, there is one more thing I must call to your attention. Blankespoor closes his remarks on the doctrinal issues involved without even once talking about the doctrinal issues. He accuses us of following a man or men. He tells us that we have tendency toward sectarianism. He states that we have a tendency to place the church and the word of man above Scripture. But he doesn't tell us where we err doctrinally. In fact he doesn't even attempt to defend the two statements of De Wolf. They are doctrine to be sure. False doctrine. But Blankespoor says nothing about them. I got the impression that he wasn't interested in doctrine at all. He was just prating. And this he continues to do as we shall see in our final article on this subject next time, D.V., when we tell you what he thinks about the church-political issues.

M.S.

CONTRIBUTIONS

How Rev. Kok Continues to Operate

As again appears from the latest issue of "The Reformed Guardian" (Jan. 1955) Kok persists in quoting us out of connection and thereby persists in misrepresenting our views, what we held, and taught by the written and spoken word in the realm of Church Polity. On page five of the aforesaid issue of the "Guardian" he writes, "we quote the following from the writings of Rev. Ophoff, which recurs constantly, making the meaning beyond the shadow of a

doubt." And then he goes on to quote the following lines from an article of mine, "But classical decisions are likewise purely advisory and not mandatory. It means that the consistory may reject also classical decisions. This again is its right, being as it is autonomous Thus were the classical decisions mandatory, the classis would be lording it over the consistory and thereby destroying its autonomy." (St. Bearer, Vol. 23, pp. 157, 158).

But Kok should have quoted my entire article. But he refrained deliberately, with a definite purpose in mind, as I shall presently prove. And that purpose was to present me to the readers as teaching in that article that a consistory has the right to reject classical (synodical) decisions without the classis having the right to take action of *any kind* against such a consistory, that, in other words, the classis stands absolutely helpless when it sees its decisions trampled by a consistory. It can do nothing about it except wring its hands. Classis must continue to seat the delegates of such a consistory, though it refuses to be bound by Classis' decisions. Such, according to Kok, is my conception of the autonomy of the local consistory that one comes upon in that article of mine from which he quotes.

But Kok is guilty here of grossest deception, — a deception that he has been practicing all along also in court as a witness under oath. Fact is that in that article of mine from which Kok quotes, I teach the very opposite from what Kok deliberately tells his people that I teach in it. To show this I reproduce here as much of that article of mine as bears upon the matter at hand. I wrote the article in reply to three questions that had been put to me by a brother, resident in Sioux Center, Iowa. The second question I can omit, as it has no bearing on the matter with which we are now occupied.

1) Art. 36 (of the Church Order of Dordrecht): The Classis has the same jurisdiction over the Consistory as the Particular Synod has over the Classis and the General Synod over the Particular. What is the character of this jurisdiction? the brother asks.

3) Art. 79: When Ministers of the Divine Word, Elders or Deacons, have committed any public, gross sin, which is a disgrace to the church or worthy of punishment by the authorities the Elders and Deacons shall immediately by preceding sentence of the Consistory thereof and of the nearest church, be suspended or expelled from their office . . ."

a) Question of the brother: "What remains here of the autonomy of the local church?"

The brother quotes the rest of the article. It reads, "but the Ministers shall only be suspended. Whether these shall be entirely deposed from office, shall be subject to the judgment of the Classis."

b) His question, "Who deposes a Minister of the Word, the Classis or the Consistory?"

To these questions I replied as follows:

REPLY

"Answering these questions requires that we have a clear understanding of the proposition that the local church is autonomous. That the local church is autonomous means:

"1) That it is a self-governing organization, under Christ subject to no legal power other than that of its own consistory. In the church of Christ legal power or authority is the right officially to preach the Gospel, discipline with the Scriptures, and excommunicate out of the Christian church again with the Scriptures. This is key-power—a power that was given by Christ to His church.

"2) That all legal power is concentrated in the Consistory and thus not also in Classis (Synod).

"3) That for each Consistory the sphere of the exercise of the legal power is its own congregation only, that is, the body of believers by which it was chosen. It cannot be otherwise, if the local congregation—each congregation—is autonomous.

"In the light of these sentences it is plain how the brother's questions are to be answered.

"Answer to question *b* under 3: if there is need of such action, not the Classis but each Consistory deposes its own minister only. For 1) to depose officebearers is to exercise key-power (legal authority); 2) all key-power is concentrated in the local consistory. Hence, the Classis cannot exercise this power, as it does not have it. Therefore it cannot depose officebearers.

"Answer to question *a* under 3: Art. 79 does not militate against the doctrine of the autonomy of the local church; for the sentence of the neighboring church, consistory, is not mandatory but purely advisory. It means that the other consistory may refuse to adopt and to execute the sentence. It may reject it. This is its right, being, as it is autonomous. Were the sentence mandatory, the advice-seeking consistory would be *compelled* to act according to it, or allow itself to be deposed and excommunicated by the neighboring consistory. Thus, were the sentence mandatory, one consistory would be lording it over another and thereby destroying its autonomy.

"Now such a lordship of one consistory (church) over another Art. 84 of our Church Order strictly forbids. "No church," so the article reads, "shall in any way lord it over other churches, no Minister over other Ministers, no Elder over other Elders or Deacons." All that the neighboring consistory may, can do in the event its sentence is not adopted and executed is to appeal the case to the Classis. And the Classis renders judgment. But Classical decisions are likewise purely advisory and not mandatory. What it means is that the consistory may reject also classical decisions. This again is its right, being as it is autonomous. Were the classical decision mandatory, the consistory would be *compelled* to submit to it or allow itself to be deposed now by the Classis. Thus were the classical decision mandatory, the

Classis would be lording it over the consistory and thereby destroying its autonomy. But this too is contrary to Art. 84 of the Church Order. For it stands to reason that a number of neighboring churches may no more lord it over a Consistory than the neighboring church. And what is Classis other than an assembly of delegates of a number of local autonomous churches. Certainly the Classis is not a consistory vested with key-power over the local consistory. The church institute is always local. It does not broaden out into a classical and synodical church with the Synod as the overall consistory. Anyone not laboring under a bias and thus capable of correctly interpreting the articles of our Church Order and of our Three Forms of Unity will perceive and readily admit that such a view is glaringly and severely anti-reformed."

Let me pause here just long enough to ask the readers and especially Kok to pay particular attention to what I wrote in the paragraph that followed. It is this:

"Thus all that the classis can do in case its decisions are being rejected by the consistory is to refuse to receive its delegates on the classical meeting (that is, refuse to seat its delegates) and thereby sever the denominational tie between it and that consistory. This the classis may do. This is its right—a right implicit in the very purpose of a number of churches federating on the basis of the Church Order. Certainly the consistory is autonomous. It is free to reject classical decisions, also decisions fixing classical assessments, without finding itself under the necessity of being penalized on this account by deposition by the classis. However, the autonomy of the local congregation does not imply that the consistory can persistently reject the decisions of the major assemblies with retention of its right to a place in the church formation." (Italics now supplied).

Then I went on to say and I quote:

"Finally, the consistory can also abuse its autonomy and this is a sin. The consistory commits this sin if it rejects the decisions of the major assemblies, including of course the decisions fixing classical assessments, without being able to prove even to its own satisfaction that they conflict with the Word of God and the articles of the Church Order. Article 31 of the Church Order therefore requires that the consistory allow itself to be bound by classical and synodical decisions unless they can be proved to be in conflict with the Word of God. This article too can easily be defended with the Scriptures.

"Herewith has been answered also the brother's question under 1). The jurisdiction that the Classis has over the consistory can only be that kind of oversight that a Classis, organized on the basis of the Church Order, may take over the consistory. It is not an oversight that involves Classis in the exercise of legal or key-power over the consistory. For, as has been shown, all key-power is concentrated in the consistory. Hence, Art. 36 does not state that the Classis has the same jurisdiction over the consistory, that the consistory has over the congregation. What then is the character

of this oversight of Classis over consistory? It is *advisory* in contradistinction to *mandatory*. If the character of this oversight or jurisdiction were *mandatory* Classis would have the right to demand that its decisions be obeyed on pain of deposition of the recalcitrant consistory. But this right cannot be that of the Classis in that it has not the key-power. Hence, the character of the oversight of Classis over the consistory must necessarily be *advisory*. What this means has been fully explained. We must consider that it is always a question to whom the key-power was given, to the consistory alone or to the consistory and to the Classis."

I need quote no more.

Now Kok read this article too. Yet by quoting me out of connection, that is, by his failure to quote the article in its entirety, he became guilty of telling the readers that it teaches the very opposite from what it actually does teach. What I affirm in this piece—see especially the italicized paragraph—is that, although Classis may not depose a consistory for rejecting its decisions, it does have the right to expel it from its communion by refusing to seat its delegates. But Kok tells his readers that what my article teaches is that the Classis has not the right to do anything at all, that it finds itself under the necessity of seating the consistory's delegates though it persistently tramples classical decisions. In this way Kok falsifies, doing so, I repeat, by quoting me out of connection.

That he was consciously and deliberately practicing deceit I shall now prove. Let us read again that brief paragraph in my article that Kok quoted (see above), and take notice of how he quoted it. The dots that he inserted indicate that he omitted a sentence,—this sentence, "Were the classical decisions mandatory, the consistory would be *compelled* to submit to it or allow itself to be deposed now by the Classis." Certainly Kok cannot deny that his eliminating this sentence was done with a purpose. He wanted to use that paragraph to prove to his readers that what I all along have been holding and teaching is, that the Classis stands helpless when the consistory rejects its decisions. In other words, Kok's purpose was to prove to the readers his false contention that, in saying that the decisions of Classis are *advisory and not mandatory*, I meant that the consistory rejects classical decisions to its heart's content with the classis standing helpless. This being his purpose, he eliminated that sentence. For had he allowed it to stand, he could not have used the paragraph for that purpose. For then it would have been evident that what I mean in saying that the decisions of Classis are *advisory* and not *mandatory* is, that Classis, seeing that it does not have the key-power, can only refuse to seat the delegates of the consistory that rejects its decisions but that it may not depose it. But Kok did not want the readers to know what I meant. For his consuming ambition nowadays is to prove from our writings that for the sake of the brick we repudiated in court what we formerly held and taught. This explains his corrupting my article. It explains his failure to quote my article in its entirety.

The content of that latest issue of "The Reformed Guardian" was not published under Kok's name. Yet it is as plain as the day that this content is from his pen. What proves this is the style of the writing, the subject treated and the way the writing was corrupted. It's amazing how Kok persists in corrupting our articles to deceive his readers with regard to us. He should repent of this his sin and forsake it. Let him learn to speak the truth.

Finally, I am asking him to publish this article of mine—this rebuttal—in the "Concordia." For the people that should read it do not read "The Standard Bearer."

These remarks can apply of course only to that section of the content signed "The Reformed Guardian Staff." If this material is not from Kok's pen so that I make a mistake in naming him as the author, the blame rests solely on the staff for not saying who did write it. And why did not the members of the "staff" affix *their* names to this material? Were they too ashamed of it? They certainly have reasons to be. Take for example the following paragraph found on page 3 (of the "Guardian," of its latest issue):

"Time and again they (Hoeksema and Ophoff) warned the churches against classical hierarchy. They never grew weary of emphasizing the autonomy of the local church. They vehemently denied that the local congregation is but a subordinate part of a larger organization, and firmly maintained that the consistory is the sole ruling body in the Church. Again and again they stressed that Classis and Synod are broader gatherings, not higher courts; that they have an advisory voice, no judicatory power; that no Classis or Synod could demand submission, even for a time, to any of its decisions or declarations, when individuals, or several consistories considered them contrary to the Word of God and the Confessions."

Yes indeed we did warn the churches against Classical hierarchy, namely against the conception (and this is the real issue that the "Staff" is here covering up) that a Classis may depose a consistory for rejecting its decisions. Have we ever ceased warning against this conception? Are we guilty of affirming the opposite in the court of Judge Taylor? Certainly not. Here too we affirmed that the Classis has no such power. Never have we ceased proclaiming the autonomy of the local church—that is, proclaiming that the local church must not allow itself to be *deposed* by Classis? And this again is the sole issue here. And have we ceased denying that the local congregation is but a subordinate part of a larger congregation? On the contrary we continued to maintain it also in court by affirming before the judge that Classis has not the power to depose a consistory. Did we maintain in court before the judge that Classis (Synod) is a higher court, that is, that it has the key-power and that by virtue thereof it deposes consistories, if need be? Kok knows better. But we did maintain in court that the Classis has jurisdiction over the consistory. Have we ever taught anything else? Kok knows better. For he has read all my articles. That the Classis has jurisdiction over the consistory

is the very teaching of my article that Kok corrupted in this latest issue of the "Guardian." Did we maintain in court that the Classis could *demand* submission, that is, depose a consistory for not submitting to its decisions? (This is the sole and the real issue). Kok knows better.

Let Kok bring into the clear light of day the real issues here involved and then let him prove from our writings and from the Court Record that for the sake of the brick we repudiated all that we had ever taught and held in the matter of Reformed Church Polity. He will find that he cannot.

G.M.O.

Kok's "Proselyte" Reports

The undersigned and his wife had the privilege to attend the first meeting held here in South Holland by those who hold to the doctrines of prerequisite and conditional promises. It is therefore the aim of the undersigned to briefly relate to those who are interested, some of the events concerning this meeting.

It was no secret, as far as I know, that Rev. Kok was going to hold a meeting for those who were interested in getting firsthand information concerning the recent split in our churches. Therefore, calling our curiosity interest, my wife and I decided to attend. After all Rev. Kok had at one time been my missionary-preacher at Manhattan, Montana and it was through his work that I also became a member of the Protestant Reformed Churches. "A Proselyte of mine," Rev. Kok called me at this meeting of Jan. 14, 1955. But the strange thing about it all is that, now, in order to follow my former missionary-minister, I will have to return to some degree from whence I came.

While the Rev. Kok worked in Manhattan he was outdone by nothing and no one and I had much respect for him. He was open and always to the point. However, when he returned from the Netherlands, a few years ago, it became apparent that there was something different about him. No longer did he possess the straightforwardness and vigor with which he used to meet every attack that was made upon him in the years of 1938 and 1939.

To prove this point I would like to take my readers to the schoolhouse where on January 14, Rev. Kok and Knott were present to enlighten those of the public who might wish to be enlightened. Rev. Kok gave an informal talk, telling the people about the sad history of the past few years. (and sad it was) His main interest seemed to be the fact that, according to Kok, Judge Taylor's report clearly proved that Hoeksema had thrown overboard the autonomy of the local church. He emphasized this by quoting Rev. Hoeksema from some article out of a Standard Bearer. Which article it was, I do not now remember, but it was one which, "he did not mean to quote but since he had it with him and it just happened to fit in, he would read it to us." However,

I am sure Rev. Kok will supply us with the quotation if we ask him and in it there is a sentence which I asked him to repeat. Upon repeating that one sentence and calling attention to it the matter was dropped. Yet a lot was made of an article which Rev. Hoeksema wrote, some years ago, against Professor Volbeda and H. J. Kuiper, wherein Hoeksema takes them to task for comparing the church denomination to a wooden barrel. Each church was a stave in the barrel and the barrel was held together with three hoops, namely, Common church order, common confession, and common liturgy. Overagainst this Hoeksema, according to Rev. Kok, maintained that each church was a barrel in itself and was therefore autonomous. Today, said Kok, Hoeksema has thrown that overboard and says that the classis is the ruling body. So now he believes in a barrel too. I asked the Rev. Kok if he had proof of this. He asked me if I had not read Judge Taylor's report. I said that I had read it but that I considered that only the opinion of another and that Judge Taylor was not trying to determine whether or not, Hoeksema believed in a barrel or barrels and I further asked Rev. Kok to produce for us the direct quotations from the court records wherein Hoeksema denies the autonomy of the local church, and wherein he stated that the classis was the ruling body over a congregation, so that it could put hoops around the staves. Well he fumbled in his pocket and stated that he did not have them with him. However I told him again that I was sure Hoeksema still believed in barrels and so did I and that in the future attacks in the "Concordia" he should please use actual quotations from the court records.

Now for those of you who have the old Standard Bearers it will be worth your while to read the article on the barrels. Standard Bearer, Vol. 6, p. 246. Hoeksema had the right idea then and let no man tell you that he forsook it now. He fought for it and still maintains it today. The only trouble is that when this group of barrels met in classical sessions, one barrel tried to emit a different sound. So that barrel was advised to come with the correct sound, and when later again at the classical sessions two barrels came to the classical gathering, we seated the barrel which sounded like our barrels have always sounded. Pure and simple church order!!! And Rev. Kok tries to maintain that this barrel with the strange sound has the right to carry the name of Protestant Reformed on its side. That is pure and simple nonsense!!

John Flikkema

(to be concluded)

A place for Thy people Thou, Lord, didst prepare,
Thy vine deeply rooted rewarded Thy care;
Its branches like cedars, majestic and free,
Spread over the mountains from river to sea.

Psalms 80:3