**The Ever Remaining Debt**

Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. Rom. 13:8

Apparently paradoxical debt of love!

You owe it, you pay it, you still owe it!

A debt which accumulates as you pay, which never decreases though you pay!

An obligation which, though you always faithfully fulfill it, is never fulfilled!

Owe no man anything, render unto every man his dues, above all do not fail to render to every man the dues of love, yet acknowledge that you still owe the debt of loving one another.

In your various and manifold relationships to your fellowmen you meet with many obligations, many debts you must pay, in virtue of the fact that these relationships are of God. There is the relationship of man and wife, of parent and child, of brother and brother, of master and servant, of teacher and pupil, of the “powers that be” and their subjects. There are relationships into which you voluntarily enter, relations of contract, relations of buyer and seller, relations of partnership in business or industry. There are relationships resulting from deeds of charity and mercy, the relation of benefactor and beneficiary. And in these different relations we owe honor to whom honor, fear to whom fear, tribute to whom tribute, custom to whom custom, pecuniary debts to whom money, gratitude is whom gratitude is due.

Owe no man anything!

It must not be said of the Christian, redeemed through the precious blood of the Lord, liberated from the power of sin, who presents his body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, who refuses to be conformed to this world, who is being transformed by the renewal of the mind, and who professes to prove and approve what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God,—of that child of God it must not be said that he fails to acknowledge his debts, is behind in meeting his obligation, of whatever kind it may be.

It belongs to the fear of the Lord to know one’s relation to others and in that position to do the will of God!

The Christian child does not refuse to pay the debt of honor to his parents, the Christian wife finds it no burden to pay the debt of obedience to her husband, the Christian servant willingly honors his master, the Christian subject his king; the Christian that receives a benefit is not loath to say thanks, the Christian that owes a pecuniary debt has no rest until it is paid.

Owe no man anything!

Such is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God!

Owe nothing, except to love one another!

Not as if you may be behind in the payment of love’s debt!

But having paid, acknowledge that you still owe!

Marvelous debt!

Love one another!

And not of a mere disposition of the heart, but of the actual manifestation of love, of the deed of love the Word of God here speaks.

Of love that is the fulfillment of the law, and that never worketh ill, always good to the neighbor!

Of love as an obligation, of a debt that is being paid!

Yet, love must be unfeigned: there must needs be love in the heart before one can love, and one must needs love before he can perform the deed of love and meet love’s obligation.

Love! What is it?

It must not be confused with that affection, emotion, feeling of attraction, that is known as “natural love”, that reveals itself in a quickly drying tear when the object of love is lost, or in a fast fading smile when its object is present. A mother loves the babe at her breast and rejoices in its possession, grieves when she is bereaved of it, yet this love, which is found even among animals, is but a natural image of the love of which the text makes mention. A young man feels attracted to the maiden of his choice and expresses his ardent love to her, yet, even this natural attraction is not the same as the love of our text. Love is not in the blood, it is in the mind, in the will, in the heart. It is not a feeling but a strong disposition; it is no emotion but a power; it is not physical or natural, but ethical and spiritual; it is a mighty moral, spiritual-ethical force that determines the attitude of the whole man, of the very person in relation to the object of his love.

It is known as a mighty desire, longing for, striving after fellowship with its object in the light, in the sphere of righteousness.

There is no love in the darkness of sin.

Love is the bond of perfectness!

It perfects him that loves and would perfect him that is loved. It desires the happiness, the true bliss of its object, that true and pure state of blessedness which is possible only in the light, in the sphere of truth, righteousness, holiness, perfection. It forevermore seeks to realize the good of the neighbor.

Love worketh no ill to the neighbor!

The hatred of sin always worketh ill to the neighbor, even though that neighbor should be the object of natural attraction and love to him that so worketh the evil. Hatred can appear very sweet and affectionate, yet it seeks to destroy. Sometimes it openly plots and works evil, in malice and envy, in slander and backbiting, in reproach and mockery, in deceit and robbery, in bloodshed and murder. Or again, it maintains the appearance of love and affection, while it entices its objects into the ways of sin, destruction, and hell. A natural, unregenerate mother may be filled with a strong, ardent affection, a mother’s love for the child of her womb, but when she teaches it to love the world and its corruption, she very actually hates the child. A young man that entices his lady-love to commit the sin of adultery at the same time that he strongly professes his love, hates her nevertheless.

Hate worketh ill to the neighbor!

Hence, all the problems in the world that are insoluble, social, economical, political, national, international. Hence, the depressions, revolutions, wars, murders, robberies, lies. If men could hear and do the Word of God as it exhorts us to love one another, the problems would solve themselves, for love worketh no ill to the neighbor!

Directly and indirectly love worketh good to its object.

It contemplates what is good, it desires what is good, it wills what is good, it strives after what is good, it speaks the good, it accomplishes the good. . . .

Always the good.

The real, the true, the eternal good, which is to be had only in the sphere of light, in the way of righteousness.

Hence, love can be very stern.

Even as what is really the hatred of sin, because it is enmity against God, may appear very sweet and tolerant and affectionate, so love often is very severe, uncompromising, and intolerant.

For, it is the fulfilling of the law!

Never can love have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.

It must needs seek righteousness and rebuke the sinner.

For, love is of God!

Love one another!

Owe no man anything but to love one another!

There appears to be a contradiction here: love one another—love every man.

Love one another is addressed to the church, and that brethren in the Lord ought to love and are in a position to love one another, because they love God, is readily understood.

But the scope of love appears to be unlimited here: owe no man anything, render to every man his dues, love worketh no ill to the neighbor. And how can love embrace all? Is not love, in its nature, jealous, exclusive, partial? Does not love cease to be love when it would make no distinction? Is not even the love of God particular? And does not the psalmist teach us to exclaim: “Should I not hate them, Lord, that hate Thee? I hate them with a perfect hatred? ....

True, love is always particular, because it is of God!

Love as fellowship, reciprocal love, the love of one another can exist, can live and flourish only among men in whom is the love of God. It is not found in darkness. It cannot breathe in the atmosphere of unrighteousness. It does not manifest itself as a bond between the wicked. For, by nature we are enemies of God, hateful and hating one another. Neither is it possible that this bond of perfectness should unite the righteous and the wicked. Only where the love of God is the common life, the sphere in which men live, can they love one another.

Yet: owe no man anything but to love one another!

And, even though it be true that we hate the enemies of God with a perfect hatred, is it not also true that the Word of God enjoins us to love our enemies and pray for them that persecute us? . . . .

Love cannot be fellowship with the wicked enemies of God.

It cannot mean that righteousness and unrighteousness become reconciled to each other, that light and darkness blend in perfect harmony, that there is established a state of peace between Christ and Belial. Love does not put on another yoke with the unbeliever, cannot have delight in his unfruitful works of darkness, does not laugh, play, sing, accomplish the lusts of the flesh with the children of disobedience. It hates these, abhors them, rebukes them and condemns the world.

Yet, even so love pays its debt!

Even to its enemies! Always it reveals itself to all men as love!

It works no ill to the neighbor, to no neighbor!

Love does not curse but prays; it does not lie but speaks the truth; it does not deceive but walks in uprightness; it does not steal, defraud, hurt, murder, slander, backbite, but seeks the advantage of the neighbor.

It never entices to sin, but rebukes unrighteousness!

Love is the fulfilling of the law.

Love is of God!

Ever remaining obligation!

For as such, as an obligation, as a debt which you owe to the neighbor, love, actual love, love manifested in the deed of love, is here presented to us.

It is a must!

You must love me; I must love you!

And when you and I meet this obligation and pay this debt of love, we have done nothing that was not required of us.

On the contrary: as we pay the debt accumulates, as we meet this obligation of love it still remains. Other debts you pay, you obtain your receipt, the obligation ceases, you owe no more; this debt you pay and continue to pay, but it ever renews itself, you keep on owing the same debt. No matter how much you pay, it never decreases. You cannot be excused ever from paying. In vain is the attempt to be relieved of this obligation by objecting that you have already loved the neighbor very much and revealed your love in a thousand ways, while he never showed any tokens of appreciation. You must still love him. You cannot object that your love is wasted, that it is never reciprocated, that you are wholly disappointed,—the debt remains. Love continually, faithfully, perfectly, and still acknowledge that you owe the debt of love!

For, he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law!

And the law is of God!

And God is love! And love is of God! And it is His unchangeable will that His love-life be manifested in the relation of His children to one another as well as to Himself. His family in Christ must reflect His own love-life which He lives in infinite perfection as the triune God! And, therefore, you must fulfill the law of love. Your love-debt to the neighbor is not based on his love to you, neither rooted in his appreciation of your love, but is your obligation to Him that called you out of darkness into His marvelous light, that you might be to the praise of the glory of His grace and show forth His virtues!

And how gloriously the love of God was manifested!

For, He loved us while we were still enemies!

He loved us with a never ceasing, eternal love, not because we loved Him first, but because He is love and for His own Name's sake. And how He loved! For in this was manifested the love of God towards us, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life!

Unfathomable love!

Deeper than the deepest ocean; higher than the highest heavens!

Beloved, if God so loved us, how ought we to love one another!

Never ceasing obligation!

Marvelous grace!

For, only by His grace it is that the must of love becomes a delight of the heart!

How else could we pay this debt of love unless to love were our delight?

And how could our hearts find delight in the love of one another except through the grace of Him that loved us?

Enemies of God we are, and for that very reason enemies of one another, hateful and hating one another, as we are by nature. There is no love in the heart of sinful man, who loves the darkness rather than the light. He cannot love; he will not love; he cannot will to love; he has even forfeited the right to the blessing of love. Nothing could possibly persuade him to love. You cannot instruct him to love. He cannot be trained to love. Even the manifestation of the love of God in the cross of our Lord will not induce him to love!

But God's love is poured out in our hearts!

The love wherewith He loved us in the death of His Son is wrought in our deepest being, so that we know it, experience it, taste it, desire it, seek it. And with the love of Him who loved us first we love Him too and seek His fellowship, walking in the light!

And with His own love, wherewith we love Him, we also love one another!

For, love is of God, always of Him!

Glorious grace!

**Calvinism and Determinism**

The above title will probably lead to expect a lengthy and profound treatise, for such could, indeed, be written on that subject.

But be at ease, reader, for at present I have no such purpose.

I merely intend briefly to answer a question I received from Mr. K. H. of R. Calif.

The brother read my article on “The Vaunting Axe" and became somewhat confused by the following sentence:

“It teaches that God did not forsake the works of His hands, as is the doctrine of the Deist; that He did not surrender them to the whims of fortune or chance, as is the teaching of the fatalist and determinist".

Now, if I understand the brother correctly, he always was of the opinion that Calvinism and Determinism were identical. And his question is whether in this conviction he is not right.

My answer is as follows:

1. If the brother means by determinism the Scriptural truth that all things that are and occur, small and great, good and evil, moral and physical, are absolutely determined by and under the control of God, so that nothing takes place but by His omnipresent power and government, he is certainly right. And I suppose that this is just what he means.
2. However, the term “Determinism" in its technical, philosophical sense does not mean this. It stands for the philosophy that the moral freedom of man is strictly determined by forces from within or from without, physical or psychical. And in this sense I used the term in my essay.
3. There is, therefore, considerable difference between Calvinism and Determinism in its technical and philosophical sense, a difference which I may very briefly express in this way: the former attributes all things to the counsel and control of an intelligent, wise, and good God; the latter to blind forces.

**Contribution**

Esteemed Editor:

Will you kindly allow me space for a few columns in your paper?

In *The Banner* of April 20, there appears an article by Dr. W. H. Rutgers, which I believe calls for some reflection in our *Standard Bearer*.

The article discusses the oft-occurring question of the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart and treats it in such a way that it constitutes an unconscious challenge to anyone who has learned to see and feel the Reformed view of God and the creature as we have it taught us in Scripture.

I believe, to express at the very outset my judgment regarding the writer’s views—I believe that his answer as a whole is thoroughly unbiblical and shows, according to his own criterion, that he is “favorably disposed to the Arminian and Pelagian position with which American Fundamentalism is thoroughly surcharged”.

The question according to the writer’s own formulation is: “How are we to interpret this Scripture with reference to Pharaoh? Without a doubt this Scripture has given offence to many. To put it in a very blunt and popular way, it is asserted that in the light of this statement of Scripture Pharaoh never had a chance; it was a foregone conclusion and more than that, it was in accordance with a fixed plan and decree, that Pharaoh’s heart would be hardened. Not only permissively, but just as much effectively would that destiny for Pharaoh be realized by Him who holds the destiny of us all in His hands.” That is the question.

And then Dr. Rutgers does precisely what those Arminians and Pelagians of “American Fundamentalism” do. For after he has posited the sovereignty of God and the fixed destiny of every individual he “swings the pendulum to the side of human responsibility and though he would not exactly want to ignore the other truth of God’s sovereignty, yet it remains in a sort of status quo, a quietus, so that the thrust of that truth gives no direction to our thinking.”

With these words, which I quote, Dr. Rutgers characterizes the American Arminian.

But with these words he also characterizes himself!

For after positing the one truth of God’s sovereignty he goes on to apologize for it and to neutralize it, even bringing in an “exceeding merciful dealing of God” toward Pharaoh, “a wooing of His mercy and love”, “a common grace and well-meant offer of salvation” in such a way that the other truth is wholly pushed to the background.

Now in the first place I do not agree with the author in the exegetical results of his study of the history of Pharaoh’s hardening.

The writer says: “Now it is noteworthy that in those few chapters of Exodus it is said ten times that Pharaoh hardened his own heart; and that an equal number of times it is said that the Lord hardened his heart. Moreover it is of signal importance to note that in the first five plagues the hardening is invariably represented as his own”.

This surely does not give us a true conception of the hardening process of Pharaoh as it can be traced in the pertinent passages.

In the first place we must notice that there is nothing in the text that suggests the division of ten and ten. Some interpreters even go so far as to find in this supposed ten and ten an equal division of efficiency as between God and His rational creature and find in the number ten the symbolof completeness.

Now the number ten is indeed a symbol of completeness if it is symbolically used; if the ten is emphasized. But surely not if we have to make the count. It is said there are ten appearances of the risen Savior, hence a complete testification of the Resurrection. But are there ten? Perhaps there are nine, perhaps eleven. So with the seven (?) beatitudes.

Hence we conclude that there is surely nothing in the texts that symbolically points to a kind of equal division between God and the creature. But aside from the fact that there is no such symbolical distribution, neither does the count of ten and ten give the true presentation of the hardening. Of the whole process we may notice the following facts:

That in the original there are three different words to express that which is in the King James Version translated “to harden”. The Dutch version and the American version, however, indicate the difference of these words.

1. There is a word used twice the root meaning of which is “to be hard”. (See Ex. 7:3; 13:15) both according to the dictionary and according to the contexts. This word is used once in prospect of the entire history in 7:13 and hence it looks at the hardening in a general sense. Pharaoh will be hard, harsh, resistant. This word occurs again in 13:15 where a retrospect of the history is given in a general sense.
2. There is a second word which means “to tie fast, to bind, to make firm, to strengthen”. This word is used to express God’s action in strengthening Pharaoh’s will and steeling his nerve under threatenings and strokes of judgment. In this connection we must of course remember that the word heart has in Hebrew usage a broader reference than our religious word heart.
3. There is a third word which means primarily “to be heavy” and then easily expresses the idea of dull, insensible. This word is used to express Pharaoh’s spiritual attitude or reaction toward the divine command especially when this command was not driven home to him by a threat or a stroke.

Then further we observe that during the first threatenings of Moses and Aaron and the first five strokes there is a twofold action: God steels the nerve and strengthens the will of Pharaoh and holds up his courage under the strokes. And Pharaoh dulls his heart spiritually against the testimonies of God’s claim upon his obedience. But after the first five plagues we read only of God steeling Pharaoh in his resistance against the mighty strokes of judgment.

It may thus be said that in all this there is nothing that suggests determinism, for throughout Pharaoh acts and is regarded as a guilty rebel against the expressed and evident will of Jehovah and His evident right to free His suffering slave-people. There is no danger here at all of denying human responsibility.

On the other hand, however, it is hard to see how this good gift of strength of will and of nerve can be a token of a gracious attitude toward Pharaoh. For without that iron will he would not perhaps have served God out of faith, but he surely would have received the “common grace” to bend under God’s pressure and so perform the “civic righteousness” of giving Israel their rightful freedom.

But now I can also make clearer my objection to the writer’s neutralizing presentation of God’s sovereignty. For after the first five plagues during which Jehovah steeled and Pharaoh dulled his heart, we have the most arresting statement of God’s purpose and efficacy. For we read, 9:14-16, “Say to Pharaoh: I will this time send all My plagues upon thy heart and servants and people, that thou mayest know that there is none like Me in all the earth. For now I had put forth My hand and smitten thee and thy people with pestilence and thou hadst been cut off from the earth, (i.e. If I had stricken thee with pestilence, thou wouldst have been utterly wiped out; but, no, I have another purpose). But in very deed for this cause have I made thee to stand, to show in thee My power, and that My name may be declared throughout all the earth”.

And it is just this text which the Apostle Paul, with that marvelous hallowed faculty of the inspired writers for quoting central, characterizing texts, chooses to describe God’s dealings with Pharaoh.

In the judgment of the Apostle the outstanding point in the entire history is the sovereignty of God.

It is therefore not at all surprising when we read in Ex. 10:1: “Go in to Pharaoh, for I have dulled his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I may show these My signs in the midst of them.” Now this time Jehovah is said to have “dulled” Pharaoh’s heart. And the meaning is plainly that God is the author of the dullness of Pharaoh’s heart.

Now it is true that the text may state either of two thoughts. It may express that God has been the author of all the past dullness of Pharaoh, for in many of those cases the author was not named. Or it may mean that with a view to the plagues yet to come, the Lord has once for all dulled the heart.

At all events in these texts (9:14-16; 10:1) the Lord expressly ascribes the deepest cause of the spiritual dullness to Himself.

Now perhaps it were uncharitable to speak of an article as unbiblical, merely because the writer overlooked an obscure passage in a lengthy history.

But that is not at all the case.

On the contrary, the writer has not overlooked an obscure passage but has neglected the repeated and exalted songs of praise that are sung throughout Scripture to the one great work of judgment and salvation. I will offer just a few: Ex. 15; Ps. 105:25ff; 77:15-20; 78:42-52; Rev. 15:3. And on the other hand Scripture is not at all concerned to assure us regarding “the other track”. Scripture nowhere takes pains to remind us that Pharaoh was also free, responsible, rational, etc.

In the light of this Scriptural viewpoint the entire article of Dr. Rutgers stands condemned.

How instructive it is to compare the viewpoint and emphasis of Dr. Rutgers with that of John Calvin who trembled in childlike awe before the high sovereignty of God.

There is in his Institutes (Bk. I, Chap. 18) an extensive Biblical testimony to that sovereignty against all those who question and object to God’s dealing in the hardening of sinners. I will quote only that part which specifically speaks of Pharaoh.

1:8, 2: “But since the Holy Spirit distinctly says that the blindness and infatuation are inflicted by the just judgment of God, the solution (of a permissive will) is altogether inadmissible.”

He is said to have hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and to have hardened it yet more and confirmed it. Some evade these forms of expression by a silly covil, because Pharaoh is elsewhere said to have hardened his own heart, thus making his will the cause of hardening it; as if the two things did not perfectly agree with each other, though in different senses, namely, that man, though acted upon by God, at the same time also acts. But I turn this objection against those who make it. If to harden means only bare permission [i.e. if, “to harden” means a permissive action when it is said of God, then also when it is said of Pharaoh and], the stubbornness will not properly belong to Pharaoh. Now could anything be more feeble and insipid than to interpret as if Pharaoh had only allowed himself to be hardened. But Scripture cuts off all handle for such covils: I, saith the Lord, will harden his heart.”

Let me add these beautiful words of Bavinck, Dogm. II:388: Indien God en Zijn schepsel niet anders als concurrenten kunnen gedacht worden en de een zijne vrijheid en zelfstandigheid slechts behouden kan ten koste van den ander, dan moet God hoe langer hoe meer beperkt worden in Zijn weten en willen; het pelagianisme bant God uit de wereld, het leidt tot deisme en atheisme en zet de willekeur, de dwaasheid van den mensch op den troon. Daarom moet de oplossing van het probleem ook in een andere richting gezocht worden, namelijk, alzoo dat God, door dat Hij God en de wereld Zijn creatuur is, door Zijn oneindig groot weten en willen de zelfstandigheid en de vrijheid van de schepselen niet vernietigt maar juist schept en haindhaaft. (I underscore).

Beautiful words! Gone is your “dilemma”, gone your two tracks, gone all the pretentions of the creature before the Creator!

And so the question arises why is it that Dr. Rutgers goes in the other direction? Surely there is not, especially in our day, any grave danger of ultra supralapsarism or determinism or an over-emphasis on the exaltedness of God. Surely the writer does not take his viewpoint out of a reaction to our times.

On the other hand I do not think the writer was thinking of a mere score of obscure Prot. Ref. Churches which caused him out of reaction to push the sovereignty of God to the background.

The only conclusion to which I can come is that the thinking of Dr. Rutgers is on this subject basically different from that of Calvin and of the Apostle Paul and Scripture as a whole. Hence his entire article is unbiblical and a danger for the church.

For the answer should not have been a neutralizing apology for the offensive and dreadful sovereignty of God, by means of a lengthy emphasis on man's freedom, self-initiative accountability, duty, culpability, even to the extent of bringing in “the gospel call to all”, “the wooing of God's mercy and love”, “an unwillingness to be led by the kindness of God”, of a point “where return in penitence and faith is impossible, etc.”

But the answer is that of Calvin and the Scriptures: Whom He will He hardeneth, and no creature shall say why doth He then find fault, for who has resisted His will.

For the creature is clay and God is the Potter.

That answer, given in humble reverence for God and with pastoral tact toward his questioner, would have been the answer that can satisfy and give peace.

Rev. A. Petter,

Bellflower, Calif

**The Shewbread**

The question still remains whether the name “bread of presence” is not expressive of something more than has thus far been mentioned. It is indeed. Let us consider that this provision was bread and that its being called “bread of presence” must signify that it was placed in God’s presence in respect solely to Him. In what respect? If our answer is going to be an improvement on the view that this provision was set before God’s face merely for being seen and looked on by the watchful eye of God, then we must concentrate upon the heavenly reality here symbolized, namely Christ and His Church and His Church in its state of perfection and glory. This bread as such was merely an earthy material substance. If we therefore divorce it from the heavenly things which it signified, it will not even do to say that it was brought in the Holy place for the well-pleased regard of God. Not that God loves not such creatures of His as bread. But the fact is that he who directs his mind to the shewbread, has to do with a sign of a thing which is of the Spirit of God. Hence all such expressions as “God smelled a sweet savor” and “the well-pleased satisfaction and favorable regard of a righteous God” apply certainly not to the earthy and material thing that formed the symbol but to the idea, truth, to the heavenly thing symbolized. Every thoughtful believer of the Old Dispensation must have apprehended that what God’s heart yearned after is not that portion of material bread displayed upon the “pure table” in the Holy place but His people; and that thus the reason that He regarded this material bread with well-pleased satisfaction is its being associated in His mind with this people.

It is then the church with which we here have to do. That the church was symbolized by bread—the twelve cakes—and by wine, that these elements were continually on God’s table in His house, tells us that the church in its state of perfection, the ideal believer, is God's eternal refreshment, joy, and delight.

The question might be raised whether it is proper to employ this language in respect to God. God Himself does so, “The Lord spake to Moses saying. . . .for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed” (Ex. 31:17). Refreshed was He by the praises of His creature rising heavenward on the wings of man’s devotion.

God’s (spiritual) bread and wine then is His people whom He possesses in Christ Jesus; and He in Christ is likewise their bread and wine. But there is, to be sure, a difference to be noticed,—a difference brought out by Christ in these words, “Except ye (my people) eat, are eating, and eat everlastingly, my flesh and drink my blood, ye have nolife in yourselves.”Themeaning here is not that the dead (spiritually) through, as a result of their eating come to life (the dead do not eat), but that the living ones who, an account of their being alive, do eat, have and continue to have life in themselves because they do eat. If therefore they should desist from eating, which they cannot, they would die. The truth here set forth is that God in Christ is the life of His people. And eating His flesh everlastingly they are also continually satisfied. And drinking His blood their joy is full. As to God, though the church be His spiritual bread and wine, it is not His life. He is God. He moves and lives and has His being not in the creature but in Self. The foundation of His being is there in this Self. He is His own bread. The self-sufficient God is He, also in His being refreshed by the fellowship of His people; for this people is born of Him, is His workmanship, was thus brought into being by His almighty creative will. He thus is refreshed by that which is of, through and to Himself.

To say that the church is the bread of God and that God is the bread of His church is but to say that as God delights and joys in His people, so, too, do His people by His mercies delight and joy in Him. It is to say that the church has fellowship with God through Christ and that God on His side everlastingly satisfies His people with His likeness. The very idea of friendship, of fellowship is joying, delighting, in what is possessed in common. What God and His people have in common is God Himself. God joys in His glories also as imaged by His church. And the church joys in God as it beholds Him in the face of Christ. And, beholding God, His people praise Him, and in doing so, they give their very self to Him as these praises proceed from their hearts and thus form the very issues of their lives. And God likewise gives Himself in love to His people in Christ,—everlastingly. The “bread of presence” was “an offering from the children of Israel by a perpetual covenant” (Lev. 24:8). And the covenant is God’s.

Now of this living fellowship of the church with God through Christ and of God with His people in Christ, the “bread of presence” in the holy place was the symbol. It is indeed true that this bread was for being seen by God. As His people partake of His divine nature, beholding them in His great delight. Only this does not exhaust the idea embodied in the symbol of “the bread of presence”.

**The Golden Candlesticks**

Let us attend first of all to the instructions for the making of this article as contained in Ex. 25:31-37. In the English version these instructions read somewhat different than in the original. In this version we read:

1. And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made: his shaft, and his branches, his bowls, his knops, and his flowers, shall be the same.
2. And six branches shall come out of the sides of it; three branches of the candlestick out of the one side, and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side: . . . .
3. Three bowls made like unto almonds, with a knop and a flower in one branch; and three bowls made like almonds in the other branch, with a knop and a flower: so in the six branches that come out of the candlestick.
4. And in the candlestick shall be four bowls made like unto almonds, with their knops and their flowers.
5. And there shall be a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, according to the six branches that proceed out of the candlestick.
6. Their knops and their branches shall be of the same: all it shall be one beaten work of pure gold.
7. And thou shalt make the seven lamps thereof: and they shall light the lamps thereof, that they may give light over against it.”

The original shows the following variations:

1. English version: “his shaft, and his branches, his bowls, his knops, and his flowers, shall be of the same. Original: “Her base and her reed, her bowls, her knops, and her flowers, shall be from her.”

The base was the pedestal upon which the candlestick stood. By her reed is to be understood the hollow golden stem of the candlestick that rose from the base and from the sides of which issued the six branches. The pronoun her in the clause, “shall be from her” denotes the candlestick as to its middle stem and its six branches. From this stem and the branches the bowls, knops and flowers issued so as to form one complete whole with them.

1. English version, “And six branches shall come out of the sides of it; . . .

Original, “And six branches shall come out of her sides, that is, out of the sides of the candlestick as to its middle stem.”

35. English version, “And there shall be a knop under two branches of the same. . . . .” that is, of or from the candlestick as to its middle stem, so that the thought set forth is, “And there shall be a knop under each two of the six branches that issue from the middle stem.”

36. English version, “Their knops and branches shall be of the same; . . .

Original, “Their knops and their branch shall be from her; . . .

The expression their knops has reference to the sum total of knops that were to issue from the six branches or arms. There were in all eighteen of them not counting the four that were to be wrought into the middle stem. The expression their branch concerns each of the six arms of the eighteen knops and should therefore be rendered their branches. “Shall be from her,” that is, from the candlestick. The thought conveyed by this rather difficult sentence is that the eighteen knops were to issue from the candlestick as to its six branches and that each of these branches were to rise from the candlestick as to its middle stem.

Some writers supposed the meaning of the words “bowls, knops and flowers” (vs. 33) to be that the bowls were to consist of knops and flowers. This explanation, however, is rendered impermissible by vs. 31, as in this verse the bowls, cups and flowers are mentioned in connection with the base and stem as three separate things which were as distinct the one from the other as the base and the stem. Yet, though distinct, they were joined together and formed, as so joined, a single ornamental unit of which there were in all twenty two, four on the central stem and eighteen on the six branches, on each branch three.

All this gives us the following idea of the candlestick: From the base which must necessarily have been a foot, extended upward, how far is not stated, the middle stem or pipe (pipe it indeed was. The expression rendered in our version beaten work is turned work). From this middle shaft rose on each side three branches or arms in regular graduation and in one plane, bending around in the form of quarter-circles on the same level with the middle shaft,—a unit therefore branching out into the sacred number, seven. On the top of the middle stem and of each of the branches was fitted a place for holding a lamp.

As to the ornaments, the language of Scripture is too indefinite to allow us to say with certainty just what they represented. The cups were ordered to be made like unto almonds, but whether like unto an almond tree or its fruit, the word used in the original does not indicate. The word in the original, rendered in our version knops, simply signifies rounded figures. Hence they were supposed by some to have been pomegranates, and by others apples. The word rendered in our version flower is the only one of the three whose meaning is sufficiently definite to permit us to say with certainty that the ornament it signified resembled a flower or blossom. Yet, despite the indefiniteness of the language, this much is certain that the cup had respect to the almond, either to the tree that bears this name or its fruit, and if the cup then certainly also the knop and the flower. It is likely that the ornamental cups were given the appearance of the tree and that the knops were so fashioned as to bear resemblance to its fruit, so that in the one ornamental unit, comprised as it was of cup, knop, and flower, was to be seen the figure of the almond tree, of its fruit and of its flower. Be that is it may, it is certain that the candlestick, on account of the shape of the ornaments wrought into its branches, must have represented a fruit-bearing almond tree (a tree of the peach family) with a trunk and six flowering and fruitful branches.

Were, as some writers have maintained, these figures merely designed as graceful and appropriate ornaments? This is questionable in view of the circumstance that Scripture gives to the almond tree a definite symbolical significance. The prophecy of Jeremiah (chap. 1:11, 12) contains the report of a prophetical vision of the almond rod. The word of the Lord came unto the prophet saying, “Jeremiah, what seeth thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree. Then said the Lord unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten my word to perform it.” Here the almond tree appears as associated with the idea of haste. This is in perfect agreement with the name that this tree bears in the Hebrew, to wit, shakeed. The verbal form of the name is shakad, to watch, to keep watch, to be wakeful watchful. Thus the almond is the shakeed, the waker and this on account of its being the earliest of all the trees to awake from the sleep of winter. That the tree as to this peculiarity is an emblem of the spiritual wakefulness of God's people is a view that rests upon solid enough ground—on the ground that in the vision just referred to it appears as associated with Jehovah's ardor. We cannot therefore acquiesce in the view, broached also by Fairbairn, that the figures of the candlestick were designed simply as graceful ornaments. Despite the relative indefiniteness of the language in the book of Exodus, the idea that these figures resembled the almond stands for a fact not to be disputed. The command, “And in the candlestick shall be bowls made like unto almonds,” is there in Scripture. It is likewise a fact that Scripture sets the almond before us as a symbol of haste. These are no fanciful notions. What we here have to do with is so much information gained from Holy Writ. It is therefore not true that we proceed on fanciful ground “if we make anything depend on this notion (?).”

Let us ask: how are we to know what the features of a symbol are that have symbolical import? There is but one answer: By ascertaining which and how many of these features receive illustration in other parts of Scripture. This is equivalent to saying that the sole interpreter of the symbols of Holy Writ is this Writ. Thus we hold the candlestick to have been an image of the church on the ground that in other parts of Scripture the spirits of the just are represented under the image of lamps of fire, and the Holy Spirit under the image of oil. Why then should we refuse to say of the candlestick that it imaged the church also on the ground that its ornaments resembled the almond if in other parts of Scripture the holy zeal and wakefulness of Jehovah and thus also of His people are presented under the image of an almond? Would not such a refusal involve us in a strange inconsistency? But aside from this, is not spiritual wakefulness precisely the state of the soul or spirit of that man who is light in the Lord? Are not, rightly considered, these two states essentially one and the same?

The position of the candlestick and of the other two pieces of furniture of the Holy Place is known from the following Scriptures, “And thou shalt set the altar of gold for the incense before the ark of the testimony (Ex. 40:5). And he put the table in the tent of the congregation, upon the side of the tabernacle northward, without the vail (Ex. 40:22). And he put the candlestick in the tent of the congregation, over against the table, on the side of the tabernacle southward (vs. 24). And thou shalt make the seven lamps thereof: and they shall light the lamps thereof, that they may give light over against it (Ex. 25:37).

These passages tell us that the candlestick stood on the south side of the Holy place; that the position of the table of shewbread was on the north; and that betwixt the two, in the middle of the compartment nearest the vail and immediately in front of it, stood the altar of incense. The statement, “that they (all the lamps) may give light over against it,” should be noticed. In the original we read, “that they may give light over against her face.” By the face of the candlestick is to be understood the front shown by the seven arms. As the position of this article was on the south of the dwelling place, the side over against her face was necessarily the north. Thus the line of the lamps of the seven arms must be imagined to have run from back to front of the Holy Place.

On the top of the arms were vessels for the wick and the oil, called lamps, which could be removed to be cleaned. The circumstance that the light was thrown on one side leaves no room to doubt that the hole of the lamp from which the wick projected was not in the middle but at the edge. The things belonging to the candlestick were tongs for the removal of the charred parts of the wick; and the ash-dishes to receive such parts. These things, too, were made of pure gold.

The size of the candlestick is nowhere given in the Old Testament; but having been an article made of a talent of pure gold, its size must have been considerable corresponding perhaps to that of the table of shewbread, namely, two and a quarter feet (providing a cubit measured eighteen inches) in length and the same in breadth between the two outer lamps.

In the lamps of the candlestick was ordered to be burned pure olive oil; but in the night only, so it seems. The instruction reads, “Command the children of Israel that they bring unto thee pure oil, olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamps to burn continually. Without the vail. . . .shall Aaron order it from the evening unto the morning before the Lord continually: . . . .” (Lev. 24:2-4). An identical testimony is contained in Ex. 30:7, 8, “And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it. And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it.” In the original this last clause reads, “When Aaron causeth the lamps to ascend,” that is, when he sets them in their places on the tops of the arms of the candlestick “between the evens” (not at the even). The information gained from this passage is that in the morning the lamps were taken down and cleaned and as so cleaned were returned to their respective places and lighted at the same time when the holy incense was burned upon the altar, namely, at even.

The candlestick imaged the church. We learn this from the first chapter of Revelation. Being turned, John saw seven golden lamps (not, seven candlesticks as in our version); and in the midst of the seven lamps one like unto the Son of man. . . . In the sequence, these lamps are said to be seven churches. In the fourth chapter we again meet with seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are explained to mean the seven spirits of God—either the One Spirit in the diversity of his spiritual and sanctifying working or seven spirits of men qualified by the One Spirit for the office of pastors and shepherds of the church.

The church, being the true candlestick, is light. So the believers repeatedly appear in Scripture. “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now ye are light in the Lord: . . . .” (Eph. 5:8). But what is meant by light and darkness? Both natural and artificial light appears in Scripture firstly as the emblem of knowledge of God as defused both by God and His believing people. So in John 1:5, “And the light shineth in the darkness; . . . .” and again in 2 Cor. 4:6, “For God, who commandeth the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,” and finally in 2 Cor. 4:4, “In whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, Who is the image of God, should shine upon them.”

Here then (in 2 Cor. 4:5) the light brought into being by the Almighty creative word of God on the first of the six days of creation appears as an emblem of knowledge, of the light of the Gospel and thus of God's glory. But what is there about the physical light of the sun that renders it a fitting figure of the light of God's Word? And the answer: Physical light is the agent of physical perception in that it conveys to the bodily eye of man the images of the physical objects of sense, yonder tree, or house, the earth and its fullness. If water were a substance that could receive and retain the impress of the object against which it were dashed, then the rebounding waves of the sea would present to the eye of the observer an image of the coast against which they were flung. Light is such a creature, a substance of marvelous subtlety, filling all space and bearing the name of ether. Set to vibrating by the action of the sun, it beats against the objects of sense, and the rebounding light wave reaches the eyes of men as imaging these objects. And the result is that these objects are being seen by men. And what is seen by the perceiving soul is not the objects by themselves but their light images. And from these images the objects are known. Hence, physical light is the external principle of knowledge, the medium of communication between the physical world of sense and the mind of man. Thus one who would know these things of sense, must walk in the light, for then only does one see light, that is, have knowledge of the things immersed in the light.

Being what it is, physical light is the symbol of light spiritual, of the self-revelation of God in creation and in the face of Christ as now possessed in the Scriptures. There is then also this light. In the beginning was the Word, the personal Word, Son of God. . . . In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in the darkness. . . .” (John 1). Thus the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead. However, “God, Who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these days spoken unto us by the Son” Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word (Heb. 11). He came and gave us by the word of His mouth and by the life which He lived, a revelation of the glories of God. As the faithful Witness, He spake of many things: of the plight of His people, of Himself as the lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world; of the cross He was to bear, of the Father’s house, of the inheritance that fadeth not away. He told us of the Father’s good pleasure to reconcile by Him all things to Himself. Christ is thus the light. He shines in the hearts of His people; what may be known of God and the heavenly He manifests in them unto salvation. And His Word, as it images the mercies of God and shows forth His wisdom, as the light upon their pathway and the lamp for their feet. And by the light, by the beams of His grace, are they quickened, gladdened, freed from sin, and beautified. For He, His Word, is the light. Being light, it has power to quicken as does the light of the sun, whose power in this respect is manifest in the growing blade of grass, in the bud unfolding itself and setting free its fragrance, in a word, in the entire changed aspect of God’s creation in springtime. If the light of the sun should disappear for a space of a single week, this earth would be turned into a wilderness. All creatures would perish. So, too, is Christ the light and thus also the life of His people.

Between physical and spiritual light (the light of revelation) there is, to be sure, an intimate connection. Physical perception and physical light are of necessity the beginning of all our knowledge, also of our knowledge of God. For man is a sensuous being. He can have knowledge of God, of the things which are of the Spirit of God only if these things be revealed to him through the things that can be seen and handled. Thus the reason that man knows God is that He gave us a physical and thus tangible and perceptible revelation of His blessed Self, of the praises of that Self. It is the things that can be seen and handled that reveal to us God. The heavens declare His glory; and the firmament sheweth His handiwork. All creatures are the crystallization of His eternal thoughts. The highest revelation of God is Christ. His appearance made it possible for us to feel and handle the Life. Says the apostle, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled, of the word of life. For the life was manifest and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifest unto us” (John 1:1, 2).

So, too, are the benefits accruing from the suffering and death of Christ, revealed to us through things that can be seen and handled. The life in Christ, to illustrate, is presented to us in Scripture under the image of bread, wine, and milk. It is thus in the things seen that God embodies His thoughts. And the aggregate of these things form the glass in which is seen the glories of God.

This light from heaven is manifested in every man, thus also in the wicked devoid of grace. Though depraved, they, too, perceive the thoughts of God as set forth by the things made. Yet, though perceiving, they do not comprehend spiritually.

Light has still another meaning in Scripture. Besides being the emblem of the light of revelation in creation and in Holy Writ, it is also the symbol of true moral goodness, as is evident from the following passage from Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, “. . . .but now ye are light in the Lord: walk as children of the light: for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness and truth.” If the believers are light, their walk also is light in the Lord. As this walk is here identified with goodness, righteousness, and truth—the fruits of the Spirit—the word light of this passage signifies the believers as to the true goodness of their ethical nature and of their moral walk. Light, then, is the emblem of goodness as to all its aspects,—thus of righteousness, holiness, mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, and longsuffering. Darkness, on the other hand, is the symbol of sin in all its variegations.

Such now being the symbolical significance of light, the seven lamps in the worldly sanctuary, imaging as they did the church, the believing people of God, require of us that we say of this people that they are the pure of heart in Christ and thus love God and the brethren, do God’s will, love and practice righteousness and so through their entire conversation, declare the praises of Him Who called them out of darkness into His marvelous light; that, further, being the pure of heart, they spiritually comprehend the light, the revelation of God in the face of Christ. And this is but another way of saying that they are a people upon which rests the Spirit of Christ,—the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord, so that they are quick of understanding in the fear of the Lord and have righteousness as the girdle of their loins and faithfulness as the girdle of their reins.

This ascribing of the virtues of believers to the operation of the indwelling Spirit, is in perfect agreement with the speech of the symbolism of the seven lamps. The light that shone forth from these lamps was the splendor of a fire fed by pure olive oil,—the symbol of Christ’s Spirit. How true it is that believers are light solely in the Lord. To deny this is as absurd as to say that there can be fire and light without fuel. Yet it is not to be supposed, of course, that the holy fire with which Christ baptized His people is the essence of the Spirit of Christ or of Christ Himself in a state of consumption or burning. To maintain this is to give expression to a thoroughly Pantheistic sentiment. The truth set forth by the seven lamps is that Christ’s Spirit, thus the triune Jehovah, the God and Father of Christ, is the creative fountain and the eternal replenishing source of the holy fire that everlastingly burns in the bosom of the church.

Of the truth here touched upon the vision of the prophet Zechariah forms a most striking illustration, “And the angel that talked with me came again. . . . And said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof: and two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof. So I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What are these my Lord? Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my Lord. Then He answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts” (Zech. 4:1-5).

What is here presented to us is a candlestick of pure gold with an oil-vessel on the top, suspended above the seven lamps, and from which the oil flows into each one of the lamps through seven tubes; and two olive trees by the side of the candlestick dropping their oil into the bowl. The Hebrew phrase rendered in our version “seven pipes” reads “seven and seven” thus forty nine pipes, seven for each lamp. The candlestick images the church as God’s appointed light bearer. Seven is the number of the covenant. The seven lamps indicate the fullness of light that was shed, and the seven times seven tubes signify the great abundance and the variegation of the splendor and beauty of the grace imparted to the church. The meaning of the two trees is explained in verses 12-14, “And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No my Lord. Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.” In the original this reads, “And these are the two sons of oil. . . .” This phrase denotes the kingly and priestly offices which were the two media for conveying God’s grace to the church, and which are being served by Christ. He is the true olive-tree, the eternal prophet-priest-king of His church. As the anointed of the Father, He is the everlasting seat and channel of the grace with which He fills His body, the church.

It is to be considered that not only the light but also the fire of the seven lamps imaged the church. Now fire is sheer energy. Being what it is, consuming and devouring energy, it is necessarily unmixed with any substance foreign to its essence. These burning lamps of the Holy Place, flooding, as they did, this compartment with the brightness of their fires,—what an apt figure therefore of the spiritual beauty of the church, of her purity, of the ardor of her holy passion, of her intellectual and moral enthusiasm, of her earnestness for God and His objects!

The Holy place, filled as it was, with the light of the seven lamps, was a figure not of this earth but of the new earth, full of the glory and of the knowledge of the Lord,—a figure of the eternal city—the new Jerusalem—which will have no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, in that the glory of God will lighten it, and the lamb will be the light thereof (Rev. 21). On this earth night reigns. True, in the darkness of this night shineth the light. Yet it is still dark here. And the reason is that the darkness—this world of wicked men—comprehendeth not the light. The wicked hold the truth in unrighteousness. They do not reflect the light through their praise. A light beam remains invisible until reflected by yonder object. What floods this, earth with light during the time of day is the light of the sun as reflected by the earth’s crust. Hence, one who should descend beyond the range of this reflected light would be in darkness even with the sun shining in his heaven. Thus though the light shineth in the moral darkness of this world, it is nevertheless night here. But this night, in the words of Paul, is far spent, the eternal day is at hand (Rom. 13:12). Christ, the Sun of righteousness, is about to rise over an earth cleansed from the race of men that now corrupt it and peopled solely by God’s redeemed family, the children of light in whose hearts God will everlastingly shine. Then, when this will have come to pass, the earth will be full of the glory of God and of the Lamb as reflected by the golden candlestick of the Holy Place—Christ’s redeemed people.

**The Image of God (Reply to Rev. Zwier**)

Rev. D. Zwier is writing a series of articles on “The Image of God”. What we have from his pen on this subject in *De Wachter* for the second of this month reads, as freely translated, thus:

“The old reformed distinction between the image of God in the broader and narrower sense is to be preferred above the new distinction to which the editor of The Standard Bearer gives preference,—the distinction between the image of God in material and formal sense. According to him, fallen man has retained something of the image of God in the formal sense, but of the image of God in the material sense nothing remained in him.

“The image of God in the formal and material sense—this distinction is in need of some explanation. In meeting this need, let us avail ourselves of an illustration. We would compare the above-mentioned distinction to that of a vessel and its content, let us say, a vessel of oil. The vessel is the form in which the substance is contained. If the vessel should develop a leak, it would run empty.

“Let us apply this to the image of God. Before the fall, man was like unto such a vessel, but through his fall into sin the vessel sprang a leak, and of its contents nothing remained. Fallen man is become like unto an empty vessel.

“According to this conception, fallen man is still the image of God in the formal sense. He remained a rational and ethical creature. None of the primary features of his being were lost. His soul still possesses the faculty of mind and will, through which he differs from the irrational beast. Had he become like unto the beast, he could not be saved nor bear the punishment of eternal damnation. Even those who perish in hell remain human beings, degenerate and corrupt beings, it is true, but nevertheless human beings of like passions as Adam in the state of integrity.

“Thus far we can go along with the conception.

“But the question is whether after the fall man remained the image of God simply in this formal sense, so that absolutely nothing remained of the image of God in the material sense.

“As our readers will understand, this conception is agreeable to the trend of thought of those who deny common grace. There is no room in their philosophical-theological system for the small remnants. According to them, the vessel is still there, but it is empty.

“If this conception is the right one, then our Reformed fathers erred when, following in the footsteps of Calvin, they made mention in Art. 14 of our Confession of ‘small remnants’. It is true, these remnants are small, they are totally polluted, they are held in unrighteousness—but they are nevertheless there. And they are sufficient to leave man without excuse.

“According to them (the Reformed fathers) the vessel is still here, and it also contains something, however negligible it may be.

“The fathers of Dordt have also stated wherein these ‘small remnants’ consist. They spoke, as was just said, of ‘the glimmerings 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.

“These are, it shall have to be admitted, not merely formal matters. Man has not simply a mind (formal), but also knowledge (material). Man has not simply a will (formal), but also discovers some regard for civic and ethical good (material).

“The conception that fallen man had retained something of the image of God merely in a formal sense, and that he is totally devoid of this image in material sense, is not in agreement with our Reformed confessions.

“It is now not our purpose to show that our fathers in the matter of the image of God and the small remains therefore, have accurately grasped the teachings of Scripture and established them in our Confession. This is the position from which we proceed in this case. We merely wanted to show that the old Reformed distinction between the image of God in the narrower and broader sense agrees better with our Reformed Confession than the new distinction between the image of God in the formal and in the material sense.” So far Zwier.

I set out with the remark that Zwier’s article is amazingly deceptive. One simply cannot refrain from asking, when reading an article of this character, whether its author actually believes in a coming judgment.

What is the case here? Let me explain. In setting forth our position in respect to the matter of common grace and related subjects, Rev. Hoeksema let it be known that he prefers the phraseology “Image of God in the material sense” and “image of God in the formal sense” above that of “image of God in the restricted or narrower sense” and “image of God in the broader sense.” Zwier felt constrained to criticize Rev. Hoeksema’s preference. And, of course, we have no objection to his having done so. That was his privilege. Our grievance concerns Zwier’s tactics. In criticizing the terms or expressions “God’s image in the formal sense” and “God’s image in the material sense” Zwier tells his readers that he deals with these terms as Hoeksema employs them, that is, as to the contents which he gives to them. Let me prove this. In the above excerpt, the following paragraph occurs, “As our readers will understand, this conception is agreeable to the trend of thought of those who deny common grace. There is no room in their philosophical system for the 'small remnants’. According to them, the vessel is still there, but it is empty.” What Zwier virtually tells his readers in this paragraph is this, “My readers, according to the opponents of common grace, the vessel 'the image of God in the formal sense' contains not the oil of the ‘small remnants’, that is, the expression “image of God in the formal sense” as employed by Hoeksema, signifies merely fallen man’s mind and will, but not the ‘small remnants’, thus not natural man’s knowledge, light of reason, his discovering some regard for external deportment.” Is Zwier telling the truth here? He is not. Fact is, that the expression “image of God in the formal sense” as employed by the opponents of common grace, signifies not merely natural man’s mind but also the “small remnants” and thus natural knowledge and volition, in a word, the light of reason. If our conception of the natural man were what Zwier says it is, then this man would be standing out in our minds as a monstrosity, as an “onding”, as a creature that is neither man nor beast; for even a beast has knowledge. He knows his master’s crib. Zwier here lays it on too thick, so thick that the thoughtful reader, concentrating on Zwier’s writing, will exclaim, “It can’t simply be true!”

What was the moral necessity under which Zwier found himself, when he addressed himself to the task of criticizing the expressions “The image of God in the formal sense.” “The image of God in the material sense”? Since he tells his readers that these expressions or terms were coined by Rev. Hoeksema (and this is the truth), and further that he criticises these terms as Hoeksema uses them, that is, as to the content which the last named gives to these terms, Zwier, of course, was under the moral necessity of doing precisely what he tells his readers that he was doing, namely, criticize these terms to the content given them by Rev. Hoeksema. But did Zwier do what he gives his readers to understand that he was doing? Absolutely not. That is what Zwier does: having given his readers to understand that he criticizes these expressions as to the content given them by Hoeksema, he deliberately ignores this content and gives to these terms a content as he, Zwier, pleases. Thereupon he turns to his readers and exclaims, “Take notice, my readers. This is the expression to which the opponents of common grace give the preference! And what does the expression, as they use it signify? Fallen man’s mind and will but no more. Thus not the “remnants”. This is the speech that Zwier directs to his readers. Amazing! One cannot help asking, “How dare the man lie so”?

But there is more to say. Zwier not only makes himself guilty of the doing just described, he even goes a step further. He tells his readers that the opponents of common grace deny the very existence of the small remnants. Attend once more to this statement from his pen, “There is no room in their philosophical-theological system for the “small remnants”. Amazing! As if we deny the existence of these small remnants! As if the controversy between us and the brethren from our side turns on these small remnants as such.

And now Zwier is ready to deliver what he, I suppose, considered to be his knock-out blow. Having ignored the content of the term “image of God in the formal sense” given by Rev. Hoeksema, having given to this term or expression a content as it pleased him, having ascribed this term as to the content which he, Zwier, gave to it to the Rev. Hoeksema, the Rev. Daniel Zwier hereupon once more turns to his readers (he does this not literally but very actually by implication) and exclaims: “Compare now this preferred expression “image of God in the formal sense” as to the content given it by the opponents of common grace (Zwier should say, as to the content given it by Zwier), with our Confession, and mark well, my readers the conflict. Our Confessions speak of the small remnants, retained by man after the fall, and of the natural light whereby he retains some knowledge of God; but the preferred expression, as to the content the opponents of common grace give to it, signifies merely fallen man’s mind and will and thus not the “small remnants”. Do you not see, my readers, how these men have departed in their thinking from the truth of God’s word as set forth by our Reformed creeds? Can there any longer be any doubt in your minds that these men are what we all along said they were, namely, heretics and schismatics?” Such are Zwier’s tactics.

Some of the closing paragraphs of Zwier’s writings read, “By this doctrine of the small remnants, we give no support to the Arminians. This reproach we must continually hear.”

Zwier knows that this last statement of his is not true. He cannot point to a single statement from our pen, which asserts that the term “small remnants” is necessarily expressive of Arminian heresy. Zwier purposely refrains from presenting to his readers the real issue in the present controversy. This issue is not whether that “vessel” (image of God in the formal sense) still contains small remnants. It does, to be sure. This, as Zwier himself knows, we have always maintained. The real issue is whether this vessel still contains some of man’s original holiness, and thus whether the terms small remnants and natural light as used by our Reformed fathers are representative of a doctrine according to which there still operates in fallen man, by virtue of his having been created in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, a principle of true holiness. This is the issue. And our stand is, as Zwier well knows, that man is actually and thus not merely in the abstract totally depraved so that all his works are sin. And this is what the exponents of common grace, Zwier and his colleagues, deny. Their position is that the vessel still contains some of man’s original holiness. Let me prove now that this statement of mine is correct. Wrote the Rev. H. J. Kuiper in his “The Three Points of Common Grace”, “This in particular is the bone of contention in the present discussion. Those who deny Common Grace freely admit that there is civic righteousness (thus, according to Kuiper we freely admit that fallen man has the small remnants. Zwier, take notice). But they deny that it is righteousness in God’s sight (Exactly G.M.O.) . . . .This then is the question (I am still quoting Kuiper): Is everything which the unregenerate does sin and nothing but sin in the sight of God (Zwier, take notice once more. This is indeed the question, according to one of your very own colleagues. Are you, Zwier, unaware that this is the real question? If so, where have you been all this time? Had you not better lay down your pen until you become thoroughly aware what it’s all about?).”

Kuiper continues, “To put the question still more pointedly: Does God in His Word ever speak of anything which the sinner does as good.” And what is Kuiper’s reply to his own question? As follows, “Our answer is yes.”

This is Kuiper’s reply. “Yes, the Bible does say that the sinner does good—good in the sight of God. Holy Writ does not teach that everything the sinner does is sin and nothing but sin.” Now if Kuiper is not here telling his readers that the works of depraved men are relatively holy, than words have no meaning. So you now see, Rev. Zwier, this is indeed the issue. It is the view of the exponents of common grace that the vessel contains a remnant of man’s original holiness. And this we deny.

The Rev. Zwier will perhaps be wondering, when he reads this, whether I failed to notice in his article that particular paragraph in which he declares with great emphasis, “van de ware kennis God, gerechtigheid en heiligheid is er niets, adsolute niets in den gevallen mensch overgebleven. We belijden zonder eenige voorbehoud de algeheele verdorvenheid van den niatuurlijken mensch.”

Yes, I took cognizance of this paragraph. But I also took cognizance of the paragraph that follows which reads, “Toch is er, volgens de Gereformeerde opvatting, en we gelooven, dat deze op Gods woord gegrond is, nog iets van het beeld Gods in den ruimeren zin in den mensch bewaard gebleven, “eenig licht der natuur. ...”

Mark that little word Toch. It speaks volumes. Man is totally depraved certainly, toch, still, yet. . . . This little word toch pits the paragraph which it introduces against the paragraph immediately preceding, and thus causes the two paragraphs to set forth two contrary moods of thought, so that the statement, “Toch is er nog iets van het beeld Gods in den ruimeren zin in den mensch bewaard gebleven,” is indeed equivalent to the statement, “toch is er iets van die oorspron kelijke gerechtigheid en heiligheid in den gevallen mensch overgebleven.”

Thus, according to Zwier, there belongs to the image of God “in den ruimeren zin” some of man’s original holiness, and this of necessity if man has actually retained the image of God in “ruimeren zin”. Consider that according to this term what was retained is a broadening out of what was originally possessed, namely, God’s image in the “engeren zin”. And herewith we have disclosed the reason of our rejecting this terminology and also the reason of Zwier’s cleaving to it. Fact is, then, that in the writing under consideration, Zwier says two things, namely, that man is totally depraved and yet that the vessel contains some of man’s original holiness. The issue upon which our controversy turns is indeed, “Does fallen man perform works that are truly good,—good in the sight of God? This is at least one of the issues.

In fine, let the reverend Zwier cease his equivocating. Let him, like an upright man, concentrate on the real issue and cease misrepresenting his opponents.

*(to be continued)*