

THE STANDARD

Bearer

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MEDITATION

Prayer Day Thoughts

"Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny Thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."

Prov. 30:8b, 9

Agur asks the Lord for food that will be convenient for him. What does that mean?

An answer to this question is possible, provided we are willing to be led by God's evaluation of things and relationships. And certainly this is not unseemly, if we remember that this God is our GOD, Who created us. Therefore He is the only Absolutely Competent One to judge of our convenience.

Generally speaking it must be evident to all that our convenience is that state where all our needs are fulfilled. This would give the general idea. Man is a creature and hence, dependent. From this dependency spring his needs. Are these fulfilled, then a state of tranquility, of convenience is born.

However, the text does not speak of this general idea but is narrowed down considerably by the word, "food." From this word *food*, we note that Agur is seeking the state of convenience for the body. Because oftentimes this word food or bread is mentioned for all the needs of the body. We all know that were the Lord to fulfil our prayer literally when we say: "Give us this day our daily bread," we would die of thirst, exposure and general misery. Our body needs more than bread if we are to be convenient. But bread, meat or food is mentioned as the more important of the species which is mentioned as the representative need for all the wants of the body.

Now, according to God's ordinances of creation, there is a certain, determined need for every creature: man, animal, herb and tree, yea, even of all the inanimate creation. And for man we might broadly speaking say that his body needs

sustenance, raiment and shelter. They are his needs without which he cannot be convenient. To go without them entirely or in part means poverty and, hence, suffering for man.

Let us emphasize however that our needs are determined according to the law of our life which God Himself has set. It is also here the law of God. Not our law. Were we to attempt to determine the law of the needs of our life, we always would make these needs very great. And therefore, let us remember that evidently radios, automobiles, pianos, pastries, beautiful and many changes of raiment, costly and large houses etc., do not belong to our needs. Neither does life-insurance or "a penny for a rainy day." No, for they are riches.

* * *

Oh, we will admit that many of the above-cited things are given to us, and we also admit that most of the time our heavenly Father gives a hundred-fold more than our needs, but that does not alter the fact that they are very determinedly not our needs.

Ah! when only we see the true relationships that God made: how humble we become! Then our needs dwindle down to the really fundamental and every crumb and luxury above them heightens our song of praise to our bountiful Father above.

The song of sweet meekness toward God our Provider.

Therefore, let us note also that Agur says: Feed me!

Remember, dear people of God, that this *feed me* belongs to the part that is convenient for me. It is a very integral part of the food convenient for me.

The words *feed me* remind us of the bird in the cage which received its convenient food: a little cup of water and a little box with seed. That is all. Does the bird know whether or not it will receive many more cups of water and many more boxes with seed? No, beloved, but listen. It is fed for to-day and listen again: its warbling song is condemnation of either our anxiety for the morrow or our murmurings of today, where we undervalue God's gifts or overvalue our needs.

Ah, let us learn the lesson of childlike trust and confidence from the feathered singers and say: Father, Thou knowest my needs for Thou art my Creator. Fulfill them to-day for I say unto Thee: Feed me! I am helpless without Thee; I acknowledge Thee as the mainspring also of my daily bread and of all my wants for to-day. Feed me and clothe me and take care of me for I am utterly dependent on Thee. And I trust Thee for Thou hast given me Thy wonderful promise that my bread and water shall be sure. With Thee and Thy care for me as my Provider I shall sing my lifelong day! Hallelujah, praise the Lord!

Does this mean, beloved that we may sit and rest and let work be hanged? Of course not. It belongs to the food and the phrase: Feed me! It also includes that I work for my daily bread and that I plan for my daily bread. It includes that the Lord would graciously strengthen me and give me all the necessary means for my daily task. But even here it requires of us that we walk with God the lifelong day in the consciousness of utter dependency on our Creator. That is the life that counts and that is also the only life that brings true convenience, true tranquility.

One more observance must be added, however. For it is possible that the Lord wants me to suffer. When I ask that neither riches nor poverty be given me, it does not mean that I will force my will upon the Lord. Neither does it mean that I have a right to my convenient food. And lastly, neither is this always the way toward the coming of God's Kingdom.

Therefore this must be added. When I have finished with my prayer for food convenient for me, I must say also: Not my will by Thy will be done. If it is necessary, Lord, that I must lie at the rich man's door, full of sores and destitute of clothing and food: then give me grace to bear it for Thy Name's sake.

* * *

Therefore we learn in the first place that this petition is an utterance of childlike trust and confidence.

In the second place, the message of our text tells us that if we have seen the Lord and have been taught wisdom, we also are aware of our own weakness. The man who is truly wise does not say: Let things come as they may! I do not care! I will praise God anyhow! For that is not only foolish, but also very decidedly superficial.

No, beloved, when heavenly wisdom has shined in our hearts we have seen our sins and our weaknesses. Then we know how treacherous we are by nature. There are depths of sin and weakness in the heart of man that are positively staggering. It reminds us of the lament of Jeremiah when he said: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Jer. 17:9. Also David, when the light of God's law had shined in his heart, beheld hidden corners of which he became suspicious, corners where sin lurked, so that it caused his outcry: "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from secret faults!" Ps. 19:12.

A truly wise man distrusts himself. Far be it from him therefore to say in arrogant boldness: Let come what may; I shall always in piety praise God, be it in poverty or in prosperity. He knows his weakness.

* * *

Therefore Agur prays: Father, give me neither poverty nor riches!

Poverty is that condition where the Lord places His creature beneath and below the convenient part according to His own ordinances of creation. On the contrary, riches is the life that is above the standard of God's ordinances. These ordinances never mean that I must have two houses in order to be happy. I really need only one. Riches is the dollar which we do not need. Poverty is the condition when we receive barely enough to live and really too much to die. When God lowers His own standard for our creaturely life we experience poverty; when He heightens that standard we are bathed in luxury and have riches.

Here again it will be advisable to emphasize that poverty is not a lack in *our budget*. Poverty is not that we have to do without an auto, a radio or piano. Poverty is not even that we have to do without work and must receive our sustenance through the deaconage. You have diligently sought for work and could not find it; you put your plight prayerfully before the deacons of Christ's Church and they provided your convenient food. You ate and were satisfied. Hence, you are not in poverty.

Poverty is when you shiver of the cold in threadbare garments. Poverty is when your cheeks become hollow from hunger and starvation; when your heart breaks when the children of your bosom cry for food and must go to bed hungry, for there is none. That is poverty. And that poverty Agur has in mind when he prays.

Is that not plain? Let us prove it from the text. Agur describes poverty as that state where you are in danger of stealing. He calls it the state where you are in danger of taking God's Name in vain. The picture is clear. Poverty, beloved, is that state where you have exhausted all the means to acquire all you need for a bare existence and where all things failed you. Consequently you went and stole a loaf for crying children and knowing that it is against God's own law to steal you said in the bitterness of your heart: There is no knowledge with the Most High. He brought me into this miserable state. I now steal and do not care. It's God's fault. And you are committing the double sin of taking what is not your own and abusing God's holy Name.

And Agur knew the perfidy of his heart. He was aware of this weakness in his nature. He knew he was able to fall into these miserable, godless depths of despair where we do no longer reason with God's commandments, but where we run riot and fall into the snares of the devil.

The same is true of the state of riches.

Agur knows that they are strong legs that can bear up prosperity. He knows beforehand that he will not be able to stand riches.

Father, he says, I am afraid that when Thou givest riches to me, I may become so full, that I will deny Thee, the very Source of them, and say: Who is God anyhow? Am I not the one who built all this Babel?

Ah, beloved, is this not true of all of us? When we have everything our hearts desire, when want seems far from our dwelling: how the prayer of praise and adoration of God is stifled upon our frozen lips! How cool we grow to the Almighty, Who is yet our Redeemer. We are so apt to then forget Him who giveth all this riches. So easily we become proud and say that *we* were the source of our own prosperity. Then we say that *our* ingenuity and *our* wisdom by far surpasses the poor struggling of the brother: the stupid one. Why do not people imitate our wisdom and our striving and our industry? Then they also would be rich. Look me over! I am it. And where is God then? He is far from our thoughts. So false we are and weak.

And Agur knows it. He knows himself a brute and foolish. That is the appraisal of self when we have seen the Lord. And that is the reason why he also is afraid of riches. Allow me to remark at this stage that thanks to the Almighty we have not experienced poverty during our time. It is necessary to remind ourselves of this. No one has shivered of the cold or gone hungry. God provided our bread every day and gave riches of extra dainties besides, all through these many years. The horror of China's terrible famines were absent from our shores, when thousands of little corpses of children lined the roadways.

No, we may say that the Lord has provided riches for us in the past. More than any country on earth is America the land of plenty.

Let us remember this prayer of Agur. Let us remember it especially now when prosperity is with us.

A childlike trust and confidence in Father Bountiful and a knowledge of our own treacherous heart are comely in the child of God.

Father, feed us with food convenient!

G.V.

REV. OPHOFF'S NEW ADDRESS

1321 Sylvan Ave., S. E., Grand Rapids 7, Michigan

Phone number: GLEndale 2-4324

When in doubt about the Gospel, visit the sick and fatherless. You will return in faith, for such visits are acts of faith.

* * *

The Bible does not agree with us, but we may learn to agree with it.

THE STANDARD BEARER

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C O N T E N T S

MEDITATION —	
Prayer Day Thoughts.....	265
Rev. G. Vos	
EDITORIALS —	
Prof. Deddens Inexcusable Ignorance.....	268
Rev. H. Hoeksema	
OUR DOCTRINE —	
The Triple Knowledge (Part III — Of Thankfulness).....	271
Rev. H. Hoeksema	
THE DAY OF SHADOWS —	
The Prophecy of Isaiah.....	274
FROM HOLY WRIT —	
Exposition of Galatians 5:22, 23.....	276
Rev. G. Lubbers	
IN HIS FEAR —	
"The Gate is Open".....	278
Rev. J. A. Heys	
CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH —	
The Church and the Sacraments.....	280
Rev. H. Veldman	
THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS —	
The Canons of Dordrecht (Art. 16).....	282
Rev. H. C. Hoeksema	
DECENCY AND ORDER —	
Students for the Ministry.....	260
Rev. G. Vanden Berg	
ALL AROUND US —	
Preview Next 25 Years; Progressive Calvinism.....	288
Rev. M. Schipper	
CONTRIBUTIONS —	
Kok a hopeless case.....	288
H. A. Van Putten	

EDITORIALS

Prof. Deddens' Inexcusable Ignorance

In "De Reformatie," numbers 18 and 19, occur several articles, penned by the hand of Prof. P. Deddens of the Liberated Kampen seminary, about the opinion of Judge Taylor *in re* the name, property and archives of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Mich., and, in connection with this, about the church political way in which the case was treated by the consistory of the First Church and by Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

According to Prof. Deddens, the action by which De Wolf and some of his elders were put out of office was not only thoroughly hierarchical, but also really ridiculous in many respects. For instance, according to the professor, at one and the same consistory meeting, eleven elders are pronounced to be under censure so that they cannot vote and immediately thereupon they are invited to vote and that, too, on what was virtually the same case. Mockingly, the professor asks: "Ra, ra, hoe kan dat?" (Guess, guess, how can that be?).

All that he writes, however, is based, partly, on ignorance and, partly, too, no doubt, on prejudice against us.

I am not concerned about the latter factor, that of prejudice in favor of De Wolf c. s. In fact, I can well understand this for the simple reason that those who left us do not care for the Protestant Reformed truth and, perhaps, can very well ally themselves with the Liberated.

However, I am concerned about Prof. Deddens' ignorance. And I will try, at least, to set him straight on the facts in the case.

In his articles he states that he really is not quite able to judge, because he is not acquainted with our history and our controversy in all its implications.

But this is a poor excuse.

For, in the first place, he should not write and express judgment about a matter of which he knows so little, and about which he has, evidently, been informed very one-sidedly. Such tactics can, perhaps, be excused in a common layman, but certainly not in a scientific man as Prof. Deddens is supposed to be. Such a man is supposed to investigate a matter thoroughly before he expresses any opinion. And this Prof. Deddens, evidently, failed to do. And, secondly, Prof. Deddens certainly was in a position to become thoroughly acquainted with all the facts in the case before he wrote. For, first of all he might have read the *Standard Bearer* which is an exchange paper with *De Reformatie*, and in which the whole matter of our recent controversy is explained in detail, both from a doctrinal and church-political viewpoint. And, besides, even if he had not been in a position to secure and read the *Standard Bearer*, he could have written me and asked for all the material in connection with

our recent controversy. I would have furnished him very gladly with all the material he needed. But even this he failed to do.

And, therefore, the heading above this editorial is certainly justified: "Prof. Deddens' Inexcusable Ignorance."

That he was ignorant about our case, I will show in these editorials, and I will surely see to it that he receives a copy of them.

Perhaps, the best way in which I can attain my purpose is by briefly reviewing the history of our case and at the same time, offering my comment in connection with the remarks of Prof. Deddens.

I will not relate the entire history from the beginning; but I rather confine myself, in connection with the remarks by Prof. Deddens, to relating how the matter came to Classis East. Prof. Deddens is of the opinion that in this matter we violated Art. 79 of the Church Order, because that article states that when a minister is guilty of any gross sin he shall immediately be suspended, not by the classis, but by the consistory with the advice of the nearest consistory. This, according to Prof. Deddens, was violated in the case of the Rev. De Wolf.

But what is the truth of this matter? I will quote a letter which I sent to the consistory, and which is self-explanatory:

"Esteemed Brethren:

"Enclosed you find a copy of a protest which together with this letter, I will, the Lord willing, bring to the attention of the next April session of Classis East.

"None of the material of this protest is new to you. By next April, it will be two years that the material of the first part of this protest has been before the consistory; while the second part has been in consideration for the last half year. You still have ample time to prepare a motivated reply to classis.

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

"1. You have forsaken and denied the Protestant Reformed truth, and approved of the First Point of 1924 in its worst form.

"2. You have, principally, cast me out, and must certainly censure me before the next celebration of the Lord's Supper, for I will never shake hands with one that proclaims such heresy. This implies, of course, that it is, from your point of view, your calling to suspend me from office.

"I protest:

"1. Against the above mentioned action of the consistory

on the grounds which will become evident in the accompanying protests.

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

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

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

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

"As soon as convenient for you, I would like to have a copy of your reply to this protest."

The question, how it was possible that the consistory could vote in favor of De Wolf by a vote of 9 to 8, is of minor importance. It is, however, easily explained by the following facts. One of our good elders, Mr. O. van Ellen, died. I was absent. And the Rev. Ophoff was told that he could not vote. And the Chairman did not vote. If it had not been for these facts, the motion would have been defeated by a vote of 12 to 9. But as I say, this is a minor matter.

My purpose is to call the attention of Prof. Deddens to the fact that so far the procedure was certainly perfectly legal. He cannot possibly deny me the right to protest against a certain action of the consistory to classis.

It stands to reason that I never received an answer to my protest. The answer could not pass through the consistory, because those that had been in favor of the original motion were now in the minority.

Thus the matter came to classis, April, 1953.

After a very lengthy deliberation, the classis finally decided as follows:

"Classis advises the Consistory of the First Church:

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

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

"Classis further advises the Consistory of First Church:

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

"b. That in case any elder or elders should refuse to submit to the proposed action as stipulated under number 2-b, which God graciously forbid, such elder or elders should be disciplined according to the articles of the D.K.O. pertaining thereto."

Now Prof. Deddens may disagree with the contents of this decision, as he undoubtedly does, but he certainly can-

not maintain that this action was in any way hierarchical. The case had been pending with the consistory for two years. Finally it had virtually proved to be deadlocked. It had come to the classis in a perfectly legal way, that of a protest. Besides, classis did not suspend the Rev. De Wolf or depose the elders. Even this was left entirely up to the consistory of the First Church. So that when Prof. Deddens writes that we violated Art. 79 of the Church Order, he simply does not know what he is talking about.

The classis at the same time appointed a delegation of 3 ministers and 2 elders to serve the consistory with information concerning this decision and with advice.

According to Prof. Deddens, the consistory of the First Church first censured the Rev. De Wolf with the help of the classis, and on the next day deposed him. According to Prof. Deddens, suspension of a minister must be done with the help of the neighboring, or nearest, consistory. This, according to him, was never done, but on the contrary, the Rev. De Wolf was suspended with the help of the classis and deposed with the help of the nearest consistory.

Worse nonsense I have never read.

In the first place, the Rev. De Wolf was never deposed, but only suspended. Does not Prof. Deddens know that according to Art. 79 a minister can be suspended with the advice of the nearest consistory, but that he cannot be deposed except with the advice of the classis and of the delegates ad examina of the neighboring classis? Or does Prof. Deddens perhaps have the idea that we are such babes in the woods that we know nothing about Reformed church polity, and that we must be instructed by some conceited professor in the old country? We assure him that not we are guilty of misunderstanding, but that Prof. Deddens is evidently totally ignorant of the facts in the case.

We now come to the meetings of the consistory of June 1, 15, 22, and 23, 1953, where the Rev. De Wolf was finally suspended (not deposed), and the elders following him were deposed. Also in regard to these meetings Prof. Deddens reveals his inexcusable ignorance. But let me briefly relate what occurred at these meetings.

At the meeting of June 1, which Prof. Deddens conveniently entirely ignores, a motion was made and adopted by the consistory by majority vote: "to adopt the advice of the classis and to act accordingly."

Mark you well that this decision is fundamental for the whole case. For by this decision the consistory declared that the Rev. De Wolf and the elders that followed him were declared guilty, and that unless they apologized for their sin they would be suspended and deposed. In other words, by this decision the Rev. De Wolf and the elders that agreed with him were already declared to be worthy of suspension and deposition unless they apologized. They certainly were in a state of guilt. In other words, after this decision, which was carried by a majority vote of the consistory, it could never be said that De Wolf and his elders were suspended

and deposed by a minority of the consistory, unless the motion and decision of June 1 were first rescinded by a two-thirds majority of the consistory. And the latter was never done.

At that meeting the Rev. De Wolf and the elders that followed him asked for time to consider the matter, and they even asked whether they might meet together for consideration. This probably should never have been done; nevertheless, the consistory granted them the privilege.

At the June 15 meeting no important action was taken, but it appeared at that meeting that De Wolf and his guilty elders had not yet met to consider whether they would apologize or be suspended and deposed. They played politics. They waited for the installation of another elder, that would take the place of Mr. O. van Ellen, who had died. And they hoped that then they could still have a majority in the consistory, or at least draw a tie vote.

The next meeting was that of June 22. At that meeting all the elders were present, including the newly elected one. The president was asked now to place the Rev. De Wolf and his accused elders before the question decided upon in the meeting of June 1. Then some more politics followed. One of the guilty elders remarked that before the chair asked the above mentioned question, a motion must be made to that effect. Such a motion was, of course, entirely out of order because the matter had been decided at the June 1 meeting. The motion was made and carried. It was immediately remarked that on this motion the guilty officebearers could not possibly vote. This was maintained not, as Prof. Deddens remarked, because they could not vote in their own case, — which in itself is perfectly true, — but because they were declared in a state of guilt. And I was taught at the seminary that no one, whether he be an officebearer or a common member, can ever vote in any case whatsoever while he is in a state of guilt. This, I believe, is sound Reformed church polity, and is also maintained by the well-known Roberts' *Rules of Order*. Prof. Deddens, however, seems to be of the opinion, according to what he writes in *De Reformatie*, that this is nothing but a reign of terror, — to use his own terminology. But we beg to differ with him, and maintain that he is utterly in error. We can truly say, therefore, that the motion regarding the apology of the Rev. De Wolf was carried unanimously, even though it stood at a vote of 11 to 11 if you count the guilty officebearers. And the vote regarding the apology of the guilty elders was also carried unanimously, even though, if you count the vote of the guilty elders, it stood as 12 in favor and 11 against. They refused to apologize. And therefore according to the decision by the consistory at its June 1st meeting, it had already been decided that the Rev. De Wolf should be suspended and the elders should be deposed.

For this purpose the June 23rd meeting was held. And for the same purpose the consistory of the Fourth Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids was called in.

Perhaps I will write still more about the foolishness and ignorance of Prof. Deddens. But for the time being this must be sufficient. And I kindly ask Prof. Deddens to admit that he did not know anything about the case, that he did not investigate it, and that therefore it was very foolish on his part to write about it.

H. H.

Announcements

Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet on Wednesday morning, April 6, 1955, at 9 o'clock in the Hope Protestant Reformed Church. Will the Consistories resorting in Classis East kindly take note.

M. Schipper, Stated Clerk

The Eastern League of Men's Societies will hold their Membership meeting March 17, at 8 o'clock in the Fourth Protestant Reformed Church. Rev. R. Veldman will speak. Topic: "Women Suffrage in the Church."

The Board

TEACHERS WANTED

Hull Christian School — Four or more teachers September 1. Openings in kindergarten, grade one or two, two in intermediate department. College training and musical ability desired. Forward references directly. Write Fred Van Engen or Principal Norman Vander Ark, Hull, Iowa.

IN MEMORIAM

On February 5, 1955 the Lord unexpectedly removed from our midst our beloved husband, father and grand-father,

EMKO RUTGERS

at the age of 65 years. Although our loss is deeply felt, we are comforted by His grace in the assurance that, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." II Cor. 5:1.

Mrs. Emko Rutgers
Mr. and Mrs. Harry Rutgers
Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Fischer
Mr. and Mrs. Henry Zandstra
Rev. and Mrs. George Lanting
Mr. and Mrs. Jacob W. Regnerus
Cornelia Rutgers
Emma Rutgers
Joan Rutgers
and 19 grand-children

Oak Lawn, Ill.

OUR DOCTRINE

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

AN EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

PART III — OF THANKFULNESS

LORD'S DAY 45

Chapter 2

The Requisites of True Prayer

Let us consider just one of the several passages of the Word of God that are quoted in support of what nevertheless must be considered a very corrupt and carnal conception of prayer—a passage that is perhaps more often appealed to than any other. I am referring to the prayer of Hezekiah, the king of Judah. You are all acquainted, no doubt, with the incident in Hezekiah's life that occasioned the prayer, as well as with the prayer itself and its result. The king was sick. And his sickness was unto death. Moreover, the Word of the Lord came unto him by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah: "Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live." But Hezekiah was not ready to set his house in order and to die. He prayed earnestly to the Lord: "I beseech thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight." And in answer to that prayer the prophet Isaiah was ordered to turn back to the king at once with this message: "Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee; on the third day thou shalt go up into the house of the Lord. And I will add unto thy days fifteen years; and I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake." The king recovered from his fatal disease. Now there are especially two questions that are of interest and importance in connection with our present discussion of the subject of prayer. The first question is: did Hezekiah in this case not pray directly against the will of the Lord? And did he by this prayer not change the mind of the Most High and God's way with him? And does, then, this prayer not furnish us with a firm ground for the view that we too do the same thing, and expect the same result? Is it not a real proof of faith and piety, when we are sick, to turn in prayer to the Lord and beseech Him to heal us, that we may not die? And the second question, closely related to the first, is this: do we not have here a clear illustration and proof that the Lord does change His mind sometimes, upon our request?

Both these questions must be answered with a most emphatic *No*. In ordinary circumstances we have no ground for the prayer that God may send recovery when we are

sick, nor a promise of God that He will hear such a prayer. And if our sickness is of such a nature that through it the Lord says to us, "Prepare thy house, for thou shalt die, and not live," it is not pious to turn our face to the wall and weep and to let the Lord know that we are neither prepared nor willing to leave the earthly house of this tabernacle and move to our heavenly house of God. In such cases we should answer: "Yes, Lord, I will be ready in a minute. It won't take me long to set my earthly house in order." This applies to all ordinary circumstances. But the circumstances under which Hezekiah prayed were quite extraordinary. In fact, they were such that he could plead on the basis of God's own sure promises against the Word of the Lord that now came unto him both through his sickness and by the mouth of Isaiah.

What were these circumstances?

They were, first of all, that Jerusalem and Judah were threatened with destruction by the world power of Assyria. It was evidently before Jerusalem had been delivered from the power of that mighty and ravaging enemy that Hezekiah became sick, and that he felt that he could not set his house in order and die. We cannot fail to notice that the promise he receives upon his prayer for recovery includes the assurance that Jerusalem shall be delivered out of the hand of the king of Assyria.

But this is not all.

In the abstract it was quite conceivable that Hezekiah should die, and that the Lord would deliver the city through his successor on the throne. But it is evident from the text in its context that when Hezekiah was stricken with this fatal disease, he had as yet no son. There was no seed of David. And that made it absolutely impossible for the king to set his house in order and die. It was exactly in this respect that he could base his plea for recovery on the sure promise of God. Had not God established His covenant with the house of David? He had. Definitely He had promised His servant David, according to II Samuel 7:12-16: "I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I shall be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of man, and with the stripes of the children of men: but my mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever." On the basis of this promise Hezekiah could plead for recovery, even against the Word of the Lord that was sent to him at that moment. He could not possibly die, for he had no son. Had he died at that time, the seed of David would have been cut off. And that means that Christ would never have come.

It is true that the king does not literally mention this ground in his prayer. But it is equally true that he does

plead not on the basis of a certain self-righteousness, but on the ground of the fact that he had walked in the way of that covenant of God when he says: "I beseech thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight." There was no reason why God should take the covenant of David away from him, as it had been removed from the house of Saul. And it is equally true that in God's answer to Hezekiah's prayer this ground of the Davidic covenant is plainly referred to: for Isaiah must answer the king: "Thus saith the Lord, *the God of David thy father*, I have seen thy tears; behold, I will heal thee." The conclusion, therefore, which you may draw from this incident of Hezekiah's prayer is not that when you are sick, the Lord will surely heal you if you only pray persistently, but that the Lord will surely hear the prayer that is based upon His own covenant and promise, no matter what may be the circumstances.

And as to the second question, did God in this particular instance change His mind, our answer must again be emphatically negative. God never had in mind to let Hezekiah die, and to discontinue His covenant with David, ultimately with Christ. That would have been impossible. For God is faithful and true. He certainly establishes His covenant forever. What then? Did the Lord lie when He sent His Word to the king. "Thou shalt die, and not live?" God forbid that we should ever entertain such a thought, even for a moment. He merely dealt with Hezekiah as He often deals with us and with all His children, pedagogically, that is, for his instruction. And for the purpose of accomplishing this He revealed His complete will to the king piecemeal, bit by bit, in order that he, and also Isaiah and the remnant according to the election of grace, might be tested, cry unto the Lord, and thus be purified and strengthened in their faith in Jehovah their God. For it was the Lord's full counsel in this case that He should test them by bringing the king to the edge of the grave and to the certainty of death, in order that thus He might teach them to cry unto the Lord, and in the way of prayer might show them His mercy and deliver them. Often the Lord makes it dark and apparently hopeless for His cause and people in the world, in order that they may learn not to put their confidence in princes, but to cry to the Lord Sabaoth and to trust that salvation is of the Lord.

Hence, I deny that prayer ever changes things, or changes the mind of God.

Or rather, let me put it this way. I can agree in a sense that prayer certainly changes things, provided you mean that it pleases God to execute His own unchangeable counsel and cause His own kingdom to come in the way of the prayers of His saints, which He Himself works in their hearts by His Spirit and instructs them to pray by His Word. But if you should mean that by our prayers we struction and madness, devastation and death. Our sons are

change the will and mind of the absolute Sovereign of all the universe, so that through our prayers not His will but our will is done, I must not only utterly disagree with such a view of prayer, but I also wish to state emphatically that I must utterly abhor it. If ever I felt as if by my prayer I changed the mind of the ever-living and all-wise God, never would I have the courage to utter another petition. We do not approach the overflowing fountain of all good in order to pour anything of ourselves into it and to add to its sparkling goodness, but with the empty cups of our existence, that they may be filled by Him.

But still more follows from this fundamental principle of all prayer, that it must be directed to the only true and living God, as He had revealed Himself in His Word. In this consciousness the sense of our real need is quite different from what we usually in our earthly-mindedness and carnality conceive it to be. For as we present ourselves before the face of the living God, as He has revealed Himself in His Word, we are impressed and overwhelmed with a sense of His holiness. In that sense many of our imagined needs begin to appear as the products of our sinful desires. In answer to Question 118, "What hath God commanded us to ask of him?" the Catechism replies: "All things necessary for soul and body." But do not forget that the Catechism adds that all those needs for soul and body are comprised in the Lord's Prayer:

What are our real needs?

O, perhaps before we stand really in prayer before the face of the living God, we had in mind to pray for many things. Perhaps we had it in our heart to pray for prosperity, for meat and drink, for abundance of earthly things, for health and joy, for peace and earthly happiness for ourselves and for our children. But when we really come to stand face to face with the Holy One of Israel, we deeply realize that after all these desires are carnal and sinful, that they represent the things after which the Gentiles seek; and our intended petitions die on our lips. Perhaps there is sickness in our home, and we are not satisfied with God's way, and we approach the throne of grace firmly determined to beseech the Lord of all to remove the sickness and to restore the sick to health. But as we stand in the presence of the Most High, we realize that He knows better than we what we really need, and that He sends us all things in order to prepare us for His eternal kingdom. And we change our prayer into a petition for grace to will His will. Perhaps we thought, as Asaph, that we had reason to murmur and to criticize the ways of the Almighty because we see the wicked prosper, while our own punishment is there every morning. But in the sanctuary of God, face to face with the Holy One of Israel, the only true God, we see all things in the light of the end. And shamefaced because of our murmuring spirit, we now confess that it is good for us to be near unto God. Perhaps there is war in the world, de-

called to battle. And quite thoughtlessly, even considering it an act of piety, we hastened to the throne of the Almighty, and earnestly meant to beseech Him to stop the war at once and to restore peace. But as soon as we are really and consciously in the presence of His majesty, we hear Him say: "I, the Lord, am he that doeth all these things! I make peace, but I also cause war to come. And all these things are subservient to the realization of My counsel and the coming of My kingdom." And with fear and trembling we choke back our intended petition for peace, and say instead: "Thy will be done, Our Father Who art in heaven." O, it is easy in our prayers to ask the questions of anxiety and earthly-mindedness: "What shall we eat and what shall we drink, and where withal shall we be clothed?" as long as we really pray to an idol. But as soon as our prayers become petitions to the living and only true God, all these carnal petitions die on our lips, and we begin to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, confident that all other things shall be added unto us.

Indeed, this one principle determines the contents of our prayer. Motivated by that fundamental principle, we shall always ask for those things which God has commanded us in His Word.

The same fundamental principle, that we direct our prayer to the one only true God, as He has revealed Himself in His Word in Christ Jesus our Lord, also determines the spiritual attitude we assume in our prayers.

Of this the Catechism speaks in the last part of Question 117 in the following words: "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."

In this answer I find especially three elements.

First of all, there is the element of humility. Humility will certainly characterize our attitude in prayer if we approach Him in the consciousness of His glory and majesty. This means, first of all, that we know that He is the Lord, the fulness of all riches, the overflowing fountain of all good, and that we are empty, always in need of Him. We can never bring anything to Him, or add anything to His infinite fulness. We come then with our little empty cups to the fountain, that they may be filled. God is all; we are nothing. That is true humility. But this humility implies more. For we are sinners, and have forfeited all things. True humility, therefore, also means that we approach Him with the confession of our utter unworthiness in ourselves to receive ought from Him, yea, of our being worthy to be damned.

Secondly, and in connection with this true humility, and motivated by it, we will realize that we can approach God only in Christ Jesus, and on the ground of His perfect righteousness, and that we are above all in need of grace. Of this need of grace in Christ Jesus our Lord we must be clearly

conscious when we approach the throne of our Father in heaven. And the knowledge that we present ourselves before the living God, Who knows all our hearts and the secrets within, will also impress upon us that we must come before Him with truth in the inmost heart. We cannot approach Him with a lie in our right hand. We must feel in our hearts that we really desire the things we ask of Him, that we really hunger and thirst after righteousness, that we really ask Him for the forgiveness of sins, and for the deliverance from evil. And we must really have forgiven one another before we can appear before Him with the prayer, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." We must really desire that His name be glorified, that His kingdom may come, that His will may be done, and that too, regardless of what may become of our name, of our kingdom, of our will, in order to utter before Him the first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer. For He requires truth in our inmost hearts. H.H.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On March 10, 1955 our dear parents and grandparents

MR. and MRS. J. R. VANDERWAL

celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary.

We are thankful to our God who gave them to us and our prayer is that He may bless them in the way that lies ahead and that they may experience that there is no peace apart from God.

Their grateful children

Mr. and Mrs. M. Gaastra

5 great grandchildren

4 grandchildren

308 W. Lugonia, Redlands, California

IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies' Society of the Oak Lawn Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sympathy with two of its members, Mrs. E. Rutgers in the loss of her husband, and Mrs. J. W. Regnerus in the loss of her father,

EMKO RUTGERS

May they find comfort in His grace by which we confess, "In God is my salvation and my glory, the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God." Psalm 62:7

Rev. G. Vanden Berg, President

Mrs. J. Buiter, Secretary

IN MEMORIAM

The Men's Society of the Protestant Reformed Church in Oak Lawn, Illinois, mourns the loss of one of its members

EMKO RUTGERS

whom, very suddenly, the Lord took home.

To Mrs. Rutgers and the saddened family we express our deep sympathy and pray that they may be comforted by the Holy Spirit in the assurance of faith that "All things work together for good unto them that love God and are called according to His purpose." Rom. 8:28

Oak Lawn, Ill.

Rev. G. Vanden Berg, President

Mr. H. Ipema, Ass't Secretary

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Prophecy of Isaiah

5. Do not thou fear; for with thee — I;
From the east will I bring thy seed,
And from the west I will gather thee;
6. I will say to the north, Give up;
And to the south, Keep not back
Bring my sons from far,
And my daughters from the end of the earth:
7. All that are called by my name:
Because for my glory I have created him, formed
him, yea made him
8. Bring forth the people blind that have eyes,
And the deaf that have ears.

The subject addressed is still Jacob-Israel, the church of the elect. She possesses an innumerable seed seeing that by the Word of God to Abraham all the nations of the earth are blessed in him, that is, in Christ. The Lord assures the church that he will surely gather her seed, from the remotest ends of the earth. That is, without fail He will save His elect in every nation and as united by a common faith in Christ make them to appear before His face in Zion as clothed with heavenly perfection and glory. God's people need not fear that one of them will be lacking. The whole house will be full. Not one place in the family of redeemed will be vacant.

How could He fail to gather this seed? The gathered ones are His sons and daughters. By His own will He begot them. They are called of Him by His name — holiness to the Lord — that they should be to His glory, — His people by nature blind and deaf but as His sons and daughters seeing and hearing.

Yes He will gather them by His Word and His Spirit. He will say to the East, the West, the North and the South, to the world-power of this earth and to every evil power that it represents — death, hell and the grave — He will say, "Give up; keep not back." And so it will be. The proof is Cyrus the Mede. He let the Jews in captivity go free that they might return to their own place. For His heart was in the Lord's hand.

Such is here the promise. And as always it is unconditional. And it is given only to the elect, to the sons and the daughters, to such as are called by His name, to the blind that have eyes and to the deaf that have ears. And though coming first to Judah in the captivity of the exile, it pertains to the whole church in every place. For it is a seed that is to be gathered from the ends of the earth. It is a mistake to limit this word of the Lord to the Jews. What is here promised is the gathering of the church as comprehending both the chosen Jews and the elect Gentiles. Of this working

of God the turning of Judah's captivity was the prophetic type.

The promised and accomplished salvation the proof that He alone is God, xliii. 9-13

9. Let all the nations be gathered together,
And let the people be assembled:
Who among them can declare this,
And cause us to hear former things?
Let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified;
And let them hear and say, It is truth.

The "nations" are the Gentiles; the "people" is Israel. It is best to imagine that in the prophetic vision the summons was obeyed so that the prophet has before his eye two assemblies, one of Gentiles and the other of God's people. Addressing the latter, the prophet declares, "Who among them can declare this . . .?" The demonstrative "this" looks back to vss. 1-8. The meaning is: What man, heathen prophet, in all that vast assembly of Gentiles is able to foretell the marvels that Jehovah has shown through me His organ? He cannot. The idol that he represents and for whom he speaks cannot (the two must be regarded as one). Both are vanity, nothingness.

Or cause us to hear the former things? Cause us to hear, that is, shew us. If the reference is to past events, there would be no point to this challenge. For events of the past are easily known from history. By "former or first works" must therefore be understood the works of the Lord of the nearer future, the spoilation of the Babylon empire by Cyrus and the turning of Judah's captivity in distinction from the working of the Lord of the far distant future from the point of view of the prophet, the advent of Christ, His atonement, the gathering of the church in the Gospel period, the final judgment and world catastrophe.

That by the expression "former or first events" is to be understood world happenings of the future and not of the past is plain from xli. 21-23, where the expression also occurs, "Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the king of Jacob. Let them bring forth, and show us what will happen: let them show the former (first) things, what they be (*shall be*), that we may set our heart upon them, and know the latter end of them: and declare us things for to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together."

I quote the whole passage, because it is only when considered in its setting that the expression can be understood. We must take notice that the idols, to prove their divinity, must say what the future will be. This stands to reason, since world happenings of the past are known from history. The "first things" are therefore the happenings to come. These are the things that the idol must show. This will

make it possible for their contemporaries to ponder these happenings and thereby come to understand them in their full potential for the ages posterior to them. The "first things" are the events to come in their inception or beginning while their "latter end" is these same events in their bearing on the ages subsequent to them. Considered by itself, the expression "former or first things" may denote past as well as future world happenings. But as proof for the divinity of the idols the "first things" must necessarily be happenings that they foretold.

Let them — the heathen prophets — bring forth their witnesses, that is, persons in whose hearing their predictions of the "first things," workings of the Lord, world happenings to come, were made and who will testify to that effect. In this way the claim of the heathen that their gods are divine will be established and they themselves justified.

And let them hear and say, It is the truth, them, the witnesses. If there be heathen soothsayers, prophets, who say that all along they foretold the "first things," let them produce witnesses who heard them prophesy, and who can therefore testify, *It is truth.* So they prophesied.

There could be no such witnesses. There could be no heathen soothsayers, prophets, who all along had been foretelling the "first things," the overthrow of Babylon by Cyrus and the turning of Judah's captivity. Here human foresight failed. For at the time that the Lord foretold these "first things" Babylon as a world power had not even begun to make its appearance.

10. Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord,
And my servant whom I have chosen:
That ye may know and believe me
And understand that I am He:
Before me there was no God formed,
Neither shall there be after me.
11. I *am* the Lord;
And there is not beside me a saviour.
12. I have declared and saved,
And I have caused to hear, when there was among
you no strange god:
Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord,
That I am God.
13. Yea, before the day was I am He;
And there is none that can deliver out of my hand:
I will work and who shall turn it back?

The gods of the heathen had their witnesses, their prophets that spoke in their name but that could not foretell the former or first things to prove thereby the divinity of their deities.

But in distinction from the gods of the heathen the Lord knows all things because He works all things according to the counsel of His will, the things that are first and the things last. And therefore He alone can and does prophesy.

And His people, Jacob-Israel, are His witnesses, they

being His servant chosen of Him that through the word of prophecy and all His marvelous works of salvation in fulfillment thereof — words of prophecy that are with them and in their hearts — they might know and believe Him and understand that "I am He," that is, that He is the God and none else. And the evidence (valid only for faith)? Before Him there was no god formed nor will be after Him, meaning that as the eternal God He is the first and the last and that therefore the idols are less than nothing (10)

Truly He alone is the Lord, the only Saviour. And once more, the evidence? He has declared, prophesied, what He will do, foretold the things first and last, and actually saved His people in the past over and over in fulfillment of His promise (11). And His prophecies cannot be ascribed to the idols, because He shewed when as yet there was no strange god among them. Essentially there is but one promise, prophecy, proclaimed immediately after the fall at the dawn of history, "I will set enmity etc."

Therefore His redeemed people are His witnesses that He is God (11, 12), that before the day He was — that in a word, He is from everlasting to everlasting God — that there is none than can deliver out of His hand and from His wrath but He alone, and that He will surely work this deliverance and that none shall deter it (13).

His redeemed people are His witnesses because as experiencing His salvation they taste that the Lord is gracious. And His word of prophecy dwells rightly in them. And so, as activated by His love in them, they witness, bear witness for the truth that He is God, etc.

The Lord's servant here is the church of the elect as is evident from the expression, "*Ye* are my servant." They are called witnesses because they see with their own eyes and have personal knowledge of all His wonderful works.

The deliverance and return of Israel from the Babylonian captivity, xliii. 14-17.

14. Thus saith the Lord,
Your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel;
For your sake I have sent to Babylon,
And have brought down their fugitives all,
And the Chaldeans whose cry is in their ships.
15. I am the Lord, your Holy One,
The creator of Israel your king.
16. Thus saith the Lord,
That maketh a way in the sea,
And in the waters a mighty path;
17. Which bringeth forth the chariot and the horse,
The army and his power together;
They shall lie down and not rise
They are extinguished, they are quenched as tow.

The vanity of the idols has now again just been exposed. They were asked to shew the "first things," not events of the past that could be known from history, nor future happening near at hand that human foresight could conjecture.

(Continued on page 288)

FROM HOLY WRIT

Continuation of Exposition of Galatians 5:22, 23

In our former article on this text we noticed that the chief subject of Paul in this passage is, that, since we *are* the free-born sons in the Lord, we ought also to walk in this freedom, and not be ensnared in a yoke of bondage of the works of the law. For we have been powerfully and irresistibly called to freedom.

However, Paul here raises a warning finger. We are not to use our liberty as an occasion to the flesh, but by love we are to serve one another. And this is fulfilling the law of Christ; it is walking according to the rule of the living faith in Christ Jesus, the law of the Spirit in our hearts.

When this is not done Satan has his "hour" in the church.

Then the fruits of the Holy Spirit of God, through whom we are sealed unto the day of redemption, do not come to manifestation. Then we walk so, that with a free and good conscience we do not fight against sin and unbelief, and with the joyful assurance of the final victory in the day of Christ.

Fact is, that then the church has the appearance of wild animals who are at each other's throats. Hear Paul's warning: If ye bite and devour one another, beware lest ye be consumed one of another.

Such is the general subject here!

Now Paul shows how this life of the Spirit and the flesh in us are constantly at warfare within us. The flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh so that ye do not do the things ye would. Just how the flesh reveals itself we have seen in an earlier essay. And in the former essay we have begun to show something of the positive fruits of the "Spirit" in our hearts.

Let us continue.

We notice that the first triad of fruits is: love, joy and peace. These are most emphatically the "fruits" of the Holy Spirit. They are in no sense of the word fruits which can come up out of the natural man. They are the "good works which God hath before prepared that we should walk in them." Eph. 2:10. Hence, they are such fruits of the Spirit which are indicative that we have a true and living faith in Christ. And having this true and living faith it is impossible that we should not bring forth fruits unto thankfulness.

That these "fruits" may be evidenced in our lives the Scripture comes to us with "admonitions, threatenings and warnings." For God *confers* grace through admonitions as these latter are "means of grace!"

Now it is spiritually-psychologically true that where the first triad of "fruits" are present, love, joy and peace, the other fruits will also needs be present; without the former the latter are not possible. Only where love, as the basic

fruit, is, can there be joy and peace, and, again, only where peace is can we expect to find the spiritual-psychological disposition expressed in the "fruits": *longsuffering, usefulness, goodness, trustworthiness, meekness and selfcontrol!*

Let us briefly notice each of these virtues in their ascending scale of spiritual fruits, most practical and most gratifying to all, who love the Lord in Spirit and in truth.

The first of these virtues is: *longsuffering*. We should bear in mind that longsuffering is a manifestation of love, joy, and peace. For "peace" is indeed as an umpire in the games. It is the inward power of real, spiritual self-control. It is the peace of Christ that rules in our life. It insists that we do not use our liberty as if it were license. It only desires that each esteem the other greater than himself. Only where a man has great peace in his heart, the joy of love, can he be "longsuffering" toward his brother.

What is the meaning of being "longsuffering?"

Literally this term means: to be long of breath, long of wrath. It means that there is such an inward spiritual self-control that we do not explode in wrath. Shall such a longsuffering be free from inward spiritual-psychological *tension* then it must be rooted deeply in the joy, peace and love of the Holy Spirit. Otherwise the longsuffering is impossible. Without there longsuffering cannot possibly be exercised in a true and living faith. Hence, we will have to study unto salvation as new creatures. We will needs have to crucify the flesh with the works thereof. Nay, we must not simply crucify the *outward manifestation* of the sin of "outburst of wrath," but we shall have to crucify the very *motives* from which these spring in heartfelt conversion, and that, too, day by day. Then we shall be longsuffering in very deed towards each other and not simply in words. Then the song of love, as sung by Paul in I Cor. 13 will surely be in our hearts, and we shall understand why the very "keynote" of this love as it reveals itself among the brethren here in the imperfect church will be: love is *longsuffering*. I Cor. 13:4 where this longsuffering is, should we, out of the great love for God and His people, be willing to endure all things.

Blessed is the man who has this fruit of the Holy Spirit in his life.

For such a man is full of "kindness;" he is spiritually *useful* in God's church. He is not a triangle in a square, a man that fits nowhere, a spiritual misfit, a self-centered egoist, who imagines that the whole of the life of the congregation evolves about him rather than evolving around God. Such a man is always ready when duty calls. Nothing is too much. He can do all things through Christ who strengthens him. Being very slow to wrath, since the peace of Christ reigns in his heart, he is not cast to and fro by all kinds of selfish whims, but he is constant in purpose true. He is "useful," denies himself, takes up his Cross and follows Christ wherever he leads. Such usefulness is awarded a hundred times in this life and in the life to come.

And this usefulness too is a "fruit" of the Holy Spirit, which is the fulfillment of the law which saith: Thou shalt

love they neighbor as thyself! O, where this "usefulness" as a fruit of the Spirit manifests itself the godly will not need to groan: every man seeketh his own! Here all will be minding, setting their spiritual affections upon the same thing. Here we will indeed see the striving to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Here the deep consciousness of having one Lord, one faith, baptism, love, and one God, Who is above all, through all and in all, will be the impulse to further blessed fruits of the Spirit. In the lives of such there will be no "tensions" which drive to despair, but such will take all their burdens to the Lord and leave them there. For here we see the love that is perfected. And in this perfect love there is no fear. Would to God that all ministers and elders understood this spiritual secret in holy fear and trembling. Here we have the soul of the Christian analyzed. Let not any man say: you have no right to judge me. I do not judge you, but the Word of God which I here explain judges every one of us in our conscience. It is sharper than any two-edged sword and passes into the dividing asunder of the bone and marrow and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. All things are naked and open with whom we have to do.

Hence, let us crucify the flesh with the passions and desires of the same. Why? Because such is a *pre-requisite* to enter into the Kingdom. Nay, but because it belongs to our being free-born sons in Christ thus to crucify these passions and to walk in a new and holy life. Such is the force of the phrase, "Now they who are of Christ Jesus . . ." You say you belong to Christ in life and death for time and eternity? Well and good. "Only then walk worthy of the calling wherewith ye have been called. Bring forth fruits meet for repentance, that is, walk in a true and living faith!"

Living faith reveals itself in "usefulness," in practical kindness. Let us show our living faith, which is energized by love, from our works. A good tree bringeth forth good fruits. Thus is the admonition here, whereby God confers grace to our hearts of this new obedience. Yes, admonitions of the gospel, which must not be confused with the command of law: the man that doeth the same shall live thereby!

Where such "usefulness" is present in our hearts and life, we will surely also see the "fruit" of the Spirit called "goodness." Here we will see good deeds. Here we will see the practical manifestation of helping the neighbor. The Parable of the "good Samaritan" is a fine commentary on this goodness. Such a useful man will surely know whose neighbor he is and will, therefore, not need to ask: Who is my neighbor? To him John will not have to write: "if any man have the world's goods and seeth his neighbor having need, and shutteth up his bowels from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" Of the contrary to such John writes: "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren." I John 3:14.

Such a walk is a walk at liberty. He that so walks will surely stand before the *royal law of liberty*, not becoming a forgetful hearer, and will have the love of God and the

faith without respect of persons. Only where this is present will we be serving one another by love. And thus we will walk not as those *under law*, but as such who are *under grace*!

The fruits of the spirit are most practical. However, they are more than morality and legality. They are "fruits of the Spirit." Let this sink deep into our hearts. And the Spirit brings forth these fruits in our hearts as a conscious reality by means of the preaching of the Word. Thus we are brought forth as "some firstfruits of the new creation." James 1:18.

Behold the threefold strand which is not easily broken: longsuffering, usefulness and goodness!

Nay, where these fruits are there will be other fruits also. Here are the many an much fruit in which the Father is glorified!

For, notice, that there will be also the fruit called: faithfulness, trustworthiness. The useful man, being longsuffering, gains the confidence of all. None doubt his sincerity. When he speaks he speaks not lightly but with truth and love sincere. Strictly speaking true faithfulness one never finds in the world. It will surely fade away in the acid test of life when affliction cometh. Matt. 13:21. But those in whose heart love, joy and peace have been established as a "fruit" of the Spirit and, therefore, have depth of earth, they shall never be moved. Their trustworthiness is proven through affliction and suffering. They are the friends who are born in the time of need. They are the friends who sticketh closer than a brother; a Jonathan who loves David in righteousness.

Yes, here we will also see "meekness." Meekness is not weakness, a man who is cowardous and will, therefore, quail before the foe. Meekness is strength, the inward strength of the new man in Christ Jesus, whereby we are not sharp and harsh, but are mild in the knowledge that the Lord judges His people, and that He never puts to shame those who place their trust in Him. The meek man knows that the Lord is His strength and protection, and that nothing can ever separate him from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Such a man also has "self-control." Not the self-control of the Stoic who stands in his own strength and wills to be the captain of his own soul, but the inner self control of the man who wholly relies upon God, as a child relies upon his father. It is the self-control, the "temperance" of the child leaning upon its mother's breast. Here the child of God sings: The Lord my Shepherd holds me within His tender care.

Such are the fruits of the Spirit.

Against such there is no law. Only such walk in the grace of Christ and true faith which establishes the law!

If we live by the Spirit let us also walk by the Spirit.

G.L.

IN HIS FEAR

The Gate Is Open

(Continued)

Time flies!

And while it does, man has severe limitations.

As a result it often happens even in a daily newspaper that, before the newsheet reaches the streets, the things written therein are outdated. New developments — as the time sped by and limited men were setting type, running the presses and delivering the printed page — make what is read weak and lacking in interest because greater things are already known.

It is to be expected then that when a semi-monthly publication such as the Standard Bearer appears in your mailbox with articles written a month before you read it, later developments take away some of the force of what is written.

But it is also true that such later developments often underscore and strongly substantiate what has been written before.

For some time we have been writing about the open gate. We put it rather mildly.

Deeds perpetrated after we began this series show that we were very mild in our appraisal of what those who schismatically left us have done and are still doing.

The gate IS open.

But observe once the rush of Arminianism through that open gate and the bold eagerness of those who falsely call themselves Protestant Reformed to have it rush through the open gates!

It cannot come through fast enough to please the leaders of this evil movement. It DID not come through fast enough. They must help it along.

Thus on the bulletin of the group that illegally meets in the church building on the corner of Fuller and Franklin in the city of Grand Rapids, Michigan — and most likely on all the bulletins of those in that vicinity who are allied with them — on the Sunday of February 6, 1955, you may find this astounding announcement:

“ARE YOU INTERESTED IN MISSION WORK? — ‘And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.’ The Mission Committee is making its first step in preparing our churches for mission work. On February 24 at 8 o’clock, Rev. D. Walters from the R.B.I. will be our speaker. His topic will be ‘The Call to Witness.’ Keep this date open, it is important to everyone.”

What about the sow and the dog now, Rev. Kok?

Who is going back to what he once repudiated?

And you, Rev. Kok, who were at one time a missionary in our churches, you vigorously opposed the philosophies of

Rev. D. Walters and all those who with him hold to an arminian view of missionary activity. You fought tooth and nail against a missionary program that was based on a “well meant offer of salvation to all who hear”; you would have nothing of the view of evangelization that was based on that theory.

Better brush up on that quotation from the Scriptures about the dog and the sow, Rev. Kok. You may have to use it very much in the future upon your colleagues and address it even to yourself.

Of course, the undersigned will be accused of condemning this speech of Rev. Walters before it is even delivered.

We are not condemning his speech. Though it is difficult for us to understand how he could ever deliver a Protestant Reformed missionary address. But before we are accused of judging that speech unheard, will those who hired him, the “Mission Committee,” assure us that they heard it and know the content of his speech to be Protestant Reformed?

How does it happen that they chose him?

What is wrong with this group of former ministers in the Protestant Reformed churches that they must go to him? And that for their FIRST step in preparing their churches for mission work!

Well may those who follow them ask whether this is not a subtle way of saying that this is the first step in preparing their people to return to the Christian Reformed Churches.

We are reminded of a pessimistic article written recently by Rev. Howerzyl about the pathetic situation of their churches in regard to training young men for preaching their conditional theology and schismatic church polity in their churches in the future. The *best* they could do was to send them back to the churches that put us out and then augment that with a little training in this conditional theology of the Liberated which they could not get even in the churches that put us out. It would indeed be interesting to have those Christian Reformed ministers who have said that they would not dare preach those statements of Rev. De Wolf do so in print.

But when you read such things as Rev. Howerzyl wrote and this announcement upon the bulletin of Rev. De Wolf’s following, then two things immediately suggest themselves. The first is (as we wrote above); where did Rev. Kok’s sick dog and very natural sow go? How come he cannot find them now? The second is; what has happened since that sinful and purely carnal boast of Rev. Kok about their group having more ministers, more souls and more churches? I believe, if my memory does not fail me, that he counted their 16—which is only 3 more than our 13—to be two-thirds of twenty-nine. Even his arithmetic is as disorganized and loose as his church polity. But with their greater number of ministers, churches and souls—one congregation even boasting carnally of having retained in its group the “money men” (indeed but the ten tribes were greater in number and had more land while the two tribes had Jerusalem and the

temple—and we have the truth and God's favour, though they have the number)—how come they must send their students back to those that put us out? How come their FIRST step to prepare their churches for missionary activity must be to call on help from those who differ doctrinally from us—and they *did* once claim also from them?

Are the former missionaries of the Protestant Reformed Churches, Revs. Kok, Hoffman, Knott and Cammenga going to take lessons now to perform a different kind of missionary work?

Those that left us are to be pitied.

They need help.

They could not even call on our former missionaries for the FIRST step in preparing their churches for missionary work. At the very outset they express their helplessness.

What is the next step going to be?

You who blindly follow them, do you never ask yourselves any questions as to the maneuvering, the playing of politics of those you follow?

Indeed! Keep this date open. It is important to everyone. It is to us too.

O, they were not going to follow a man!

Rev. Hoeksema, Rev. Kok dared to say, is a man broken in mind and body. His leadership has been so corrupt that no man can follow him.

No, they are not going to follow *a* man.

They are going to follow everybody, anybody, on the condition that he is not Protestant Reformed. They drift from here to there. They weave back and forth between the Liberated and the Christian Reformed Churches. Rev. Hoffman indicates in his pessimistic Concordia article that they have either tried to get into the Christian Reformed Churches already and found out that they do not want their clergy, or else at the very least have seriously considered getting into these churches. How do they know that the Christian Reformed Churches do not want their "uneducated and uncultured" clergy? These meetings in Grand Rapids with certain Christian Reformed ministers and professors, were they about a fishing trip, a game of golf or better still about correcting some of the glaring errors in higher christian education? Surely it was not about the establishment and furtherance of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools, was it, Rev. Blankespoor? It was not to discuss your letter you sent to your former congregation in regard to such schools. It really was a nice document. Too bad you cannot publish it next fall just before the school year begins. It would look nice in print around that time. Don't you think?

And why must these churches be prepared for missionary work?

Thank God we have a man already in the field, one who loves the Protestant Reformed truth and who finds that a former congregation of his has, under the leadership of one who has not been faithful to his calling before God and to the Protestant Reformed Churches, discarded more than a year ago the Protestant Reformed catechism books in favor

of those of the churches that cast us out because we would not agree to their heresy.

The gate has been open for a long time in Marion County.

And such dare to clamor for the removal of the Revs. Hoeksema and Ophoff from their offices as professors in our Theological School.

When you remain loyal to the truth of your church, you do not need to prepare your people for missionary work. But when you want to branch out into a missionary activity of which your denomination has never approved before and against which it has warned in the past, you need to prepare your people for that further step away from the "doctrine taught here in this Christian Church."

And then you have to get outsiders to help you.

Then you go to those who have that philosophy that you want to inculcate and sell to your people. You may give him a few pointers and ask him not to lay it on too thick. And first of all—as has already been done in Concordia—you slip with subtlety into the minds of your people the idea that we must be ecumenically minded and not simply see our own little denomination.

No, you must also see other denominations, so that you can call in their most outspoken representatives to teach you a few things.

Walls?

Denominational walls?

Protestant Reformed walls?

Forget the whole business. They take away christian liberty. So they say. O, Chatham! O, former Protestant Reformed ministers and members!

Forget these walls?

But, then, Rev. Kok, do not forget the dog and the sow.

How can anyone who loves the Protestant Reformed truth be so foolish as to believe that this group is the continuation of the Protestant Reformed Churches?

What deeds do those that oppose us perform that even begin to give the appearance of being the continuation of the Protestant Reformed Churches?

Christian Reformed training for their "students." Christian Reformed help in beginning "missionary work." Christian Reformed catechism books. Christian Reformed speakers for their society meetings and Young People's Mass Meetings.

And these men who opposed the Declaration of Principles for which our Mission Committee asked because, so they claimed, it did not come into being in a legal way from local congregation through Classis to Synod, can they assure us that their "Synod" has approved such a radically new "mission work" that requires instruction and preparation by Christian Reformed ministers?

Is that why J. D. (is that Rev. J. D. De Jong?) in the Feb. 24 Concordia writes, after a similar notice of this "important" meeting of preparation for "mission work" appears in that paper, "Could someone write an article in

(Continued on page 283)

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

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

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

The doctrine of the Church — the Church visible.

There was at this time a controversy about the purity of the Church and the question of Church discipline between the Donatists and the Church Catholic, whose view was represented and defended by Augustine. The Donatists were a schismatic party in North Africa. When we speak here of the Church Catholic we must not confuse this with the present Roman Catholic Church, but with the Old Catholic Church as it existed during and immediately upon the age of the apostles. The word, Catholic, we all know, means universal, and the Church of God was called either Catholic or Old Catholic because the Church was not divided as yet, split up into various denominations, but one church and embracing several peoples of the earth. This also enables us to understand why there were ecumenical or world-wide councils during the early centuries of the Church of God of the new Dispensation, such as the Councils of Nicea, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon. These were truly ecumenical church councils inasmuch as the Church of God throughout the world was not as yet divided during these early centuries.

Donatism was by far the most important schism in the church of the period we are now discussing. Augustine, who himself belonged nine years to the Manichaean sect (Manicheism, the philosophical system of Manes, a Persian, which had many followers throughout the Persian Empire, was a strange mixture of some Christian thoughts and heathenism, or heathen dualism), and was wonderfully converted by the grace of God to the Catholic Church (not the Roman Catholic Church of today), without the slightest pressure from without, held at first the position that heretics and schismatics should not be violently dealt with, but won by instruction and conviction; but after the year, 400, he turned and retracted his view, in consequence of his experience with the Donatists whom he endeavored in vain to convert by disputation and writing while many submitted to the imperial laws. Thenceforth he was led to advocate the persecution of heretics partly by his doctrine of the Christian state, partly by the seditious excesses of fanatical heretics, partly by the hope of a wholesome effect of temporal punishments, and partly by a false interpretation of a passage of Holy Writ which occurs in connection with the great supper, Luke 14:23: "Compel them to come in." "It is better, indeed," said Augustine, "that men should be brought to serve God by

instruction than by fear of punishment or by pain. But because the former means are better, the latter must not therefore be neglected Many must often be brought back to their Lord, like wicked servants, by the rod of temporal suffering before they attain the highest grade of religious development The Lord Himself orders that the guests be first invited, then compelled, to his great supper." This Church Father thought that, if the state be denied the right to punish religious error, it should also be denied the right to punish any other crime, since Paul, in Gal. 5:19, attributes divisions and sects to the same source in the flesh. He charges his Donatist opponents with inconsistency in seeming to approve the emperors of prohibitions of idolatry, but condemning their persecution of Christian heretics. It is to the honour of Augustine, however, that in actual cases he earnestly urged upon the magistrates clemency and humanity, and thus in practice remained true to his noble maxim: "Nothing conquers but truth. The victory of the truth is love." But it has been justly observed that his theory of the use of temporal force when other means fail contains the germ of the whole system of spiritual despotism, intolerance, and persecution, even to the court of the fearful Inquisition which was instituted by the Roman Catholic Church during the Middle Ages, that fearful instrument of unbelievable cruelty which was instituted by the Romish Church to suppress and root out heresy. We know that the great authority of his name was often afterwards made use of to justify cruelties from which he himself would have shrunk with horror. Soon after him, Leo the Great, the first representative of consistent, exclusive, universal papacy, advocated the penalty of death for heresy, and he found support in Augustine.

Donatism, we have already observed, was by far the most important schism in the history of the church during the period we are now discussing, 300-750 A.D. For an entire century it divided the North African churches into two hostile camps. Like the schisms of the former period, it arose from the conflict of the more rigid and the more indulgent theories of discipline in reference to the restoration of the lapsed, or fallen, those who had lapsed or fallen, succumbed in times of persecution. But through the intervention of the Christianized state, it assumed at the same time an ecclesiastical-political character. The rigoristic penitential discipline had been represented in the previous period especially by the Motanists and Novatians who were still living (Montanism denied that the Holy Spirit had been poured out on Pentecost, declaring that the coming of the Holy Spirit was now at hand and that the end of the world was near. This implies that the Holy Spirit had not been poured out upon the apostles and that what they wrote was therefore their own work and not the inspired work of the Lord. The Novatians were a sect in the early history of the Church who demanded that the Church be absolutely pure in the midst of the world, and therefore were opposed to the return of the lapsed or fallen to the Church; while the milder principle and practice had found its most powerful support in the

Roman church, and, since the time of Constantine, had generally prevailed.

The beginnings of the Donatist schism appear in the Dioclesian persecution (303-311), which revived that controversy concerning church discipline and martyrdom. The rigoristic party, favored by Secundus of Tigisis, at that time primate of Numidia, and led by the bishop, Donatus, of Casae Nigrae, rushed to the martyr's crown with fanatical contempt of death, and saw in flight from danger, or in the deliverance of the sacred books (these lapsed or fallen had, to escape martyrdom, delivered the sacred books to their tormentors) only cowardice and treachery which should forever exclude from the fellowship of the church. The moderate party, at whose head stood the bishop, Mensurius, and his archdeacon and successor, Caecilian, advocated the claims of prudence and discretion, and cast suspicion on the motives of the forward confessors and martyrs. So early as the year, 305, a schism was imminent, in the matter of an episcopal election for the city Cita. But no formal outbreak occurred until after the cessation of persecution in 311; and then the difficulty arose in connection with the hasty election of Caecilian to the bishopric of Carthage. The Donatists refused to acknowledge him, because in his ordination the Numidian bishops were slighted, and the service was performed by the bishop, Felix of Aptungis, or Aptunga, whom they declared to be a *traditor*, that is, one who had delivered up the sacred writings to the heathen persecutors. In Carthage itself he had many opponents, among whom were the elders of the congregation, and particularly a wealthy and superstitious widow, Lucilla, who was accustomed to kiss certain relics before her daily communion, and seemed to prefer them to the spiritual power of the sacrament. Secundus of Tigisis and seventy Numidian bishops, mostly of the rigoristic school, assembled at Carthage, deposed and excommunicated Caecilian, who refused to appear, and elected the lector (a reader, specifically one who reads lessons in a church or lectures in a university) Majorinus, a favorite of Lucilla, in his place. After his death, in the year, 315, Majorinus was succeeded by Donatus, a gifted man, of fiery energy and eloquence, revered by his admirers as a wonder worker, and styled THE GREAT. From this name, and not from Donatus mentioned above, the name of the party was derived.

Each party endeavored to gain churches abroad to its side, and thus the schism spread. The Donatists appealed to the emperor Constantine—the first instance of such appeal, and a step of which they afterward had to repent. The emperor, who was at that time in Gaul, referred the matter to the Roman bishop, Melchiades (Miltiades), and five Gallican bishops, before whom the accused Caecilian and ten Africans bishops from each side were directed to appear. The decision went in favor of Caecilian, and he was now, except in Africa, universally regarded as the legitimate bishop of Carthage. The Donatists remonstrated. A second investigation, which Constantine entrusted to the council of Arles (Arelate) in the year, 314, led to the same result. When the

Donatists hereupon appealed from this ecclesiastical tribunal to the judgment of the emperor himself, he likewise declared against them at Milan in 316, and soon afterward issued penal laws against them, threatening them with the banishment of their bishops, and the confiscation of their churches.

Persecution made them enemies of the state. This we can readily understand. They had sought the help of the state and now the state had turned against them. Hence, they now became enemies of the state whose help they had invoked and fed the flame of their fanaticism. They made violent resistance to the imperial commissioner, Ursacius, and declared that no power on earth could induce them to hold church fellowship with the "rascal," Caecilian. Constantine perceived the fruitlessness of the forcible restriction of religion and, by an edict of 321, granted the Donatists full liberty of faith and worship. He remained faithful to this policy of toleration, and exhorted the Catholics (not, we understand, the Roman Catholic Church of today) to patience and indulgence. At a council in 330 the Donatists numbered two hundred and seventy bishops. The history of the church has revealed only too often that the use of the sword is wholly powerless to suppress heresy and maintain the true religion.

The Lord willing, we will continue with this historical survey of the Donatist Schism, which was by far the most important schism in this early period of the Church in the New Dispensation. We also expect to call attention to the role which Augustine later played in this important drama. First, however, it is well to give our readers the historical background for the conflict between Augustine and the Donatist. Again we are indebted, for this historical material to Philip Schaff's History of the Christian Church. Hence, the Lord willing, we will present this material in our following article. H.V.

IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies' Society "Eunice" of the Second Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, extends its sympathy to Mrs. N. Klaver, one of its members, in the death of her mother

MRS. AUGUSTA VANDER KLOK

May our Covenant God give unto her and her family to experience the peace that surpasseth all understanding.

Rev. M. Schipper, President

Mrs. Dick Eerdmans, Secretary

IN MEMORIAM

The Young People's Society of the Oak Lawn Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sympathy with three of its members, Cornelia, Emma and Joan Rutgers, in the sudden loss of their father,

EMKO RUTGERS

whom the Lord took unto Himself on February 5, 1955.

May their comfort be in Him Who is the resurrection and the life. John 11:25.

Rev. G. Vanden Berg, President

Grace Ipema, Secretary

Oak Lawn, Ill.

The Voice of Our Fathers

The Canons of Dordrecht

PART TWO

EXPOSITION OF THE CANONS

FIRST HEAD OF DOCTRINE

OF DIVINE PREDESTINATION

Article 16. Those who do not yet experience a lively faith in Christ, an assured confidence of soul, peace of conscience, an earnest endeavor after filial obedience, and glorying in God through Christ, efficaciously wrought in them, and do nevertheless persist in the use of the means which God hath appointed for working these graces in us, ought not to be alarmed at the mention of reprobation, nor to rank themselves among the reprobate, but diligently to persevere in the use of means, and with ardent desires, devoutly and humbly to wait for a season of richer grace. Much less cause have they to be terrified by the doctrine of reprobation, who, though they seriously desire to be turned to God, to please him only, and to be delivered from the body of death, cannot yet reach that measure of holiness and faith to which they aspire; since a merciful God has promised that he will not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed. But this doctrine is justly terrible to those, who, regardless of God and of the Savior Jesus Christ, have wholly given themselves up to the cares of the world, and the pleasures of the flesh, so long as they are not seriously converted to God.

The above translation is substantially correct.

The present article is, like Article 12, really concerned with the subject of the assurance of our election. And, like Article 12, it is of an intensely practical nature, — practical in the true sense of that term. The difference between Article 16 and Article 12 is a difference of approach and of occasion. Previously the viewpoint was that of election; here the viewpoint is that of reprobation. In Article 12 the question was: How are the elect assured of their election? In Article 16 the question is: who should rightly be terrified by the doctrine of reprobation?

In this light it will be seen also that the subject of this 16th article is indeed practical. For reprobation is indeed a terrible thing. To be destined eternally unto damnation, and to *know*, or to imagine, or even to consider the possibility that one is so destined unto damnation, is indeed awesome to contemplate, and terrifying for any soul. One can surely never think or speak of reprobation, whether it be the reprobation of himself or of his fellow man, coldly. And the terror of reprobation is increased when we remember that according to the Reformed view, the view of Scripture, that reprobation is sovereign, unchangeable, inflexible. O, as long as you play around with the truth of reprobation, and present the matter as though man has a decisive vote in his own reprobation or election, and as though a man can

be elect at one time and reprobate at another, or as though the reprobate can somehow be changed into elect, then, to be sure, there is nothing terrifying about reprobation. Then if only you plead long enough and persuasively enough, you can rescue any man from his reprobation. But the moment you maintain that reprobation is eternal, unchangeable, and according to the sovereign good pleasure of the Most High, and that therefore no amount of preaching of the gospel, be it ever so pure and beautiful, and no amount of human persuasion, be it ever so forceful and appealing, will ever bring a single reprobate soul into everlasting glory, — then, then, I say, reprobation is indeed terrible to contemplate. As terrible to contemplate it is, as the grace of election is wonderful.

And it is such a conception of reprobation that lies at the bottom of the 16th Article of *Canons* I. For it was such a doctrine of reprobation that the Arminians hated and opposed. They accused the fathers of proclaiming a dreadful doctrine. They accused them of making God a terrible despot, who arbitrarily sent men to destruction, and who delighted in arbitrarily destroying men. They accused them of frightening and terrifying the people of God and of robbing them of any comfort and hope and assurance. They did their utmost to discredit the doctrine of sovereign predestination by all manner of such appeals to sinful reason and sinful emotion. And in this 16th article the fathers give answer.

And what, in general, is their answer? It is this. No true child of God, be he ever so weak and wavering, ought to be terrified, has any need to be terrified, by the doctrine of reprobation. But this doctrine is justly terrible (*haec doctrina merito terrori est*) to the ungodly. And is there anything strange in this? Would the Arminian change the very gospel itself? Is the gospel not ever thus: "There is no peace, saith my God, for the wicked?" And objectively this truth is the foundation of the above answer of our fathers: while not one of the reprobate can ever be saved, not one of God's dear elect will ever go lost. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." John 6:37.

Let us notice, in the first place, that this article presupposes the preaching of reprobation. Literally the fathers here speak of "the mention of reprobation," which perhaps may be an indication of what they conceived to be the proper place of the doctrine of reprobation in the preaching of the Word. But at least this presupposes that, to an extent at least, also the doctrine of reprobation has its proper place in the preaching of the Word. This is noteworthy, especially in our time. For if, as we wrote in connection with Article 14, it is true that the doctrine of election is frequently banned from the preaching, this is much more true of the doctrine of sovereign reprobation. In fact, we may probably say that the root of this neglect of the truth of sovereign election in the preaching of the Word may be found in this, that men do not want sovereign reprobation. However

this may be, we may also notice that the fathers do not expound the place of reprobation in the preaching of the Word as they did (in Article 14) with the doctrine of election. No separate article is devoted to the subject. And therefore, although the subject is in itself well worthy of discussion, we do not at this juncture devote special attention to it. We merely take cognizance of the fact that the *Canons* do presuppose the preaching of reprobation.

Now just as there is a reaction on the part of the hearers to the preaching of election, so there is always a reaction on the part of the hearers to the preaching of reprobation. And this article makes the following distinction among the hearers of the doctrine of reprobation: 1) Those who do not yet experience a lively faith in Christ, an assured confidence of soul, peace of conscience, an earnest endeavor after filial obedience, and glorying in God through Christ, efficaciously wrought in them, and do nevertheless persist in the use of the means which God hath appointed for working these graces in us. These ought not to be alarmed at the mention of reprobation, nor to rank themselves among the reprobate. 2) Those who, though they seriously desire to be turned to God, to please him only, and to be delivered from the body of death, cannot yet reach that measure of holiness and faith to which they aspire. These have "much less cause" to be terrified by the doctrine of reprobation. 3) Those who, not regarding God and the Savior Jesus Christ have wholly given themselves up to the cares of the world and the pleasures of the flesh. These have good reason to be alarmed at the doctrine of reprobation, "so long as they are not seriously converted to God."

A few general remarks may be made concerning this three-fold distinction. Notice, first of all, concerning the two classes mentioned above, that the presupposition is that there are times when they are indeed alarmed at the mention of reprobation, and may even rank themselves among the reprobate. They *ought* not to do so, and they have not good reason to do so; but they do so nevertheless. Notice, in the second place, that about none of these classes does the article make a flat and unqualified statement. The first class is admonished diligently to persevere in the use of the means and to wait for a season of richer grace. The second class is pointed to the promise of a merciful God that He will not quench the smoking flax. And even concerning the third class the qualifying statement is added: "so long as they are not seriously converted to God." In the third place, this classification is not exhaustive, and undoubtedly not intended to be. For example, one could properly add at least two classes: 1) Those who are assured of their election to that degree that the mention of reprobation tends for them personally to illustrate the eternal and unmerited grace of election. 2) Those who are not alarmed at the mention of reprobation because they are *carnally* secure, and rashly presumptuous. The latter can, of course, not ultimately remain unalarmed.

Finally, we may remark, before we go into detail in regard

to the three classes mentioned in this article, that these various reactions to the mention of reprobation are by no means to be construed as reasons to silence the doctrine of reprobation in the preaching of the Word. As we indicated above, the Arminian would draw such a conclusion. But the Reformed man would draw the very opposite conclusion, namely, that also the proper preaching of reprobation must serve as a means of grace. And if the question be asked as to the purpose of the preaching of reprobation, then we may answer in general as follows:

1) The preaching of reprobation must serve the maintenance of God's sovereign power and authority over all things. Nothing depends upon the free will of the creature. And even the reprobate himself must be convinced under the preaching of the Word that not he, but God, is sovereign also in the ungodliness of the ungodly.

2) It must serve unto the comfort of the believers, in this way, that they must understand that also the ungodly ultimately must serve the purpose of the realization of God's counsel.

3) It must serve the purpose of their greater humiliation and increasing thankfulness, when they behold the free and eternal grace of election next to the terrible wonder of reprobation.

4) And it must serve the purpose of the hardening of the reprobate themselves, when, beholding the wonder of divine predestination, they go on in their ungodly way, and hasten unto destruction, and thus unto the goal that was eternally and sovereignly fore-ordained for them.

H. C. H.

IN HIS FEAR

(Continued from page 279)

Concordia about this Mission Society and tell our people a little more about the purpose and aims of the Society?"

It seems as though J. D. knows nothing of this first step of mission work which the "Mission Committee" is foisting on the membership of their group. So Synod did not approve of such a thing. And no local church brought it to Synod by way of Classis.

But then, in Rev. Kok's disorganized and loosely bound church political set-up anything goes. You can even become Catholic and still say you belong to the Protestant Reformed Churches, if your Consistory will sustain you.

That is the continuation of the Protestant Reformed Churches?

Don't you believe it!

J. A. H.

Many people believe they own what they have, while they merely possess them. God owns in the full sense of the word. We possess for as long as God wills it.

DECENCY and ORDER

Students for the Ministry

Their Support

The last time we emphasized the duty of the churches to exert themselves toward obtaining suitable men for the ministry of the Word. This necessity arises from the churches constant need of more ministers. Through sickness, emigration, apostacy, and death her number is constantly diminished. In addition the establishment of new congregations increases the demand for more ministers and unless this demand is supplied the future of the church is jeopardized. Further, the office of Professors of Theology cannot be retained without students to be instructed. The church is built about the ministry of the word, which is the chief means used by the Son of God in gathering, defending and preserving her in the midst of the world. Only then, by the perpetuation of the faithful ministry does the church continue. Just as in any given profession, new recruits are needed, so the church must be supplied with men who are called and equipped for the ministry of the Word.

In obtaining these men, there are frequently practical problems to be faced. To be prepared for the ministry of the Word involves a period of several years and in justice to the importance of this work, one who is engaged in this work should not, in addition to his studies, be required to spend a large share of his time in other employment. On the other hand students also need a livelihood which consists of more than bread and butter. They need to meet the costs of their schooling. They have to obtain a library or at least the beginnings of one. Their needs are such that unless they belong to the class of the "rich" or can be almost fully employed while attending school, the way into the ministry is closed for them. This is not as it should be. It is not consistent with the position the church has correctly taken with respect to the importance of the work of the ministry. This work is of such importance that, according to Article 12 of the D.K.O., no one who is engaged therein may enter upon a secular vocation except for such weighty reasons as shall receive the approval of the Classis. And in the call-letter the churches promise to pay the minister they call a certain annual salary "in order that he may be free from all worldly cares and avocations" while attending the work of the ministry. If such provisions are necessary for those already in the ministry, are they not equally imperative for those who prepare themselves for this labor? Why should the students for the ministry be perplexed with worldly cares and be compelled to labor in other occupations to make ends meet? These things infringe upon their studies and are detrimental to their preparation for the ministry.

Realizing this the churches have made provisions to assist these students. To do this Article 19 of the church

order speaks also of "supporting them to be trained for the ministry," and to this is added the limiting phrase which allows considerable flexibility, "as far as necessary." All agree that it is proper for the church to aid her needy students but the disagreements and problems arise in determining the extent to which such aid should be given and what circumstances merit assistance. These problems our coming Synod will also have to take into consideration and study when she is asked to review our former position on this matter.

In determining this matter there are two extreme positions that ought to be carefully avoided. First, the church must guard against the danger of becoming a hand-out society. Secondly, she must not make such rigid requirements that those who really need and are entitled to support cannot obtain it. To safe-guard against the first danger, a rule such as the Christian Reformed Churches have is advised. In those churches the individual Classes take care of this matter instead of the Synod and each Classes require a written promise that students receiving financial aid from the churches will repay the full amount received in case they do not enter the ministry. History has shown that there have been many who have used the churches funds for their training and then turned their backs upon the churches that aided them. This should be prevented. Funds of the churches are not to be so misused. Those who do not enter the ministry and render their services to the churches should be compelled to return any and all funds given them to aid them in their schooling.

On the other hand we must not make too many rules. Neither should the rules we do make be so rigid that none dare apply for support. It is very difficult to make general rules which will justly fit every case that may possibly arise. For this reason, it seems advisable with a matter of this nature to permit room for every case to be judged on the basis of its own merits. No two cases are ever exactly alike. In order then that the Synod or the E.B.P. Committee may be able to have a complete picture of each case so that it may be judged competently, another provision ought to be made. Synod is in no position to know all the circumstances, past and present, that they may have bearing upon the need. Each request for aid ought to be made upon the recommendation of the Consistory of the church to which the student seeking assistance belongs. This consistory is in a position to perform the necessary investigation, to know the facts, and is best able to determine whether or not the case is one that merits support. It can then recommend to the committee what should be done. Further, the Synod, meeting only once a year, or the E.B.P. Committee, located perhaps in another part of the country, may know nothing of the individual's circumstances and, in cases where support is granted, things may arise where it is advisable that the support that is being given be withdrawn. The consistory would undoubtedly first be aware of such things and upon its recommendation either the aid would be imme-

diately discontinued or an investigation conducted. Hence, if each request for aid was processed through the consistory, much of the danger of wrong-doing and misuse would be avoided.

Then there are two other matters of a general nature which must be considered in determining the extent to which help should be given. The first is whether a student should receive assistance only during the time that he is in the seminary or whether he should also be helped, if necessary, during high school and college and in some instances while he is engaged in post-graduate work? In our churches, I do not think that aid has ever been given from the E.B.P. Fund to others than those in the seminary. Nor has there ever been a request from others. If such instances should arise help should not be denied if circumstances really require it for it is imperative for the welfare of the churches that those who are prepared for the ministry receive a complete as well as thorough training. This would not apply in every case but the rule should be broad enough as to allow the possibility of it. The rule should not be so limited as to make it impossible for a promising young man who may have been the victim of some unfortunate circumstances to finish his preparatory work in order to enter the seminary adequately equipped.

Another matter of interest and concern is whether or not the practice of our churches according to which all married students, as a class, are refused support from the E.B.P. Fund is a correct one? In considering a possible revision of this matter several things will have to be taken into consideration. On the one hand a rule of such long standing ought not to be quickly abrogated. There is undoubtedly good reason behind its adoption as is evidenced by its having stood for so long a time. It is not a thing that has been enacted out of antipathy toward married men. There is principle in the matter which is that the churches are neither obligated nor do they have the right to hand out support to wives and children of the students. The Synod may not take upon itself the duties of husbands and fathers nor may it infringe upon the office of the deacons. There is nothing in the church order that speaks of this. One may get married while attending school, raise a family and let the churches support him. This is not right. It is not according to the idea nor the intention of E.B.P. assistance. To prevent this abuse the rule serves a good purpose and should, therefore, not be revoked without some safe-guard to this effect retained.

This would then allow for some revision to be made which history has also shown is necessary. It happens sometimes that a man is already married and has a family when he receives the desire to enter the ministry. Now it might be objected that the Lord does not call men to the ministry after permitting them to be engaged in other employment for a number of years. This contention would be rather difficult to prove and, although it may be admitted that

this is undoubtedly not the normal way in which the Lord works, yet, its possibility cannot be entirely ruled out. Should such men be given help or if no help is available should they conclude from that that the call to the ministry is not real?

Or, the case of the three who were in the ministry in other churches and who were brought by the Lord to seek admission into the ministry in our churches may be cited. They were married. They had families. Still they desired and needed the training that only our school could give them. Without support for themselves and their families this could not be obtained. Must they conclude then that because of the rule that says, "No support for married students," that the way is closed for them or is it the duty of the churches to exert themselves, as far as necessary, that there may be students supported by them? We believe the latter to be the case and that provisions under the rules should be made to allow for such instances. Marriage as such should not determine one's eligibility for support. Rather other factors such as the time and circumstances of marriage should be the determining factors and, therefore, each applicant should receive individual consideration and have his case determined on the basis of its own merits.

G.v.d.B.

IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory of the Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Haven, Mich., in conjunction with our local Men's Bible Class and Ladies' Bible Class, desire to express our sincere sympathy to the family of our Pastor, Rev. and Mrs. George Lanting, and family, with the recent and sudden loss through death of their beloved father,

MR. E. RUTGERS

of Chicago Ridge, Ill.

We commend them, together with the entire family, to the comfort and love of our Heavenly Father.

By Order of the Consistory,

Mr. A. Peterson, Clerk

IN MEMORIAM

On Saturday morning, February 5, 1955, the labors of one of our faithful office-bearers

DEACON EMKO RUTGERS

came to a sudden end when the Lord removed him from this earthly scene. The Consistory of the Oak Lawn Protestant Reformed Church mourns this loss and expresses its sympathy to the bereaved widow and family of our departed brother.

"Happy is he who hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in Jehovah, his God." Psalm 146:5

Rev. G. Vanden Berg, President

Mr. J. Polstra, Clerk

Oak Lawn, Ill.

ALL AROUND US

Preview of the Next 25 Years.

One of the most brilliant scientific intellects of our day reveals in prophetic tones what we may expect in the next 25 years in the way of material progress. In the March issue of Reader's Digest, David Sarnoff, chairman of Radio Corporation of America, in a condensed article taken from Fortune Magazine discloses the things that lie in the offing.

When Mr. Sarnoff speaks of the last hundred years as being no more than a split second in human history, and that the production of the next ten years will be more than all the previous 75 years has produced, one almost begins to lose his sense of proportions. And yet one who has lived through and seen the developments of the last 50 years and especially the last 25 years cannot relegate his predictions to the fantastic and incredible.

The pith of his article may be expressed in the single statement in which he tells us that there is no longer margin for doubt that whatever the mind of man visualizes, the genius of modern science can turn into fact. Mr. Sarnoff, of course, is primarily interested in electronics, for that is his business; but his scope of vision reaches out into every field of science and industry.

In his own field he gives us a glimpse of what his technicians are working on at present. He tells us that they are developing a new form of light. He calls it "electronic light." When this is perfected, it will free electric light from the prison of a vacuum bulb. It will, he tells us, change the appearance of our homes, stores, factories and streets. Yes, in a short while we will even be able to have devices that will make vision possible in darkness, and it will immensely enlarge our visual penetration of outer space. Before 1980, so we are told, we are going to have atomic batteries, and small atomic generators, installed in homes and industrial plants, will provide power for years without recharging. Before 1980, ships, aircraft, locomotives, and even automobiles will be atomically fueled. Guided missiles, transcontinental and transoceanic, will find vital civilian uses. They will transport mail and freight over great distances, be guided into terminal hangars within minutes after their takeoff.

Mr. Sarnoff sees the skyways as densely traversed as the highways on the ground. The air will be filled with pilotless aircraft, with privately owned helicopters and other planes. With just a little more vision than Mr. Sarnoff I began to see myself setting my helicopter down in the churchyard of one of our churches where I have to keep a Classical appointment. When I think of this I get goose-pimples perhaps as big as my grandfather's when he saw his first automobile.

O, but you haven't seen anything yet! Why, they are going to take hold of the sun, the tides and the winds, and make the deserts to bloom as the rose. The briny waters of the seas are going to be converted into fresh waters to

nourish the erstwhile valleys of death. As the farmer now harvests his fields to gather the ripened grain, so science is going to harvest the bottom of the seas of all the chemical and food resources they contain.

The sciences of medicine too is going to develop so fast with the aid of nuclear and electronic devices that all the dread diseases of cancer, polio, etc., will all be removed. We are going to add from 10 to 15 years to our life's span, and we're going to have more time to enjoy it. Mr. Sarnoff tells us that the one great problem we will face is not labor but leisure. There is going to have to be a considerable adjustment made in order to keep up with the progress.

Even the class distinctions of poor and rich will steadily disappear. Social injustices will be rectified, and evil social conditions will be eradicated. Yes, even the age-old battle between science and religion will cease. Mr. Sarnoff hints that the scientist of the past, who ignored God, is fast waking up to the fact that with all his progress he cannot reach the Infinite. Wars will cease from the earth because all the nations will realize that war will be suicide. Indeed, according to Mr. Sarnoff, we are going to the reality of one world. He refers, no doubt, to Wendell Wilkie's "One World."

And what shall we say about all this? I for one do not believe it is impossible. In fact, I am looking for just such a world. And I am inclined to believe that it is coming much faster than we can even imagine. However, of this I am assured in Scripture that it cannot come until the kingdom of Christ has first been realized. Until then, the nations must be divided. Racial and class distinctions must continue. But when all the elect have been born and saved universal peace will for a short time be established and the world will see a prosperity it has never dreamed could be possible. This will be the time of tribulation for the children of God. The only religion that shall "flourish" will be that of antichrist. There will be no room in that universal prosperity for the children of God. Our consolation is that that world with all its pomp and glory, with all its power and beauty, will soon be destroyed to make room for the New Jerusalem that must come down from God out of heaven in which He shall tabernacle with us in the new creation forever.

"Progressive Calvinism."

Such is the title of a little booklet I received recently in the mail which was sent to me by one of the authors who is a friend and acquaintance of mine. The booklet is dated January, 1955, and purposes to be the first issue of a publication emanating from a newly formed organization which calls itself the "Progressive Calvinism League."

On the first page of this 24 page booklet appears an announcement concerning the organization of this league. It reads as follows:

"We are organizing the Progressive Calvinism League. We shall be pleased if you will give serious thought to our program as outlined in this issue. We hope you will be in agreement with us and will join the League. Joining the

League automatically puts you on the list to receive for one year, from January 1955 through December, the League's publication, *Progressive Calvinism*. This League is different from anything of which you are a member now. The League will be a pioneer in social thought and research. To belong will be interesting and profitable. A membership blank is enclosed. Join at once and be a charter member." This announcement is signed by three laymen: Frederick Nymeyer, John Van Mouwerik, and Martin B. Nymeyer. With the first named I became acquainted while I was serving our church in South Holland. Though I did not always agree with him on every issue we discussed, I have nevertheless learned to respect him for his sincerity and independent thinking and intelligent grasp of the problems which were at issue. And I can vouch for it that anything that comes from his rather prolific pen will demand one's most serious study and consideration.

Under the title "The Character of the Progressive Calvinism League," the booklet presents briefly the "General Aims of the P.C.L." We are told among other things that "The P.C.L. has been organized to promote in particular one phase of Christian doctrine and living, namely, the practical, everyday phase which is concerned about two relationships, namely,

- (1) the relationship of men to men, and
- (2) the relationship of men to things.

We should add that there is the still more important matter of

- (3) the relationship of men to God.

But we are not theologians, and although we shall take item (3) very much into account, it is a phase of Christian doctrine and living which we leave primarily to the experts in theology. We are neither theologians nor philosophers."

A little later the pamphlet asks the question: "What is our aim?" And the answer: "To be successful in this life and to promote the success of others. (1) That requires sound social science ideas. (2) That means that some ideas of modern so-called social science must be rejected. (3) That means that Biblical ideas on successful living are right and should be practiced and promoted. (4) That means that the identity of true social science and Biblical ethics, without any fantastic interpretations being required, can and should be established. (5) And finally, that also means, because the understanding of the general revelation of God should be progressive, that true modern social science has considerable light to throw on Biblical ethics."

Under the title "Our Methods" I quote only one brief paragraph. "In short, our method will be to work over debated question, or over questions which should be debated. There are plenty of them. In the interest of truth, we shall neither give nor expect quarter. In the discovery of truth we shall not exercise "love" so-called. We shall exercise love only in the form of patience and forbearance. To consider love (so-called, but what is really a toleration of error) as a substitute for probing for the truth is a vicious idea."

From this brief statement one can quite readily surmise the promoters of this new organization intend to pull no punches and allow no friendly relationships to interfere with the expressions of their minds. That, to my mind, is commendable.

Then follows a Declaration of Basic Principles. Prospective members of the League are required to signify their assent to them before becoming members.

"I hereby declare that as a member of the Progressive Calvinism League, I will boldly and steadfastly

1. (a) Promote brotherly love as required by the Christian religion; and (b) attack all "extensions" of the Scriptural rule which extensions make the rule sanctimonious.

2. (a) Promote the further discovery of the greatness of God, as revealed in nature and in Scripture, by (1) promoting an attitude toward research in the sciences which will be fruitful in results and will inspire men with humility and awe; and by (2) rejecting the idea that the comprehension of special revelation has been completed; the Scriptures must be reapplied to changing circumstances.

3. (a) Promote awareness of the limitations of the human mind, that is, promote true humility; and (b) resist the arrogance of all attempts at universal planning, that is, all attempts at pretending we are as God, and all Comitian Positivism.

4. (a) Promote a single rule of morality; and (b) reject a dual rule, namely, one rule for individuals and a conflicting rule for groups.

5. (a) Promote confidence that prosperity obtained in a free market society is the result of obedience to the law of God; and (b) discontinue all apologies for that prosperity and all policies which will undermine that prosperity.

6. (a) Promote a program for this life (1) which will be distinguishable (antithetical) from a non-faith program, (2) which will bring good temporal results, and (3) which, therefore, cannot discredit Christianity's message in matters beyond this life; and (b) resist all programs borrowed from non-Christian sources which science and experience will reveal as unsound for this life, and which will consequently discredit Christianity's supernatural message."

Following this Declaration of Principles is a brief explanation of each of the six statements which we cannot quote for lack of space, but which clarify to some extent the questions the reader may raise relative to them.

On page 15 of the booklet is a list of subjects the League plans to discuss in the future, some of which appear to be very interesting. Here is the list:

1. The difference between the Christian and the Communist Laws of Love.
2. The Causes of Prosperity.
3. The Legitimate Authority of Government.
4. Unionism.
5. Discrimination.
6. Inflation.
7. Common Grace and Social Science.
8. Birth Control and Migrations.

9. The Introduction of the Doctrine of the French Revolution into Present-Day American Society.
10. The Foundations of Society — What Holds it Together.
11. The Pre-Fall World a la Moses.
12. The Parallelism between Biblical Morality and Sound Social Science.
13. The so-called Neo-Calvinism of Karl Barth and Emil Brunner.
14. The Social Ideas of Reinhold Niebuhr.
15. The Advance of Positivism — the Introduction of Comitian Epistemology into the Christian Churches."

Annual memberships in the League, or subscriptions only to Progressive Calvinism, are \$2.00. For students, \$1.00. The Address is: Progressive Calvinism League, 366 East 166 th Street, South Holland, Illinois, U.S.A.

Since our space is more than filled we will have to refrain from any other comment at this time. But we promise to inform our readers of any new developments and offer comment and criticism from time to time as the need requires.

M.S.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Holland, Mich.
168 Reed Ave.
February 25, 1955

Dear Editor of the Standard Bearer:

Your Editorial in the February 15th Standard Bearer "Kok is A Hopeless Case," touched my heart (as a matter of *fact* only) for several reasons: Kok has exposed himself as to what he is, both Doctrinally and Church Politically. However, there are those who will still maintain that Kok is *ethically* true blue, and that we here in Holland, and also yourself and others, have not understool Kok — for he means well. Naturally, none of us wish to judge motives, which alone belongs to God, Who can judge the heart. But when I judge the matters in the light of historical facts, then, I (we) feel the same as what you express when you write: "Even now, I would not deny that there is an element of truth in this impression of him." But let us not for one moment think that Kok's followers agree with us! And naturally, there is a reason! They have been deceived! *Scheemed into believing falsities*; such as: That Declaration — no need for it. Why? Hoeksema, and those Liberated Professors agree perfectly(???) That Standard Bearer? Bah! The hate Hoeksema-Ophof campaign came next — "Conditions in the Reformed "sense". Hush! Hush! Holland's congregation: You may not discuss your pastor's teaching and preaching. If you have any difference of opinions, then you must first talk with him, beware! Your pastor is reformed! But, some make it so miserable for him, they are wolves, and disturb the peace. (What a lie! No one knew the contents of our protests H.V.P.) and Hoeksema and

Ophof are Antinomian. Thus this deception of Kok continued unabated under the Reformed flag. But: If we only publish Kok's reply to that letter which Dr. Holwerda sent to Canada, then (I believe) we shall also be able to judge Kok's ethical position once and for all. This letter is the property of the Prot. Reformed Churches and not of Kok! It therefore should be published, and then we can close the question in everyone's mind, as a settled issue.

Yours in Christ for the Truth

H. A. Van Putten.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

(Continued from page 275)

but the "first things," the fall of Babylon of the Euphrates valley and the redemption of captive Judah. These things no man, no idol, no heathen soothsayer could possibly foresee. What human could call Cyrus by name, a spoiler of nations that was not to appear upon the historical horizon until two hundred years later? These were happenings of a future far too remote. The challenge put to the idols was therefore not met. But it assuredly could have been met, if these final twenty six chapters of the prophecy of Isaiah originated with a so-called second Isaiah, a contemporary of Cyrus. This is a view therefore to which no place must be given.

The Lord now does the thing of which the idols are incapable, they being nothingness. Through His prophet as His organ He shews the "first things" and also in the sequel the last things as we shall see. As always His prophesying consists in His declaring what He will do for the sake of His people. He will send to Babylon the capital of the Babylonian world-power, that is, He will send Cyrus against the impregnable city, humanly speaking, and it shall fall. That the Lord's messenger is Cyrus appears from xli. 2, 3, 25. The inhabitants of the city, the Chaldeans of our passage, will take to flight in ships into the tributaries of the lower Euphrates and return to their original home. So will the Lord bring down the fugitives, the Chaldeans, whose cry is in their ships (vs. 14) that is, who put their confidence in ships. And it will surely come to pass.

For He is Jehovah, the I Am, whose promises cannot fail. He is the Holy One of Israel. As the wholly other, wholly consecrated to Himself, He is the consecrator of His people, their creator and king. And He does all His good pleasure. Seas and mighty waters do not deter Him. In the sea He makes a way and in the water a path for His people. The chariot and the horse, the army and the might thereof exists by His power; move, live, and have their being in Him, wherefore also it is He that brings them forth. And when they have served His purpose, they lie down together never again to rise. They are extinguished and quenched as tow by the breath of His mouth.

This is an allusion to the wonderful deliverance of Israel at the Red Sea. In it the Lord made a way for His people and overthrew Pharaoh and His host in its midst. G.M.O.