

THE STANDARD

Bearer

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MEDITATION

THE RESTORATION OF THE SOUL

"A psalm of David. The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." Psalm 23:1-3

The psalm from which my text is chosen might very well be called the psalm of quiet trust.

Amid the storms of life there are moments when our soul is taken by the loving hands of the Almighty and caused to rest in His bosom.

Oh yes, the enemies are before us still: this spiritual lullaby is sung "in the presence of my enemies," but it is nevertheless a strain to sooth the crying child to sleep, to rest, to wondrous relaxation.

Some psalms are like the thunder of war, the turmoil of strife, or the voice of many waters, but here all is quiet, harmonious, peaceful. When I read this psalm I cannot help but think of the Holland rendition of a psalm set to music, and particularly the following lines:

*Hier wordt de rust geschonken!
Hier 't velt van Uw Huis gesmaakt;
Een volle beek van wellust maakt
Hier elk in liefde dronken!*

* * * *

What a suburb beginning! "The Lord is my Shepherd: I shall not want."

There have been millions of shepherds on this earth, in many lands and among many peoples. Imagine: all these shepherds are here because God is the Great Shepherd. That is the way you must talk. All things are here in order to portray the great God and His Christ and His salvation.

Jesus said: All these things happen unto them in parables. And He was talking about the things of the kingdom of God.

There is only one Theme, one glorious Theme in the whole Universe, and that Theme is the Love of God!

You say: Yes, but there is a lot of hatred, ugliness and discord also!

True, but that is there so it may fit as the black background for this most beautiful theme of the Love of God.

So also here.

On the background of the wolves who are after the lambs and sheep of Christ, we see the Shepherd, slowly going His way to the green pastures: he is going to feed His flock.

Look on it! Look on it strongly: you see the things of the Kingdom *happening* before your eyes.

God is the Shepherd of His people. Therefore, they shall not want.

They shall not want because the Shepherd feeds them.

The prophecies told us of this Shepherd. Isaiah tells us that this Shepherd shall lead His flock, and shall feed them.

The Shepherd is Jehovah, the Lord. That is, the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, is the Shepherd of the sheep, and they are the elect out of all peoples, tongues and nations.

That He is their Shepherd means that He will take care of them, protect them, feed them, and lead them gently along the very quiet waters.

And this idyl is fulfilled in Jesus when He came from heaven on earth. There are a little more than three years in the long history of the world when Psalm 23 was *seen*. Jesus leading His own and feeding them with the heavenly manna.

And how He cared for them, protected them, suffered for them, and died for them!

Surely, the world has seen the Shepherd feeding His flock!

* * * *

The heart of this feeding and caring for the flock is described in poetical, figurative language: He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters!

What does the Holy Spirit mean when He tells us that the Lord Jehovah, that Jesus causes us to lie down in green pastures?

Allow me to tell you in a childlike way. It means that he causes us to go to church from Sabbath to Sabbath. Again I think of that Holland psalm: Hier wordt de rust geschonken!

I heard that psalm sung in our church in Holland many, many times. Our old dominee loved that psalm. And as a little boy I distinctly remember thinking: What do they mean? "Hier wordt de rust geschonken?" (I better give you the English translation: "Here the rest of God is granted!") Here in this ugly building? Old, discrepit, "bouwvallig," ugly and musty building?

And I mused on and on, and understood nothing of it.

But now I know. In that ugly old church (later they built one of the most modern and beautiful buildings in Holland) God caused His people to eat and to drink of the dainties of His everlasting lovingkindness. In church we hear of all that and more. The whole counsel of God is unfolded. In great variety the sheep of Christ heard what wondrous work the Lord had wrought for them. In that musty old church they heard that all their warfare was accomplished in the dying Christ. The children of God saw nothing of the rain-splotched and dirty walls, but they saw with the eye of faith how God had pardoned all their iniquity.

The children of God had been *caused to lie down!* Let it not escape you how this attitude was God-wrought. God caused them to lie down, and God had prepared this grassy pasture for them.

Oh yes, there was activity! God be blessed, there was wondrous activity: they were led along the very quiet waters of peace!

Once in a while I hear a song over WFUR about *the quiet waters of peace*. I could listen to that song for days on end. It transports me to the heavenly scene.

Peace! Yes, the Bible speaks often of that peace, and sometimes with the same figure as we meet here. I think it is Isaiah who tells us that the Lord shall extend peace to Jerusalem like a river!

Yes, beloved reader, the quiet waters of my text are that peace.

You ask me what this peace is?

It is the state and condition when your warfare is accomplished, when your iniquity is pardoned, and that you know it.

It means that there is nothing between you and God but love and lovingkindness. He loves you, and you know it; and you love Him and He knows it. It means that all your hurt, trouble, misery, sadness, tears, in short, that all the *former* things are gone, be it but for a moment. And you are transported into heavenly peace.

Hush! David was very still when he composed this nightingale of the psalms.

* * * *

Oh God! How did this miracle happen to me?!
The text will tell you.

He restoreth my soul.

Everyone knows the meaning of restoration.

Once you were sick and with feverish brow and painful body you saw the doctor at your bedside. Your loved ones tread softly and hushed their voices. They were very serious around your bedside.

But the sickness left and the sunlight dawned on a brighter day. You were *restored to health*.

A picture was found in one of the back rooms of a monastery. No one knew its author or worth. But experts came and labored over it. And the result? It was discovered that when all the dirt and dust was removed it was really a masterpiece. The picture was *restored*.

Well, God restores the souls of His people.

However, the foregoing illustrations cannot cover the truth of our restoration in Christ. It rises far above them.

It is true: once we were beautiful in Adam; and it is equally true that now we are filthy and dirty in sin. But the restoration is such that now we are much more beautiful than when we first came from the hands of our Creator. Even as the heavens are much more beautiful than the earth, so are the redeemed much more beautiful than Adam ever was.

I must improve on that comparison, and I must give you the true, the Biblical comparison. Even as Christ is more beautiful than Adam, so are the redeemed more beautiful than they were in Paradise.

The restoration is such that we are now spiritual, glorious, heavenly and eternal. Oh yes, God restores our souls.

* * * *

And the beauty of the child of God as he will be in Christ's day is explained: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness.

Righteousness is a virtue of God.

And the meaning of righteousness is that God in all He is, does and says is conform to the highest Good, and that is His own Being.

And so for man righteousness means that he is a good man, that he speaks that which is good, and that he works that which is good.

When a righteous man comes before God in the judgment day, He shall look upon him and through him, and He will see that he is completely good and lovely. And therefore He will say to him: Welcome, My child: enter into the joy of your Lord. And he shall begin to be merry.

And if you ask me: but how did this miraculous thing happen? I am so crooked and perverse that I shudder of my thoughts, words and being!

Then the answer is: God leads us along the paths of righteousness.

Oh, those paths of righteousness.

First, they are the determination of God from all eternity to clothe His people with those robes, clean and white. It is

a righteousness which God prepares for us. Daniel speaks of a righteousness which was everlasting.

Second, it is the death and resurrection of Jesus which lay the ground and foundation of that righteousness: We call that the legal righteousness which is ours through faith.

Third, a principle of that righteousness is granted in our regeneration, conversion and sanctification.

And, fourth, that righteousness shall clothe us publicly in the day of Christ. At that time we shall be as lovely and beautiful as Christ is.

And if you ask me: but why? Why does God do all this to the Church, to Jerusalem, to Zion, to His elect people?

Then the answer is: for His name's sake.

And that answer is most wonderful. We can see that now already.

For we know God for what He is.

I can very well see that there must be and there is only one central aim in the whole universe, in all of time and in all of eternity: and that only aim and purpose is that God sit on His throne, and that everyone and everything say: Hallelujah!

G.V.

Notice for Classis West

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet, the Lord willing, Wednesday, March 20, 1957, in Doon, Iowa.

The consistories are reminded that all matters for the classical agenda must be in the hands of the stated clerk not later than thirty days before the date of Classis.

The Stated Clerk,

Rev. H. Veldman,
Edgerton, Minnesota

IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory of the Fourth Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express its sincere sympathy to our fellow office-bearers, Elder Ryven Ezinga and Deacon Kenneth Ezinga in the recent loss of their mother,

MRS. PETER EZINGA

May the God of all grace give the comforting knowledge that all His doings are for the good of His own.

In the name of the Consistory,

Rev. R. Veldman, President
Mr. W. Klaassen, Clerk

Grand Rapids, Michigan.

IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies' Aid of the Protestant Reformed Church of Edgerton, Minnesota, expresses its deepest sympathy to one of our members, Mrs. H. Veldman, in the loss of her mother,

MRS. P. EZINGA

on January 1, 1957.

May the God of all grace comfort and sustain her in her sorrow and may she abundantly experience the consolation of His Word and Spirit.

Rev. H. Veldman, President
Mrs. Dick Bleyenbergh, Secretary

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EDITORIALS

The Free Offer

"The Free offer of the Gospel" is the title of a pamphlet that was recently sent to me by an interested brother.

The pamphlet was composed by the Revs. John Murray and Ned B. Stonehouse, professors at the seminary of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia and was originally prepared for the Fifteenth General Assembly of that church held in 1948. In a short foreword the authors tell us that it was reprinted "in the interests of the gospel and Reformed theology."

Whether this is true, i.e., whether this little booklet really presents the true gospel and reveals that it is interested in Reformed theology, we hope to find out in a few articles in our magazine.

The pamphlet consists of three parts: an introduction, the Scriptural basis for the "free offer of the gospel," and the conclusions. The bulk of the matter is in the second part in which the authors quote several texts and attempt briefly to exegete them to prove that the gospel is a free and conditional offer of salvation to all men. Nevertheless, the introductory paragraphs are very important because in them the authors set forth their "Reformed" theology in regard to the gospel. This we will, therefore, discuss first of all.

I will quote the first paragraph:

"It would appear that the real point in dispute in connection with the free offer of the gospel is whether it can properly be said God *desires* the salvation of all men. The Committee elected by the Twelfth General Assembly in its report to the Thirteenth General Assembly said, 'God not only delights in the penitent but is also moved by the riches of his goodness and mercy to desire the repentance and salvation of the impenitent and reprobate.' It should have been apparent that the aforesaid committee, in predicating such 'desire' of God, was not dealing with the decretive will of God; it was dealing with the free offer of the gospel to all without distinction and that surely respects, not the decretive or secret will of God, but the revealed will. There is no ground for the supposition that the expression was intended to refer to God's decretive will."

From the above we may gather that a committee had been appointed on the matter of the "free offer of the gospel" before 1948, that this committee had already reported to the thirteenth General Assembly, that their report had not been very satisfactory, and that, therefore, a new committee had been appointed.

For a correct understanding of the above paragraph which we just quoted from the pamphlet is, perhaps, advisable that we also at once quote the next paragraph. It reads as follows:

"It must be admitted that if the expression was intended to apply to the decretive will of God then there would be, at

least, implicit contradiction. For to say that God desires the salvation of the reprobate and also that God wills the damnation of the reprobate and apply the former to the same thing as the latter, namely, the decretive will, would be contradiction; it would amount to averring of the same thing, viewed from the same aspect, God wills and God does not will."

Here you have the well-known distinction between the will of God's decree and the will of God's command, or the secret and revealed will. And here you have it in its worst form so that, according to the authors we say, indeed, that God desires the salvation of the reprobate.

Now, in the first place, I wish to emphasize that this distinction, especially when it is called the distinction between the secret and revealed will, is most detrimental and has wrought untold harm in the Reformed Church all over the world.

According to this philosophy, the will of God's decree is secret and, therefore, we have nothing to do with it. O, it is true, we believe that there is such a will of God's decree; we also profess to believe that, according to that will, God has chosen some to eternal life and reprobated others to eternal damnation. We even express the doctrine of election and reprobation in our confessions. Perhaps, if we happen to be ministers of the Word, we will preach on that doctrine once in a great while. But, for the rest, it is better not to speak of this doctrine. We must apply the text of Deut. 29:29 to this part of the truth: "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."

The result is evident.

According to this philosophy that separates the revealed from the secret will of God, one can, indeed, say that God desires the salvation of the reprobate if they will only come to repentance. It is evident that, in this expression, the term "reprobate" is used in the Arminian sense of the word. Also the Arminian professes to believe in election and reprobation. According to him election is that eternal act of God according to which He, from before the foundation of the world, has determined that those, and those only, who accept Christ and would persevere to the end in that faith, and whom He has foreknown and foreseen as such, would inherit eternal life and glory. And, according to the Arminian, reprobation is that eternal act of God, according to which, He, from before the foundation of the world, determined that those, and those only, who refuse to believe in Christ and who persevere in their unbelief even to the end, and whom He has foreknown and foreseen as such, would be cast into eternal damnation. Of course, even so it is a question how it could possibly be said that God desires the salvation of the reprobate. Is it possible that God desires the thing which He knows will not and cannot come to pass? Can He possibly in His divine heart, desire the salvation of the devil and his reprobate angels? In this respect, the ex-

pression in the pamphlet that God desires the salvation of the reprobate, is worse than Arminianism. The Arminian would never speak thus. It is a denial of reprobation. Or, if you wish to apply the distinction between the so-called secret and revealed will to this statement, it implies that, according to His "secret will" God has chosen some and reprobated others, while, according to His revealed will, there is no reprobation: He desires that all men, even the "reprobate" may be saved!

This is not only a separation of God's will of decree and His will of command but it teaches a flat and impossible contradiction between the two.

And all this is supposed to be Reformed theology.

That is the worst of it.

The effect of this unscriptural philosophy (for unscriptural it surely is, as we shall show) on the preaching is evident.

The preaching becomes nothing but a mere free and general offer of salvation to everybody on condition of faith and repentance. It consists of a begging to come to Jesus. It emphasizes the impotence of God to save whomsoever He wills to save, and the free will of the sinner. It is throughout a denial of the sovereign grace of God. This is not a mere opinion on my part but is reality as everyone well knows and as has been my personal experience in other churches frequently.

In fact, this is the plain implication of the pamphlet. It has no room at all for the truth of sovereign grace, but only for the salvation of all men on condition of their acceptance of the gospel and faith and repentance by their own free will. God desires the salvation of all, but whether they shall actually be saved depends on their own choice of will.

Let us, in this connection, quote one more paragraph:

"The question is: what is implicit, or lies back of, the full and free offer of the gospel to all without distinction? The word 'desire' has come to be used in the debate, not because it is *necessarily* the most accurate or felicitous word but because it sets forth quite sharply a certain implication of the full and free offer of the gospel to all. This implication is that in the free offer there is expressed not simply the bare preceptive will of God but the disposition of loving-kindness on the part of God pointing to the salvation to be gained through compliance with the overtures of gospel grace. In other words, the gospel is not simply an offer or invitation but also implies that God delights that those to whom the offer comes would enjoy what is offered in all its fulness. And the word desire has been used in order to express the thought epitomized in Ezekiel 33:11, which is to the effect that God has pleasure that the wicked turn from his evil way and live. It might as well have been said, 'It pleases God that the wicked repent and be saved.'"

Now, let us remember that all this supposed to be an explanation and defense of the statement that God desires the salvation of the reprobate. The gospel is preached to all in

order that God's desire might be revealed and proclaimed that all men, even the reprobate might be saved. In other words, God is so filled with lovingkindness on the part of all, even on the part of the reprobate, that He desires and hopes for their compliance with the overtures of the gospel.

This is a downright denial, not only of reprobation, but also of the truth that it is God alone Who is able, by His sovereign grace in the hearts of men, to cause them to comply with the overtures of the gospel.

Does God desire that all men be saved?

Does He earnestly long for the salvation of the reprobate, as this pamphlet teaches?

But how is it possible that a man be saved?

Is it not true that all men by nature are totally depraved, dead in sin and misery? As the Heidelberg Catechism has it, through the fall and disobedience of our first parents "our nature is become so corrupt, that we are all conceived and born in sin," and that, except we are regenerated by the Holy Spirit "we are so corrupt that we are wholly incapable of doing any good, and inclined to all wickedness." Qu. 7, 8. Or, according to the Canons of Dordrecht, III, IV, 1, 3, man, through the fall, "entailed on himself blindness of mind, horrible darkness, vanity and perverseness of judgment, became wicked, rebellious and obdurate in heart and will, and impure in all his affections." And again: "Therefore all men are conceived in sin, and by nature children of wrath, incapable of saving good, prone to evil, dead in sin, and in bondage thereto, and without the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, they are neither able nor willing to return to God, to reform the depravity of their nature, nor to dispose themselves to reformation."

God seriously desires the salvation of the reprobate?

That reprobate man, or any man, for that matter, can never do or will to do anything to his own salvation. He will not, cannot, and cannot will to repent or to come to Christ in order that he may be saved. Only God can save him. Only if God, through His Spirit implants within his heart the principle of regenerating grace, calls him to life and light through His own powerful Word through the gospel, brings him through that same Word to conscious and living faith, justifies and sanctifies Him, and causes him to persevere even unto the end, can he possibly be saved.

He seriously desires all men to be saved, even the reprobate?

He knows that they cannot be saved except through efficacious and irresistible grace of His Holy Spirit?

He longs to save them, He is able to save them, yet He does not do it?

What would you say of a man in the water, unconscious and on the point of drowning, and the first man throws a rope to him and calls to him to take hold of it, though he knows the drowning man is "totally incapable" of grabbing the rope; what if that second man has a boat, in fact, is in the boat, so that he can easily lift the drowning man out of the

(Continued on page 201)

OUR DOCTRINE

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

CHAPTER IX

THE CHURCH WITH THE PROMISE OF AN OPEN DOOR

Revelation 3:7-13

It is certainly remarkable that there are but two churches of all the seven churches that are addressed in these letters to the churches in Asia Minor that receive no rebuke, but only praise and consolation. These two churches are, as we know, the congregation of Smyrna and that of Philadelphia. The latter is the subject of our discussion in the present essay. Nor can it escape our notice that these two churches reveal a marked similarity in regard to their general description and characterization by the Lord Jesus. Especially may we notice that of both churches it is true that they are small and of little strength. Evidently they have but little standing room in the world in which they live. Of the church in Smyrna it is said that she is poor and despised, and that she exists in the midst of a world that hates and persecutes her. The same is true of the church in Philadelphia. The Lord in this letter describes her as a church that has but little strength. Moreover, the same enemies that lived near the church of Smyrna and were a source of trouble to her, those that say they are Jews, and are not, but are a synagog of Satan, are also mentioned in the epistle to Philadelphia. Hence, there is not only spiritual similarity between the two congregations, but also in an outward aspect they are nearly alike. Only there seems to be this difference, that the church of Smyrna evidently must spend all its spiritual strength in the bearing of the cross for Christ's sake, while the church in Philadelphia still has the opportunity to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ, to gain converts especially from among the Jews in the city, and thus to increase and extend the church and the kingdom of God. Moreover, although until that time her labors appear to have been without fruit the Lord promises her such fruit in the future when He writes to her that He will give her an open door, which evidently means an effective entrance for the preaching of the gospel into the hearts of others.

One of the chief characteristics of the church in Philadelphia is undoubtedly expressed in the words of the Savior: "thou hast little strength." This describes her outward condition in the world. The meaning is that the church was small. This was one of her most emphatic traits. We understand, of course, that this does not imply that the other churches were outwardly great and strong, for this was not the case. In fact, we may undoubtedly say that the church in general, the true church of Jesus Christ, is always of little power if compared with the strength of the world. It is always comparatively small in numbers. It usually is financially poor. It does not count among its numbers the

rich and the great of the world. And therefore, it is evident that in a general sense that which the Savior here writes about the church in Philadelphia may be said of all the churches that had been addressed thus far. Ephesus and Smyrna, Pergamos and Thyatira and Sardis,—all were small and poor and of little strength according to the measure of the world. Nevertheless, of the church in Philadelphia this was especially and emphatically true. It was not the chief characteristic of the other churches, but it was one of the main features of the church in Philadelphia. And therefore, we may take it that in this little sentence the Lord gives a brief description of the peculiar situation in the church of Philadelphia from an external point of view.

However, when the Lord addresses the church in Philadelphia thus, and remarks that she has but little strength, this refers only to her outward position in the world. It does not describe her spiritual condition. Spiritually the little church in Philadelphia was not weak, but strong indeed. That this is true is evident from the rest of the letter addressed to her. The Lord commends her for having kept His Word, which implies that the church remained faithful to the truth of the gospel. And thus to keep the Word of Jesus certainly requires spiritual strength. The church that is spiritually weak certainly will not keep the Word of Jesus. Always the enemies encompass the church of Jesus Christ in the world; and always those enemies attack her especially from the viewpoint of the truth. It requires strength, spiritual strength, the exercise of the power of faith, to be faithful to the truth and to keep the Word of the Lord. This is emphasized in what follows immediately. It is evident that the church had not only kept the Word of Jesus, but also confessed His name. For the Lord writes to her: "thou hast not denied my name." The negative form of this expression implies that the enemies, perhaps especially the Jews in Philadelphia, had exerted all their influence to make the church deny the name of Christ. They persecuted her, and left her but little standing room in the midst of the world. But this negative expression also implies by way of contrast that the church in Philadelphia had openly confessed the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. They could not and did not keep still about that name of their glorious Lord and Redeemer, in Whom they believed and Who they loved, Who had delivered them from sin and death and merited for them everlasting life and glory. Of course, all this points to real spiritual strength. To confess the name of the Lord is from a natural point of view by no means an easy matter, especially over against the enemy and especially when the confession of that name instigates persecution and hatred on the part of the world. This certainly had been the case in Philadelphia. This is evident from what the Lord continues to write to her: "thou hast kept the word of my patience." Patience, in the Scriptural sense of the word, always presupposes suffering for Christ's sake, the bearing of His cross. The confession of the name of Jesus, the preaching of His Word, had caused the saints in

Philadelphia suffering and persecution. But they had been faithful in the midst of the suffering of this present time, and had not denied His name. They had kept and proclaimed the Word of Jesus Christ, and for it they had suffered affliction and persecution, and thus they had kept the Word of Christ's patience, the Word that always exhorted them to be patient and to suffer and bear the cross for Christ's sake. And therefore it must not be said that the little church in Philadelphia had little strength spiritually. No, in grace she was strong, very strong indeed. But outwardly, according to the measure of the world, the little church was weak in every respect of the word. She was small in numbers, no doubt. The church was perhaps hardly known in the city. She counted but few members. Neither did this small band belong to the great of the world. The financial resources of the congregation were practically none. She had no wealth. She possessed little property. The little band did not belong to the wealthy and influential in the city. According to the standard of the world, the church in Philadelphia had indeed but little strength. From an outward aspect one would judge that the church could exert no influence at all. If Philadelphia existed in our day, she would no doubt receive the advice to unite with some other church as soon as possible. In her small and isolated condition, — so we would judge, — she can be of no influence and power in the world. The sooner she becomes member of a larger body, the better.

But Philadelphia did not think so. At least, from the letter we receive the impression that the church had been busy in preaching the gospel and witnessing for Christ. No doubt they had witnessed for the name of the Lord also with a view to gaining converts, and that especially among the powerful and influential Jews in the city. That this is true is evident from the entire letter. In the first place, the Lord in this letter announces Himself as the One that has the key of David, that opens, and no man shall shut; and shutteth, and no man shall open. The expression "key of David" is derived from Isaiah 22:22. The prophet there pronounces judgment upon Shebna, the king's treasurer and most important officer over his house. This office shall be taken away from him and shall be given to Eliakim, the son of Hilkiyah, who was found to be more worthy than Shebna. And it is in this connection that Isaiah uses the expression "key of David." Says he: "And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder, so he shall open and none shall shut, and he shall shut and none shall open." This power of the key, therefore, symbolized general supervision over the king's business, and included specifically the authority to determine who were allowed to enter into the king's presence and into his service. Now then, Christ possesses the key of David. That is, He has the authority to open and shut the door of the Father's kingdom. He, and He alone, determines who shall enter into that kingdom and who shall remain without. It is He, therefore, that adds to the church. And this announcement, no doubt, points to the hope and the

desire of the little congregation in Philadelphia, as well as to her activity in regard to witnessing for Jesus and in respect to the proclamation of the gospel, that the little church may increase in numbers and that converts may be gained. In that respect she was a true missionary church. O, the congregation was of little strength: yet they had been very active. And though they had remained small, and their labors had been crowned with but little success, yet the Lord reminds them that He is the One from Whom alone the growth of the church must be expected. They must be faithful, and they must preach, and they must witness. But the Lord holds the key of David. He alone opens and shuts the door of His Father's kingdom.

In the second place, the Lord tells the congregation that He gave them an open door, which no one could shut. Different interpretations have been given of this figurative expression. Yet, in the light of Scripture in general, the meaning can hardly be dubious. When Paul and Barnabas return from their missionary journey and report to the church of their labors and the fruit upon these labors, we read that the church rejoiced because the Lord had given an open door unto the Gentiles. Acts 14:27. In II Corinthians 16:9 the apostle writes: "For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries." And again, in II Corinthians 2:12 he writes: "Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus, my brother: but taking leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia." And once more, in Colossians 4:3 the apostle writes: "Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds." The meaning of the open door is therefore evidently that the door would create an opportunity and a receptivity for the preaching and the hearing of the gospel of Christ. And if we may conclude, as certainly we may, that this promise is in harmony with the desire and longing of the congregation, we see that also this expression points to the fact that the church in Philadelphia was characterized by zeal for the Lord's cause and was bent upon the extension of the kingdom of God. They were small, but faithful, and purposed to add to their little band by means of preaching of the gospel.

This picture is of great significance for the church of today. For it tells us that the Lord fulfills His strength in weakness. The church of today seems to be quite forgetful of the fact that she in herself of little strength. The talk of the day is of money and funds and men and organizations. The church is united into a powerful army. Long, so it is said, the church has been forgetful of her great task to bring the world to Christ. But now she will accomplish that tremendous task. But what we need is organization. What we need is men and means. What we need is sound business methods. And surely, we do not oppose all these. We surely may employ the very best methods, even in the extension of the kingdom of God. We surely need men that will preach

the gospel. We surely need funds, even for the extension of the kingdom. But we fear that the expectation is more and more from these than from Him that holds the keys of David. After all, let us never forget that we do not open and shut, but the Lord only. He will use His church as an instrument; but that church must always be mindful of the saying of Jesus, "Thou art of little strength." In the second place, the picture of the little church in Philadelphia reminds us that the church must not force the fruits when they do not immediately become evident. Today this is often the case. In her anxiety to force men into the kingdom, the church not so infrequently compromises on the gospel of Jesus Christ and the truth of the Word of God. It does no longer emphasize the essential truths. It feels that perhaps men are repelled by the preaching of sin and total depravity, of wrath and condemnation, not to speak of the fundamental truths of election and reprobation. These truths, therefore, are no longer preached. Instead, a certain shallow gospel of love takes its place, in order to attract men and to force them into the church. Gradually the gospel loses its strength and its true content. And the result is that rather than bringing the world to Christ, we bring the church into the world. Philadelphia had not adopted this method. She had labored faithfully, and seen no fruit. For still she was small. But she kept the Word of Christ's patience, and had in no wise denied His name. And therefore, finally, in Philadelphia we have the true picture of the faithful mission church. Mindful of her smallness and of her dependence on Christ, mindful that He must open the door, she remains a faithful witness and does not deny the truth.

Glorious promises are given unto this church for the present as well as for the future. First of all, the Lord promises that she shall see fruit upon her labors. This promise is already suggested in the manner in which Christ appears to the church of Philadelphia. He is the holy and true One, upon Whose Word the congregation may rely. He holds the key of David, and has the authority to open and to shut. In these words there is already a faint suggestion that presently the Lord will open the gate of the kingdom and cause some of them among whom they had witnessed and labored to enter in. This inference becomes practically a certainty when the Lord tells them: "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, which no man can shut." Hitherto it had seemed as if with all their activity they had only aroused enmity and bitter hatred against the Lord and His church. The enemy appeared not even to be approachable. The hearts were closed. But now the Lord would open the door. They would find entrance. They would henceforth experience that the attitude of the enemy had changed. Their witnessing would meet with a certain eagerness to listen to the truth of the gospel. The Lord would prepare the field for them. And finally, this fact is raised beyond all doubt, and is at the same time stated more definitely, when the Lord adds: "Behold I give thee of the synagogue of Satan, of them that say they are Jews, but are not, but do lie;

behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." There was in Philadelphia a synagogue of the Jews. They were filled with bitter hatred against Christ and His people. They had no doubt slandered the congregation. From them the church had suffered much. But over against them the little church had witnessed faithfully. Only, hitherto it had all seemed to be in vain. The door was closed. They could not be approached. They did not appear open to conviction. They met their gospel with bitterness and scorn. But now, behold, the Lord would finally crown their labors with blessing unexpected. Some of those very Jews that hated them and persecuted them would be converted. These very enemies would come and worship before the feet of the church, that is, in all humility, expressing in their attitude that the church is the beloved, the bride of the Messiah, these Jews would come and take their place among the followers of Jesus of Nazareth. Long, therefore, they may have labored in vain; but glorious is the victory. And the same is true today. Long all our labors may appear to be fruitless and without result. Let us never forget that the Lord will surely bring His own, and that also through our labors.

Neither is this the only promise the Lord gives to the church of Philadelphia for the present time. Troublesome times were approaching for the church, — also for the faithful in Philadelphia. They must have been filled with apprehension of this fact even at this very time. The clouds of persecution appeared at the historical horizon. Presently they would cover the firmament and burst forth their black darkness over the church. The Lord speaks of those times that are about to come when He writes: "I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." The hour of trial, or of temptation, here mentioned refers, of course, in the first place, to a wave of persecution that swept over the church of Christ at that time. Likely it was the same hour of persecution that would come over the church of Smyrna. It would sweep over the entire then-known world, and try men with a view to their loyalty to Christ Jesus. But although this hour of temptation refers, in the first place, in the literal sense of the word to a time of persecution that would arrive for the church of Philadelphia, yet it remains true that this same hour of temptation was repeated several times in the history of the world. It was repeated when the Mohammedan half-moon rode high over the Christian world. It was repeated when the harlot church, as represented by Roman Catholicism, sent the sons of the Reformation to scaffold and stake. And after all, it will find its complete fulfillment no sooner than at the time of Antichrist when days are still to arrive for the church so terrible that even the elect would not endure if they were not shortened. All these hours of temptation, repeated several times in history, wherever the church was persecuted, are after all but faint types and forebodings of what will come when the man of sin shall reach his full development and full power. The hour of tribulation

will come, will surely come, perhaps will come soon. And what now is the promise to the church of Philadelphia and also to the church of the present time? This: that she will be kept from the hour of temptation that shall come upon the whole world. Does that mean that the church will not be subject to that hour of trial? Does it mean with regard to the church of Philadelphia that she will be kept by the Lord and in some wonderful manner remain unmolested when that hour of temptation sweeps the world? And does it mean with a view to the final period of suffering that the Lord will first receive His faithful church up to heaven, before that final suffering comes? Thus is the view of many. If the church is faithful and keeps the Word of Christ's patience, she shall meet the Lord in the air before the persecution by the man of sin breaks loose in all its fury. But I do not believe that this is the meaning of these words. In the first place, the question arises: why should the church of Smyrna be cast into the midst of that tribulation, and the church of Philadelphia be excused? In the second place, we may notice that the entire conception, as if the faithful church shall be delivered before the persecution of Antichrist comes, is false and dangerous. It is false, for it is not in harmony with Scripture. Christ warns His people more than once that this hour shall come, and that they must remain faithful unto the end. Why all these warnings of tribulation, with which Scripture abounds, if they that are faithful shall not be in the hour of temptation? And dangerous this conception is, because it puts the church to sleep. The church that expects to be received in the air before the great tribulation comes does not prepare itself for the battle and for the hour of temptation. And that hour shall catch her unexpectedly. And therefore, we must not labor under this illusion, but must expect to be in tribulation, and prepare for the evil day, putting on the whole armor of God. In the third place, the tribulation that is mentioned here is pictured as coming over the whole earth. And it is not likely that the faithful little church of Philadelphia would escape the attention of the enemy. It is exactly the faithful church that must endure persecution. Fourthly, the original may very well be interpreted to signify that the little church of Philadelphia would indeed be cast into the midst of temptation, and be tried with all the world, but that in that tribulation the Lord would keep her, so that she would come out of it unharmed. And this is indeed the meaning: not that the church shall be kept from tribulation is her glory and comfort; not that she shall not meet with tribulation must be her assurance, for it would be false. But that in the midst of suffering and persecution, when the enemy rages and the temptation to deny the Lord is strong and fierce, the Lord by His grace will be sufficient to keep the church so that she endures to the very end. That is the meaning of the text. That is the assurance the church may have. That is the comfort which the church needs. Also with a view to the great tribulation that is still to come, the church is in need of that consolation. Who does never tremble

at the thought of what must still come to pass? Who of God's children, when he thinks of the terrible suffering that is connected with the persecution of the church in the last days, never asks himself the anxious and all-important question whether he shall be faithful even unto death? And therefore, the church has need of that comfort, that the grace of the Lord will be sufficient even in the hour of trial. And finally this interpretation is in harmony with the admonition that immediately follows this announcement: "Behold, I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown." It is exactly in times of tribulation and persecution that the church has need of the comforting assurance that the Lord is coming quickly. For the coming of the Lord will mean her victory and final deliverance. And again, it is not when the church escapes persecution, but when she is in the midst of it that she needs the admonition, coming directly from the Lord: "Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." And therefore, this, we take it, is the meaning of this assurance. The church of Philadelphia, and the church of all ages, and the church of the latter days especially, may expect the hour of temptation that shall come over all the world. She will be cast right into the midst of it. But in the midst of suffering and trial the vision of the Lord may always be before her, holding the keys of David, calling Himself the faithful and true, and giving the church the assurance that she need not be afraid, for His grace will be sufficient to keep His faithful ones out of the hour of temptation, so that no one shall take their crown.

H.H.

EDITORIALS

(Continued from page 197)

water into the boat and save him, but he does not do it. Would you say that this man in the boat had a serious desire to save that drowning man, that he offered to save him but that he would not grab the rope?

Would you not rather say that the man in the boat was a hypocrite?

Well, I claim that this is exactly what the Revs. Murray and Stonehouse make of God.

That is, you understand, as long as, with all their Arminian philosophy, they still claim to be Reformed.

But, of course, they are not.

Their claim that God seriously desires to save all men, even the reprobate, stands in flagrant contradiction to the entire system of Reformed truth. They do not believe in the total depravity of the natural man; they do not believe in sovereign grace; instead they believe in the free will of man and in a conditional promise on which every man can lay hold by complying with the overtures of the gospel.

More about this next time, D. V.

H.H.

ON THE THEORY OF COMMON GRACE

Our beloved brother, the Rev. G. M. Ophoff, is ill in the hospital. In the early part of the week of Jan. 20-26 he will submit to surgery. We daily pray for him that the Lord may give him grace to trust in Him and to commit his way unto Him. It is, of course, our earnest desire, the desire of all our people, that the Lord may spare him and enable him to resume his labors among us. Let us all remember him in our prayers.

In the meantime, we shall try to fill the brother's space in the Standard Bearer to the best of our ability. May I ask all our editors to help me in this respect?

The following is an essay I delivered to a ministers' conference in 1920.

It is not without definite intention, that we state the subject to the discussion of which I am asked to offer an introduction this afternoon as we do. We defend by thus formulating our topic our conviction that the view expressed in the phrase "Common Grace" is not a Reformed Doctrine, but simply a theory. It is not confessionally reformed. It never found expression in any of the standards of the Reformed Church. It is true that Kuyper quotes from the confession and from the Canons of Dordt on page 11 of the second volume of his *Gemeene Gratie*. The passage quoted from the Confession by the great Dutch theologian is from the fourteenth article and reads as follows: "And being thus become wicked perverse and corrupt in all his ways he hath lost all his excellent gifts which he had received from God and only retained a few remains thereof." Thus far Dr. Kuyper quotes the article. And in the Canons of Dordt III, IV, No. 4, we read: "There remain however in man since the fall, the glimmers of natural light, whereby he retains some knowledge of God, of natural things, and of the difference between good and evil, and discovers some regard for virtue good order in society, and for maintaining an orderly external deportment. But so far is this light of nature from being sufficient to bring him to a saving knowledge of God and to true conversion, that he is incapable of using it aright even in things natural and civil." Again we say, that thus far runs the quotation from Dr. Kuyper. On these few remains and glimmers of natural light is raised the entire structure of common grace. Let me call your attention, however, to a strange phenomenon in these quotations, a phenomenon we can hardly believe is merely accidental. It is the fact, that although Dr. Kuyper quotes from the Confession and from the Canons at length, he does not quote fully, and breaks off the quotation at a rather significant point in both instances. For upon the last sentence quoted by Dr. Kuyper from the Confession there follows the important explanation: "which however are sufficient to leave man without excuse, for all the light which is in us is changed into darkness as the Scripture teach us, saying, 'The light shineth in the darkness and the darkness comprehended it not,' where St. John calleth men darkness!" And the article of the Canons adds to what

Dr. Kuyper quotes of it: "Nay, further, this light such as it is, man renders in various ways wholly polluted and holds it in unrighteousness by doing which he becomes inexcusable before God." These are important additions and, on the part of Dr. Kuyper remarkable omissions, which as I hope to make clear in this paper, swing the meaning of the Confession decidedly our way. Moreover, though the esteemed theologian would have us believe that the doctrine of common grace is actually embodied in the standards of our churches, all that have read his work on the subject know too that he himself often complains that the theory was never developed by Reformed theologians, and that it did not receive a place in the Confessions. We prefer, therefore, to speak of the theory of common grace.

I think it is even a tenable position to maintain that the theory is not historically reformed. At least, if by historically reformed we mean that anything has for any length of time been taught and developed in Reformed circles. True, Calvin sometimes speaks of a certain general grace, but in the first place, it may safely be said that he does not at all develop the idea. In the second place he speaks of it merely to answer an objection that might be brought against his development of the truth of total depravity. And in the third place, Calvin very peculiarly sometimes calls this general grace "special graces." That is, he holds, not to the theory of common grace, a grace which the people of the world have in common with the people of God, but to the existence of some kind of grace operating outside of the sphere of special revelation. But even if it were true, that Calvin taught common grace in the sense we understand it today, the fact remains that after Calvin for three centuries and more the theory is not developed and taught, neither received into the standards of the Reformed churches. Now, surely, the fact that Dr. Kuyper developed the theory can hardly make it historically reformed.

Now, it seems to me, this stands to reason. Common grace is no church-doctrine and never will be. The matter with which it deals is in the very nature of it extra-confessional. It is a theory, a hypothesis advanced for the purpose of explaining certain phenomena in the world. I would almost be inclined to say, that it is a certain apology for the reformed doctrine of total depravity and God's curse upon the world. Reformed theology holds upon the basis of Scripture, that man thru sin became totally depraved, that he is incapable of doing any good, that he is wholly corrupted, and corrupts even the natural light and the remnants that still are with him. Reformed theology moreover holds to the absolute righteousness of God, who demands absolute satisfaction before He can show grace and favor. But now there are certain phenomena, both with regard to the church and to the world. The regenerated are by no means perfect. And the world is by no means as bad as our confession would make it. It does not appear totally depraved, neither does it seem entirely deprived of the blessings of God's grace. As

Dr. Kuyper repeatedly states the matter: "De kerk valt tegen, de wereld valt mee." There are a good many good things the world receives, there are a good many phenomena that attract one to the people of the world. There is a good deal of nobility, righteousness, love, sympathy, beauty of character and disposition in the world, which can hardly be interpreted in the light of the doctrine of total depravity. Now, the question is: how must these phenomena be interpreted? Must we deny them? But this is impossible. The sun shines, the rain falls on the righteous and unrighteous alike. To set your hearts and minds at rest and remove any possible suspicion as if I should deny this flagrantly apparent truth, I will add that the wicked as a rule receive more rain and more sunshine than the good in this world. It generally constituted a reason for complaint on the part of the people of God until they entered the sanctuary, and looked at things from a higher viewpoint. There are all the blessings of this temporal life. There are the institutions of the home, of the state, of society, of the school, there are all the products and commodities this world produces. There is all the science, all the art, all the ingenuity displayed by sinful man in this dispensation. Now, then, the question is: You hold to the doctrine of total depravity? How do you account for these facts? And very unfortunately to our mind the theory of common grace was advanced to account for them. It is this theory we are asked to discuss this afternoon. We introduce the subject by calling your attention to:

I. *The Theory and its weakness.*

II. *Our view of the matter.*

I. No doubt I can afford to be very brief in presenting or recalling to you the theory of common grace as developed by Dr. Kuyper. In the first place because you are all thoroughly acquainted with the theory, and in the second place, for the simple reason that there is but very little to be said about it. It is true, there are three heavy volumes under the title *De Gemeene Gratie*, together covering approximately two thousand pages. But it is surprising how little the three volumes contain on the subject of Common Grace. And, therefore, I can be very brief. What, then, is meant by common grace?

In the first place, it may be said, that it is a grace shown by God to the world outside of Christ. It is a grace outside of Christ as the Mediator of redemption. The presentation is, that common grace flows from the Mediator of Creation, and, therefore, directly from the Logos. In his *Dictaten Dogmatiek*, Loc. de Foedere, p. 129, Dr. Kuyper speaks as follows: "Nog kan de vraag worden gedaan of het leven der Gemeene gratie buiten Christus staat. Let wel, niet of er ook wel ethische invloeden op inwerken, maar of ze er principieel mee samenhangt. En dan moet het antwoord zijn: ongetwijfeld. Ook geheel die helpende redding komt uit den Christus. Doch dan niet uit Christus als verlossingsmiddelaar, maar uit hem als scheppingsmiddelaar. Het scheppingsleven zelf

heeft van den middelaar niet zijn essentie, maar wel de modaliteit van zijn existentie ontvangen. Het is het Eeuwige Woord, door 't welk alle dingen geschapen zijn en tot op dezen oogenblik in stand gehouden worden." Thus, then, is the view. Common grace does not flow from Jesus, but from the Logos. Even as before the fall all things in creation were made and were sustained through the Logos, so all that is of common grace comes to men and to the world through the same Eternal Word. What is of importance here is to note that the obedience of Christ, his atoning suffering has nothing to do with the bestowal of this grace. It is a grace outside of atonement and satisfaction.

In the second place, we may notice that all the good things of this present life find their origin in this common grace. Why is it, that the human race is not instantly destroyed after the fall? It is because of the common grace of God. Repeatedly the idea is expressed and emphasized that, if common grace had not intervened immediately after the fall, Adam and Eve and all the world would have been instantly sent to utter ruin and destruction. That Adam and Eve are spared, that they are promised life and a seed and development that the curse does not immediately destroy the world, the kosmos; that the rain falls and the sun shines, that seasons and years follow in regular succession that nature still offers its wonderful powers and forces to the service of man, and that man possesses the power and the ingenuity to bring them to light and subject them to himself; the development of man in the world of the life of science and art, commerce and industry; the continuance of the institutions of the home, society, the state; civil righteousness, law and order,—all these, and whatever good things you may further be able to enumerate as blessings of this present life and as bestowed on man in general, are the outflow of common grace. They are good gifts of God reaching all men and coming to them as sinners outside of Jesus Christ.

In the third place, as to its subjective operation in the hearts of men, this common grace is a check upon the development of sin. If you ask, how it must be explained that total depravity does not appear in all its horror in the world outside of special grace, Kuyper answers, that God checks the development and manifestation of sin. He does so partly thru the means of these outward blessings of His common grace. But he also halts the progress and prevents the full manifestation of sin directly thru an operation of His spirit. This is so often expressed that it has become the chief element in the theory of common grace. Common grace is the power that prevents the full manifestation of sin in the individual sinner, and that halts the progress of sin in its organic development in the world. And the result of this operation of common grace as a check upon the power of sin is not only that man does not reveal himself in all the hellish horror of his corrupt nature, but also that he performs a good deal of good, that there is much in his life and ac-

complishments that attracts and appeals. "Ook bij van alle geloof vervreemde menschen, bij wie we met geen wedergeboorte rekenen mogen, ontmoeten we velerlei levensuiting die liefelijk aandoet, en wel verre van tot het kwaad te neigen, er veeleer tegen ingaat." Vol. II, 48. "Dat nu nochtans, niet-tegenstaande 's menschen zondige natuur hen prikkelt, om de menschelijke orde prijs te geven, en in een dierlijke orde lust te hebben, toch zekere menschelijke orde tusschen de menschen in het gemeen in stand bleef en zich zelfs in toenemende mate ontwikkeld heeft, is Godes gemeene gratie. Niet de mensch heeft zichzelf van de vernieling gered; maar die hem ook voor het wereldsche leven tegen hemzelfen beschermd heeft is God de Heere. Deze reddende daad der gemeene gratie Gods loopt ten deze nu langs twee wegen: de eene *in* den mensch, de andere *onder* de menschen; de eene inwendig, de andere uitwendig. Die inwendige weg in den mensch bestond hierin, that God hem in zijn wilden hartstocht intoomde, behoefte aan vrede en rust in hem prikkelde, en zachter gezindheden in hem deed opkomen." p. 159. The power of common grace serves, therefore, as a check upon the power of sin. And this check on the power of sin bears this fruit, that the sinner performs something positively good. More than once Dr. Kuyper emphasizes this. On p. 303 he concludes a discussion of this difficult question, how a check on total depravity can be productive of positive good with the statement: "Vergissen we ons nu niet dan is hiermede de zoo moeilijke vraag beantwoord, hoe, als de gemeene gratie niets doet dan de zonde stuiten, ze toch leiden kan tot iets positief goeds." And that the theory actually leads to this conception is evident from the notable illustration of Melchisedec. According to Dr. Kuyper's view in Melchisedec we have one of the grandest products of common grace. He was a carnal man, totally depraved. He possessed no redeeming grace. Yet, sin was checked in him to such an extent and so effectively, that he was serving the true God in priestly consecration, was a king of righteousness, and type of Christ Jesus who is priest after his order!

Lastly, it is a grace that is common to all men. It is not thus, that the people of the world that live outside of Christ live under the influence of this common grace, while the saints in Christ Jesus possess special or saving grace. No, all possess this common grace. The people of the world, all that are outside of Christ live from only one kind of grace; God's regenerated people live from a double, from a two-fold grace, from two kinds of grace. They live partly from common, partly from special grace. "Gemeenlijk stelt men het zoo voor, alsof de gemeene gratie alleen werkt in de niet wedergeborenen, en alsof alles wat in de geloovigen ten goede uitkomt vrucht is van de particuliere genade. Maar het kost weinig moeite om in te zien dat dit niet opgaat. . . Wie de zaak helder wil inzien zal moeten erkennen, dat er tweeërlei genade in den geloovige werkt, zoowel

de particuliere genade uit het zaad Gods dat in hem is, als de gemeene gratie, die hem met de wereld gemeen is. Niet met een maar met twee genadefactoren heeft men by den geloovige te doen, en daar bovendien zijn natuur in hem werkt, moet zijn verschijning en zijn optreden begrepen worden als een complex van drieërlei werking: ten eerste van zijn natuur, ten tweede van zijn kindsgenade, ten derde van zijn gemeene gratie . . ."

We may summarize, therefore, by saying: Common grace is the name for a theory that holds, that God outside of Christ and his atoning blood reveals His good favor to all men in general; that from this grace must be explained all the present existence of the world, with all the temporal blessings and institutions for the present life, as well as all the power and ingenuity man still displays; that this grace serves subjectively to check the development and prevent the full manifestation of the totally corrupt nature of man and is productive of much good; that the power of this grace works in regenerated and unregenerated alike, so that the child of God lives from two kinds of grace, one of which is peculiar to himself, the other of which he has in common with the world.

Now, in the way of negative criticism we wish to remark in the first place, that the theory does by no means solve the problem it promised to solve. The problem was that the children of the world did much good and the children of God much evil. The church disappointed the careful observer, and the world was much better than we would expect on the basis of the doctrine of total depravity. But we fail to see how this theory offers an explanation of this sad contrast. True, it apparently explains the good there is in the world. The power of common grace operating in the sinful heart checks the development of sin, and for that reason the world appears not as bad as we would expect. But, this does not explain why the church should be so much worse than the world, and why much of the attraction and graces that adorn the children of the world should not also beautify the regenerated. For according to Dr. Kuyper the believers also are under the influence of this common grace. If it were thus, that believers lived from special grace alone, and the children of the world only under the operation of common grace, the problem raised might probably be regarded as solved. But now it is a different story. Fact is, that believers live under the power of a double grace, common and special, while the children of the world live from the former only. And, therefore, we would still expect that the children of God would display a much more virtuous life and character than the children of the world. It will, I think, be evident, that the problem is not solved by this theory.

H. H.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Matthew 11:25-30

IV.

(Matthew 11:29, 30)

For the sake of clarity we once more call attention to the trend of thought we have thus far noticed in the verses 25 through 28. This trend of thought is as follows:

1. That Jesus thanks and exalts the Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that He has hid the Mysteries of the Kingdom from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto the babes. We noticed that Jesus emphatically thanks the Father not only that He has "revealed" these things to the "babes," but that he has also "hid" these things from the wise and the prudent.

2. That when Jesus explains and reveals the deeper background of this "revealing" of the things of God's Kingdom to the "babes," He tells us that this entire work of "revealing" has been delivered into His hands and into His authority. He reveals the Mysteries to whom he will; it is solely in His sovereign will to reveal or not to reveal. He reveals it to those whom the Father has given Him. And to the "rest" it is not given to understand the Mysteries of the Kingdom; from these it is hid. Seeing they see and perceive not, and hearing they hear and understand not, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and repent and God should heal them.

3. That, further, the weary and heavy laden are called to rest by Christ in harmony with this will of Christ to reveal it to some and not to others. The "*whosoever believeth*" is in perfect dependent relation to the "*to whomsoever* I will to reveal the Father." Surely the objects of the revelation of the Father by the Son will come as weary and heavy laden ones.

However, we now come to a very interesting and practical matter here in this portion.

The text reads as follows: "*Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*"

In this passage we are dealing with the spiritual-psychological aspect of the making known by Christ of the Father's love, and the appropriation of this revelation of the Father's love by the called sinner, in his learning to know the spiritual secret being disclosed to him, so that he "finds" rest for his soul.

In passing we would remark that in this passage we have some profound, yet clear and lucid principles of "Soul-care" in the church. Here are principles which are far higher and different than what modern psychiatry has to offer. The latter imagines itself to have attained when they

have treated the patient with the approach of what is called "Psycho-Somatic" medicine. Here in this passage Jesus clearly indicates that the secret of rest for the "soul" is not at all simply a matter of the "mind," of thought-patterns, stream of consciousness, but that it is a deeply spiritual-ethical question of standing in the proper relationship toward God. That the question of bodily health enters into the picture no one will deny, who has made a serious study of Scripture in regard to the effect which a rebellious attitude toward God and fellowman can have upon our health. Read Psalm 32:3, 4, "when I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." And let it be clearly understood that this poetry portrays a very dreadful reality in David's life — until he rested in the sweetness of forgiving love.

The minister and elder, who does not see the deep principles here of soul-care in the church, is responsible that the work of the Church is often relegated to the psychiatrist, "who lacks both the insight and the authority to 'care for the souls as they, who must give account.'" Heb. 13:17.

Wherefore, lest this accusation return to our own door, let us give heed to the instruction of Christ in this important Scripture passage.

The great boon, which Christ here promises to all who take "his yoke" upon them is "ye shall find rest for your souls."

Concerning this sentence "ye shall find rest for your souls," it should be observed, that this is a quotation from Jer. 6:16 where we read, "Thus saith the LORD, stand ye in the ways, and see, ask for the old paths, and walk therein, and ye shall *find rest for your souls*." If anything is clear from this passage it is this: a man finds rest for his soul only when that soul is right with God and, therefore, "asks for the old paths and walks therein." And this is not simply a Psycho-Somatic matter, but it is, at bottom, a spiritual-psychological matter; it is a matter of repentance with the *whole heart*. And such only the "babes" find because it is *revealed* to them. And since it is revealed to them they "find" it for their souls.

Rather radical, I hear someone opine.

I reply: the "old paths" often look new and untrodden to those who have never found it, since they are lost in a maze of philosophic speculation, solving life's riddles, whereas a simple obedience to the Word, yea, a profound obedience of meekness and lowlimindedness is the answer. We then stop peeping and muttering about the "mysteries of *life*" of which the fickle and superficial and God-hating world sings her vain songs, and know that the solution to the quest for rest for the soul lies in the mystery of *faith*! And this mystery of *faith* is the conferring of rest as this is revealed to us in the Mystery of GODLINESS that is great! It is the mystery revealed to the "babes": I will give you rest!

Such is the radical standpoint of Christ. And is *He* not radically, absolutely different with the healing of his wings, than all the panaceas of the would-be soul-care of those, who have no eye for the Scriptural truth, that the outgoings of life are from the heart. And that it is from the evil heart, in relationship to God, that the unrest of man proceeds, for as Augustine, the ancient father, said: Man cannot rest save he rests in God!

The reader should not understand the former remarks about "psychiatry" as if the modern methods of "electro-therapy" etc. did not have their valid place. They do. They have a place, however, fundamentally only in *physical* therapy. They are, at bottom, no different in effect than the warm or hot bath, or a good night's sleep. No one denies that a good night's rest does not afford the physical-psychological stamina to meet the day, together with a good breakfast of bacon and eggs. Neither will anyone deny, that a good meal and night's sleep will not "raise one's spirits." But they will not give rest to the soul of any man, for *man* does not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceeds from the mouth of the Lord. And when Moses and Christ here speak of "man" they have in mind "man" in the generic sense. The English cannot distinguish man and "man." The Holland language does; it speaks of "man" in distinction from "mensch." And since we are concerned with man, man as created in the image of God, we hold that no meal, bath, electro-therapy (shock-treatment) can give "rest to the soul." The Holy Spirit, it has always been held in the Church, sovereignly chooses the "means of grace" to work the grace of faith and repentance in our hearts, and thus makes us seek for and find sweet peace for our souls.

I have been approached by psychiatric doctors requesting my observations of what happens in a "shock-treatment" to the patient. I told them I had never observed one, but that they had. They should tell me. They wondered what happened to the "soul" of man. They felt somehow they "helped" a man to raise himself up again in soul and body. However, they wondered what it was. Well, I asked them: what happens to you when you have slept well? You know *the effect*. Well, that's my answer. But as little as a night's sleep will work faith and strengthen faith in my heart, so little will a shock-treatment. And in some cases, where a man is not deeply humble, a shock-treatment, although it does not work resentment per se, will become the occasion of the sinful reaction of bitterness because of its being a harsh treatment—something like the resentment of a soldier against the "army."

But "finding rest for the soul" is something which lies on a different plane. It is a question of spiritual "learning." When we have *learned* a profoundly spiritual lesson we will "find rest for our souls." For the wicked are like the driven sea, their waters cast forth mire; there is no peace to the

wicked, and, therefore, no rest for the soul of the wicked. As little as man can lift himself up by his own boot-straps so little can modern psychiatry give "rest to the soul." At best the unbelieving (not willing the teaching of Scripture, able to give rest to the soul) psychiatry can give a false peace, telling a man that all his troubles are simply psychological, have nothing to do with conscience. And when those, who purport to be christian psychiatrists, tell their patients, who literally roar with a sense of guilt, that their sense of guilt will leave as soon as the roaring leaves, they have reversed the cause and the effect. If it were not so disastrous for the patient, since it puts him really out of reach of Calvary, I would smile about it and say: My grandfather used to tell me, that, in order to catch a rabbit, one had to place salt on his tail!

I will, however, as long as the Lord gives me breath, believe and, therefore, preach, that as soon as the sense of guilt leaves and all opposition to God is crucified in our souls, then also the roaring is ceased and sweet and blessed peace of heart and soul replace it.

To my surprise, a hospital pastor in one of the Christian Sanitariums, was speaking to me about the soul-care of patients filled with real fears. He wondered how a christian could possibly come to such a point in life. When I observed that he was speaking to the patients on "attitudes" in life, of jealousy, envy, pride, resentment, I told him that I thought that he was on the right track, that is, on the "old paths." After some discussion I told him that in the Canons of Dort, the Fifth Head of Doctrine the answer was given to his question how a Christian could come to that point in the road where all seemed lost, and where the withdrawing of God's countenance is "more bitter than death" and where there are "grievous torments of conscience."

He asked me, whether I would dare to preach this. And I told him I would not dare *not to preach it*.

Later I visited that institution again. This time the pastor told me that he had instructed the patients to read the Canons of Dort, Head of Doctrine V. And it had been of benefit to them. Such had been their testimony. Well, it is good to hear this. However, it would have been true anyway. For it is the old way, the tried way, where all God's children find rest for their souls."

Why do they find rest there, and there only? And why do they find rest for their souls in that way whether at Pine Rest or at Bethesda?

The answer is simple: Christ gives rest only to the weary and heavy laden, in the way of their learning to be meek and lowly of heart, since they thus learn Christ and the truth as it is in Jesus.

Next time, the Lord willing, we shall investigate the text a bit more closely.

Meanwhile: to the law and the prophets; if they speak not according to this word there is no "dawn" (*morgenröte*) to the weary souls of God's children. G.L.

IN HIS FEAR

Respect and Obedience

(2)

"And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering."

"But unto Cain and unto his offering He had not respect."

So Moses speaks in regard to the attitude of God towards Cain and Abel when they brought their offerings unto Him. Of this we read in Genesis 4:4 and 5.

You will recall that we were dealing with the matter of respect and obedience and the relation between them.

We cited the case of Harold whose little four year old son was allowed to call his father by his first name instead of showing him respect as his father.

Examples of entirely different behaviour of children towards their parents as they are revealed to us on the pages of Holy Writ were quoted. We noted that Joseph even after he became chief ruler in Egypt under Pharaoh so that his father was subject to him in many earthly matters still showed respect to his father and called him such.

We had only begun to examine those passages in Scripture wherein the word *respect* appears in our English translation. Having said a few things about those passages wherein respect of persons is mentioned and condemned, we referred you to that passage above in Genesis 4:4 and 5 wherein God is presented as having respect unto Abel and to his offering and not unto Cain and unto his offering.

We desire now to pick up the thread there and continue to consider this matter of respect and obedience.

The word Moses uses in Genesis 4:4 in itself means more than to look. God looked at that offering of Abel. He took notice of it. But as the English translation has it, He had respect unto it. That means more. It means that He approved of it and looked upon it with favor. The actual word that Moses uses has the primary meaning of *dividing* or *discerning*. It is, then, a look whereby a distinction is made between Cain's and Abel's offerings. It is a look that sees more than that which meets the eye. It is a deeper evaluation than that which results from a look at outward things. God looked at the heart and judged Abel's offering to be a worthy expression of his faith and desire for salvation. He looked at the heart of Cain as well as at the thing which he offered and judged it to be full of wickedness and unbelief. We maintain, therefore, that in respect one always judges an individual or object to be worthy of honor, of confidence, of acceptance or the like.

When we respect someone we pass judgment upon that individual from the viewpoint as to whether he should be honored, esteemed, trusted and served or not. The element of discerning of dividing surely is in that word respect and therefore the translation here in Genesis 4:4 and 5 is ex-

pressive of the meaning of the original text. For whether we show respect or not, whether we are respectful or disrespectful, we do these things because of an inner judgment which the outward deeds reflect.

We have another passage in the Old Testament Scriptures wherein it is stated that God had respect. We read in Exodus 2:25, "And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them." Here we have an entirely different word from the one in Genesis 4 which is also translated "*respect*." It means "to know, to be acquainted with." It is interesting also to note that this is said in connection with the statement that "God looked upon the children of Israel." For, as we remarked last time, the word respect is made up of the Latin preposition "*re*" which means "back or again" and the verb "to look." Respect and disrespect depend upon how people look to us and are determined by our judgment upon them in the light of what we see of them.

Harold's little boy saw him occasionally as his father, as someone upon whom he depended and even in a sense as one to whose wishes he had to submit. As we wrote last time, he pleaded with his father to go down and get something to eat. As a little child without money of his own, without the ability to read a menu in the diner, he felt the need of his father and in that sense looked up to him. There was a difference between him and his father which he could not help but see. He was simply incapable of escaping the fact that there was a difference between him and his father that was deeper than the eye could see. When he called his father by his first name, however, he was behaving as one who knew his father only according to that which the eyes of Harold's equals see him.

Harold's wife no doubt called him such before their children. Harold's brothers and sisters called him by the first name. His friends did so. And all this Harold's little boy heard, of course. It would be quite impossible to keep him from it. But Harold never instructed his son — and for that matter his wife did not either — to look upon him in any other way than these brothers, sisters, wife and friends who were as to position and age on the same level with Harold.

Incidentally, it may seem a little humorous and odd to hear a man call his wife "mother;" but it surely does not encourage the children to show disrespect for their mothers. I would a hundred times rather see and hear a man — be his wife five or ten years younger than he — say to her when the children are present, "Well, mother, shall we go home now?" than to hear Harold's little boy say, "Let's go downstairs, Harold. Come on, Harold I'm hungry." The same holds true, of course, for the wife calling her husband "Father" in the hearing of the children.

At this particular P.T.A. meeting wherein the matter of respect was treated briefly on a panel discussion that dealt with other matters that had to do with the relationship between the teachers and the parents one of the ministers present made a remark that certainly points in the right direction. He said that it was unthinkable for him and he could

not possibly get it across his lips to call his elders in the church by their first names. By elders he meant not those who were older than he in the congregation but the officebearers in the office of elder in his consistory. He said that he could not call them Pete, John and Bill but always Mister so and so. We would go a step further. As parents we ought never to speak of these elders in the church to our children in any other way than in respect for the office. We ought to teach our children to see them with a deeper insight than that which comes to the natural eye. God has made them to be different when He ordains them into the office in His Church; and for their work's sake that difference ought to be seen and maintained by us and by our children. How much more beautiful and spiritually proper it is to refer to them when we speak to our children as Elder so and so and Deacon so and so.

We live in a world that wants to get away from all formality and class distinction. Respect of persons, to be sure, Scripture condemns. But we must be very careful that our desire for informality and removal of class distinction does not become disrespect. For disrespect is sin. Paul writes to the church at Rome, "Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom is due; fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor." And disrespect is violating the fifth commandment which demands that we honor our fathers and our mothers and all those who are in authority over us.

Respect means dealing with others in a special way. It means that we see that difference between us and them which God has been pleased to bring about and that we are willing to honor them and show them deference because of His sovereign good pleasure to place us in a position of inferiority over against them.

By having us born to certain parents God realizes a position of inferiority between us and them that remains as long as we and they live. We never outgrow the fact that we owe our existence to them. By ordaining officebearers in His Church God realizes a position of inferiority between us and them which He recognizes as long as they are in office. They have the spiritual rule over us. The same holds true of the governor, the king or president, the policeman, the master or "boss" for whom we work. And He demands that we look at them in that light, deal with them accordingly and do not behave in such a way that we deny that difference which He has brought into being.

It stands to reason that the respect God has differs from the respect which is demanded of us to those He places over us. Essentially the idea is the same, as we have seen. When God showed respect to Abel's offering He looked at it far more deeply than Cain who saw his own offering as a good thing. God judged that offering of Abel and approved of it. When we show respect it is also due to a deeper look than that of the outward appearance reveals to the natural eye. Respect is the result of judgment of inner qualities or realities. But

God does not have any superiors whose honor He must respect. He is God. And that means that there is not and cannot be any one who is either above Him or even on the same level with Him. All are under Him and all, therefore, must respect Him. All must render Him honor and obedience. But He shows deference to no one.

When He had respect unto Abel and to his offering He approved of Abel and of his offering; but He did not show deference unto him. He did deem his offering as worthy of acceptance and Abel as worthy of being considered to be a believer. This, however, was due to the fact that He had given that faith unto Abel whereby he brought unto God an "excellent sacrifice." The respect God showed unto Abel was due to the fact that Christ is the Lamb of God Who was slain for the sins of God's people and due to the fact that now in Him the elect are worthy of the blessings of salvation. Thus we read in Revelation 3:4, "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy." And again in Luke 20:35, "But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage." Yet this respect God has for His people is a respect for His Own works in them. It is not due to a judgment of them as they are in themselves. Then His attitude would be one of eternal wrath and indignation. Then He would have no more respect for them than He has for Cain and for his offering. But seeing us again, seeing us as we are in Christ He deals with us in a special way and bestows blessedness upon us.

But among men there can be respect for superiors because God does make some to be superiors over others in one way or another. Even, then, however, we do not respect them for what they are in themselves but for what God has made them to be in relation to us. Often they behave so that it is difficult to have any respect for them; but for God's sake we still do honor them by obeying them and dealing with them as being our superiors. Respect for the authorities, respect for our parents, respect for the offices in the Church is respect for God Who alone is worthy of our praise and honor.

Respect for those whom God has placed over us in walking in His fear.

Only as we fear God will we respect Him by respecting those whom He has placed over us.

J.A.H.

IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, expresses its sympathy to our fellow members, Elder M. Swart and Deacon W. Swart, in the loss of their Mother and Grandmother,

MRS. J. SWART

May God comfort and sustain the bereaved in their sorrow.

P. Decker, Secretary

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

VIEWS DURING THE THIRD PERIOD (750-1517 A.D.)

THE SUPREMACY OF THE POPE

THE ISIDORIAN DECRETALS.

During the chaotic confusion under the Carolingians (the Carolingians are known in Church History as or pertaining to the dynasty or family of Charlemagne who was emperor during the early part of the ninth century — H.V.), in the middle of the ninth century, a mysterious book made its appearance, which gave legal expression to the popular opinion of the papacy, raised and strengthened its power more than any other agency, and forms to a large extent the basis of the canon law of the church of Rome. This is a collection of ecclesiastical laws under the false name of bishop ISIDOR of Seville (died 636), hence called the "Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals." He was the reputed (though not the real) author of an earlier collection, based upon that of the Roman abbot, Dionysius Exiguus, in the sixth century, and used as the law-book of the church in Spain, hence called the "Hispana." In these earlier collections the letters and decrees (*Epistolae Decretales*) of the popes from the time of Siricius (384) occupy a prominent place. A *decretal* in the canonical sense is an authoritative rescript of a pope in reply to some question, while a *decree* is a papal ordinance enacted with the advice of the Cardinals, without a previous inquiry. A Canon is a law ordained by a general or provincial synod. A dogma is an ecclesiastical law relating to doctrine. The earliest decretals had moral rather than legislative force. But as the questions and appeals to the pope multiplied, the papal answers grew in authority. Fictitious documents, canons, and decretals were nothing new; but the Pseudo-Isidorian collection is the most colossal and effective fraud known in the history of ecclesiastical literature.

1. The *contents* of the Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals. The book is divided into three parts. The first part contains fifty Apostolical Canons from the collection of Dionysius, sixty spurious decretals of the Roman bishops from Clement (died 101) to Melchiades (died 314). The second part comprehends the forged document of the donation of Constantine, some tracts concerning the Council of Nicaea, and the canons of the Greek, African, Gallic, and Spanish Councils down to 683, from the Spanish collection. The third part, after a preface copied from the Hispana, gives in chronological order the decretals of the popes from Sylvester (died 335) to Gregory II (died 731), among which thirty-five are forged, including all before Damasus; but the genuine letters also, which are taken from the Isidorian collection, contain interpolations. In many editions the *Capitula Augilrammi* are appended.

All these documents make up a manual of orthodox doctrine and clerical discipline. They give dogmatic decisions against heresies, especially Arianism (which lingered long in Spain), and directions on worship, the sacraments, feasts and fasts, sacred rites and costumes, the consecration of churches, church property, and especially on church polity. The work breathes throughout the spirit of churchly and priestly piety and reverence.

2. The *sacerdotal system* (pertaining to a priest or the priesthood — H.V.). Pseudo-Isidor advocates the papal theocracy. The clergy is a divinely instituted, consecrated, and inviolable dispensation. The priests are the "*familiares Dei*," the "*spirituales*," the laity the "*carnales*." He who sins against them sins against God. They are subject to no earthly tribunal, and responsible to God alone, who appointed them judges of men. The privileges of the priesthood culminate in the episcopal dignity, and the episcopal dignity culminates in the papacy. The *cathedra Petri* is the fountain of all power. Without the consent of the pope no bishop can be deposed, no council be convened. He is the ultimate umpire of all controversy, and from him there is no appeal. He is often called "*episcopus universalis*," notwithstanding the protest of Gregory I.

3. The *aim* of Pseudo-Isidor is, by such a collection of authoritative decisions to protect the clergy against the secular power and against moral degeneracy. The power of the metropolitans is rather lowered in order to secure to the pope the definitive sentence in the trials of bishops. But it is manifestly wrong if older writers have put the chief aim of the work in the elevation of the papacy. The papacy appears rather as a means for the protection of episcopacy in its conflict with the civil government. It is the supreme guarantee of the rights of the bishops.

4. The *genuineness* of Pseudo-Isidor was not doubted during the middle ages (Hincmar only denied the legal application to the French church), but is now universally given up by Roman Catholic as well as Protestant historians.

The forgery is apparent. It is inconceivable that Dionysius Exiguus, who lived in Rome, should have been ignorant of such a large number of papal letters. The collection moreover is full of anachronisms: Roman bishops of the second and third centuries write in the Frankish Latin of the ninth century on doctrinal topics in the spirit of the post-Nicene orthodoxy and on mediaeval relations in church and state; they quote the Bible after the version of Jerome as amended under Charlemagne; Victor addresses Theophilus of Alexandria, who lived two hundred years later, on the paschal controversies of the second century.

The Donation of Constantine, which is incorporated in this collection, is an older forgery, and exists also in several Greek texts. It affirms that Constantine, when he was baptized by pope Sylvester, A.D. 324 (he was not baptized till 337, by the Arian bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia), presented him with the Lateran palace and all imperial insignia, to-

gether with the Roman and Italian territory. This mysterious document tells that the emperor Constantine was cured of leprosy by the prayers of Pope Sylvester. Thereupon Constantine out of gratitude to the pope decided to remove his residence from Rome to Byzantium on the Bosphorus, the city later called Constantinople. His object in doing this was that the secular government of the emperor might not cramp the spiritual government of the pope. On leaving Rome Constantine, according to this document, ordered all officeholders in the Church to be subject to Pope Sylvester and to his successors upon the papal throne. Furthermore he transferred to the popes the city of Rome and all the provinces, districts, and cities of Italy and of the western regions. So, according to this document, Constantine bestowed upon the popes sovereignty over the western half of the Empire. The object of this forgery was to antedate by five centuries the temporal power of the papacy, which rests on the donations of Pepin and Charlemagne. The only foundation in fact is the donation of the Lateran palace, which was originally the palace of the Lateran family, then of the emperors, and last of the popes (concerning this Lateran Church Schaff-Herzog writes the following. The church of St. John Lateran in Rome and the councils held in the palace connected with it. The palace was the official residence of the popes for over a thousand years. It was originally the property of the rich patrician family of Plautius Lateranus, but was confiscated by Nero, and later became an imperial residence. A portion of it, bestowed by Maximian on his daughter Fausta, second wife of Constantine, became known as the Domus Faustae, and she lived there until her husband beheaded her. Constantine then gave it (312) to Pope Melchiades, confirming the donation to Sylvester, in whose pontificate the first basilica was built here and consecrated in 324. The church of St. John Lateran is properly speaking the cathedral of the Roman diocese; here the pope is bishop of Rome, while St. Peter's is the seat of his universal jurisdiction.). So, the wife of Constantine, Fausta, resided in it, and on the transfer of the seat of empire to Constantinople, he left it to Sylvester, as the chief of the Roman clergy and nobility. There the pope takes possession of the see of Rome. But the whole history of Constantine and his successors shows conclusively that they had no idea of transferring any part of their temporal sovereignty to the Roman pontiff.

5. The *authorship* must be assigned to some ecclesiastic of the Frankish church, probably of the diocese of Rheims, between 847 and 865 (or 857), but scholars differ as to the writer. Pseudo-Isidor literally quotes passages from a Paris Council of 829, and agrees in part with the collection of Benedictus Levita, completed in 847; on the other hand he is first quoted by a French Synod at Chiersy in 857, and then by Hincmar of Rheims repeatedly since 859. All the manuscripts are of French origin. The complaints of ecclesiastical disorders, depositions of bishops without trial, frivolous divorces, frequent sacrilege, suit best the period of the civil

wars among the grandsons of Charlemagne. In Rome the Decretals were first known and quoted in 865 by pope Nicolaus I.

From the same period and of the same spirit are several collections of *Capitula* or *Capitularia*, that is, of royal ecclesiastical ordinances which under the Carolingians took the place of synodical decisions. Among these we mention the collection of Ansegis, abbot of Fontenelles (827), of Benedictus Levita of Mayence (847), and the *Capitula Angilramni*, falsely ascribed to bishop Angilramnus of Metz (died 701).

6. Significance of Pseudo-Isidor. It consists not so much in the novelty of the views and claims of the mediaeval priesthood, but in tracing them back from the ninth to the third and second centuries, and stamping them with the authority of antiquity. Some of the leading principles had indeed been already asserted in the letters of Leo IX, and other documents of the fifth century, yea the papal *animus* may be traced to Victor in the second century and to the Judaizing opponents of St. Paul. But in this collection the entire hierachical and sacerdotal system, which was the growth of several centuries, appears as something complete and unchangeable from the very beginning. We have a parallel phenomenon in the Apostolic Constitutions and Canons which gather into one whole the ecclesiastical decisions of the first three centuries, and trace them directly to the apostles or their disciple, Clement of Rome.

Pseudo-Isidorus was no doubt a sincere believer in the hierachical system; nevertheless his collection is to a large extent a conscious high church fraud, and must as such be traced to the father of lies. It belongs to the Satanic element in the history of the Christian hierarchy, which has a little escaped temptation and contamination as the Jewish hierarchy. The great purpose of this document was to show that all the rights claimed by the popes in the ninth century has been exercised by the popes from the earliest times. For hundreds of years these documents were accepted at face value and regarded as genuine. Nicholas de Cusa in 1433 was the first one to suggest that the decretals were a forgery. After that they came to be called the "Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals." In 1440 Lorenzo Valla proved that the "Donation of Constantine" was a forgery. Today Catholic scholars agree with Protestant scholars, that both documents are spurious, or false. But the harm had been done and the papacy had time to entrench itself. H.V.

NOTICE!

The Free Christian School Society of Edgerton, Minnesota, is in need of two teachers for its next school term. One to teach the lower grades one through four, the other as principal to teach the four upper grades, five through eight. Need we plead? Please send enquires or applications to the Board of the Free Christian School Society.

H. Miersma, Secretary, Woodstock, Minnesota

The Voice of Our Fathers

The Canons of Dordrecht

PART TWO

EXPOSITION OF THE CANONS

THIRD AND FOURTH HEADS OF DOCTRINE

OF THE CORRUPTION OF MAN, HIS CONVERSION TO GOD, AND THE MANNER THEREOF

Article 4 (concluded)

The question is: how is it possible for the Gentiles to do this? The apostle explains that they have the work of the law (not the law, but the work of the law, the work that the law does, the work of drawing the fundamental lines of the will of God for our ethical life in this world) written in their hearts, — written by God Himself, by the testimony of His Spirit in and through His general revelation. That the Gentiles know this difference between good and evil, are able to distinguish, is also evidenced in their ability to formulate systems of jurisprudence, codes of law, by which they lay down the law for the individual citizen in the community. And it is evidenced, as the apostle also indicates, by the fact that their conscience bears witness, their thoughts, considerations, the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another. They reveal in their thoughts, their considerations, that they have a formal knowledge of the law of God as it distinguishes between good and evil. They reveal this officially and formally in their laws and in the judgments of their courts. They reveal it too in the expression of public opinion, in conversation, in the daily newspapers, and on the radio. The Gentiles, who had no contact with the law as it was given to the Jews could even write volumes on ethics. And, in this natural light, according to which they knew the difference between things good and evil, they judged one another, and accused or excused one another according to that work of the law that was written in their hearts.

Accordingly, the article tells us, in the fourth place, that by virtue of this remnant of natural light man even shows "some regard for virtue and external order, or discipline." Notice that the fathers do not say that the natural man keeps the law. They do not say that he does good. They do not even speak of a certain "civil good." But: "Man shows some regard for virtue and for external order." He knows that the law of God, and that to keep the law in his earthly life is good for him. He understands right well that the way of sin is the way of destruction. And so his regard for virtue and external order, or discipline, even extends so far that he attempts in his life and walk to adhere to the outward form of the law and to maintain order in society. He attempts to conform his life and the life of his fellows to the outward form of the law. That regard is due to the fact

that he fears the evil results of his sin. But his adherence to the outward form of the law is purely outward, external. His regard for virtue is not motivated by the love of God. It is a regard that has respect only to the evil effects of sin for himself and for society. His regard for external order in his individual and communal life is of the same character. For in the first place, as soon as a man imagines that he can commit a certain sin and "get away with it," escape its results, he will do so. In the second place, he is not always equally mindful of the evil effects of sin. Or, if he is mindful of them, he will make the attempt to nullify those effects, so that he can sin freely and without the fear of those effects. And in the third place, ultimately man can never succeed to bridle his lust. Sin has dominion over him. And so he not only sins, but he has pleasure in sin, and he has pleasure in his fellow sinner.

And therefore, again, in all this there is no iota of evidence of the grace of God. Nor is there any proof whatsoever that the natural man has any capacity for good. On the contrary, the very fact that he is able to distinguish between good and evil means that man is responsible, and can properly be judged by God. Mere knowledge is no virtue. And mere outward adherence to the law, regard for virtue, out of the motive of selfseeking is an abomination to the Lord.

Hence, our fathers draw the negative conclusion, first of all, that man by this light of nature is not at all able to arrive at a saving knowledge of God or to convert himself to God. We must bear in mind that when the fathers here speak of a saving knowledge of God, and in Article 3 of saving good, they did not have in mind a non-saving knowledge that constituted a non-saving, or civil, good. The *Canons* were written against the Arminians. And over against the Arminians the question was whether man, through the means of the remnants of natural light, which both the Reformed and the Arminians ascribe to the natural man, — whether through the means of this light man was able to come to a saving knowledge of God, to the knowledge of salvation, and whether man was able to convert himself to God. The Arminians maintained that this was possible. And the fathers, taking cognizance of these remnants of natural light, express the judgment concerning them, that man is by no means able through this light to come to such a saving knowledge of God or to convert himself to God. The fathers insist that man is far from being able by this light to come to such a saving knowledge. How far? Here we have the positive conclusion of this article. The true picture of the natural man, with all his remnants of natural light, is so far different from the picture of him that is drawn by the Remonstrants that, on the contrary, *man is not even able in things natural and civil to use this natural light aright*. Still more: the fathers maintain that even in things natural and civil man wholly contaminates and pollutes this natural light, and he holds it under in unrighteousness. The Remonstrants attempted to maintain that the natural man could use

this light aright in the sphere of things spiritual. The Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in 1924 attempted to maintain that man could use this natural light aright in the sphere of things natural and civil. Both are wrong, according to our *Canons*. For the fathers maintain that man is not even able to use this light aright in the sphere of things natural and civil. They contradict both the Remonstrants and the Synod of 1924. Man, such is the position of the Synod of Dordt, though he has a certain knowledge of God, though he has a certain knowledge of things natural, though he discerns the difference between good and evil, and though he is even able to show some regard for virtue and external discipline, — though he knows, therefore, Whom he ought to serve, and what he ought to be, and what he ought to do, yet sins and corrupts himself in all his life. He wholly pollutes his natural light, such as it is, and he holds it under in unrighteousness.

The only possible conclusion, therefore, concerning man as he is apart from Christ, is that in all his sin and in all his corruption there is no single fact to be found which might mitigate his judgment before the bar of the Judge of heaven and earth. He stands without excuse. He is by nature a child of wrath, prone to evil, dead in sin, in bondage thereto. And without the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, conversion is an utter impossibility for him.

Article 5. In the same light are we to consider the law of the decalogue, delivered by God to his peculiar people the Jews, by the hands of Moses. For though it discovers the greatness of sin, and more and more convinces man thereof, yet as it neither points out a remedy, nor imparts strength to extricate him from misery, and thus being weak through the flesh, leaves the transgressor under the curse, man cannot by this law obtain saving grace.

The above English translation fails to do justice to the origin Latin version of this article. In the original the first sentence introduces an element of comparison that is important for the understanding of this article, and which is not expressed in the English. For those who can follow the Latin, we quote it here: "*Quae luminis naturae, eadem haec Decalogi per Mosen a Deo Judaeis peculiariter traditi est ratio.*" It is a bit difficult to give a smooth-flowing English translation of this, but the idea is as follows: "What (is true) of the light of nature, this same is the reason (explanation, accounting, *ratio*) of the Decalogue, delivered by God through Moses peculiarly to the Jews." From this it will be evident that the accepted English version goes rather far astray with its "In the same light . . ." The Dutch is more accurate, although it fails to translate the Latin *ratio*: "Gelijk het met het licht der natuur toegaat, zoo gaat het ook in dezen toe met de wet der Tien geboden, van God door Mozes den Joden in het bijzonder gegeven."

It must be evident at once that here again the fathers deal with one of the many Arminian corruptions of the truth. That fundamental error was in this case that the Arminians made separation between the law and the

gospel, and taught that through the law man could obtain the saving grace of God. Implied in this teaching is, of course, the error that the natural man can also keep the law, at least in part, that is, at least in so far as is necessary to obtain the promise of eternal life, in so far as God demands such obedience in order to connect with it the promise of eternal life. And they denied that the natural man neither can nor will keep the law unless he is first regenerated and receives that small beginning of the new obedience according to which he delights in the law of God and strives to walk according to it. The comparison indicated in the opening sentence of this fifth article sheds some light also on the Arminian view that is opposed in it. Just as the Arminian taught that man through the use of his natural light was able to come to a saving knowledge of God and to true conversion, so the same Remonstrant taught that God revealed His law as a means by which man might come to the saving knowledge of God and to true conversion. He would not be saved by the keeping of the law in perfection. But if man revealed that he was not opposed to the law of God, that on the contrary it was his desire and striving to keep it, then God would show that man grace and bestow upon him all the necessary grace to be saved. But notice, please, that while this is not purely a doctrine of salvation by works, it is a doctrine which begins with man, begins with man's works, which makes the grace of God unto salvation dependent once again upon the will of man to receive that grace not only, but dependent upon the worthiness of man to receive it.

Nor is this such a strange error, — not strange in our day. Not infrequently the error is committed of making separation between the law and the gospel, of taking the law out of its proper context as a part of the revelation of the gospel, of ignoring the fact that the law was imposed upon the promise for one reason, namely, to be a school-master, to lead us unto Christ. Not infrequently the law and its demands are preached with the implied, if not the open, claim that the *responsibility* to keep the law implies the *ability* to keep it. Not seldom the law is preached in such a manner even to converted Christians that its obedience is presented as a condition unto salvation and that salvation is after all in some degree to be obtained by works, be they then the good works of faith. Well, therefore, may we take warning from this article.

H.C.H.

IN MEMORIAM

The Board of the Free Christian School Society of Edgerton, Minn., wishes to express to the principal of our school, Mrs. H. Veldman, its sincere and heartfelt sympathy in the lost of her Mother,

MRS. P. EZINGA

January 1, 1957.

May the Lord of all grace and comfort console her in this hour of sorrow, and grant her the blessed assurance that all things work together for good to them who love God and are the called according to His purpose.

H. Miersma, Secretary

OLD AGE PENSION

The purpose of this article is to discuss a problem which often confronts the diaconate of our churches. It happens repeatedly that when some of our people reach the age where they are unable to provide for their own livelihood, and do not have the necessary reserve to support themselves, they turn to the state to apply for state aid, or old age pension, rather than to appeal to the deacons of the church. The question has often been raised, Is this proper? Should the church and the deacons approve of this, tacitly consent to it? Or should we openly express our disapproval, instruct these parties accordingly, and urge them to seek their aid from the deacons?

Our problem is, therefore, a very practical one.

You realize that we are not discussing the federal Social Security Act, nor the propriety of applying for and obtaining old age assistance through Social Security. That, to my mind, is an entirely different matter that has nothing in common with the old age pension. It is true, that in the future social security will replace the present old age pension, and thus our present problem will be resolved. But in the meantime we still are confronted with this question.

It should also be understood that we are not discussing in this present article the matter of aid from the cancer, polio, and heart societies. That is also an entirely different subject, that is well worth discussing, but lies beyond the scope of our present discussion. We are limiting ourselves now to the matter commonly known as "old age pension."

I have obtained some literature from the Michigan Social Welfare Commission, to which I will refer occasionally. I am well aware that this material actually applies only to the State of Michigan, but I feel that we are quite safe in assuming that the legislation of the various States in this matter differs only in minor detail, and actually does not affect the main point of our discussion.

I would have you note, therefore, first of all, that in the State of Michigan the old age pension is the result of state legislation. The State has drawn up a "Social Welfare Act" providing for such matters as "old age assistance, aid to dependent children, aid to the blind, and aid to the totally and permanently disabled" which is supported by state and federal funds taken from the taxes.

From this it already becomes evident that the state itself considers old age assistance through pensions as a special relief measure, or an act of "charity." It is matter of special legislation, and is placed in the same category as aid to dependent children, blind, mentally handicapped, etc. The pensions are even drawn from the same funds.

Moreover, the Social Welfare Act provides (Sec. 400.26) that "Old age assistance shall be given to any person who (a) Has attained the age of 65 years or upwards; . . . (f) Has not sufficient income to provide a reasonable subsistence, compatible with decency and health, as determined by the

county bureau under the rules and regulations of the state bureau. . . ." Notice particularly that statement, "sufficient income to provide for a reasonable subsistence, compatible with decency and health." That is a perfect description of a needy person, a charity ward, who turns to the state because he has no where else to turn for his daily subsistence. Therefore the state has made regulations as to how much property a person may own and still be eligible for state aid. And the state also determines the amount that shall be paid to each individual according to need. All of which proves that a person must be considered dependent on others for his daily subsistence; that is, he must be an object of charity before he can appeal to the state for aid. Which only stresses the point that old age pension is a special relief measure, and nothing less.

Quoting once more from the Social Welfare Act (Sec. 400.26), we find under (d) that a person can receive old age assistance if he "Has no spouse, child, other person, association or corporation legally and contractually responsible under the laws of this state for his support and found by the county bureau to be able to support him: Provided, that if such spouse, child, other person, association, society or corporation is partially able to support the applicant, such partial support shall be taken into consideration in fixing the amount of the assistance."

This is an even more potent argument to show that old age pension is a special relief measure adopted by the state for those who have no one to assist them in their need. From the section quoted above it is obvious that the state will give aid to the aged only when the responsible relatives are unable to support them. From a leaflet entitled, "What is Expected of Relatives?" given out by the State of Michigan Department of Social Welfare, I quote the following: "Does the state give pensions to the aged, widows, etc.? Not in the sense that many people think of a pension as something a person is entitled to regardless of circumstances. The Michigan Social Welfare Act gives the conditions under which the various types of public assistance may be granted. Section 76 says, 'This act shall not be construed to relieve the liability for support by relatives under the provisions of Act 146 of the Public Acts of 1925, as amended. The terms of said act with respect to liability for support by relatives may be invoked in connection with any form of public aid or relief administered under this act.' (Act 280. Public Acts of 1939, as amended.) Thus, when an aged person applies for old age assistance, for example, the county Bureau of Social Aid is required by law to determine whether the responsible relatives are able to provide support." This leaflet adds, that "if the total of expected contributions from the relatives does not meet the person's needs as figured on Bureau standards, assistance may be given for the difference." Which means that the state supplies only that amount which cannot be brought up by the responsible relatives. And then it goes on to say, that if relatives do not make the expected contribu-

tion, the hardship will fall on the dependent person, for the bureau "is required by law to consider the expected contribution as available income whether it is forthcoming or not."

Summing up, we have three arguments. First that old age pension is not something that a person is entitled to regardless of circumstances. Second, that a means test is applied to determine whether or not a person shall receive state aid, so that anyone who has sufficient income to provide for a reasonable subsistence cannot qualify for this welfare measure. And third, that there is a responsible relative measure in this law, so that the immediate relatives must furnish the aid if at all possible, and the state only steps in to fill in the amount which cannot be brought up by the relatives. From which we conclude that the old age pension, as it exists at present, is a matter of charity administered by the state.

Now we do not question the right of the state to make such regulations for those persons who have no other means of support. It is only proper that the state should take care of its citizens, whether they need old age assistance, aid because of blindness, or are totally disabled, and have no other source of relief.

But the question remains, what is the calling of the church and its members in this respect? We can grant without argument that the immediate relatives are the first responsible parties in taking care of the needy. But what is the order after that? Is this the order: relatives — state — church? Or this: relatives — church — state? Or, to cast the question in a slightly different form, must a needy person who cannot obtain aid from his immediate relatives turn first to the church, and only to the state if the church fails to help him? Or must he appeal to the state, and only finally in a last extremity, to the diaconate?

From the point of view of the church, she has a very definite calling? First of all, the church must proceed from the principle that Christ is her Head, even as her exalted Lord in heaven. Christ rules over His church as her King, preaches the Word as her Prophet, and exercises mercy as her Highpriest. Therefore He also assures His church that, "the poor ye have always with you," not as an unpleasant burden, but as a gracious arrangement of God whereby the mercies of Christ may become manifest. In the second place, Christ exercises His three-fold office of Prophet, Priest and King through His church. Therefore He has instituted the offices of minister, elder and deacon. Therefore He calls to that office through the church, ordains and qualifies by His Spirit, and accomplishes His work through the office in the church as institute. We may never ignore that principle. From this follows that Christ manifests His mercy through the mercies of the believers upon the poor and indigent. Christ Himself arouses His people to exercise that love and mercy, when He says in His Word, "distributing to the necessity of the saints, given to hospitality." Rom. 12:13. And He makes this possible through the deacons, that it

may be done in His name, and the right hand never knows what the left hand is doing. It is, therefore, blessed to give in His name, but also to receive from His hand.

From this follows, that from the aspect of the aged who need assistance, where would they rather go than to the deacons? Charity, in the true sense of the word, can only be exercised by the church. For the mercies of the wicked are always cruel. Would we rather go to Moab and Philistia than to Israel for help? But even more, the deacons do not aid the needy; not as mere deacons. Nor does the church; not as church. But Christ aids His needy through the channel of the church and the deacons. He who receives his daily sustenance from Christ, receives it from the same hand as when he worked for his daily bread, but now through the direct channel of the church. And by doing so, both he is blessed who gives, and he who receives. That we believe, and therefore it becomes easy to swallow all sinful pride which might prevent us from receiving of those who live round about us and know what we do with the gifts which we receive.

But that still leaves a few questions.

The argument is sometimes raised, that we pay into these funds by our taxes, and therefore have a right to draw out of them as well. The argument implies that we have a right to these pensions because they are supported by taxes. But the fact remains that the state has introduced this welfare act as an emergency measure to aid those who have no other source of income. It is not something that a person is entitled to regardless of circumstances, that is, regardless of the fact that there is an office of mercy in the church.

The objection is also made that every other needy person benefits from this state welfare, so why should not we? Yet, this argument is in direct conflict with the stand we have taken in regard to the instruction of our children in our own christian schools, as well as in regard to the care and support of those who suffer from emotional and mental disturbances. Why our own christian schools? Why such institutions as Pine Rest? Why, since we could benefit from the institutions which the state has raised up? To that we answer, of course, that the instruction of the seed of the covenant is the responsibility of the parents, regardless of whether the state has provided schools for our children. And again, that it is the calling of the church to exercise mercy in caring for mentally handicapped and disabled. But then the same rule applies to the care of those who can no more support themselves and have no source of income from their immediate relatives.

Ultimately it is simply a matter of principle. If anyone is inclined to disagree with what has been written in this article, I am sure that the *Standard Bearer* will appreciate your contributions on this subject. And, personally, I would like to hear from you.

C.H.

ALL AROUND US

The Perseverance of the Saints.

The Rev. Malcolm R. Mackey, concerning whose writings in *The Contender* we have called attention before, in the November, 1956, issue of his paper continues his development of the above named subject. In the present issue he treats two aspects of the subject, calling attention first of all to: *The Fact of Perseverance*; and then in the second place to: *What Perseverance Depends Upon*. He informs his readers that he plans in the succeeding issue of *The Contender* to call attention to: *Perseverance — and the Sins of the Elect*. We will be waiting with interest his development of this third point.

Concerning the first and second points mentioned above, we give our readers a few excerpts which we consider both interesting and instructive from the point of view of our own historic faith.

Rev. Mackay writes the following respecting *The Fact of Perseverance*:

"Putting this as simply as it can be put, there is one outstanding fact which has been seen from the beginning of human history, from Abel's time to the present, and that is, that there has been a continuing line of people who have, by faith, seen the eternal, immortal invisible God, and in this faith they have persevered unto the end of their mortal lives. This is the essential fact, however widely differing their individual, racial or national circumstances have been. These people belong to the one body of the elect. They have been chosen unto life eternal by God the Father from eternity; they have been redeemed by Christ the Son in the fulness of time; and they are, as they take their predestined place in the unfolding course of history, called by God the Holy Spirit out of the guilt and bondage of sin into the peace and blessedness of God's spiritual kingdom. This is a glorious fact against which the gates of hell cannot prevail. Nothing can stop the fulfilment of God's plan whereby these people are at last brought to heaven . . ."

"Perseverance has in view, in particular, not the beginning of the Christian life, or any particular stage of it along the way, but the *end* or consummation of it . . . Perseverance in the faith to the end may be regarded as an indication of one's election. That is, perseverance to the end is a practical proof, in this life, that a person is of the elect. It is the outworking, in daily life, of God's eternal decree to give that person an inheritance in eternal life. We are to judge of the state of our souls, not on the basis of profession, or of an intellectual assent to 'orthodox' doctrine, but on the basis of perseverance in the faith, through thick and thin to the end."

Having considered the plain fact of history concerning this perseverance of saints, the writer proceeds to look at this

fact from the point of view of eternity. He continues as follows:

"Let us see God's statement of this fact. In the words of our text (Phil. 1:6), the Apostle says, as a matter of fact, that it is God who makes this difference among men. God who begins the good work of saving faith in men, will surely finish what He has begun. Now this puts the matter on a proper and reasonable basis. God's work is not thoughtless, hit-or-miss, haphazard, as is so often the case with the works of men . . . When we think of God, we are in an entirely different realm where sin, weakness, ignorance or any other kind of evils, defects, or limitations have no existence. They are not in Him. And, positively speaking, the being and perfection of God are infinite, eternal and unchangeable. Hence, what God has determined, or planned, to do He shall most certainly accomplish, regardless of how devils and men may rage against it. This is the case with the eternal redemption of the elect. Consider the fact that it is *God* who has decreed that this shall take place! And it automatically becomes unthinkable that this should not be accomplished with glorious and infinite perfection. Therefore, looking at the perseverance of the saints from the ineffable light of eternity and not from the shadows of this life, God is the one who does it: 'Being confident of this very thing, that He who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.'"

In the 10th chapter of John's gospel, in connection with the parable of the Good Shepherd and His conflict with the bitterly hostile Jews, Jesus makes a plain statement of fact, which illustrates the truth of the perseverance of the saints from both the human and the divine points of view. First, He made a contrast between the hostile Jews or the non-elect and His own disciples or the elect under the figure of those who are not His sheep and those who are: 'But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me.' Here is a plain observable fact, — some are not Christ's people while some are."

"Along with this statement of fact, Christ tells us something about these two classes which otherwise we could not have known. This explanation which He gives is the divine revelation as to why some are not His sheep, and why those who are His sheep persevere in the faith unto the end of their mortal lives. This difference does not lie in the nature or will of men. How could it? — for by birth we are all alike dead in sin and enemies of God. Notice Christ does not say that some are not His sheep because they believe not, but that some believe not because they are not of His sheep! This gives the lie to the Arminian (or common grace) doctrine which teaches that the only reason why some are not saved is because they believe not. This lying doctrine teaches that the only obstacle in the way of the eternal salvation of these people is their own sin and unbelief, and that they could be saved if only they desired (or willed) it. This teaching would

take away the sovereign gift character of salvation. And it has done just this in the mind of the average person. 'Salvation' to him is not a matter which God may grant to him or not grant to him, as seemeth good unto Him, as Jesus expresses it in Matthew 11:25-27"

"Common grace men, no less than the Arminians, actually put God's dealings with men on the same kind of universalizing, levelling, lowest common-denominator basis as does modern democracy in its theory of mankind. Just as democracy claims that all men are equal, and that if any man does not make use of the opportunity he has it is his own fault, so common grace (like out-and-out Arminianism) says that all men have the opportunity to be saved, and that if they are not saved, it is their own responsibility and fault, not God's. This takes the sovereignty completely out of God's dealings with men, and reduces God to the same level as the popular head of a democratic state who is supposed to be strictly impartial and treat all citizens alike. Thus Arminianism and/or common grace, alike, teach that in the final analysis the answer to whether or not a person is saved, lies in man rather than in God. The common grace men cannot deny this for they do say that the *only* thing that prevents a man from being saved is his own unbelief and unwillingness of heart, for God, they say, wills their salvation, has provided a sufficient atonement for them, and offers it freely to them. This puts the ultimate cause for their salvation or damnation squarely upon man rather than God. This is very pleasing and satisfying to the natural, unregenerate heart for the natural man loves to say in the words of the atheist Henley, 'I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul'"

Rev. Mackay has much more to say about the fact of perseverance which we will have to pass over in order to leave room for a few excerpts of the material he gives us in his second point: What Perseverance Depends Upon. Under this heading he writes as follows:

"First and most important of all, *it is based upon the infinite, eternal and unchangeable love of God for His elect people*. Now this love is anything but what the average person takes for the love of God. If you were to strike up a conversation with any man of ordinary intelligence on a drab town street or in a general store in a country village or at a crossroads, and ask him what he thinks of when he hears of the love of God, he would say something like this: 'Oh, God loves everybody, everywhere, and makes no difference between one man and the next one. His love is everywhere, like the air we breathe, and all we have to do is to recognize it and receive it.' Whether your man lives in Cape Race, Newfoundland, or Snag in the Yukon, or anywhere between, you will get the same reply. Yes, he says, God's love is universal, impartial, all-embracing. God yearns for all men to receive Him and is grieved when they do not. And your man will undoubtedly leave it at that unless you continue the con-

versation. No other conception of the love of God is in his mind. More than that, he is quite content with it that way, and it never seriously crosses his mind that it could be any other way. All is well. The people on the street pass unnoticed, intent on their errands, — or the peace of the countryside and the mingled, pungent, old-fashioned store odors along with the crackling of wood in the stove, give a sense of solid contentment. And if, while you were speaking with your man, a funeral should be seen passing along, enroute to the cemetery ('memorial gardens'), he would probably say, 'Well, some day we too must pass away,' implying quite naturally that all is well with the deceased, and will be with everybody else who dies. God is loving; and He understands. Let us be good neighbours, and play our part. In the ordinary course of events, the conversation would end as it began, — peacefully. But if you were so undiplomatic, cold-blooded and cruel as to say that this idea of the love of God, is simply not true, but that instead of God's love being universal and general it is partial and particular, the sense of peace and well-being would vanish. Let us suppose that you were, further, bold enough to say that God, by the counsel of His own will and by nothing outside Himself, makes a difference among men. Upon some He bestows His infinite and everlasting love, and because of this particular love to them, or on the basis of it, He chooses to deliver them from their sins and make them heir of eternal life, seeing to it infallibly that they shall reach the goal which He has marked out for them. Upon the rest He does *not* bestow this love. Instead of choosing to deliver them from their sins, His eternal decree is to harden them in their sins, and make them 'vessels unto dishonour' (Rom. 9:21), 'vessels of wrath fitted to destruction' (Rom. 9:22). And, likewise, He sees to it infallibly that they shall fulfil the destiny which He has marked out for them. If you undertake to say this to your man, he will undoubtedly blurt out that such an idea of God is preposterous. He will say, 'Who believes such nonsense nowadays? If people believed that way once upon a time, — well, we are more enlightened and broad-minded. We believe in a God whose love is like the sunshine, rain and air, — bestowed universally on all.'"

Rev. Mackay further develops the thought: *Universal Love Implies Universal Salvation and Particular Love Implies Particular Salvation*. Concerning the former, he posits two particular and outstanding cases from history to prove his point. The two cases he refers to are, 1. John Wesley and the Methodist Church. 2. Princeton Seminary and Common Grace. Concerning the latter he writes: "Now Wesley was dead twenty five years before Princeton was founded. Historically speaking, the Methodist Church turned to the rejection of hell and belief in (modernistic) universal salvation fairly fast. But Princeton went faster from common grace into Barthianism which is basically the same sort of humanistic rejection of the truth as modernism." M.S.

REPORT OF CLASSIS EAST

Meeting of January 9-15, 1957

At Fourth and First Prot. Ref. Church

The chairman of the October Classis, Rev. M. Schipper, led in devotions; and after the credentials of the delegates were accepted, declared the Classis constituted. The Rev. R. Veldman then presided, while Rev. Schipper transcribed the minutes.

All the churches were represented in the opening session. Conspicuously absent, however, and sorely missed from all the arduous sessions was the Rev. G. Vos who, under doctor's orders, could not attend. The Classis remembered him often in the prayers that ascended to the throne of grace. One of our churches was represented by one delegate for one day, but failed to be represented the rest of our sessions. Later Classis instructed the Stated Clerk to send a letter of reprimand to this church for its neglect of duty.

A Finance committee was appointed to ascertain the expenses of this Classical meeting which later reported; and a Classical Appointment committee also was appointed to prepare a schedule of appointments for Kalamazoo. The following schedule was later adopted: Jan. 20, C. Hanko; Jan. 27, G. Vos; Feb. 3, R. Veldman; Feb. 10, H. Hanko; Feb. 17, G. Lanting; Feb. 24, J. McCollam; March 3, B. Woudenberg; March 10, R. Veldman; March 17, M. Schipper; March 24, H. Hanko; March 31, G. Lanting; April 7, B. Woudenberg; April 14, G. Vos; April 21, C. Hanko; April 28, J. McCollam; May 5, M. Schipper.

Classis then treated an overture from Grand Haven which had been tabled at the October session, and decided not to adopt the overture respecting reimbursement of elder delegates but to keep the status quo.

The Churches of Holland, Creston and Grand Haven presented Subsidy Requests which Classis decided to approve and send on to Synod. Kalamazoo was granted permission to present their request to the April Classis.

The committee appointed to advise on the Van Putten protest of last October reported and with little change the advice was adopted.

First Church presented an overture re condensation of the material for Synod in the Holland Appeal. Later it became evident this overture was not needed.

Second Church was granted permission to ask for collection in the churches of Classis East and petition Synod for the same right in Classis West to aid with the cost of litigation.

Grand Haven presented an appeal relative to the Holland Case which Classis sustained.

Voting for Minister delegates to Synod resulted in the following:

Primi

H. Hoeksema
G. Vos
C. Hanko
M. Schipper

Secundi

R. Veldman
G. Lanting
H. Hanko
G. Lubbers

The voting for elder delegates was postponed to the April Classis.

Classis also decided to send a committee to visit Rev. G. M. Ophoff who was able to attend Classis the first day but on the second was in the hospital for observation. Later it was learned he would undergo surgery. Our brother is committed to God's grace.

The rest of the time Classis busied itself with a host of protests relative to the Holland Case.

In spite of all the knotty problems and lengthy and strenuous sessions of Classis, a good spirit prevailed throughout. Much of this was due to the witty and efficient leadership of our chairman. Much trouble still remains, especially for our sister church in Holland, but with God's help and more perfect manifestations of His love, also these difficulties should be resolved.

Classis decided to meet next April, D.V., in Hudsonville and after the Questions of Article 41 of the Church Order had been answered satisfactorily by each consistory present, Classis adjourned with the Rev. C. Hanko leading in the closing prayer of thanksgiving.

M. Schipper, Stated Clerk.