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MEDITATION

Christ's Royal Ascent

Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

Eph. 4:8-10

Victory!

The resurrection certainly means that Christ,—and His people with Him (for you cannot separate Christ and His people),—emerges triumphant out of death and the grave. But the ascension signifies that Christ,—and His people with Him (for again: you cannot separate the Christ from His elect people),—enters into the victory, is exalted into heavenly glory. Christ is set at the pinnacle of all created things. And His people are exalted with Him, though it be under Him. The ascension of our Lord is the complete victory of Christ and all His elect!

The revelation of the exceeding greatness of God's power to us-ward who believe!

God wrought it in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. In the descension into hell you behold the depth of misery and suffering, the experience of being utterly forsaken of God. In the ascension into heaven,—and that too, exactly as the ascension through descension,—you behold its victorious opposite, the height of glory and bliss and triumph!

Divine triumph! For it is "according to the working of his mighty power!"

Glorious victory!

So glorious is its light that it was seen by the people of God who in faith yearned for the promise already in the old

dispensation. For its beams were cast over the events and persons of the age of promise, and, under the guidance of the Spirit of Christ that was in him, the sweet psalmist of Israel taught the people to sing: "O Lord, Thou hast ascended, On high in might to reign." And therefore, under the guidance of that same Spirit of Christ, beholding the very same glorious light of victory, only now more clearly, in the age of fulfillment, the apostle to the Gentiles can take up the refrain of those triumphant words of the sixty-eighth psalm: "Captivity Thou leadest A captive in Thy train."

O yes, the ascension is victory, divine victory!

* * *

Ascension by way of descension!

Ascension presupposing descension!

Ascension on the basis of descension!

Ascension as a distinctly divine wonder of grace!

To these the text points when it tells us that the fact that he ascended means that he also descended first in to the lower parts of the earth, and that the One who descended is the same also who ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things. It speaks of Christ, and that too from the viewpoint of the central truth that He is the Son of God, God Himself, in the flesh. For a mere man does not descend in order to ascend. He cannot: for he is already on the earth, and therefore cannot descend to the lower parts of the earth. Hence, the text can refer to only one thing, namely, that it is God Himself Who ascended up far above all heavens. And it is only thus, too, that the apostle can properly apply the sixty-eighth Psalm here. For that psalm speaks throughout of the ascent of Jehovah, not of a mere man. In the second place, this descension into the lower parts of the earth is the basis, the ground of Christ's ascension. Such is the thrust of the statement in verse 10 which points to the identity of the One Who descends and the One Who ascends. And thus, in the third place, is captivity led captive.

An unspeakable wonder of the God of our salvation!

To Christ, His Anointed King, God gave an inheritance, and that too from before the foundation of the world. He anointed His only begotten Son in the flesh to be King on

Mount Zion. He declared the decree: "Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost ends of the earth for thy possession." God promised Him a people, an inheritance, out of all the nations of the earth. And He appointed Him the Head over all things, so that as Head of all creation and as Servant of Jehovah He should reign eternally over all things, to the glory of God the Father.

But Christ would reach that glorious position,—and mark well, that was also a part of that same decree, in order that the glory of God might reach its highest possible revelation,—only in the way of sin and grace, hell and heaven, captivity and liberation. That inheritance of Christ was captive. In the first Adam the entire human race, and with it also the elect inheritance of the Son of God, fell captive to the power of sin and death. It was bound with the fetters of death. There was a guilt, a mountain of black guilt, which no man could ever remove. And there was a dominion of the power of darkness that man could never break. As long as that guilt remained, the power of darkness and death legally could and did hold an unbreakable dominion over that people that had been promised to Christ. And so complete was the dominion that this elect people were willingly the slaves of the prince of darkness. Besides, the whole creation was captive to the prince of darkness. It was made subject to the curse because of man's disobedience. And thus, the entire inheritance of Christ was captive in the stronghold, the fortress, where he who had the power of death held dominion.

That He ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?

The stronghold of the prince of darkness must be broken into. It must be destroyed! Captivity must be led captive! The kingdom of the King of Zion must be delivered out of the prison of death and hell.

He descended!

The God of our salvation,—be it in the likeness of sinful flesh!

God Himself! He descended!

To the lower parts of the earth He descended, that is: to the lower parts, namely the earth. Nay, He did not actually leave His eternal divine position as the Son of God. That would be both impossible and valueless. But God Himself, the Person of the Son, came to dwell among men, became man as well as God, was bound inseparably and personally to the human nature, here on the earth, through the womb of the Virgin Mary.

And thus He entered right into the stronghold of our captivity! There, in the lower parts, in the earth, was His inheritance. There it was held captive by the power of darkness. And to take possession of His inheritance He must enter into the very sphere of that captivity.

A necessary descension

And there He joined battle with the forces of sin and

death, in order to ransom His inheritance. It was a battle not of might, but of right,—in the cause of the righteousness of God. And the only sure way to victory was the way of obedience, complete and perfect obedience to the Father, obedience even unto death. And thus He descended all the way. Having entered the stronghold, He faced the enemy and fought the good fight. He descended in His incarnation. And from that point on His way led steadily downward too to the depths of hell and death and the grave.

His ascension, what does it mean, but that He first descended also into the lower parts of the earth?

Saving descension!

What matchless grace is God's!

* * *

And He that descended is the same also that ascended . . .
Up far above all heavens

And when He ascended, He led captivity captive!

He came, as God in the flesh, to pay the guilt of His inheritance. God in Christ descended into the lower parts of the earth, in order that there, in the obedience of love He might descend even further, to that depth where the cry of being God-forsaken was pressed from His soul. And having borne the wrath of God willingly and completely, He was heard by God. God did not leave His soul in death, but raised Him up. That was the indubitable testimony that He was righteous, that He had taken the tremendous burden of the guilt of His inheritance upon His mighty divine shoulders, and carried it away!

Thus it is that He ascended up on high. That means heavenly glory. There was no place for such an One on this sin-cursed globe. When He had risen, there was but one place that was proper for Him, one place glorious enough, one place that would befit His new and glorious and heavenly and powerful Self. That was heaven! Yea, the ordinary heaven was not good enough, not high enough for Him. He ascended up far above all heavens! Exalted He was, in that ascension, to the position of highest possible glory. To the Father's right hand! And He received a name above every name! The Lord over all things!

And captivity He led captive!

The expression is a figurative one, borrowed from the terminology of war and conquest among the kings in the old dispensation. A conquering king would frequently come back in a triumphal march to the royal city taking along with him captives and the spoils of the war in his victory march, as concrete evidences of his victory and testimonies of his triumph. So the Lord Jesus Christ ascends with captivity a captive in His train.

Captivity itself is captive!

That means not merely that Christ has ransomed and delivered His people out of the power of sin and death. It

is not thus, that Christ delivers His people, but leaves the power and dominion of sin and death and darkness and the devil still existent and in full sway, so that actually they would be able to come and conquer again, and to wrest the royal inheritance out of the power of Christ. On the contrary, the very power of that captivity, the dominion of sin, the power of death, the control of the devil, the dread force of hell, — they all are Christ's captives. When we behold Christ our Lord ascending to heaven it is as though we see Him as the triumphant King leading in His victory march so many captives. Sin, death, the prince of darkness, hell, — they are all in His procession. He leads them captive. They are all completely in His power. He has the keys of death and of hell. So complete is His victory that He has not only ransomed His inheritance, but He has completely put to nought the power of captivity itself. No more is there the slightest possibility that His inheritance should ever again be taken captive. Yea, so completely are all the dark legions of our captivity absolutely subject to Him that they can only serve His purpose. Thus He ascends as the absolute victor, to exercise His power from the throne promised Him of the Father, and to the end that He may completely redeem and deliver His inheritance and cause them to enter into the full and final realization of the victory over the enemy!

The battle is decided! He decided it!

The victory, not only of Christ, but of all His people with Him, is already achieved!

The matter of our freedom, our salvation, our liberation from captivity into the glorious liberty of the children of God, is absolutely settled!

There is no devil, no combination of devils, no power of sin, no death, no wicked man or combination of wicked men, no persecution, no famine, no nakedness, no peril, no sword, — yea, there is absolutely nothing that can ever wrest you and me out of the gracious dominion of our ascended Lord. Yea, it all must serve His purpose to glorify us with Himself!

The promise is centrally fulfilled!

He led captivity captive!

He, our ascended Lord! He, the revelation of the God of our complete salvation!

Glory to His name alone!

To all eternity

H.C.H.

NOTICE

During June, July, and August, there will only be one issue of the Standard Bearer. Although I expect to be on my vacation, the copy can be sent to my address as usual, provided it is strictly on time, i.e. on the 20th of each month.

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EDITORIALS

The Wellmeaning Offer of Grace

Under this heading the Rev. Van Halsema, editor of "*De Wachter*," recently wrote an editorial in answer to a contribution of a certain brother, and defends the position of 1924 and, of course "common grace" in general.

It is rather striking that everybody nowadays, some thirty years after 1924, writes again about the problem of "Common grace." About two years ago, "*Torch and Trumpet*" sent me a committee of their editorial staff and invited me to write an article on the subject. Since that time, several articles have, indeed, appeared in that magazine by various authors. However, my contribution which I sent in very promptly about two years ago was never published nor did I ever hear of them. Will the staff of *Torch and Trumpet*, please, send back my article if they do not intend to publish it? I am not deeply interested in the publication of the article. But I think it is, to say the least, rather strange if not hardly decent, to ask someone for a contribution and then promptly lay it aside without even informing the writer of the article why it was never published and returning it to him. So, please, return it to me.

Besides, the *Reformed Journal* and also *Calvin Forum* writes about the subject, and even books are written about it. How to explain this phenomenon. Do, after all, the theologians in the Christian Reformed Church feel that the problem was not settled in 1924? It would almost seem so for they do not only write about it, but they also rather severely criticize one another in so doing. I have thus far refrained from interrupting, although my name was mentioned several times. One thing is, to me, a cause of gratitude: they recognize that I have not changed my views.

But let me return to the article by the editor of *De Wachter*.

The article offers nothing new. From this viewpoint it is not worthy of any special attention. He is simply a faithful son of 1924 and presents its conception without any criticism or further developments.

But there are one or two things to which I nevertheless want to call attention.

One is that he simply repeats the old, utterly absurd and unfounded accusation that our conception of "common grace" or rather of "grace" is based, not on the Word of God, but on a preconceived notion or proposition.

Writes he (I translate):

"The big mistake of the brethren that left us (sic! We did not leave them, but they cast us out. H.H.) in 1924 and of all that still walk in their footsteps is that they proceed from a preconceived proposition. They say that God never, either in this dispensation or in the future, shows any favor to the ungodly that goes to perdition, to the reprobate, if you will. (Why the "if you will"? Does not the editor will this?

H.H.) An absolutistic easily comes to this proposition if he does not pay close attention to the Scriptures. He twists Scripture within the framework of his thinking and thus he reaches the wrong conclusions that does violence to Scripture. One of those wrong conclusions is that there is no general wellmeant offer of grace, that is, God does not show in any respect favor, whatever it may be, to those that are lost (to the reprobate, if you will, H.H.) The Synod of 1924 opposed this false notion as if all the grace of God is limited only to the elect. The Synod showed that "apart from the saving grace which concerns only the elect, there also comes to manifestation a certain grace, goodness or favorable disposition of God toward a circle of men that is broader than the elect, and that this, among other things, is also clearly evident from the fact that God calls wellmeaningly every one to whom comes the kind invitation of the gospel."

I will not reflect on all the Arminian elements in this paragraph. It is all old material that has been thoroughly threshed out again and again. And Van Halsema's case is hopeless anyway. He blindly follows 1924. Just let me briefly accentuate a few elements:

1. Grace, according to Scripture and the Confessions, is never general but always particular, i.e. only for the elect. I challenge the editor of *De Wachter* to prove the contrary. Mark you well, this is not a preconceived notion but concerns Scripture and the Confessions.

2. Grace is never an offer (which depends on the acceptance and the will of man, but it is always a work of God which He sovereignly and unconditionally works in whomsoever he wills. I challenge Van Halsema to disprove this statement, not on the basis of any preconceived notion but on that of Scripture and the Confessions.

3. Grace is never meant for all men, and therefore, God cannot possibly wellmeaningly offer it to all. God is not a liar or two faced. I challenge Van Halsema to disprove also this statement, not on the basis of any preconceived notion but on that of Scripture and the Confessions.

4. Even the preaching of the gospel is never meant for all, but only for comparatively few, to whom He sends that preaching according to His good pleasure. Let Van Halsema disprove this statement if he can on the basis of Scripture and the Confessions. But if this is so, how can he base the theory of a general grace on that preaching of the gospel?

5. The preaching of the gospel is, according to God's pleasure, a savor of life unto life for the elect, but also a savor of death unto death for the reprobate. What grace, then, do the reprobate receive through the preaching of the gospel. Let Van Halsema explain, not on the basis of any preconceived notions, but on that of Scripture and the Confessions.

6. The preaching of the gospel is never a kind invitation to all men, but the means of grace through which God, through His efficacious Word, softens the hearts of the elect, while, at the same time, it is a means whereby He hardens the hearts of the reprobate. Let Van Halsema disprove this,

not on the basis of some preconceived notion, but on that of Scripture and the Confessions.

7. The Synod of 1924 dealt with the problem of the Kuyperian common grace. Because they could not find anything in the Confessions on that subject but, on the contrary, found nothing but emphasis on total depravity, yet wanted to condemn us, they inadvertently distorted the Confessions so as to teach the Arminian conception of the preaching of the gospel. This proposition I am willing to prove if Van Halsema challenges me and offers space in *De Wachter* for this purpose.

* * *

But all this is old straw.

What I intended to criticise especially in the editorial of Van Halsema is the accusation that I proceed from preconceived notions instead of from the Word of God.

It is true, this is also old straw.

But I consider this very important, because if this could be proved to be true my entire theological conception especially as it concerns the very fundamental idea of grace, would have to collapse.

The Word of God as it is reflected in our Reformed Confessions is the only basis of all Reformed theology. Hence, in regard to this accusation, I make the following comments:

1. Let Van Halsema prove this very serious accusation which really presents me as a rationalist rather than as a believer in the Word of God. I claim that this accusation is utterly false, and I can prove this. But the accusation of Van Halsema is a very general statement. It stands there without any proof. As a general statement it is probably incapable of proof. Perhaps, this is the sole reason why it is made. Nevertheless, I must ask the editor of *De Wachter* to produce concrete proof from my writings that his accusation can stand. He ought to have no difficulty to produce such proof from my writings for ever since 1918 I appeared in print and wrote hundreds of articles, many books and pamphlets, and Van Halsema ought to have no difficulty to lay hold on them and find his desired proof. If he cannot do this, I expect him to publish an apology in *De Wachter*. If he does neither the one nor the other, I will write again and publicly tell him what I think of him.

2. I will assure him, however, that he will never be able to furnish such proof. Every one that is at all acquainted with whatever I wrote knows that I always base my views on the Word of God, in the light of the Reformed Confessions, and that, too, in the way of thorough exegesis. My public writings are simply full of this and so are my Dogmatics, which I teach in our theological school. This work, too, is virtually ready to be published and when it is, every one will acknowledge that in it I not only produce so-called proof-texts, but that many of them I exegete. Hence, I feel confident that it will be quite impossible for Van Halsema to produce proof for his false accusation.

3. My method of basing my conceptions on Holy Writ,

however, is not that I quote a few isolated texts, but that I take the whole of the Word of God, comparing Scripture with Scripture. The method of quoting some isolated texts, often, in fact, usually without any exegesis, is the method of heretics, especially of all kinds of Arminian teachers and preachers. This was also the method of the Synod of 1924 through which they reached their Arminian conclusions. For instance, they quote Ps. 149:9: "The Lord is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works." They not only failed to interpret the term "all" in the text in the light of the second part of the text, so that "all" does not mean "all men" but "all his works," but they also forgot to quote vs. 20 of the same psalm: "The Lord preserveth all them that love him; but all the wicked will he destroy." Such is the method of heretics, such was also the method of 1924. But the Reformed method is that of considering the whole Word of God and of comparing Scripture with Scripture.

4. This method has been the method of all that believe in double predestination ever since Augustine and Calvin. It is a striking fact that the Pelagians in the days of Augustine produced some of the same texts against him that the Synod of 1924 quoted to maintain their theory of common grace and of the well-meaning offer. But Augustine answered them by exegesis and by comparing Scripture with Scripture. But the trouble with most in the Christian Reformed Church is that they must have nothing of the truth of double predestination, especially not of reprobation.

5. I offer to produce and exegete hundreds of texts from the Word of God to prove that Van Halsema and the Synod of 1924 are in error, texts which, I am sure, the editor of *De Wachter* will never touch or try to explain.

This about the accusation that I deal with preconceived notions instead of with the Word of God.

* * *

One more observation.

In the end of his editorial Van Halsema writes: "That the brethren that departed from us in 1924 (sic!) have not been willing to acknowledge, and up to the present day they persisted in their error, although it must be said that hundreds of families, among whom a congregation of two hundred families, have come to another insight in the course of years and have returned to our churches."

About this the following:

1. How many families, Van Halsema? The congregation of two hundred families are only "among them." So the impression is left that there are, indeed, many hundreds of them. Can you tell us approximately how many? A thousand, five hundred, four hundred? Or do you, perhaps, already anticipate that many of the schismatics that left us or were expelled, after the decision of the Supreme Court is published and happens to be in our favor, will return to the Christian Reformed Church? If so, you can have them. We do not want people that stay with the brick.

2. How did those hundreds of families return to your

church, Van Halsema? Did they all confess publicly their sin of schism or did you just receive them without any apology?

3. Are you not ashamed to mention that return of the congregation of two hundred families, the church of Kalamazoo, to your church? How did that congregation return? Did they all apologize and sign the "Three Points" of 1924? Do you mean to say that also the Rev. H. Danhof apologized and that he also signed the "Three Points"? Yet, did not you receive him and allow him to preach in his own church?

Shame on you!

I understand that your church likes to expand and be big. For this I warned repeatedly, when I was still in the Christian Reformed Church. But they refused to listen. The result is disastrous. You have all kinds of elements in your church that are anything but Reformed, and you know it. And what about the Union question, and the divorce problem, etc.?

We do not care for mere numbers. After all, the church are the seven thousand that do not bow their knee to Baal.

H.H.

AS TO BOOKS

Calvinism, by Ben A. Warburton. Published by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Mich. Price \$3.00.

The sub-title of this book is: "Its History, Basic Principles, Its Fruits and Its Future, and Its Practical Application and Life." Personally, I am not acquainted with the author of this book, and it would have been a help if in the book itself he would have been briefly introduced to the American reader. All we learn to know about him is that he is "an English student of Calvinism, and editor of *The Christian Pathway*."

As to the book itself, I heartily recommend it to the American reader that is interested to know more about Calvinism. It is written in a very clear style, easily available to everybody. Although for the theologian there is nothing especially new in the book, I am convinced that for the general reader it will prove to be both interesting and instructive. As to the contents, after an introduction, the historical background of Calvinism is briefly treated. Then, after two chapters on Arminius and the Synod of Dordt and Divine Sovereignty respectively, the Five Points of Calvinism are discussed following the orders of the Canon. The book concludes with two chapters on Calvinism in the Inner life and The Fruits of Calvinism. The author is, evidently himself a Calvinist, and although he realizes that, in our modern age, Calvinism is not very popular, he defends it, both from a principal and practical viewpoint, and that, too, over against much of the calumny that has been directed against it.

Once more, I heartily recommend the reading of this book. It is quite different from the Stone Lectures on the same

subject by the late Dr. A. Kuyper, and also from the would-be Calvinism in *De Gemeene Gratie*. In other words, it is more truly Calvinistic.

One remark. On page 37, the author writes: "But even over this modified form of Pelagianism (Semi-Pelagianism, H.H.) the truths which Augustine had preached and advocated ultimately triumphed, and Semi-Pelagianism gradually withered and died down, leaving the teaching of Augustine . . . paramount in the Church . . ." I do not believe that this opinion can stand in the light of history. Already during the lifetime of Augustine some of his strongest disciples (Prosper, for instance) began to weaken and waver. The Synod of Orange, 529, certainly cannot be said to have maintained the teaching of Augustine. And do not forget the figure of Gottschalk, who rotted in prison because he maintained double predestination.

H.H.

Man en Vrouw, Voor en in het Huwelijk. (Man and Wife—or Woman—Before and in Marriage), by Dr. A. C. Drogendijk. Published by J. H. Kok, N. V., Kampen, the Netherlands. Price f 5.90.

The reader may notice that I am somewhat doubtful about the translation of "Vrouw" in the title. Should it be "Wife" or "Woman." The reason is in the sub-title: "Before and in Marriage." In Dutch you can easily speak of "vrouw" before marriage as well as in marriage: the term remains the same. But in English that is not the case: a wife is a married woman. Hence my hesitation.

This is a very good book written about a difficult and somewhat delicate subject. Throughout, the author deals with the subject from a Christian viewpoint and he does so in sober and proper language. That it is very popular may be gathered from the fact that, since 1941, it has already had five reprints. Of this it is worthy. The book offers a clear and very sober and Christian answer to many questions concerning sexual life of both men and women before and after marriage.

To those that can still read the Holland language I heartily recommend this book.

H.H.

IN MEMORIAM

The Eunice Society of Grand Rapids, Michigan, mourns the loss of a member and wishes to express its sympathy to the family of

MRS. PLEUNE ROOBOL

who passed away at the age of 54 years.

Ps. 73:2—"Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel and afterward receive me to glory."

Mrs. B. Yonker, President
Mrs. G. Spruit, Secretary

OUR DOCTRINE

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

AN EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

PART III — OF THANKFULNESS

LORD'S DAY 47

Q. 122. Which is the first petition?

A. "Hallowed be thy name"; that is, grant us, first, rightly to know thee, and to sanctify, glorify, and praise thee, in all thy works, in which thy power, wisdom, goodness, justice, mercy and truth, are clearly displayed; and further also, that we may so order and direct our whole lives, our thoughts, words and actions, that thy name may never be blasphemed, but rather be honored and praised on our account.

Chapter I

God's Holy Name

A comparison may very properly be drawn between the Law of God and the Lord's Prayer. There is a certain similarity between the two. In the Law God speaks to us; in the Lord's Prayer we speak to God. You know, of course, that in the Decalogue we distinguish two tables. The first table of the Law demands that we love the Lord our God with all our heart and mind and soul and strength. The second table has reference to our relation to the neighbor. The two tables of the Decalogue, therefore, are so related that the first table dominates the entire Law: for the love of God is the principle also of our love to the neighbor.

Now if we turn to the Lord's Prayer, in which the Lord teaches us how we ought to pray and for what we ought to pray, you will find that in that prayer there is the same fundamental relation. Also the six or seven petitions of that prayer fall into two groups. And just as in the Decalogue the first table has reference to God alone, so the first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer pertain entirely to God, His name, His kingdom, His will. And so the Lord teaches us in this prayer that God and His cause ought to be our chief concern at all times. And the second group of petitions pertains to our relation to one another, to ourselves and to earthly things.

There is, therefore, a very clear similarity between the Law of God and the Lord's Prayer. In the Law God speaks to us, and demands of us that we shall love Him above all. But in the Lord's Prayer we speak to God, and also in the Lord's Prayer the Lord teaches us very plainly that our prayers shall be motivated above all by the love of God.

We must remember, however, when we consider the first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer, — "Hallowed be thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven," — that they are nevertheless very really petitions. When we read these three petitions, we may probably

receive the impression that they are really no prayers in the real sense of the word. Just because they all pertain to God, we are probably tempted to imagine that they are not petitions: for it seems hardly possible that we should ask something for God, and His cause, and His will as it is always surely accomplished in the world. And perhaps it would seem better, as undoubtedly these petitions are often considered, to look upon them as certain pious wishes, rather than as prayers. In that case, the first petition, "Hallowed be thy name," would mean that we stammer the wish, "O, that thy name may be glorified." We simply express the desire of our hearts, but we hardly ask for something from God. And the same may then be applied to the second and third petitions. This, however, is not correct. All these petitions that pertain directly to God and His cause are very really prayers in the proper sense of the word. In them we really express very definitely the desire to receive something from God. We understand, of course, that in these first three petitions, although they pertain to God, we do not mean to ask something for Him. God has no need of our prayers for Himself. Prayer always means, and can never mean anything else than that our soul drinks out of the fountain of all good. We need something. We desire something. And that need and desire is also expressed in the first three petitions.

In the first petition, therefore, we express the need, the need of our heart and soul, that God's name be hallowed. And the position of this first petition teaches us very clearly that the glory of the name of our God must be uppermost in our minds. Otherwise we can never pray this. It teaches us at once that the chief and only purpose of all things is the glory of God, and that the desire for the realization of this purpose should be uppermost in our minds and hearts, and should occupy, therefore, the first place in all our prayers. Unless we rightly know the name of God, we cannot pray to the true God at all. And unless the earnest desire that God's name may be hallowed occupies the chief place in our hearts, so that all our other desires are strictly subservient to it, we cannot possibly ask anything that is according to His will. Of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things. Whatever may betide, therefore, to Him must be the glory forever. Rom. 11:36.

In the discussion of this first petition, we do well, first of all, to consider its meaning, or, its objective aspect. We must ask and answer the question: what do we really pray for in this petition? And secondly, we must also contemplate the subjective disposition of our heart when we pray this petition. How is it possible? In what state of mind and heart can we possibly present this prayer to our Father Who is in heaven?

The name of God in Scripture is God Himself as He has revealed Himself to His rational, moral creature, which He so created that he can know Him and express His name.

God is God. He is, as Barth often expresses it, the Wholly Other. We can never find Him out. It is only when God reveals Himself to us that we can possibly know Him and have fellowship with Him. When, in his sinful pride, man

refuses to be instructed in the knowledge of God from His own revelation, and makes instead his own puny mind the measure of all things, it is inevitable that he reaches the conclusion that God is unknowable, as Herbert Spencer attempts to prove by sheer logic. Then he is swallowed up in the quicksand of agnosticism and atheism. God dwells in an inaccessible light. We cannot approach to Him. He is infinite in His Essence and all His virtues. And we are finite. And the finite can never comprehend nor establish any fellowship with the infinite God. God is the eternal One: He transcends all time. And we are children of time and of the moment. It is impossible for time to comprehend eternity, and to reach out for and establish fellowship with the eternal. If, therefore, we are to know God, it is necessary that He reveals Himself to us. He must descend to the level of the finite. He must, as it were, come into time, which He Himself has created. And there the eternal One must speak to us concerning Himself.

This Self-revelation of God to a creature which He Himself has created with such a nature that he can know Him is God's name.

This name of God, according to Scripture, is in all the works of His hands: in creation and providence, as well as in the wonders of salvation in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The psalmist sings: "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! Who has set thy glory in the heavens." Ps. 8:1. And again: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge." Ps. 19:1, 2. And again: "Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks, unto thee do we give thanks: for that thy name is near thy wondrous works declare." Ps. 75:1. All creation is His handiwork, and He so made all things that they might be a revelation of His marvellous virtues. They spell the name of the Most High.

And not only did He call them into being by the Word of His power in the beginning, but He also continually dwells in them, sustains them, preserves them, and governs them according to His eternal purpose. It is He that "sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills. They give drink to every beast of the field: the wild asses quench their thirst. By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches. He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth; And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart." Ps. 104:10-15. It is He that causeth the sun to rise every morning, that covers the heavens with clouds, that "giveth snow like wool; he scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes. He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold? He sendeth out his word, and melteth them: he causeth his wind to blow, and the waters

flow." Ps. 147:16-18. With sovereign power He governs the destinies of man and beast, of individuals and nations. And in all the history of the world we may indeed behold the name of God.

Nevertheless, in this world of sin and darkness and death we would never behold the beauty and wisdom and full power of that name, and surely could never know it as a name of salvation, had it not pleased Him to manifest Himself to us in still another, a higher, and more glorious name, — a name of highest wisdom and power, of holiness and righteousness and truth, of abundant mercy and boundless grace and fathomless love. It is the name of Jehovah, into which the righteous run and are safe. Prov. 18:10. That name of God is revealed in Jesus, Jehovah-Salvation, the Son of God come in the flesh, Immanuel, God with us, Who fully revealed the Father, Who bore our sins and bore them away forever on the accursed tree, Who was raised from the dead on the third day, and is seated at the right hand of the majesty in heaven, in Whom we have righteousness and life eternal, and Who will come again in glory, to become manifest as the Head over all things in the new creation. That is the central and the highest revelation of Jehovah. In the light of that name we see the true meaning of the name of God in all the works of His hands. And it is the name of God as it is revealed to us and as we know it from the Holy Scriptures that is meant in the first petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Hallowed be thy name."

What does it mean when we pray that God's name be hallowed?

Perhaps we had expected that the Lord would rather have used the word "glorified." Yet, as we examine the meaning of the term *hallowed*, we soon discover that it is both the deeper and the more comprehensive term, and that to glorify God presupposes that we hallow His name.

The fundamental presupposition in this first petition is that God's name is holy, that we must always recognize it as holy, and that because of this His name must be glorified, and His name alone. The name of God is holy because God is the Holy One. And this means that God is One, and that there is no god beside Him. It means that He is the infinitely perfect One, matchless in His infinite power, sovereignty, holiness, righteousness, truth, love, grace, and mercy. It means that He alone is consecrated to Himself, loves Himself and seeks Himself, that He does all things for His own name's sake, and that therefore all creation must be consecrated to Him, and can be blessed only in as far as it serves the purpose of His glory. That God is the Holy One signifies that He is the incomparable One, infinitely exalted above all that is called creature. He is Jehovah, the I Am, the eternally Self-existent and independent God, Who is of and by Himself. He is God! His name is holy. The name of God stands entirely apart and by itself. It is a separate name. It has nothing in common with other names. It is the name of all names, by which all names exist in heaven and on earth.

H.H.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Prophecy of Haggai

The rebuke bears fruit. The temple is built, Chapter 1:12-15.

12. *And Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the highpriest, with all the rest of the people, listened attentively to the voice of Jehovah their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as Jehovah their God had sent him, and the people did fear before Jehovah.*

13. *Then spake Haggai Jehovah's messenger in the message of Jehovah unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith Jehovah.*

14. *And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the highpriest, and the spirit of all the rest of the people; and they came and did work in the house of Jehovah of hosts their God.*

15. *In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.*

Zerubbabel — the names mentioned are those contained in verse 1 (see there). *All the rest of the people* — Not the people soul for soul, but the true Israel, the remnant within the remnant. They took the words of the prophet to heart. Pondering his message, they were profoundly impressed and immediately resolved to resume building operations. *The voice of Jehovah* — They discerned in the words of the prophet the voice of God speaking to them. *As Jehovah their God had sent him* — The sense is causal. They listened attentively because Jehovah had sent the prophet and laid his words upon their hearts. *And the people did fear* — Jehovah was not an object of dread to them as He is to the wicked. For their fear was at bottom love. But the meaning is that they stood in awe of God and trembled at His word.

Then spake Haggai (13) — In reply to the changed attitude of God's people. They had repented of their sinful apathy regarding God's house and were now resolved to build it. *Jehovah's messenger* — So called because Jehovah sent him and put His word in the opening of his mouth. *In the message of Jehovah* — The prophet comes with a fresh message now that the people have repented. And he is in it and does not depart from it to speak his own word. He is in it with his whole heart and mind and will. It is part and parcel of him. It issues from his soul as a word fraught with the power of a mighty conviction. *Saying, I am with you, saith Jehovah* — The message is brief, but it is precisely what they have need of hearing. It is their only comfort in this crisis. Though He is not seen of them anymore by that visible manifestation of His presence — the pillar of cloud, the angel of the covenant — yet He is with them nevertheless —

He, His gracious presence — to establish all the work of their hands.

And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel . . . and the spirit of the rest of the people (14) — All were mightily inspired by the prophet's message. Not the prophet but the Lord did the inspiring through His word that He spake through the prophet as His organ and sanctified to their hearts. *And they came and did the work* — Their revival was not momentary but abiding. For it was of the Lord and not of man. And being of the Lord, it was genuine. For it translated itself into action. They *did* the work.

In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month (15) — On this day they began to work, just twenty three days after Haggai had admonished them.

Chapter II

The Glory of the New Temple, 1-9.

1. *In the seventh month, in the twentieth and one day of the month, came the word of the Lord by the hand of the prophet Haggai, saying,*

2. *Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest and to the rest of the people, saying,*

3. *Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? And how do ye see it now? Is it not in your eyes in comparison with it as nothing?*

4. *Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith Jehovah; And be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong all ye people of the land, saith Jehovah, and work: for I am with you, saith Jehovah of hosts.*

5. *The word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt and my spirit remaineth among you: fear not.*

6. *For thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land;*

7. *And I will shake the nations, and the desirable things of the nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith Jehovah of hosts.*

8. *The silver is mine and the gold is mine, saith Jehovah of hosts.*

9. *The glory of this latter house shall be greater than that of the former, saith Jehovah of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith Jehovah of hosts.*

In the seventh month (1) — Called Tishri and answering to September and the first part of October. *The one and twentieth day* — Not quite a month after the recommencement of the work. Came the word of the Lord by the hand of the prophet — It was the second of four separate communications from God to the prophet. *Speak now to Zerubbabel . . .* (2) — The names mentioned are again those contained in

chapter 1:1. (See there). *Who is left among you . . .* (3) — How these aged ones within the community had reacted sixteen years ago, when the foundation of the temple was laid, is known from the book of Ezra. They had wept with a loud voice on that occasion (Ezra 3:12). The cause of their tears was not that they were overjoyed at the thought that the house of God was being rebuilt, nor that they were being reminded by the undertaking of the hardships through which they had passed. But they had seen the first temple. And they perceived that the prevailing circumstances would prohibit the new work from attaining to the magnificent beauty of the old. Their sorrow was carnal. They clave with their hearts to the earthly splendour of the first temple. As the time was drawing near for the Son of God to appear in human flesh, the typical things of the first covenant would soon have served their purpose. Already they had vanished away to a large extent as has already been pointed out. This troubled these aged people. They were looking back with longing eyes to the typical splendour that had characterized the theocracy especially during the reign of Solomon. They seemed to have little understanding of what it means that God, being Spirit, must be worshipped in spirit and truth. Not that they were particularly carnal in comparison with the younger generation that had shouted for joy when the foundation of the temple was laid. This generation would have wept instead just as well, had it seen the glory of the first temple. For it must be remembered that the Spirit was not yet to lead into all truth in that Christ was not yet come.

A number of these "ancient men" were still living. Their attitude, as could be expected, had remained unchanged. In their eyes the house of God that was now in process of being built was nothing in comparison with the house of God in her first glory. And so they had not the proper regard for it. Being mostly priests and Levites and chief of the fathers (Ezra 3:12), they were a bad influence. Their despondency was contagious. And it was discouraging. It was retarding the work of building the temple.

Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel . . . Joshua . . . all ye people (4) — In the work of building the house of God, God's people and their leaders must be courageous and inflexible in His strength. They must not allow themselves to be distracted by men, whoever they be, the despondent ancient men within their community, or the skeptical and profane persons in their midst, or the hostile people of the land or even the mighty kings of Persia. *Saith Jehovah* — Necessity is laid upon them. For it is Jehovah that speaks. *And work* — They must be continuously at it with all their might until the work has been brought to completion. *For I am with you, saith Jehovah of hosts* — For one thing this assures them that in building the temple they do His will and are pleasing in His sight. Also implied is that the work is His and not theirs and that He therefore must see to it that it succeeds. And that He shall. As to His servants, what He demands of them — courage and consecration for the work — He will give. And as to the adversaries, they exist by His

power and therefore are less than nothing in His sight. Their hearts devise their way, but He directs their steps (Pro. 16:9).

There has been a large variety of opinions among commentators regarding the right construction of the following verse (5). But its general sense is not affected by whatever that construction may be. To my mind the thought conveyed is this, "*I will be with you, saith Jehovah* (vs. 4), *according to the word that I cut with you when ye came out of Egypt, and my spirit abideth among you; fear not.*" So Calvin and others and our versions.

The word that I cut — the covenant that He made with them. *When ye came out of Egypt* — From this clause it is plain that the reference is to the covenant of Sinai. Essentially and in the second instance this covenant comprehended the following promises for the Israel according to the election of grace: a) That He is their God and they His people; b) That on the ground of Christ's atonement they have the pardon of all their sin; c) That for Christ's sake and in the way of their obedience, His gracious work in them, He will cause them to experience all the blessings of the law; d) that in His love He will chastise them for their correction when they depart from His ways, even driving them out unto the uttermost parts of heaven; e) that from thence He will bring them again into the land which their fathers possessed, do them good, multiply them above their fathers, and circumcise their heart and the heart of their seed to love the Lord their God with all their heart and with all their soul that they may live; in the final instance that in the Gospel period He will build His temple, that is, gather His elect out of every nation and from the four corners of the earth, both Jews and Gentiles, and cause them to inherit life in glory on the new earth; d) that, finally, He will put all the curses of the law upon the adversaries of the church, that is, He will destroy them and thereby deliver His people from their clutch. Implied is the promise that His Spirit will abide among them to impart unto them the virtues of Christ's cross and to stir them up unto every good work, Deut. 30.

Now such in the final instance is the word that He covenanted with them at Sinai. See particularly the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy. According to the standard of this word, these promises, He will be with them. All therefore will come to pass. The temple shall be built, His church shall be gathered, His heavenly kingdom shall come. For He cannot deny Himself. His promises therefore are sure. If so, there can be no reason why they should fear.

This is not the place to enter upon a detailed explanation of the covenant of Sinai. It requires a much fuller treatment than is here practicable. We only remark that if this covenant was truly conditional, if essentially and in the last instance, its promises concerned things earthly and not the realities of Christ's heavenly kingdom, our prophet had no understanding of this covenant, and His message to the church of that post-exilic era was utterly vain and comfortless. What real value and significance could his message have had, were it true that

the realization of Jehovah's word depended upon the will of man — and this it did, if the covenant of Sinai and its promise were conditional — and if all that he was occupied with in his discourse is the erection of an earthly temple?

The following verses (6, 7) shows the way in which He will realize the word that He covenanted, by what working of His. *For thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Yet once more, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens . . . and the dry land;* (6) — He has already once shaken the earth, definitely Sinai when He descended upon the summit of this mount in fire. (That the statement contains an indirect reference to the shaking of mount Sinai is plain from the context of Hebrews 12:26). But once more He will shake not alone the earth, as He had then done, but the heavens and the sea as well. This shaking, universal as to its character, will make an end of the dispensation of the law that was ushered in by the shaking of Sinai, and will signal the commencement of the dispensation of the Gospel; it will be coextensive with this dispensation and will be climaxed by the removal of the heavens and the earth and the appearance of the kingdom of Christ in heavenly glory (see once more Heb. 12:26 and context). Our prophecy must thus be taken literally. In view of the fact that the heavens and the earth are due to be shaken and thereby removed actually, it is hard to see why our prophecy should not be taken literally. And that this shaking began soon enough to justify the view that it signalled the commencement of the dispensation of the Gospel is plain from the Gospel narratives. While Christ hung on the cross, there was darkness over the whole land from the sixth to the ninth hour. Thus was the sun darkened, the heavens shaken, in a word. In the moment of His crying out upon the cross, "It is finished," the earth quaked and the rocks rent. In the morning of His resurrection there was a great earthquake. Thus was the earth shaken. Also the view that this second shaking is coextensive with the dispensation of the Gospel is well founded in the Scripture. What violent commotions are not in store for the heavens and the earth and the sea in the book of Revelation all during this Gospel period and especially as it draws to a close? And the entire mass of phenomenon is preindicative of the final world catastrophe, and must be regarded as expressive of God's wrath concerning the world that lies in darkness.

And will shake the nations (7) — He will come in judgment over the nations. Also this shaking betokens in its way the commencement of the Gospel period, is coextensive with it, and will be climaxed by the complete removal of the nations according to their reprobated shell in the final judgment. Thus will the earth be cleansed from the race of men that now corrupt it in order that it may be inherited in a glorified state by the just. As the people of Israel as the typical city of God are included in this shaking of the nations and are even among the first to experience it, it spells the complete vanishing away of the symbolical-typical economy of the first covenant.

And the desirable things of all nations shall come — The desirable things, that is, the gold and the silver (see the following verse), shall come and not the *desire* of all nations as our versions have it. As correctly interpreted, this scripture statement lends no support to the view that in the ages that preceded the coming of the son of God in the flesh there was always present in the Gentile world a nucleus of heathen men whose heart as sanctified and illuminated by the light of the logos shining in them and not by the light of the Gospel were thirsting after Christ. The naked truth contained in this scripture is that, during all the dispensation of the Gospel and while Christ is shaking the heavens and the earth and the sea, and coming in judgment over the nations, the elect in every nation, both Jews and Gentile, will come to the flock of Christ, to Zion that is now above, as drawn by the Gospel and as driven by holy fear. But they will not come empty handed but as well supplied with gold and silver for the support of the service and the ministers of God's house.

And I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts — The idea is not that the Lord would again honor that earthly temple with that visible manifestation of His presence — the pillar of cloud. Nor is the meaning that Zerubbabel's temple will be a thing of surpassing earthly splendour as compared with the one that was destroyed. The values here are heavenly and not earthly. The expression, "this house" looks to the church, the spiritual temple of which the true worshippers within the community were at the time the manifestation. And her glory is her God. For His fullness dwells in her through Christ in His spirit. *And I will give peace in this place* — The peace to be given is the peace of God that passeth all understanding. It will be the portion of His people as reigning in their hearts everlastingly. Hence there will be peace in whatever place they dwell. For a short while that place will be Zerubbabel's temple and in the final instance the new earth.

G.M.O.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 9, 1955, the Lord willing, our dear parents

MARTIN DOEZEMA

and

TENA DOEZEMA, nee Wegter

hope to commemorate their 35th wedding anniversary.

We thank our God for the many blessings He has bestowed upon them in the past. It is our hope and prayer that they may be spared for each other and for us for many years to come.

Their grateful children:

Mr. and Mrs. John Timmer

Mr. and Mrs. Jay Doezeema

Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Doezeema
and 6 grand children.

2836 Knapp St., N. E., Grand Rapids, Mich.

THE SOCIAL PRINCIPLE(S) OF THE EPISTLE TO PHILEMON

To attempt to set forth the "social principle or principles" of a particular portion of God's Word, certainly presupposes that such "principle or principles" are to be found.

But the question immediately arises, are there such principles? Does the Word of God purpose to set forth "social principles?" Furthermore, is not this term "social" a dangerous one? These, of course, are only a few of the many questions that can and, no doubt, do arise when considering a subject such as the one assigned.

Perhaps the asking of these questions can be justified when we consider the strange use to which the modern-day church has put that term "social." For, the fact of the matter is there is a fearful use of that which has been characterized as "social" and, this is especially so in some ecclesiastical circles. The matter has been aggravated by the additional fact that the term "social" has been associated or employed with the term "gospel." We hear a great deal of the "social gospel." Therefore, to attempt the setting forth of any "social principle or principles" of the Word of God, necessitates the elimination of any possible misunderstanding of such terminology, as has been employed and now is employed by the church world, generally.

Hence, we must ask the question: Is there any sense in which we have a "social gospel?" We ask this question because the Gospel, being the good news of Salvation for God's people, embodies the principles according to which those people of God live. It is the good news of Salvation in Jesus Christ, the Lord; and in this Gospel—in Christ is that principle of new life which He imparts to the hearts of His children. Well, then, may we speak of a "social gospel?" May we speak of the gospel with social implications? If you mean "social gospel" as the modernist understands his gospel to be, then we certainly *may not* speak of such a gospel, for then the gospel, and its principles take on new meaning. With his gospel, the *modernist* has a "religion" for the entire world. Because its principles are "social," the modern-day religionist stresses that false idea of doctrine being relatively unimportant and emphasizes the prime significance of "life." Jesus, he will say, taught men how to live. And, when pressed for an explanation, he will point to the life of Jesus as the "Great Example and Pattern" in whom are set forth all the principles for proper social conduct and intercourse among men. Hence, *this* "social gospel" purports to reach *all* men—calling them to follow this "Great Example" and to exercise the same "principles" which were enunciated and applied by Him.

You can see, then, if you mean "social gospel" with its "social principles" in this sense of the word, then we can never subscribe to such a notion.

Nevertheless, the question is still there. May the Reformed man—may the Protestant Reformed man speak of "social principles"—implying, of course, a "social gospel?" If he may, then just what does he mean when he speaks of

"social principles?" The term "social," (as it applies to our discussion) according to the "New Century Dictionary" is defined as: "*living or disposed to live in a community, rather than in isolation*"—*pertaining to the life and relations of human beings in a community.*" The term "principle, (as it applies to our discussion) according to the same dictionary, is defined as: "*a beginning or commencement*; also, "*an originating or actuating agency or force*; also, "*a fundamental, primary, or general truth, on which other truths depend*; also, "*a fundamental doctrine or tenet*"—"right rules of conduct."

Combining the elements in these definitions, according to *the common and hackneyed use of the phrase "social gospel,"* it has come to represent a general call to any human being who maintains social relationships with others and, to exercise in these relationships, "right rules of conduct" as, of course, exemplified in Jesus Christ, the "Great Example and Teacher."

Actually, this is a very superficial, shallow, and therefore a very wicked understanding of the "social gospel" on the part of those who would lay particular emphasis upon it, for the sake of stressing the necessity of exercising the "social principles" that that "social gospel" implies. Superficial and shallow and wicked it is because they call upon *all men to live from or out of the principles of Christ.* The wickedness of this is seen in the fact that they *assume* that all men *can do this*, i.e., live out of the principles of Christ, which is simply another way of saying from the *principle of new life.* You can see, too, how that *Arminianism* is nothing but *incipient modernism.* For the Arminian also has a general call to *everyone* "to come to Jesus"—"accept Him as your Saviour" and "let Him show you the way." The Arminian, too, wickedly assumes that all this is possible for man to do. Therefore, essentially, he speaks the same language as the modern-day churchman who invites everyone to come and embrace and practice the teachings of Jesus.

Now, we must not hesitate to note that we *have* a social Gospel," but it is the true—the biblical—the *God-given "social Gospel."* It is the Gospel *first.* That is, the good news—the promise of God that He will surely save His people from their sins, in Jesus Christ, their Lord. Furthermore, it is the good news that He will also bless them with all the blessings of this Salvation, and He will so work in them "to will and to do His good pleasure" that His people will live out of that principle of new life which He imparts unto them, in Jesus Christ. And this, they will do so that they reveal themselves as the children of Light. It is the Gospel *first* and then it becomes "social," as the principles of this Gospel are applied by the people of God in the midst of the world.

Here, we see the error of the modern-day church world. It fails to see that you must have a people of God if the true "social principles" of the scriptures are to be exercised or applied. As J. G. Machen stated in quoting an article entitled, "Christianity and Today" by F. S. Downs: "there can be no applied Christianity unless there be a Christianity to

apply." In other words, those who prate about the "principles of Jesus" and endeavour to mold the sinful natures of men by the application of these "principles" are completely blind to the biblical truth that there must be a radical spiritual transformation.

The Reformed man has the only true "social Gospel" with its "social principles." And, again, by "social Gospel" he means the application of all the truths of scriptures in his entire walk and life and therefore, in all his contacts with men — whether they be the spiritually-minded or the ungodly and the profane.

This is beautifully illustrated for us in Paul's Epistle to Philemon. In this letter to Philemon, a "fellow worker," the apostle concerns himself with the matter of Philemon's slave who, having run away, had come into contact with the apostle, and had also been called upon to perform the unheard of act of voluntarily returning to Philemon and putting his neck once more beneath the yoke of servitude.

This letter, of course, is genuine and not a mere piece of "fiction," as some higher critics have considered it to be — receiving it only as "the embryo of a Christian novel, in which the author purposed to illustrate by a short narrative this great idea: that that which is lost in this world and for time, is found again in Christianity for all eternity."

On the other hand, we certainly cannot agree with such men as A. McLaren who, in commenting on this Epistle declares: "If the N. T. were simply a book of doctrinal teaching, this Epistle would certainly be out of place in it; and if the great purpose of Revelation were to supply material for creeds, it would be hard to see what value could be attached to a simple short letter from which no contribution to theological doctrine or ecclesiastical order can be extracted. But if we do not turn to it for discoveries of truth, we can find in it very beautiful illustrations of Christianity in action." Here, again, we see the repeated error of those who desire to divorce doctrine from practice or life. For, what kind of "Christianity in action" does one have if it is not founded upon "truth?" All of which we read in the Epistle to Philemon is rooted and grounded in doctrine. The "social principles" in this Epistle, and there are many, find their basis in *doctrine*.

Consider the problem. Paul finds himself in possession of property belonging to another. Onesimus, according to the awe-inspiring institution of Roman slavery, is nothing more than mere *chattel*. If we were to consider the "social principles" involved in this problem, we would be compelled to enumerate them and inquire: Does the apostle have a right to retain possession of this slave, Onesimus? What does he owe, not only to Philemon, but to Roman society, in general, which has sanctioned the institution of which this Onesimus is a member? What is the relation of Christianity to slavery? May the apostle retain Onesimus without sinning against the Eighth Commandment? Furthermore, what about Philemon? What should his attitude be toward one such as Onesimus, who has offended him? Then, too, what about Onesimus?

From v. 11, we learn he is "now profitable." Paul no longer considers him a servant, but "a brother beloved." Must Onesimus again return to Philemon?

One immediately senses how complex the problem truly is. But Paul, in his own inimitable way, resolves all these questions involving "social principles" or, the "right rules of conduct" — resolves them all into the *one question* of "Love." What does the fundamental principle of the Love of God, in Jesus Christ require of us? Whatever the "social principles," they are to be viewed in the light of God's love to His people, in Jesus Christ. And Paul means to convey this idea to Philemon; that all our doings are not only to be prompted and permeated, but are to be a demonstration of the *great love wherewith God has loved us*. Therefore, Paul proceeds — takes his departure from the great doctrine of the Love of God to His people and purposes to apply this principle of Love and thereby, very tactfully and diplomatically, show Philemon what his attitude should be toward Onesimus. And this, he does without the use of any flattery nor any failure to counsel high duties, but reflecting upon that Love of God in Christ, which has called us *friends*, Paul exhibits the perfect model of Christian friendship.

Again, it must be borne in mind, that Onesimus is a "brother beloved," not only to Paul, but to Philemon: "both in the flesh, and in the Lord." Hence, Paul heeding his own injunction, "Let your speech be always with grace seasoned with salt" (Col. 4:6), pleads in the name of Christ, his Lord, for Onesimus; and he does so as though the "greatest interests of his apostleship were involved."

Nevertheless, he doesn't approach his brother and friend, in Christ, clothed with his apostolic authority. This, it seems, is so when he addresses his Epistles to the Churches and when he knows the opponents will challenge him, as in Galatia.

In such instances, he defiantly claims to have received his "commission" not of man, but directly from heaven — by the revelation of Jesus Christ. But here, he purposely limits his apostolic authority even though he declares: "I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin (order or command, EE) thee." Of course, whatever authority he has is *in Christ*; he has nothing in himself. In quietness of voice, Paul thus speaks to Philemon — even as Christ had spoken to him, and waives his authority as an apostle and, instead of commanding appeals on the basis of *Love*. That, alone, is the ground for his pleading in behalf of Onesimus; "for love's sake" (v. 9) — *not simply because of his love to Philemon* or because of the *love of Philemon to Paul*, but because of that strong bond of love that unites all the people of God together, and binds them to Christ. That is the principle that motivates the conduct of the apostle so that he puts away his authority, and "beseeches" or "entreats."

Where the bond is Love — the Love of God in Christ, then "grace is poured into the lips," and "I order" or "I command you" becomes "*I pray*." This is the way the Lord

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IN HIS FEAR

Silence Reigns

It was our original intention to use the columns of our department to treat the doctrinal and political issues in our recent struggle for the truth until the decision was rendered in the court case of the Superior Court of the city of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

At that time we did not dare to ascribe such folly to those who left us that they would appeal to the Supreme Court of the State of Michigan. Realizing that their case was a very weak one, since they had the decisions of the Classis against them, we expected them to abide by the decision to be rendered. And after the trial once began, the confusion presented especially by Rev. Kok and the forthright admission of Rev. Gritters under oath to his honor Judge Taylor that Classis West had no jurisdiction over anyone in Classis East and that no one in Classis East might appeal his case to Classis West led us to believe that they themselves were wise enough to see the folly of such an appeal to the Supreme Court.

But we underestimated the folly.

After all, as it was presented to us by different individuals at different times and in widely separated parts of this country of ours, after Rev. De Wolf did such a foolish thing as to try with only half of the consistory to set himself up as a consistory and declare as no consistory those whom they never treated, never had under discipline and who did what the Classis advised; and if Classis West did such a foolish thing as it did in September of 1953 to usurp more power than the Synod has and decide a case for Classis East before Classis East itself could finish the case; then you can expect them to do almost any foolish thing.

And so after the decision of Judge Taylor became known, those who left us continued to walk foolishly and sinfully.

Reluctantly we continued our writings concerning these doctrinal and church political matters.

Our purpose always was to bring these matters out in the open where they might be discussed, where the arguments might be weighed.

Those who walked this way of folly and sin refused to discuss to the matter. They chose the way of silence as safest for them.

Can it be that they now see themselves that their works were so very, very wrong? Can it be that they see now that their tactics were so very, very foolish? Is it not plain to everyone that had Rev. De Wolf submitted to his suspension and appealed to the Synod, that he could easily have won there the vindication that he sought? Did he not know when he refused to apologize that the West would vote delegates to Synod who were sympathetic toward him and his conditional theology? Could he not see that all the opponents of

the Declaration of Principles would vote for his statements? O, it was so plain to all of us at that time already that the West was voting as a solid block and that they could easily get eight delegates sympathetic to Rev. De Wolf without even trying. Subsequent history substantiates that. He would have had half the votes of Synod on his side. And all he would need is one delegate from Classis East, elder or minister—and the delegates from First Church would be ineligible to vote since it was their case—so that victory was pretty sure.

But God did not want it that way!

He did not want us who loved the Protestant Reformed truth, who did not overstep our bounds by the decisions of Classis East in May and DID NOT initiate discipline, He did not want us to be put out by those who were secretly dragging into our churches the conditional heresy of the Liberated. But surely from a human viewpoint the possibility was there that if Rev. De Wolf had walked the Church Political way of appeal, he could have won his case before men.

The same is true of Classis West. Had it walked the church-political way of drawing up a protest to be presented to the Synod, it would have had half the votes of the Synod and with the help of one in Classis East, it could have sustained Rev. De Wolf and put us out. But blinded by hatred and in love with conditional theology it could not even see the folly of Rev. De Wolf's sinful walk and simply tried to defend sin with more sin.

It is better then to be silent and not try to defend such evil.

If they were so foolish as to do these things, they are now with worldly wisdom wise enough to see that any defense they might make of these foolish and sinful deeds would only show up their folly and sin that much the more.

That is the way it goes with defending foolish and sinful deeds.

There really is only one way out of such foolish and sinful deeds. That is the way of confession and repentance. That is the solution to this problem.

And so, since all our efforts to bring them to the consciousness of their foolishness and sinfulness are ignored—though we have reasons to believe that they were not ignored in private—we will also with this article bring to a close our consideration of these matters until and unless future developments warrant such treatment.

If the "Classis East" of those that left us is sincere in a desire for fraternal discussion then let their constituency reveal that by giving answer to the many inconsistencies of their stand which we presented. We would close our discussion of the matter on these pages with a plea to them to give answer.

We could list a number one on our list of points that they ought to answer: Show us from Scripture and Church Order where a Classis may take a stand in regard to the constituency and discipline case in a consistory of another Classis. Show us where that may be done before that Classis wherein this Consistory resorts has itself had opportunity to take a stand

in that case. Show us how the act of Classis West of September 1953 *maintained the autonomy of First Church of Grand Rapids* which was resorting in a different Classis.

Silence on that matter before men does not take away the guilt of that sin. Silence in this instance is and can be due to nothing else than that any answer which would try to defend so glaringly sinful a deed would only expose more sinfulness and open a few eyes of those not versed in these church-political matters.

We place this set of questions first because it more than anything else led to the schism on a denominational level. We made that statement once in print, only to be chided for it and demanded to apologize. Our answer was to write under the dateline of September 22, 1953 to the individual who said we were guilty of maligning and traducing Classis West — fancy words for one who engineered one of those instructions to Classis West to commit such a horrible sin. We gave him seven reasons for our stand and why Classis West was guilty of all that we said.

A great silence reigned!

We heard not another word about it, nor a single word of any kind from this individual until he requested having his name on the list for the Court records. So, he did read our articles in the Standard Bearer!

When you have no answer, it is better to keep still. It is still better, of course, to confess your error.

But the point we wish also to make here is that after those seven reasons were given, the matter was dropped! We were no longer accused of maligning and traducing Classis West. The case was not made pending with the consistory of the undersigned.

Incidentally evil rumors have been circulated of cases made pending with the undersigned's consistory which are purely fictitious and therefore also very devilish. There is not one iota of truth in them. Those in doubt may write the consistory of the undersigned either of his present or former charges and will find that it is all devilish propaganda and nothing more.

As a second point for discussion we would present the action of Rev. De Wolf and his supporting deposed elders. Let us assume, for the sake of discussion and for that reason only, that the whole thing was wrong. Classis had no right let us assume, to give the advice it did of demanding apologies and suspension and deposition. Let us assume that for discussion of the matter's sake. Let us assume that half of the consistory of First Church in a sinful and hateful way executed the advice of Classis, or let us even assume that they misunderstood or deliberately distorted the advice of Classis. Make plain to us even then that the action of Rev. De Wolf and his supporting deposed elders was Scriptural and according to the Church Order. The decision of June 1 cannot be set aside. Unanimously the consistory approved the advice of Classis. Did Rev. De Wolf et al submit and appeal that action to the next Classis? Classis West, of course, messed the thing up further by making a Synodical meeting impos-

sible. Classis West separated from Classis East by taking the case of Classis East and deciding it before Classis East could even finish the matter. But explain and discuss the legality of half of one consistory that, according to the unanimous decision of 11 to 0 was being treated for defending heresy and for exonerating Rev. De Wolf by motion without first rescinding by two thirds majority the motion already on the books that condemned his sermons explain the legality of that half of the consistory setting itself up as the consistory of that church and declaring those who walked the way of the advice of Classis outside the denomination *and no longer in office* in that church. Explain and show from the Church Order that this is the proper way to depose office bearers. If the contention is that Rev. De Wolf and his supporters were illegally deposed and suspended from office, show that the Rev. Hoeksema, the Rev. Hanko and their elders were deposed and suspended properly in conjunction with a neighbouring church by Rev. De Wolf and his supporters.

You want discussion? Fraternal discussion? Then discuss these very unfraternal actions! Defend them with Scripture and Church Order, if you can! Be positive then, as the new Reformed Guardian claims to be. Do not criticize the actions of the Rev. Hoeksema, the Rev. Hanko and their elders; but be positive and show that these actions of Rev. De Wolf and of Classis West in 1953 are according to Scripture and the Church Order. Otherwise admit that you do not want discussion, fraternal or otherwise.

As to the doctrinal side we could present the following for positive discussion: Show that there is one whit of difference between the statements that God sincerely offers salvation to all who hear the preaching of the gospel and the statement that God promises salvation to everyone that hears the preaching of the gospel. And be positive so that you can show us that this statement that God promises salvation to all who hear the preaching of the gospel leaves any more room for the doctrine of election than the "common grace" statement that God sincerely offers salvation to all who hear the preaching of the gospel.

Show us where Scripture ever presents any of man's works as prerequisites unto any phase of salvation. Do not come with texts that speak of demands and even of requisites. Rev. De Wolf defended the word "prerequisite"; and when asked on the floor of Classis whether he could not agree with us that the word prerequisite was wrong stated. "Mr. Chairman, I'd rather not. I might be sorry for it later on." There are any number of delegates to Classis that May of 1953 who will testify to it that this was his reply. And Rev. Kok has the stenographic report of the whole discussion of that Classis in re these statements of Rev. De Wolf. How come we never saw one line of it in print?

It does not look very good for Rev. De Wolf does it?

Discussion? Plenty of room for it.

There has been too much silence on the main issues.

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Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

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

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

In our preceding article we had begun to call attention to another phase of the doctrine of the Church during the second period, 300-750 A.D., namely the importance of membership in this true church. And we quoted Articles 27 and 28 of our Confession of Faith. Continuing with the articles of this Confession of Faith which relate to this subject, Art. 29 confesses the marks of the true Church and also sets forth wherein she differs from the false Church, as follows: "We believe, that we ought diligently and circumspectly to discern from the Word of God which is the true Church, since all sects which are in the world assume to themselves the name of the church. But we speak not here of hypocrites, who are mixed in the Church with the good, yet are not of the Church, though externally in it (it would be interesting to know how the Liberated explain these words, inasmuch as they have condemned in the past the terminology of true and false church, in the sense of visible and invisible, and would maintain that all the baptized are equally in the Church; they certainly did not approve of any distinction between those who are in the Church actually, really, and those who are in the the Church merely externally — H.V.); but we say that the body and communion of the true Church must be distinguished from all sects, who call themselves the Church. The marks, by which the true Church is known, are these: if the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached therein; if she maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ; if church discipline is exercised in punishing of sin: in short, if all things are managed according to the pure Word of God, all things contrary thereto rejected, and Jesus Christ acknowledged as the only Head of the Church. Hereby the true Church may certainly be known, from which no man has a right to separate himself. With respect to those, who are members of the Church, they may be known by the marks of Christians: namely, by faith; and when they have received Jesus Christ, the only Saviour (to receive Jesus Christ is not the same as "accepting" Him; to accept Him emphasizes an action which proceeds from the sinner, but to receive Him means that Jesus Christ is given to him — H.V.), they avoid sin, follow after righteousness, love the true God and their neighbour, neither turn aside to the right or left, and crucify the flesh with the works thereof. But this is not to be understood, as if there did not remain in them great infirmities; but they fight against them through the Spirit, all the days of their life, continually taking their refuge in the blood, death, passion and obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ, "in Whom

they have remissions of sins, through faith in Him." As for the false Church, she ascribes more power and authority to herself and her ordinances than to the Word of God, and will not submit herself to the yoke of Christ. Neither does she administer the sacraments as appointed by Christ in His Word, but adds to and takes from them, as she thinks proper; she relieth more upon men than upon Christ; and persecutes those, who live holily according to the Word of God, and rebuke her from her errors, covetousness, and idolatry. These two Churches are easily known and distinguished from each other." — end of quote. It is not the purpose, of course, of these articles to explain Articles 27-29 of our Confession of Faith in detail. We merely wished to quote them in connection with the subject with which we are busy at present. Although we read, at the close of Article 29, that it is easy to distinguish between the true Church and the false Church, this applies only when this absolute distinction between true and false is clear and easily discernible. One of the characteristics of the true Church, for example, is the pure preaching of the gospel. Nevertheless, we know that the departure from the Word of God and the denial of the fundamental truths of the Scriptures does not occur as in a moment, "over night." The modern church today denies that Jesus is the eternal Son of God, coeternal and coequal with the Father and the Spirit. Yet, we do well to remember that the church which proclaims this today was once sound and that the departure from the truth, although inexorable, is nevertheless gradual. Hence, there are certainly degrees of falseness as far as the manifestation of the false church is concerned. One more observation we wish to make in connection with Article 29. The Roman Catholic Church of today stands condemned, of course, by this article. This is understandable. The article declares that the characteristic of the true Church, briefly summarized, is this: if all things are managed according to the pure Word of God. How different it is in the Roman Catholic Church! In that church the church determines what the pure preaching of the Word of God is. The Church, specifically the pope, proclaims what is in harmony with or contrary to the truth. In this article, however, the Word of God determines what the true or false Church is. Here the Word of God is championed as the sole rule of life and of doctrine. This was surely the guiding principle of the Reformation, and it must continue to be the guiding principle in the life of the Church throughout the ages.

Relative the importance of membership in the true church, as advocated in the second period of the Church, 300-750 A.D., we may say that it was generally held that membership in this Catholic Church was strictly necessary unto salvation. This was also the view which was maintained by earlier Church Fathers, such as Cyprian, and it was maintained also in this period. Fact is, our own Confession of Faith, in Article 28, when speaking of the calling of every child of God to join himself to the true Church, called the Catholic Christian Church in Article 27, declares that "this holy congrega-

tion is an assembly of those who are saved, and that out of it there is no salvation." And the Fathers certainly advocate that no one can be saved who separates himself from the true Church in the midst of the world.

Gregory the Great, the first monk to become pope, and who ruled over the Church from 590-604, and is said to have been the first to use the humble-proud title: servant of the servants of God, declared that "Heretics are unworthy of life and cannot escape the wrath of God unless they come into the Catholic Church." Augustine certainly maintained the principle that membership in the Catholic Church (not to be confused with the Roman Catholic Church) was absolutely necessary unto salvation. He declares, for example, that "Whoso is not in this Church does not receive the Holy Ghost." This great Church Father has declared, in opposition to the Donatists, the issue to have been: "The question is, indeed, discussed between us, Where is the church, whether among us or among them?" He held that the great church is the *one Catholic* church by virtue of the distribution of the latter throughout the whole world and by virtue of its connection with the church of the apostles, whose successors the bishops are. "Outside of this one Catholic church," he continues, "the body of Christ, there is no truth, no salvation. Separation from it is a sacrilege. Only chaff is blown off by the fan; only pride and lack of love can impel a Christian to split the unity of the church." This declaration of Augustine rests upon the thought that it is only in the Catholic church that the Spirit and love are bestowed upon man, and that the saints are to be found only in the Catholic church.

In connection with this question of the Church, we wish to present to our readers the few quotations of Augustine which he wrote in his struggle with the Donatists. The first quotation reads as follows: "As my Father hath sent Me," says our Lord, "even so send I you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." Therefore, if they represented the Church, and this was said to them as to the Church herself, it follows that the peace of the Church looses sins, and estrangement from the Church retains them, not according to the will of men, but according to the will of God and the prayers of the saints who are spiritual, who "judge all things, but themselves are judged of no man." For the rock retains, the rock remits; the dove retains, the dove remits; unity retains, unity remits. But the peace of this unity exists only in the good, in those who are either already spiritual, or are advancing by the obedience of concord to spiritual things; it exists not in the bad, whether they make disturbances abroad, or are endured within the Church with lamentations, baptizing and being baptized. But just as those who are tolerated with groanings within the Church, although they do not belong to the same unity of the dove, and to that "glorious Church, not having

spot or wrinkle, or any such thing," yet if they are corrected, and confess that they approached to baptism most unworthily, are not baptized again, but belong to the dove, through whose groans those sins are remitted which were retained in them who were estranged from her peace; so those also who are more openly within the Church, if they have received the same sacraments, are not freed from their sins on coming, after correction, to the unity of the Church, by a repetition of baptism, but by the same law of charity and bond of unity. For if "those only may baptize who are set over the Church, and established by the law of the gospel and ordination as appointed by the Lord, "were they in any wise of this kind who seized on estates by treacherous frauds, and increased their gains by compound interest? I trow not, since those are established by ordination as appointed of the Lord, of whom the apostle, in giving them a standard, says, "No greedy, not given to filthy lucre." Yet men of this kind used to baptize in the time of Cyprian himself, and he confesses with many lamentations that they were his fellow-bishops, and endures them with the great reward of tolerance. Yet did they not confer remission of sins which is granted through the prayers of the saints, that is, the groans of the dove, whoever it be that baptizes, if those to whom it is given belong to her peace. For the Lord would not say to robbers and usurers, "Whose soever sins ye remit, they shall be remitted to him; and whose soever sins ye retain, they shall be retained." "Outside the Church, indeed, nothing can be either bound or loosed, since there is no one who can either bind or loose; "but he is loosed who has made peace with the dove, and he is bound who is not at peace with the dove, whether he is openly without, or appears to be within." — end of quote.

Continuing with our quotations from the writings of Augustine, we read the following: "But if martyrdom is of no avail for this reason, because it has not charity, neither does it profit those who, as Paul says, and Cyprian further sets forth, are living within the Church, without charity in envy and malice; and yet they can both receive and transmit true baptism. "Salvation," he says, "is not without the Church." Who says that it is? And, therefore, whatever men have that belongs to the Church, it profits them nothing towards salvation outside of the Church." — end of quote.

H.V.

IN HIS FEAR

(Continued from page 399)

These main issues were covered up with slander and misquotations.

Let us have discussion.

But then let it be of these fundamental church-political and doctrinal issues and not personalities and fabricated moral issues.

J.A.H.

The Voice of Our Fathers

The Canons of Dordrecht

PART TWO

EXPOSITION OF THE CANONS

FIRST HEAD OF DOCTRINE OF DIVINE PREDESTINATION

Article 17 (cont.)

The quotations made from the opinions of the very fathers who drew up the *Canons* serve to furnish us with information as to the background of Article 17. In the first place, it becomes evident that the basic question with which the fathers were occupied was not the narrow question of the salvation of children of believers who die in infancy, but the fact of the Arminian denial of either election or reprobation of children: And it is only in connection therewith that the Synod felt constrained to make some kind of statement also about the salvation of infant children of believers. In every case the quotations show this to be true. In fact, some of the opinions did not even mention the subordinate matter which is treated in *Canons* I, 17, but simply treated the broader question of the election and reprobation of children. In the second place, the negative and subjective viewpoint of this article is largely explained by the fact that *none* of the fathers quoted makes a purely objective and Scripturally established statement in regard to the salvation of infants of believers who die at an early age. Some avoid the question. Others rather pointedly observe that the line of election and reprobation cuts directly through the generations of believers, citing proof for their observation. Some call attention to the fact that after all the element of age has nothing to do with election and reprobation essentially, since predestination is sovereign and has no regard to works. Others use expressions such as "we judge," or "the children *ought to be reckoned* . . ." Some point to the judicial ground of the condemnation of infants, namely, original sin. One opinion warns against "curiously investigating" whether reprobation also takes place among children of believing parents who die before committing any actual sin, and admonishes God's people to be satisfied with the Scriptural testimony that the promise is for believers and their seed. But there is not a single instance of an objective statement that all children of believers who die in infancy are elect, and, therefore, saved. In the third place, we learn from these quotations what Scriptural passages the fathers had in mind, when they said in Article 17: "Since we are to judge of the will of God from his Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature, but in virtue of the covenant of grace, in which they, together with the parents, are comprehended . . ." They are such passages (also cited in our *Baptism Form*) as Genesis 17:7, Matt. 19:14, Mark 10, Acts 2:39, and I Cor. 7:14. And concerning

these passages we may note: a) That none of them concerns itself directly with infants who die in infancy. b) That all deal with the children of believers. c) That, in the light of the rest of Scripture, none of them intends to teach that the promise and salvation are for *all* the children of believers. d) That the fathers in their opinions give ample reason to believe that they thoroughly understood that these Scriptural passages did not refer to all children of believers, but only the elect seed. And finally, with this background information it becomes evident that the Synod by no means intended to express as a hard and fast ecclesiastical statement of doctrine that all children of believers who die in infancy are elect and saved on the basis of Scripture, but that the Synod exactly avoided such a statement.

Turning to the article itself, then, we may notice, first of all, that there is a lack of clarity and precise definition that cannot be denied. And for this reason the article is of little doctrinal or confessional value. In a confession the church gives expression to what it believes concerning the truth of God's Word according to the Scriptures. And it can scarcely be said that this is done here. Surely, had the Synod been of the intention to make such a clear and precise formulation of the objective truth of Scripture, it had the ability to make such a statement, as the rest of the *Canons* abundantly proves. Thus, for example, had the Synod believed that all children of believing parents who die in infancy are elect, according to Scripture, then we would not have the present formulation of Article 17, but a positive statement to that effect, together with Scriptural proof. In such a case we might expect a statement like the following: "We believe that, since we are to judge of the will of God from his Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature, but in virtue of the covenant of grace, in which they, together with the parents, are comprehended, all children of believing parents which are called out of this life in infancy are elect, and, therefore, saved." Or, if the fathers had known of some means whereby we might definitely determine whether or not our children that die in infancy are saved or not saved, they could have precisely formulated an article giving expression to such a doctrine. But this they did not do. They gave expression to no objective article of faith here. They merely say: ". . . godly parents ought not to doubt of the election and salvation of their children, whom it pleaseth God to call out of this life in their infancy." And we can come to no other conclusion than this, that the Synod intentionally avoided making such an objective statement of doctrine *because such a statement was impossible*.

The above is indeed significant. It means that no support can be found in Article 17 for the view of those who nevertheless want to maintain that it is objectively certain that all children of believers who die in infancy are saved. And there are not a few, both among parents and among ministers, who seek to maintain this. Not infrequently do parents who bring a little one to the grave express without hesitation that their infant is saved, and that this is their comfort also. And

often in funeral services ministers will seek to comfort the parents of children who die in infancy by assuring them that all such children are saved. And it is even surprising in some instances how old a child is classed as an infant. And of course, the only conceivable objective ground for such a claim would be that somehow, either on the ground of a presupposed regeneration or on the ground of a general covenant promise guaranteeing to all children of believers, head for head and soul for soul, the objective right to the blessings of salvation, all the children of believers are heirs of salvation. And in this sense they then take up the first part of Article 17 also. Naturally, if it is actually the case that all children of believers are heirs of the blessings of salvation, then the whole question is easily dissolved. There is no problem then. But we repeat: the Synod could not possibly have had this in mind in view of the indefinite, negative, and subjective language which is employed in Article 17. And since they were well aware that there was no definite Scriptural ground for saying that all such children are saved, and were aware, on the contrary, that there were Scriptural grounds for saying that divine predestination makes a distinction also among the children of believers, they made a subjective and negative statement.

If the question be asked, then, why the fathers were moved to make such a statement at all, I believe the reason is to be found partially, at least, in the fact that the Arminian opponents employed what is called an *argumentum ad hominem* over against the Reformed fathers. And it was a double-pronged argument. On the one hand, they appealed to the people emotionally with their own doctrine that all such infants are saved. And on the other hand, they besmeared the fathers in the public eye by picturing them as monsters who even delighted in teaching that God would damn not only some infants, but some infants of believers. It was indeed a foul argument which they used, and one not based at all on calm reasoning from the Scriptures. After all, objectively considered, first of all, it was not a question of who was a monster in whose opinion, nor a question of who taught what, but a question of what the Scriptures teach. And if the Scriptures teach that God also damns infants, then it behooves no one to call that teaching monstrous and cruel, nor to call those monstrous who maintain such Scriptural doctrine. And in the second place, calmly and objectively considered, is it any more cruel and monstrous that infants who die in infancy are sovereignly reprobated and sovereignly damned than that infants who grow up are sovereignly reprobated and damned? Is it *ever* easy for the flesh of believing parents to know or to think that there is a possibility that their own children, their own flesh and blood, go lost? Or, to cite a Scriptural example, was it easy for Rebecca to carry reprobate Esau in her womb even though she also knew that Jacob was elect in the same womb? Gen. 25:21-23; Rom. 9:10-13.

But the fathers knew that the argument was false and wicked, and that they were not guilty of such an infernal

delight in the damnation of little babies. And therefore, in view of the fact that while we do know on the basis of Scripture that the Lord establishes His covenant in the line of continued generations, taking His seed from our seed, and in view of the fact that we know nothing about the election or reprobation of an infant child of believers while it is an infant, a *judgment of love* concerning such children of believers who die in infancy is possible, and may be taken for what it is worth. But there is nothing else to say with objective certainty than that the Lord takes His seed out of our seed.

In this light we can also understand somewhat the subjective and negative language of Article 17: "godly parents ought not to doubt." In the first place, it is not simply believing parents, but godly parents, that is, parents who are godly in the capacity of parents, that are mentioned here. In the second place, they are negatively admonished not to doubt concerning the election and salvation of their children who die in infancy. And in the third place, they are pointed to the fact not simply that their children "die," but that "God calls them out of this life in infancy." Now godly parents are certainly parents who live godly in relation to and with their children. They bring children into the world in the consciousness that the Lord graces them with the privilege of bringing forth children for His covenant. Thus they live even before their children are born, committing them to the blessing of the Lord in prayer. They want to serve the Lord also in the bringing forth of children. For their children they pray. They pledge those children to service of the Lord. They beseech the Lord for grace so that their children may live to the glory of His name in the midst of the world. As they grow up, their children are instructed in the fear of the Lord according to their capacity at the earliest possible moment. Such are godly parents. And if God removes a little one from their family circle, that is, an infant who is not yet able to assume a conscious position toward the covenant of God, then such parents ought not to doubt. Surely, they may hope that their little one is elect of God, and they may do so for the sake of God's covenant too, being spiritually minded. But they are conscious of the fact that the covenant Jehovah has Himself called that child out of this life. And therefore as godly parents they do not say: "Our child is a child of believing parents, and therefore saved." But they acknowledge at the grave of their little one: "Lord, we have in Thy name brought forth this little one, and we received it with thanksgiving from Thee. To Thee we consecrated that child, that it might be a child for Thy covenant. It has now pleased Thee to remove that child from this life. And therefore, in the same faith whereby we received the child from Thee and dedicated it unto Thee, we rest satisfied in Thy way, without being filled with fearful doubt about the salvation and election of the child, knowing that Thou, according to Thy good pleasure, which through faith we acknowledge to be always good, dost save Thy children out of our seed."

H.C.H.

DECENCY and ORDER

Good Christian Schools

(Continued)

The word "good" has a wide variation of meaning depending upon how the term is used. It may mean perfection as, for example, when we say that God is good. He is Light and there is no darkness in Him. He is the sum total of all virtue and perfection. In this sense there is none that is good but one and that is God.

The term may also have a strong ethical connotation and then it denotes such things as are in harmony with the moral law of God. It forms the contrast of all that is vile and corrupt. Such things as uprightness, integrity, honesty, humility, sincerity, etc. are good. They are the opposite of such evils as pride, deceit, lying, etc. Although such virtues are not found in the natural man, they are possessed by the children of God who, by virtue of the grace of regeneration, are made good.

In common conversation the word "*good*" is generally used to designate that which is adapted to the purpose for which it was made or brought into being. Thus, for example, we may speak of an automobile, as it rolls from the assembly line of one of the huge industrial plants, as good only when, after a test drive, it is evident that there are no mechanical defects and that it will serve as a reliable means of transportation. We may speak of a good tree as one that is productive; of good food as that which nourishes the body; of a good watch as one that will reliably give the time of day; etc. In this sense we also read in Scripture that man (and all things) was created good. Although this expression also denotes that man was created in excellency and virtue; that he was without sin and endowed with many excellent gifts; it also signifies that he was created so that he was adapted unto the purpose of serving and glorifying His Creator.

In this last named sense we speak then of a good christian school. In all things it conforms to and is adapted unto the purpose for which it is brought into existence. And the christian school does not have the same reason for its existence as schools in general. Its purpose is distinctively christian. It is not materialistic or humanistic but emphatically God-centered in all of its aims. It has its objective in training the children of the covenant in the fear of the Lord and thus to prepare them to live in the midst of this present world as citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. They must be thoroughly furnished unto every good work. The school that succeeds in this endeavor is good. Only then is it worthy of the beautiful name "christian."

The task of the school is somewhat curtailed by other vital training centers in the life of the covenant child. The school is only a part of that important triple alliance which cooperatively is called to train him. To this belongs also the

home and the church. These three are not to be confused. Although they are intimately related and each one is concerned about the labors of the other, their separate sphere and objective of labor must be kept distinct. The school must not perform the functions of the former. This danger is more than imaginary and when it becomes a reality the result is disorder which is never good. Let each perform the duties of its own sphere according to the calling of God and the result will be the complete training of the man of God.

Whereas, in this connection, our main interest concerns the school, we may dispense with an elaborate discussion on the home and church. A few brief remarks in this connection will suffice.

Concerning the home, it may be stated that it is the oldest and most basic of all institutions of learning. It is established in creation itself and upon it revolves the solemn duty to "train up the children in the way they should go." Parents may never relegate this obligation to others although they may employ others to assist them in this prodigious task. When this is done the matter of accountability to God remains with the parents and is never pushed off on the assistants. Were this regarded with more seriousness, many parents would be more careful in the means employed for the training of their children and more devoted and zealous in procuring the very best means possible. More concerning this we will write under a separate heading of "Parental Responsibility."

The church, too, is an institution but, unlike the home, has its origin not in the creation but in grace. She is conceived in the eternal counsel of God. Her entire constituency is given unto Christ before the foundation of the world according to the sovereign and unchangeable decree of election. In time she is separated from the world through regeneration and called out of darkness into the marvelous light of God. She is called to manifest herself as the body of Christ, showing forth the praise of the glory of His grace amidst the darkness of men. Upon the church is laid the duty to preach the Word of God and to indoctrinate the seed of the covenant in the truth of that word and so prepare them through the word to occupy their place in the Kingdom of Heaven. Another calling the church does not have. She must declare the mighty works of her God. She must witness unto the world of His power and grace. She does not tell the world what God in Christ would like to do and tries to do but cannot unless He receives the consent and cooperation of man but rather she proclaims the Gospel of Christ in which that which God has done and will continue to perform until the day of Jesus Christ is preached. By the power of that Gospel, the lives of the true members of the church are brought into subjection to and the service of Christ. The church is not a social or civic center. Its interests and aims are not of this world. She does not seek world reformation. The culture of her members is spiritual, their citizenship is heavenly and in the communion of saints the things of the Kingdom of God are sought in and through all things of this present time. The

church must confine her labors to teaching and preaching and indoctrinating in the realities of the Kingdom of Heaven. Her subjects must be instructed and prepared to rightly occupy their place in that Kingdom, even now while they are in the present evil world.

The christian school is not a subsidiary to the church and must not be conceived of as a sort of mission station as is not infrequently done. The school is an extension of the home and is born out of practical necessity. There was a time when all of the secular training of the child was done by the parents in the home but that time is no more. Life, with all of its complications and involvements, makes this a practical impossibility. The specialized training that is requisite to most occupations today the parents are not able to provide. Consequently, the school is a cooperative enterprise in which parents together furnish those services for their children which as individual parents they are unable to provide. Worldly schools are the outgrowth of worldly homes and christian schools are the proper extension of christian homes. (Note: The state has taken cognizance of the gross neglect of worldly parents to provide for their children and, consequently, taken the matter of education into its own hands.) The school, in distinction from the church, aims at furnishing the child with the necessary preparation and training so that he is able to fill his place in the present industrial, political and social world. The christian school aims to prepare the child to do this as a christian. It purposes to so train the child that it is thoroughly equipped to serve God in whatever vocation of life it is called. To express it with other words, the christian school that is worthy of its name, aims at preparing the citizens of the Kingdom of heaven to rightly occupy their temporal place in the midst of this present world. They must be trained to live the antithetic life in business, in labor, in government, in society.

It is evident then that the school aims at the temporal. It does this, not exclusive of the spiritual and eternal, but so that the purpose of its establishment is after all earthly. Just as the home is not an eternal institution but will pass away with the things of this earth for in heaven there will be no marriage or giving in marriage, so also it is with the school. It serves its purpose in this present order of things and if it is to do this well, it must never lose sight of the heavenly and eternal but rather, in its earthly form and character, serve them. Then it is a good school.

The task of the good christian school is also, therefore, related to the calling of the church. Not so, of course, that the school must preach the gospel or indoctrinate as such but if we remember that the truth of the gospel is expressive of a *way of life*, we may characterize the duty of the school by saying that it is her task to apply in a practical way this world and life view of the church unto every single phase of the child's secular education. Whether the child is then taught geography, history, mathematics, reading, or whatever it may be, he is taught these things in the light of the truth of the Word of God and from the Truth he gains the correct per-

spective of life regardless of the field or vocation he chooses to enter. He must be trained in the fear of the Lord. This, a good christian school does!

In light of all this, it should be evident that the most important single factor in a good christian school is the teacher. Such things as buildings, physical facilities, size, etc. are relatively unimportant. The significant factor is the teacher. A staff of competent, Godfearing teachers makes a good school. Without them the ideal in education cannot be reached. Teachers who are able to inculcate the Protestant Reformed world and life view into the minds of succeeding generations are ever in demand. The meaning of Article 21 would require that "Consistories see to it that there are such teachers." This is quite different from consistorial supervision and control of the schools. What this means and how this can be accomplished we will, D.V., write next time.

G.V.d.B.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 9, 1955, our beloved parents and Grandparents

EVERT VAN VOORTHUYSEN

and

ELIZABETH VAN VOORTHUYSEN, nee Groeneveld

will commemorate the 40th anniversary of their marriage.

We are grateful to our Covenant God for all the blessings He has bestowed upon them and us; and we trust and pray that, if it be His good pleasure, they may be graciously spared for one another and for us, for many years to come.

Their thankful children:

Mr. and Mrs. Nelvin Kooiman

Mr. and Mrs. John Ekema

Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Van Voorthuysen

Mr. and Mrs. Everett Van Voorthuysen

Mr. and Mrs. John Kimm

15 grandchildren.

Redlands, California.

O GOD, REGARD MY HUMBLE PLEA

O God, regard my humble plea;
I cannot be so far from Thee
But Thou wilt hear my cry;
When I by trouble am distressed,
Then lead me on the rock to rest
That higher is than I.

Psalms 61:1

O GOD, REGARD MY HUMBLE PLEA

Before Thy face shall I abide;
O God, Thy truth and grace provide
To guard me in the way;
So I will make Thy praises known,
And, humbly bending at Thy throne,
My vows will daily pay.

Psalms 61:4

ALL AROUND US

To Whom The Church Belongs

In the May issue of "torch and trumpet", page 16, appears a short article by the hand of Rev. Peter Y. De Jong, minister of a Christian Reformed Church in Pella, Ia., which we enjoyed reading. We believe the article merits a reprint in these columns in its entirety. The Rev. Mr. De Jong writes regularly in this periodical under the rubric "Fathers and Brethren!" Under the above named sub-title he writes the following:

"Protestants seem peculiarly apt to fall into a dangerous and dishonoring practice, when they speak about the church.

Every day we can hear people talking about "the Rev. Smith's church" or "Dr. Jones' congregation." Although we may not be ready to condemn these phrases too severely, they do betray a lamentably superficial attitude to the church. After all, the church belongs to no man or group of men. It belongs solely to the Lord Jesus Christ who is her Savior and Head.

Scripture is abundantly clear on this. Paul tells us that God has put all things under Christ's feet "and gave him to be head over all things to the church" (Eph. 1:22). John emphasizes this truth repeatedly in Revelation, when he calls the Savior "the Lord of lords and King of kings." Peter calls Christ "the Shepherd and Bishop (overseer) of your souls" (I Peter 2:25). And Jesus reminded his disciples at the time of the Last Supper, "Ye call me Teacher and Lord: and ye do well; for so I am" (John 13:13). This claim he explicitly exercises after the resurrection, when he bestows His peace, gives them the Holy Spirit, sends them out to be his witnesses, and entrusts to them the keys of the kingdom (John 20:21-23). In summarizing the arguments for speaking of Christ's rule over his church, Berkhof mentions the following points: (1) Christ himself instituted the church, which is not a purely voluntary organization rooting in the wishes and will of men (Matt. 16:18). (2) He has instituted the means of grace which spiritually nourish the church (Matt. 28:19, 20; Luke 22:17-20; I Cor. 11:23-29). (3) He gave the church both her constitution and her officers, clothing them with his authority (Matt. 10:1; 16:19; Eph. 4:11, 12). (4) This same Christ is always present, when the church meets for worship (Matt. 10:40; II Cor. 13:13).

In our Reformed confessions we hear the clear-toned echoes of this Scriptural teaching. The *Belgic Confession* acknowledges that the church "has been from the beginning of the world, and will be to the end thereof; which is evident from this that Christ is our eternal King, which without subjects He cannot be" (art. XXVII). Believers are obligated to join the true church where the marks are maintained, "submitting themselves to the doctrine and discipline thereof; bowing their necks under the yoke of Jesus Christ" (art. XXVIII). Likewise, Christ has given her in his Word "the

spiritual polity" by which she must be governed (art. XXX). In the *Heidelberg Catechism* we confess similar truths concerning the church (Lord's Days XXI and XXXI). And even the *Canons of Dordt*, which do not deal directly with the doctrine of the church, stress the need of faithfully serving Christ (II, 9) and being "much more careful and solicitous to continue in the ways of the Lord, which he has ordained" (V, 13).

Such truths are far from popular in our days of self-will and self-expression.

Many members seem to resent an authoritative proclamation of the Word. When admonished concerning doctrine or conduct by the officers, some will even speak boldly of the curtailing of their Christian (!) liberties and the unwarranted prying into what they consider to be their private affairs. As a result some who have been clothed with Christ's ruling power hesitate to carry out their commission. The danger of closing our eyes to weaknesses and sins in the congregation is not imaginary. The sin of hesitating worldliness threatens to sweep the church from her spiritual moorings.

Our only weapon against these defections is the daily, prayerful reminder that Christ wills to rule his people through lawfully appointed and elected officers. The authority with which ministers, elders and deacons are clothed is not their own but his. Let us then remind ourselves constantly of the blessing of living by faith and laboring according to this major principle.

First of all, it affords a *sure foundation* for carrying out our God-given calling. Officers although elected by the congregation, receive their mandate from the King of the church. They are servants of the people only for Christ's sake. And they cannot serve the people well, unless they are conscious of serving Christ above all.

Moreover, it clothes us with proper *humility*. The danger of "lording it over the flock" is ever present. It was already present in Peter's day. One writer warns, "Power will intoxicate the best hearts, as wine the strongest heads." We will only rule in proper fashion and seek the proper goal, when we remember that we are but representatives of the heavenly King.

This truth also gives the *necessary encouragement*. Those who rule in Christ's name may often be plagued with a sense of their unworthiness and inability. Yet let them look to Christ who has promised the needed wisdom, zeal and love.

And finally the Bible assures us of the *promised reward*. The words of the officers may be resented; their interest in the flock criticized; their admonitions rejected; their persons vilified. But Christ himself promises all those who rule wisely and well for his sake "the crown of glory that fadeth not away."

We consider the above article, with which we wholly agree, both timely and to the point; and at the same time worthy of consideration especially by all office-bearers in the church.

During the course of our ministry we have from time to time had occasion to deal with people who have assumed a rather loose position overagainst the authority invested in the offices of the church. This is probably due to the peculiar times in which we live when people generally speaking appear to be under the spell of independentism and very readily cast aspersions on all who are clothed with authority. Even children today are given to disrespect for authority. No doubt this is the result of loose talking and criticism of and disrespect for authority evidenced by parents in the home. But, as I said, also in the church one comes upon people who care not a whit when the church exercises the Key Power over them. To avoid the "nuisance" of careful and Godfearing discipline, some will even seek to escape by asking for letters of dismission to flit quickly to another church where they are not so well known. It is well, therefore, that we learn again what the Scriptures and our Confessions have to say on this subject.

Woman Suffrage in the Church.

Also in the May issue of "torch and trumpet" appears another article written by the Rev. Martin Monsma on the subject of Woman Suffrage in the Church. The readers of this column of the Standard Bearer will recall that we called attention to Rev. Monsma's first article on this subject which appeared in "torch and trumpet" in the October-November, 1954 issue of this paper.

What Rev. Monsma writes now is a continuation of this former article. In fact, most of the present article is quotation of the work of a committee which has been charged to study this matter and advise the Christian Ref. Churches. We are not going to quote any of the article this time since there has been really no new development over that already written. The reader will probably remember that the committee advised the Synod of 1950 to seek advice from the Reformed Ecumenical Synod of Edinburg, Scotland. Rev. Monsma promises to tell us in his next article what this Synod did with their inquiry and also what the Synod of 1954 of the Christian Reformed Churches did with this advice. We will try to keep our readers informed if there are any new developments on this subject. Most particularly we are interested in what the Rev. Monsma himself will have to say on the subject of Woman Suffrage in the Church. He is the advisor of this committee and professor of Church Polity at Calvin Seminary. No doubt his advice will be very effective in the final decision by the church.

In our former article we predicted that Rev. Monsma would advise his churches to follow the precedent of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands who have already decided to allow Woman Suffrage in the Church, thus setting aside an old tradition that disallowed this. It will be interesting to see if our prediction comes true.

Incidentally since we last wrote on this subject, we received a missive from one of our faithful readers informing us of how far this matter of Woman Suffrage in the Church

has gone in the Reformed Church of America. We are told that in one of their churches in his city (which condones Woman Suffrage), they have already a lady elder in the church. What hinders them from soon producing women candidates for the ministry in their seminaries?

"Love the Lord Thy God."

Such is the title of Rev. H. Hoeksema's latest volume on the Heidelberg Catechism. Already eight volumes on this notable Work have been written by our esteemed brother; and, the Lord willing, two more will follow before the work is complete.

In a very colorful jacket this latest volume appears. As to contents, it covers Lord's Days XXXII to XXXVIII of the Catechism. We will not now review the book. Our purpose is only to acquaint the reader with the fact that this volume is now available at the Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan. All those who have read the first seven volumes will also want to add this one to their library.

On the inside of the jacket the publishers give us the following information.

"Love the Lord Thy God" by the Rev. Herman Hoeksema. — The eighth volume in the Rev. Hoeksema's widely recognized exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism, the first full scale treatment the Catechism has received in more than a generation. *Love the Lord Thy God* begins the discussion of the believer's gratitude to God for his redemption, the third and last part of this classic doctrinal standard.

Treating here, Lord's Day 32 to 38 (in the Heidelberg Catechism the doctrines of the Christian religion are treated in fifty-two sections which, in Reformed Churches, provide the basis of a sermon for each Lord's Day of the year), the author divides the response generated by the believer's gratitude into two parts. The first of these is the necessity of good works, with the Decalogue used as a basis of discussion; the second is the necessity and true requisites of prayer, with a discussion of prayer as it is taught us by Jesus. Filled with valuable insights and always provocative, Rev. Hoeksema's exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism is a rewarding experience."

We urge you to procure this volume if you have not already done so, and study it carefully. We are assured that you will be greatly rewarded.

M.S.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Farewell but not good-bye

Esteemed Editor:

In the Editorials of "Concordia", April 7, W. Hofman extends a farewell word to the readers of Concordia. This baby was born, January 15, 1944, with the purpose to com-

plete what is lacking in the public life of our Protestant Reformed Churches. That is what Hofman wrote in the last Concordia. However, it was a complete failure.

And now the forces of Concordia have been joined with those of the Reformed Guardian which took the place of Concordia.

P. De Boer promised to write the Editorials for a while in this expected to be famous paper. Well go ahead De Boer. In the past you have done wonderfully well by slandering your former minister, spiritual father and esteemed Professor, and that without a cause.

The aim of the Reformed Guardian is to guard the truth. Now, by the way, if this means the Protestant Reformed truth, I have my doubts, for in the past its pages were full of conditional lies.

De Boer writes: We shall seek to take cognizance of all that the Reformed fathers from Calvin on have written and thought. If you try to perform this noble work, De Boer, don't forget to take cognizance of all that the Protestant Reformed fathers have written, and write, in the Standard Bearer.

De Boer also writes in his first Editorial, that they stand committed to the Three Forms of Unity. That sounds big, De Boer, but why did you and your co-workers discard the Declaration of Principles?

De Boer, and his co-workers shall also seek to write the truth and nothing but the truth, "as before God's face and seek to do so in love and mercy." How wonderful, how praiseworthy. In the past it was not even mixed with love, and the mercy of Jesus Christ was not in it.

Now, De Boer, as I see it, you are not able to defend the truth anymore, and to be sure not in the Editorials of the Reformed Guardian—and by the way that name is also false.

It seems H. De Wolf will be a co-worker of this paper too. He tries to teach his readers to be on guard, but I assure you that a yes-no-man, can not guard the truth, and he has lost this jewel-virtue. You have trampled under foot our Protestant Reformed truth while you were pastor in these very same Churches, De Wolf.

De Wolf will also guard the truth honorably. I suppose you have forgotten the Court case. Have you also forgotten that general promise on condition of faith? O, yes, in the Reformed sense, it is meant for everybody and not for everybody. It is yes and no.

Well, the Reformed Guardian is here again to fight the Protestant Reformed truth, to corrupt the truth, and dishonor the Name of our covenant God. This we have witnessed in the past, and therefore Jehovah God is not well-pleased with this so-called Reformed Guardian.

S.D.V.

THE SOCIAL PRINCIPLES OF THE EPISTLE TO PHILEMON

(Continued from page 396)

deals with His people. He deals with us after the tenor of His Covenant. As someone once said, speaking of Christ:

"He too does not merely impose commands, but stoops to entreat, where He indeed might command. "Henceforth I call you not servants, but friends;" and though He does go on to say, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you," yet His commandment is so padded with love that His yoke is easy. His burden is light, because it is laid on His servants' shoulders by a loving hand; and so, as St. Bernard says, it is a burden which carries him who carries it."

Thus Paul entreats Philemon to receive Onesimus—not merely because this is right but because in so doing, he reveals his love for Christ.

Society knows *nothing* of this. That is, the "social principles" of the society of the world are *nothing but cold, moralistic abstractions of duty*. There is nothing of that "*in Christ*" of which we read in Scripture. In substance, Paul tells Philemon that he now has this Onesimus, the slave, *for his brother, in the Lord*.

Outwardly, the relation of Philemon and Onesimus was not altered. But inwardly, it was transformed by the fact that both were "in the Lord." Apparently, the Scriptures do not condemn the institution of slavery. Perhaps this accounts, in part, for the apostle refraining from criticizing this institution. Nevertheless, he doesn't seem to hesitate to remind Onesimus of that principle that he should not "abandon the calling in which he had received the call of Christ." What he does in reminding him of it, of course, is apply that principle to him. (1 Cor. 7:21, 22). Then, too, embodied in his letter to Philemon, is the reminder that in Christ Jesus, there is neither bond nor free—"For by one Spirit are we baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Cor. 12:13) And thus, Paul writes—not only to Philemon but "to the Church in thy house" (v. 2) for love is "toward all saints." Therefore Onesimus is commended to the confidence and to the love of them all.

The *key note* is Love. It makes no difference what the "social principles" may be and who it is that is involved. As far as the child of God is concerned, his attitude, approach and resultant conduct is to be determined by the Love of God in Christ, to His people; that same Love which has drawn him to His Saviour, and of which the Spirit bears witness with his spirit, and tells him that he is a child of God. If "the Love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us," then whatever "social principles" are implied in our Gospel will resolve themselves in the *one fundamental question*: What does the Love of God require of thee? For, as Luther reminds us in his Preface to this Epistle, *we are all the Onesimi of Christ*.

E. Emanuel