

THE STANDARD *Bearer* A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

VOLUME XXII

SEPTEMBER 15, 1946 — Grand Rapids, Michigan

NUMBER 22

MEDITATION

With Whom We Have To Do

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Heb. 4:12, 13.

For. . . .

For the word of God is quick, and powerful. . . .

And this little word *for* here signifies that we should pay special attention to the statement that follows, because it contains a powerful incentive to heed the exhortation that precedes, and to obey it with fear and trembling.

That exhortation, which in some form or other occurs repeatedly in the epistle to the Hebrews, is that we must labor, that we should give diligence to enter into the rest that now, in the new dispensation, still remains for the people of God.

It is addressed to those that have a place in the house of God, the house over which the Son, the glorious Apostle and High Priest of our profession, is anointed as Lord. In that house His voice is heard. And always that Voice demands of those that dwell in the house of God that they shall give diligence to enter into the rest of God, into His covenant. For the covenant of God is the rest that even now remaineth. And, truly, into that covenant the people of God have entered. Principally they have been received into the rest of God. Yet, here in this world, and in the body of this death, they are still in the midst of the unrest of sin and death. Their life is in a tension

Constantly they must fight the good fight. Always they must give diligence to enter into the rest, to fight against sin, to crucify their old nature, to forsake the world, to walk in a new and holy life.

Give diligence, therefore!

Labor to enter into the rest of God!

Very painstakingly, with holy fear and trembling, work out your own salvation!

For, in the house of God, you are in the sphere of the Word of God!

And that Word of God is quick and powerful!

It is sharper than any twoedged sword; it pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow.

It discerns the thoughts and intents of your very heart.

All is exposed and naked before His eyes!

With Him we have to do!

Wonderful Word of God!

Wonderful, principally, because that Word is not a mere *it*, but a *He*: with whom we have to do!

Through this Word we have to do with Him that speaks it!

Thus, no doubt, this marvellous passage of Holy Writ must be understood.

Men have thought upon these amazing words, and pondered upon the question what might be meant by this Word of God that has such mighty power; and variously they have answered this question.

It has been concluded that this Word of God is the gospel, as it is contained in the Holy Scriptures, and as it is preached by and in the church of Christ in the world. Is not the author of this epistle speaking of the house of God, where the voice of the Son of God is heard? And is not the Bible the Word of God as it is delivered to the church, and as it is proclaimed and heard in the house of God? To this Word of God, then, as we have it in the Scriptures, and as it is preached by men, the text must have reference.

Nor can it be denied that there is truth in this interpretation.

For, indeed, there is no Word of God heard in the church except that which is proclaimed according to the Scriptures.

Yet, on the other hand, there is no less truth in the objections that are raised against this view by those who insist that the text here does not refer to the Bible, nor to the preaching of the gospel as such by mere men, but to the eternal Logos, the Word of God become flesh, crucified and raised from the dead, and exalted at the right hand of God, the quickening Spirit, the living and mighty and glorious Christ Himself. For, however true it may be that the contents of the Holy Scriptures, and the contents of the Word preached according to the Scriptures always judge and discern the thoughts and intents of the heart, it cannot be said of either that Bible or that preaching, apart from the living Christ, that it is quick and powerful and piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit. If merely the preaching of the Word by men were meant, what is said of its piercing and discerning and judging power, could not be applied to it. Men hear the Word preached, and criticize it, judge it, oppose it, cast it from them in disdain, refuse to become doers of the Word. And, besides, does not the text itself sufficiently make plain that the reference cannot be to the Bible, nor to the preaching of the Word by mere men, not to the personal Word Himself, when it declares that there is not any creature that is not manifest in *His* sight, but all things are naked and opened before the eyes of *Him* with *Whom* we have to do?

And yet, without the Word of God as revealed in Holy Writ, and as proclaimed in and by the Church, there is no Word that is heard.

No Word that is heard without the Scriptures; no mighty Word without the living Christ that speaks.

The two must be combined.

They are inseparable.

Separate the personal Word, the Son of God become flesh, Who died and was raised, and Who is glorified in the highest heavens, from His Word in the Scriptures, as it is preached in the church, and what you have left is a word of man, powerless to pierce the heart of man, to convict and to save.

And again, despise the Scriptures, and separate them from the living Christ, and you must be hopelessly lost in the thick fog of false mysticism, in which you may hear the siren's song of many voices, but in which the voice of the living Lord does not penetrate.

In the house of God we have to do, not with a mere "it" but with a mighty "He".

The Word of God is, indeed, the Son of God speaking.

Its contents we have, to be sure, in the Holy Scriptures; and it is proclaimed through the preach-

ing of the Word by men. Nevertheless, it is He, the living Lord, Who died and was raised, Who received the promise of the Holy Ghost, and Who, through and in that Spirit dwells in His own house, that speaks, and Whose voice is heard in the church.

It is the sharp, twoedged sword that proceeds out of His mouth!

See that we despise not Him that speaketh!

Labor to enter into the rest!

Mighty Word of God!

Quick and powerful it is!

And "quick" signifies *living*!

With heavy emphasis, according to the original, this virtue of the Word of God is mentioned first: *living* is the Word!

And because it is living, vibrating with the life of Him that speaks it, it is powerful, that is, energetic: the Word is a current of living power.

It is not like the word of mere man, that merely communicates to you the thoughts and desires of its subject, but is powerless to lord it over you; that tries to persuade you, but must wait for your consent; that attempts to convince you, but must submit itself to your judgment and determination; it is living and energetic. Never does it reach you in vain. Always it accomplishes that unto which it is sent. It saves or it damns; it quickens or it kills; it brings you to contrition or it hardens. Whether its effect in and upon you is that you, brokenheartedly, humble yourself in dust and ashes, or that, in the vain imagination of your haughty heart, you reject and oppose it, and raise your rebellious fist against Him that speaketh,—always it is the effect of that living and energetic Word.

That Word darkens and illuminates, it blinds and it gives sight to the blind, it hides and it reveals.

It is a savor of death unto death, as well as a savor of life unto life.

It is a quickening flame, and a consuming fire.

Vibrant it is with the power of eternal election, and of reprobation.

Moreover, it is the Word of your Lord, and such it judges you; and as a judging Word it penetrates into your inmost being, into the most secret recesses of your heart, to expose them to the light of sovereign and most indubitable righteousness and justice, to discern them, and to pronounce upon them the judgment from which there is no appeal!

It is compared to a sharp, twoedged sword, and found to be sharper than it. Without respect of persons, this Word cuts through the outer surface of your appearance, of the conventional words you speak, of your lying and deceitful smiles and tears, of your outward actions and apparently good deeds, in order to

penetrate into your deepest existence, your thoughts, your desires, your aspirations, your real purposes and motives, into the heart, whence are the issues of life. Into the finest and tiniest fibres of your nature it cuts, to distinguish, to separate, to expose them. For it pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and in each of these it finds its way into the "joints and marrow," that is, into each secret inclination, and desire, and motive. There is in us a life that is related to this present world in all its relationships, a soul-life, with its thinking and willing, its seeing and hearing, its love and hatred, its joy and sorrow, its pleasure and pain; and there is in us that which is related to God, a spirit-life, also with its joy and sorrow, its pleasure and displeasure, its love and its hatred. And into the "joints and marrow" of each of these this Word of God pierces, distinguishing and exposing whether your joy is joy in God or mere joy in the things of this life, whether your repentance is truly sorrow after God, or mere sorrow of the world, whether you seek the things that are above, or the things that are on the earth.

And always it judges!

For it discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart.

For the heart has its thoughts, and the heart has its considerations, its intents, its purposes and motives.

The heart is the deepest in man, from an ethical, spiritual viewpoint. It is the center of his life and activity as a moral being, created to be God's image-bearer, and to be motivated in all his life and acts by the love of God. From the heart are the issues of life as far as their direction is concerned with relation to the will of God. There are found the deepest answers to the questions concerning the reason and purpose of all your actions: why and unto what end you laugh or weep, you sing or curse, you labor and struggle, you pray and give alms, you worship and do well. In your heart is found the answer to the question: what is your worth in relation to God and man?

The thoughts and intents of the heart!

Discerned they are, one and all, by the Word of God.

That Word is your Judge!

In the light of the perfect will of God, that Word makes separation between the truth and the lie, light and darkness, righteousness and unrighteousness; and pronounces God's own verdict upon the hidden things of the heart!

And it knows no respect of persons.

Nor is there any appeal from its judgment.

Powerful Word of God!

As we dwell in the house of God, the Word of God comes to us.

Always it speaks to us, through the Holy Scriptures, through the preaching, through instruction in the catechism room, through personal exhortation and admonition. In the sphere of that Word we live. From earliest childhood we carry it in our mind. It is always with us. Whether we sit in our house, or walk by the way; whether we labor in the factory or sit in our office; whether we lie down or rise up,—always that Word of God is with us, living, energetic, penetrating, piercing into the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, of the joints and marrow, discerning, judging, condemning, justifying, quickening, killing. . . .

And through that Word, as it is spoken to us, as it reaches us, and is always with us, we have to do with *Him*, with the Speaker, the living Christ, the Lord of the house of God!

With Him, the Word, the Son of the living God!

And we have to do with Him, exactly because His Word is the Word of *the Lord*. It is not a philosophy that is submitted to our criticism; nor a mere invitation we may kindly accept or politely decline; nor even a mere doctrine which we may learn to know, and to the truth of which we may consent; His Word is a Word of life and death: it concerns us personally. Through this Word we have to do with Him as our Lord, Who owns us because He purchased us with the price of His precious blood; Whose servants we are, Whose mind is our mind, and Whose will is our law; Who is responsible for us, and to Whom we are responsible. We have to do with Him, the Son of God, because He demands obedience, the obedience of faith and love, that in His house we may walk as children of light.

With Him, Himself we have to do!

See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh!

His speech is clear: give diligence to enter into the rest; love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your mind, and with all your soul, and with all your strength; forsake the world, crucify your old nature; walk in a new and holy life!

And say not in your heart, that you can hide from Him with Whom we have to do, or walk in His house with a lie in your right hand. For there is no creature that is not manifest in His sight, but all things are naked and opened unto His eyes!

Give diligence therefore, to work out your own salvation.

With fear and trembling.

As before His eyes!

With Him we have to do!

H. H.

The Standard Bearer

Semi-Monthly, except Monthly in July and August

Published by

The Reformed Free Publishing Association
1463 Ardmore St., S. E.

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Communications relative to subscription should be addressed to MR. GERRIT PIPE, 1463 Ardmore St., S. E., Grand Rapids, Michigan. All Announcements, and Obituaries must be sent to the above address and will not be placed unless the regular fee of \$1.00 accompanies the notice.

(Subscription price \$2.50 per year)

Entered as Second Class mail at Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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EDITORIALS

Decision In The Case Of Dr. Clark

Our readers will, no doubt, be interested to know the decision reached by the General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church *in re* the "Complaint" against the licensure and ordination of Dr. Gordon H. Clark by the Presbytery of Philadelphia, a case we discussed rather elaborately in our paper more than a year ago.

A year ago, the Twelfth General Assembly appointed a committee to investigate the doctrinal implications of the "Complaint". This committee had finished its work, and presented its report to the Thirteenth General Assembly that convened last May.

A few weeks previous to the convocation of the Assembly a copy of the report prepared on this matter by the committee was sent to me, presumably by some member of the committee. The sender may hereby accept my hearty thanks for the courtesy.

A majority and minority report were offered, the latter by only one member of the committee, Dr. John Murray. It is evident that both the majority and the minority section of the committee took their work very seriously, made a thorough investigation of the matter, and presented their conclusions upon the basis of rather elaborate and, in the main, sound argumentation. The majority report, while expressing doubt with regard to some of Dr. Clark's replies to questions put to him in his examination by the Presbytery of Philadelphia, denied the arguments of the "Complaint" and found no grounds for condemning the action of the Presbytery in licensing Dr. Clark. The report of the minority does not differ radically with that of the majority. It does not take the position that Dr. Clark errs or that the Presbytery of Philadelphia should have found sufficient ground in the examination to refuse his licensure. It rather holds that the examination of Dr. Clark was insufficient to decide upon his licensure and ordination, and that the Presbytery erred in not continuing the examination till sufficient clarity was obtained. Both reports together cover forty long mimeographed sheets, and required three hours to read to the Assembly.

As to the action of the Thirteenth General Assembly in this case, we quote from *The Presbyterian Guardian*:

"The assembly defeated a motion to find grounds for complaint against the presbytery's action in approving Dr. Clark's examination in theology an licensing him to preach the gospel; it passed a motion finding grounds for complaint in the matter of the ordination of Dr. Clark, since in this

action presbytery had not observed the provisions of the Form of Government which call for a period of time between licensure and ordination."

The latter part of this decision refers to some rule in the Form of Government of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church which provides for a certain period of time to elapse between licensure and ordination, and even for a second examination before the ordination, if circumstances require this. The decision reads literally as follows:

"The Assembly finds that there is ground for complaint against the Presbytery of Philadelphia, and declares that the Presbytery of Philadelphia on its meeting of July 7, 1944, erred in the decision to deem the examination for licensure sufficient for ordination and in the decision to ordain Dr. Gordon H. Clark at a subsequent meeting of the Presbytery called for that purpose, in that the Presbytery of Philadelphia failed to observe the plain intent of the provisions of the Form of Government XIV, 1; XV, 11, in circumstances which made the propriety of these provisions apparent."

The meaning of these decisions, therefore, is that the "Complaint" is denied, Dr. Clark is maintained in his office as minister, and that the Presbytery of Philadelphia is rebuked for its improper haste to ordain Dr. Clark. The clerk of the General Assembly was instructed to inform the Presbytery of Philadelphia of these decisions, and added to this information the following:

"This Assembly also implores the Presbytery of Philadelphia to make acknowledgement of these errors and of its failure thereby to preserve the peace of the church, and to report accordingly to the Fourteenth General Assembly."

The Presbyterian Guardian also informs us that:

"When the Assembly defeated the motion to find ground for complaint in the action of sustaining Dr. Clark's examination in theology, and proceeded to license him, a number of commissioners asked that their affirmative vote be recorded, and these commissioners, together with others, later filed a formal protest against these decisions of the Assembly."

While, in the main, we agree with the decisions of the Assembly on grounds sufficiently set forth in our discussion of the "Complaint" more than a year ago, we think it regrettable that the issues involved were not always clearly presented to and determined by the Thirteenth Assembly. Especially is this true with re-

gard to the matter of the question concerning the so-called "general offer of salvation well-meant on the part of God also to the reprobate." The "Complaint" alleged, and not without ground, that Dr. Clark denied this well-meaning offer of salvation to the reprobate.

The committee itself (Majority Report) held rather definite views on this matter, which, in our opinion, are not Dr. Clark's. Their conception is expressed in the following paragraph of their report:

"Such passages as Ezekiel 18:23 and 33:11 indicate that God not only delights in the repentance of the actually penitent but also has that benevolence towards the wicked whereby He is pleased that they should repent. 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. To put this negatively, God does not take delight or pleasure in the death of the wicked. On the contrary, His delight is in mercy. God desires that the reprobate exercise that repentance which they will never exercise and desires for them the enjoyment of good they will never enjoy. And not only so, He desires the exercise of that which they are foreordained not to exercise and He desires for them the enjoyment of good they are foreordained not to enjoy." p. 27.

More boldly the contradiction could not well be stated. Unless in this paragraph the term "foreordination" is to be understood in the Arminian sense, viz., in the sense of reprobation in the ground of foreseen unbelief, this paragraph carries the contradiction into God's very nature: He foreordained what He dislikes; His decree is contrary to His good pleasure. This implies that He must be eternally filled with sorrow over the condition of the wicked in hell. In our opinion, this is not the teaching of Holy Writ, it is surely not Reformed, but fundamentally Arminian; and we cannot imagine that Dr. Clark would subscribe to this statement. And as to this latter point, the committee itself expresses doubt. We quote from the report:

"It also appears that a question might be raised regarding the answer given by Dr. Clark in reference to the so-called paradox that exists in the offer of salvation to the reprobate: 'The solution to that paradox is the distinction between the outward public call and the actual call of the Holy Spirit. The call of the Spirit comes to God's elect only, I don't see a paradox there, it seems perfectly clear to me.' (T. 48:2-5).

"The Committee cannot regard this solution of the so-called paradox as an adequate explanation of the problem. The question was: how can God

make an offer of salvation to those that are fore-ordained to damnation? It does not explain the mystery of the co-existence of the full and free offer of salvation and foreordination to damnation to make the obviously necessary distinction between the outward and the inward call. For even after full recognition is given to the truth that God effectually calls only the elect the mystery of God's will in the offer of salvation to the reprobate still remains." p. 27.

And the Committee concludes its report as follows:

"The Committee has no zeal for the word 'paradox'. But the Committee believes that great mystery surrounds this matter. Even the reprobate are the objects of divine benevolence, compassion and loving kindness, not only in the gifts of this present life such as rain and sunshine, food and raiment, but also in the full and free overtures of God's grace in the gospel. This truth confronts us with the mystery of the divine will and the believer is overwhelmed with wonder at the unfathomable depths of the divine good pleasure. It may not indeed be said that this mystery should 'bother' the believer. It may not even be said that it should cause difficulty for the believer or that the apprehension of this mystery must focus itself in the mind of the believer in the form of an apparent contradiction. But to aver that the distinction between the outward public call and the actual call of the Spirit solves what has been called a 'paradox' is, in the judgment of the Committee, to betray a lack of appreciation of the problem involved." p. 28.

We consider it deplorable, not that Dr. Clark was maintained in his office as minister, in spite of the fact that he, according to our conviction, does not agree with the sentiments expressed by the Committee; but that these sentiments were expressed on the floor of the Assembly, and, apparently, tacitly assumed to be correct and Reformed or Calvinistic. For they are most certainly not! It is thus, when "current opinions" are openly expressed in an official gathering, and tacitly, without further investigation and without challenge or debate, accepted as the truth, that views, which are, nevertheless errors, come to be looked upon as official dogma's of the church.

Whether or not the Orthodox Presbyterian Church wants to adopt the views expressed by the Committee or not, is not the question now. But they should not be tacitly accepted.

We deplore that even Dr. Clark, apparently, did not challenge them.

Perhaps, however, the matter may still be clarified at the next General Assembly, for the Thirteenth Assembly passed the following resolution:

"Whereas the purity and the peace of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church are of the deepest concern to the General Assembly, and whereas 'to the General Assembly. . . belongs the power deciding in all controversies regarding doctrine. . . ' (Form of Government XI, 5), and whereas there has appeared to be a difference in our church concerning the Scriptural teaching pertaining to the doctrines of the incomprehensibility of God, the position of the intellect in relation to other faculties, the relation of divine sovereignty and human responsibility, and the free offer of the gospel, therefore be it resolved that this assembly appoint a committee consisting of Messrs. Murray, Clowney, R. Gray, W. Young, and Stonehouse, to study these doctrines in the light of Scripture and the Westminster Standards in relation to all expressions of views on these doctrines that have appeared or may appear in connection with the discussion of the complaint against the Presbytery of Philadelphia in the matter of the licensure and ordination of Dr. Gordon H. Clark, in order to clarify these matters, and report to the Fourteenth General Assembly."

We assure the present Committee of our profound interest in their labors, and would appreciate deeply to receive from them a copy of their report when it is ready.

H. H.

Correction: — Since, in my editorial of Sept. 1, the word VITRIOLIC was consistently spelled VITROLIC, even in the heading, it may not be superfluous to call attention to this error.

H. H.

CLASSIS WEST

will meet in regular session, the Lord willing, September 25, 1946 in the Protestant Reformed Church of Oskaloosa, Iowa, at 9:00 A. M. Delegates desiring lodging can contact Mr. G. Ryken, R. F. D. No. 6, Oskaloosa, Iowa. Since the Synod of 1946 again referred the report of the Psalter Committee to the Classes for further study, all delegates are urged to take your Acts of Synod 1945 with you.

Rev. C. Hanko,
Stated Clerk.

Attention! Ministers Classis East—Due to the Conference with the Ref. Church in the U. S. the Board has decided to postpone the October Conference of Eastern Ministers. The next meeting will be at the time of the January Classis. W. HOFMAN, Sec'y.

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

Part Two.
Of Man's Redemption

LORD'S DAY XX

3.

The Meaning Of Pentecost

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of the exalted Christ, was poured out into the Church, and through that Spirit Christ Himself, with all the fulness of spiritual blessings He had merited by His suffering, death and perfect obedience, returned to the Church, and the latter was translated from the old dispensation into the new. And this significant change implies, first, that the Church was led out of the dimness of the shadows into the clear light of the revelation of reality; secondly, that the Church was delivered from the bondage of the law into the liberty of the sons of God; and, thirdly, that the Church broke through the boundaries of Jewish nationalism to become ecumenic and be established among all the nations of the earth.

That is the meaning of Pentecost.

When we say that it was the Church that thus received the Spirit, and that was translated thereby from the old into the new dispensation, it will be evident that we stand opposed to the view which maintains that the Church came into existence on that first new dispensational day of Pentecost, and was given birth by the outpouring of the Spirit of Christ.

Especially the modern dispensationalist insists that on Pentecost something wholly new came into existence. In the old dispensation there was no Church. Israel is the kingdom-people. And when their promised King is come, and they receive Him not, but reject Him, nailing Him to the accursed tree, they are sent into exile among the nations, until, in the end of the ages, God will return in mercy to them, they shall accept their King, and be His kingdom-people for ever. In the interim, however, God gathers His Church, which is the Body of Christ. This Church has its beginning on the day of Pentecost, and will be gathered until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in, after which Israel will be restored. According to this view, therefore, the line of God's work does not run through from Israel to the Church of the new dispensation, but is temporarily broken off, in order that a new work may be begun, and a new people be gathered. The day

of Pentecost marks the birth of the Church.

Nothing could be farther from the truth as clearly taught in Holy Writ.

For, first of all, the promise of the Spirit, given in the old dispensation, was not for a new kind of people that God would gather in the future, but for Israel. By the mouth of His servant Isaiah, Jehovah had promised: "Yet now hear, O Jacob, my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen: Thus saith the Lord that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: And they shall spring as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." Isa. 44:1-5. Let us note: 1. That in this passage there is a promise of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit; 2. That this promise is definitely for Israel: "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring"; and 3. That the result of this gift of the Spirit is that the Church shall be gathered from among all nations: Israel's offspring shall spring up among the grass, as willows by the water courses, and while they acknowledge the Lord as their God, they shall surname themselves with the name of Israel.

And if there can be any doubt that, in the above passage from Isaiah the reference is to the promise that was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, no such doubt can possibly exist with respect to the passage in Joel 2:28-32: "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call." Here, too, the promise refers to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. And in this instance, there can be no doubt about this, for the simple reason that, in his first pentecostal sermon, the apostle Peter quotes this passage, proclaiming that "this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." Acts 2:16ff. Again, this promise is not to a new people, but to Israel, their sons and their daughters.

ters. And, finally, here also the promise of the Holy Spirit is connected with that of the ingathering of the Church from all nations. For it is thus that the apostle Paul interprets the words: "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered." Rom. 10:13.

The point is that, according to these passages, Israel, the Church of the old dispensation, on the day of Pentecost, received the promise of the Holy Ghost, and, from there on, continues as the Church of the new dispensation, among all nations.

And this is also the teaching of the New Testament. Suffice it to refer to just one passage, the meaning of which is perfectly clear. In Gal. 4:1-6, the apostle writes: "Now I say, that the heir, as long as he is child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be Lord of all; But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because we are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Notice especially that, in this passage the Church of the old dispensation is compared to a small child, that is placed under tutors; while the Church of the new dispensation is the fullgrown son, that is free, and need be treated as a servant no more. Now, there can be no question that, even as the small child is one and the same person as the adult into which it has grown, so the Church of the old dispensation, under the law, is the same as that of the New Testament, free from the yoke of the law. And to this Church, that was once under the law, but is now grown up, the Spirit of God's Son is given. The line runs through. Not a new people is born on the day of Pentecost, but by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the Church passes from the old dispensation into the new.

That is the significance of Pentecost.

It was but proper, therefore, that the outpouring of the Spirit should take place in Jerusalem, that center of the Church of the old dispensation. Only, that Church was no longer represented by priesthood and temple, and by those that sought to continue the bondage of the law, but by the one hundred and twenty that, under the leadership of the apostles were gathered in the upper room, and waited for the fulfillment of the promise. Already the old city of God had lost its significance. Jerusalem was no longer on earth, but above. And from heaven it was to descend, through the Spirit of Christ, into the hearts of those that constituted the true Israel, the Church of the living God.

Through the coming and operation of this Spirit

of the glorified Christ, the Church passed from the shadows into reality.

In the old dispensation, the Church lived by the promise, and especially under the Mosaic institution, the promise assumed the form of the shadows. In the new dispensation the shadows passed away to be replaced by reality. No doubt, also in the days of the Old Testament, the elect were saved. They were regenerated and called out of death into life. And they were saved by faith. Yet, the contents of their salvation were poor in comparison with the riches of grace now revealed and bestowed upon the Church of the New Testament. Reality had not yet come. Christ was not yet. The full light of His revelation did not yet shine: His significance and riches were only dimly apprehended. The blood of atonement had not yet been shed, and the forgiveness of sins, and the adoption unto sons, and the eternal righteousness we have in Christ's death and resurrection, could only be apprehended through the sacrifices and shadows. In the land of Canaan they saw the fulfillment of the promise, a shadow of the heavenly Canaan of the kingdom of heaven; yet a most miserable shadow it often proved to be. Jerusalem was the city of God, and it was the chief joy of the true believers; but it was still in bondage with her children, and frequently it assumed the character of Sodom and Gomorrah. The temple was the dwellingplace of God among them, but the way into the inner sanctuary was still closed; and, besides, also that central dwellingplace of God could be, and often was changed into a den of robbers.

By those shadows, the Church of the old dispensation lived, and were saved in hope. There was, indeed, an operation and revelation of Christ, but only through the shadows. They stood, as it were, before the still closed door of the kingdom of heaven; and on the door there were representations, pictures of the riches that were within. And the Spirit of God in the old dispensation, through prophets and priests, interpreted to the people of the old dispensation these pictures, and fixed their faith upon them, causing them to live in the hope that presently the door would be opened, and they would become heirs of the reality of the riches of salvation in the kingdom of heaven. With the coming of John the Baptist, and still more with the coming of Christ, we might almost say that the door is ajar: the kingdom of heaven is come near. John stands on the threshold, and the mighty of his day, and of Jesus' day try to get their foot in between the door, and take the kingdom of heaven by storm. Yet, the door is not opened, till the Lord has died, God reconciled us with Himself, raised Him from the dead, received Him up into glory, fulfilled unto Him the promised Spirit, and in that Spirit the glorious Christ returned unto His Church, to realize in her all the riches of salvation. Now the shadows are needed no

more: the body is come. In the Spirit, we are united with the living Lord, by faith, and receive out of Him the fulness of the riches of salvation, even grace for grace. The covenant is realized, the way into the inner sanctuary is revealed, and we have access to the Father, without the intermediation of an earthly tabernacle or a human priest. And we all, with open face, beholding in the mirror of His full revelation the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. And as to the glorified Church in heaven,—for it also had its Pentecost, and also in her the Spirit was poured out,—the accuser of the brethren has been cast down, and they are now for ever with the Lord.

That is the meaning of Pentecost

And as the shadows passed away to make room for reality, the Church was delivered from the bondage of the law, to pass into the state of the perfect liberty of the sons of God, in principle at least.

The entire religious life of Israel in the old dispensation was under the law. The child was, indeed, placed under tutors and governors, until the time appointed of the Father. Step by step, the way of the old dispensational saint was prescribed for him. The law held him in bondage continually. It directed his life. The law enjoined him just what sacrifices to bring for different occasions, how to offer them and where; when and how to celebrate the holy days and the sabbaths; how to fast and what tithes to bring. In detail the Mosaic law told him what to do, and how to serve God. Moreover, it should not be overlooked that under the law the old dispensational saint was dependent on, and in bondage to the entire Mosaic institution. Only in the land of Canaan could he live his life. Only in the central sanctuary in Jerusalem could he offer his sacrifices according to the law. From the Church institute he could not sever himself. He was dependent upon prophet, priest, and king, to live his religious life under the law. The prophet must inform him concerning the will of Jehovah. To the priest he must bring his sacrifices, firstfruits, and tithes. Upon the king he was dependent for war and for peace. In other words, he could not keep the law, except through the mediation of men. And if those that were officially anointed to function as leaders, as prophets, priests, or kings, under the Mosaic institution, were wicked, the entire church suffered and groaned under the heavy curse of the law. Then the temple was defiled, the law was trampled under foot, the land was filled with idols, the false prophets abounded, the kings became tyrants, lording it over the people, and filling the streets of Jerusalem with innocent blood. And the wrath of God was revealed from heaven, the land, flowing with milk and honey when the people walked in the statutes of Jehovah, became more accursed than any other land: foreign

powers were raised up against God's people to chastise them; and the whole church received double for all her sins. Nor could the remnant according to the election of grace, the true church, initiate a reformation, and separate from the false. They were inseparably connected with the institution under the law.

And thus the law became an unbearable yoke. How often, in the history of Israel and Judah, did the reprobate, wicked element predominate and have control over the Church as instituted under the Mosaic law! How repeatedly did official Jerusalem make itself worthy of the stinging rebuke the Lord directed to them toward the end of His ministry: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Matt. 23:37.

All this was changed through the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The law is fulfilled. Christ is the end of the law. The Church is no longer in bondage to the law, but has entered into the state of free sons. Jerusalem is now above; she is the mother of us all; and she is free. Not only is there no longer any external law of precepts, prescribing for us just how and when to worship, enjoining us to keep days and months, to pay tithes and to bring sacrifices; but the Church is no longer inseparably bound to any institution, nor dependent on anyone except Christ Himself to exercise her religious life. It is true, also in the new dispensation, the Lord has instituted His Church, and, for the upbuilding of the saints, He gave unto her apostles, prophets, evangelists, ministers, elders, and deacons. But, although these are given to the Church for the edifying of the body of Christ, this does not mean that believers are now wholly dependent upon an institution of men for the knowledge of the Lord, and for the proper functioning of their spiritual life. All have the Spirit. All have the unction of the Holy One; and they need not that any one teach them. And they no longer "teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord," for all know Him from the least to the greatest. And if a certain institution of the Church in the world becomes deformed, wicked men are in high places, the truth is corrupted, and the holy things of God's covenant are profaned, the Church, the true spiritual remnant, is in a position to exercise the office of believers, separate themselves from that false Church, and institute the true Church anew. From the state of bondage under the law, the Church has passed on into the state of freedom. For she has not received as spirit of bondage again to fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby she cries: Abba, Father! Rom. 8:15.

And thus, through the outpouring of the Spirit of the glorified Lord, the limitations of the law being

removed, the Church has passed beyond the national boundaries of Israel, and is become truly ecumenic, international, universal. As long as the Church was under the law, she was necessarily limited to Israel, to the natural seed of Abraham. For even though this was never strictly maintained, and individuals from other nations occasionally became members of the Old Testament Church, this could only be accomplished by their being incorporated into the Jewish nation through the rite of circumcision. But in the new dispensation, the Spirit is poured out upon all flesh, and the covenant with Abraham now finds its members among all the nations of the world. "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." Rom. 10:12. And thus: "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Rom. 10:13. Through the pouring out of the Spirit the Church was placed in the proper position to carry out the injunction of her Lord: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Matt. 28: 19, 20.

This is the meaning of Pentecost!

H. H.

THROUGH THE AGES

The Fundamental Principles Of Reformed Church Polity

(Rev. G. Hoeksema and The Church Order)

We now come to our final basic principle of Reformed Church polity, the *binding power of classical and synodical decisions*. To exhibit in a more marked manner the unity of the body of Christ, the neighboring congregations organize to form a classis (synod). According to article 8 of our Church Order, a classis is a meeting of neighboring churches that respectively delegate a minister and an elder to meet at a certain place and time. Thus, a classis is an assembly of congregations, more definitely of consistories. But, though an assembly of consistories, the classis, as has been shown, is not a consistory, a ruling council with key-power. According to Reformed Church Polity, a classis is an assembly of members of a confederation of neighboring autonomous churches, which means that the churches represented on the classical assembly

are not parts of a larger whole, the classical church (collegianism, Heynsism) but autonomous members of a federation of churches, in a legal aspect, the equals, each of the other. Now a basic principle of Reformed Church Polity is, that the decisions of classis (synod) are binding, unless they be proved to militate against the Word of God. This principle is laid down in article 31 of the Church Order. In allowing itself to be bound by what the classis by a majority of votes decides, the consistory is not subjecting itself to a higher or broader judicial power, but it simply lives up to its agreement to the effect that, as an autonomous member of the federation, it will allow itself to be bound by classical and synodical decisions, with the reservation that these decisions be not in conflict with Holy Writ. And it makes this agreement because it knows it to be the will of God, that the unity of Christ's body be manifested, and for other subordinate reasons. A consistory that will not be bound by classical and synodical decisions, of which it must admit that they are not contrary to God's Word but are profitable for the churches, commits a great sin. And likewise the individual member in the church. Such a consistory walks disorderly, and if it will not repent, the classis eventually finds itself under the necessity of refusing to receive its delegation on the classis-meeting. It is precisely this principle of the binding power of classical and synodical decisions, as rightly interpreted, that forms the line of demarcation between truly Reformed Church Polity, and that polity that goes by the name of Congregationalism or Independentism. The classis of the Congregationalists, which is, rightly considered, not a classis but a mere conference, is a loose organization. It makes no decisions binding upon the churches.

The consistories then must allow themselves to be bound by classical and synodical decisions. They commit no small sin before God when they refuse to be bound by classical and synodical decisions the moment these decisions meet not with their favor and approval. The Consistory and Minister should exercise humility. Having unsuccessfully attempted to win the brethren for our way of thinking, we should acquiesce in what the major assembly has agreed upon by a majority of vote, in order that the unity of the body of Christ be manifested. This is God's will. The refusal to acquiesce is justifiable then only if it can be proved that the decision is contrary to the Word of God. In that case refusal to acquiesce in the decision is a solemn duty. This certainly is, must be, the plain teaching of Art. 31 of the Church Order of Dordrecht, "If any one complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to a major ecclesiastical assembly, and whatever may be agreed upon by a majority of vote shall be considered settled and binding,

unless it can be proved to conflict with the Word of God or with the articles of the Church Order, as long as they are not changed by a classical decision." This language is plain. Its meaning is obvious.

Yet the article has occasioned much debate as to just what it declares. The bone of contention was the phrase "unless it be proved" in the sentence "unless it be proved to conflict with the word of God". The question was just how this phrase is to be interpreted. There is the interpretation of the late Prof. Heyns, who, as was stated, for thirty years gave instruction in Church Polity in the seminary of the Christian Reformed churches. Heyns' interpretation has many exponents in the Christian Reformed communion of churches—exponents including also Rev. G. Hoeksema, who, in 1926, took it up for Heyns' interpretation in a brochure entitled, "Can a Classis Depose a Consistory?" This, in those days, was the burning question among the divines in the afore-said churches, the reason being that their Classis Grand Rapids West had just gone to deposing office bearers right and left; and the leaders in the churches who had advocated that action were determined to prove the action right, despite the fact that it is wrong. Among the fruits of that determination is also the brochure of Rev. G. Hoeksema just alluded to. Here follows his interpretation of Art. 31. Wrote the Reverend, "But let us proceed. The views we condemn are not only dangerous in practice, but they have also led to a strange distortion of the Church Order (of Dordrecht, he means. The views that the reverend considers dangerous are those that I present in this brief series of articles on the principles of Reformed Church Polity,—views including also and especially the one according to which the Classis cannot depose a consistory, the reason being that the deposition of office bearers is an exercise of key-power and that all key-power is concentrated in the Consistory. Mark you, the reverend says that these views are not only dangerous in practice, but that they have also led to a strange distortion of the Church Order. This is courageous language to use for anyone defending propositions that cannot be successfully defended). The reverend continues, "For appeal is made, in defence of these theories to several of its (the Church Order's) Articles, especially Articles 31, 36, and 84. . . . Let us first consider Article 31. As already stated in a previous chapter, the words, 'unless it be proved to conflict,' etc., are explained, 'unless someone considers it proved for himself that it conflicts'. Against this explanation (continues the reverend) we have the following objections: A. It is contrary to the very words themselves. 'Unless it be proved' simply cannot mean, 'unless some one consider it proved.' Then words no longer have any meaning. The words themselves, 'unless it be proved' have an objective, not a subjective, meaning. Two parties are implied, the one that seeks to prove something, and the party or court before whom proof must be brought, and who must be convinced. Only then can it be said that something is proved. And that is what the article demands: 'unless it be proved.' And then we have also this from the reverend's pen, 'Let us read Article 31 as it is. It guarantees the right of protest, so dear to every Protestant's heart. For the rest, it makes the decision of Classis and Synod binding on all, unless they can prove them un-Scriptural. That subjects the consistory to the real governing authority of Classis and synod. 'Upon that plain meaning of Article 31, Classis East also based its action against (H.) Hoeksema and his consistory. Once and again, as its official minutes show, it appealed to this Article and the interpretation we have given of it." Thus far G. Hoeksema, The reverend's interpretation of the phrase "unless it be proved" is obviously this: unless it, the decision of the major assembly,—Classis or Synod—be proved to this assembly to conflict with the word of God, that is to say, unless the aggrieved one—office bearer or consistory—who deems the decision anti-Scriptural and therefore turned protestant, succeeds in convincing the major assembly—Classis or Synod—that its decision militates against Holy Writ. Unless he does, such is the reasoning of the reverend, the major assembly, Classis or Synod, finds itself under the necessity of disciplining the recalcitrant office bearer by suspending and deposing him from his office. There is a reason then why G. Hoeksema construes as he does the phrase "unless it be proved". The two propositions. "The decision must be proven anti-Scriptural to the satisfaction of synod (classis)", and, "Synod must discipline" are actively related; if either is true, the other must be true. Hence, G. Hoeksema's interpretation of the phrase "unless it be proved" will not do at all. It is thoroughly hierarchical. It proceeds from the principle of thought that Synod (Classis) is vested with key power over the churches, and therefore suspends and deposes consistories, that refuse to be bound by its decisions, after vainly attempting to prove them anti-Scriptural to the *satisfaction of Synod*. Who then must be convinced? Not certainly Synod or Classis but the protestant himself, the aggrieved consistory or office bearer and the churches. This interpretation of the phrase in question proceeds from the principle of thought that the synod is not, as G. Hoeksema has it, an ecclesiastical court vested with key-power over the churches but an assembly of delegates of autonomous, confederate, churches and therefore legally the servant of these churches, to whom it is answerable for all its decisions. Hence, by all means, it is the protestant, the aggrieved one—the aggrieved consistory, office bearer, common member,

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vinced they act. The aggrieved consistory does. It voices its grievances against the decision privately and publicly by word spoken and written in order that all the churches may likewise be convinced. And as convinced, they instruct synod, their servant, again in session to rescind the decision.

G. Hoeksema even converts conceptionally discipline and excommunication into instruments of persecution. For the teaching that one encounters in his brochure is also that a consistory and its following, when, for conscience sake it withdraws itself from the communion of churches to which it belongs, to erect the institution of the church elsewhere must be penalized—that is the term he uses—by deposition and confiscation of its church property. .

In his desperate attempt to justify deposition of consistories by classis and synod, the reverend even goes so far as to hold the consistories and officebearers in the churches to the Formula of Subscription, *even in their difficulties and different sentiments respecting synodical and classical decisions*. On page 55 of the brochure we read. "If all our ministers and elders and deacons would just read the plain simple language of the Formula of Subscription they have solemnly signed, our problem would evaporate into thin air. 'Being ready always cheerfully to submit (the reverend is here quoting the Formula) to the judgment of Consistory, Classis, and Synod, under penalty in case of refusal to be by that very fact suspended from our office',—mark you, being ready always cheerfully to submit to the judgment of Classis and Synod *respecting all classical and synodical decisions*, the reverend meant to tell us; for that is the very point to his argumentation.

Now it is truly amazing that the reverend should want to maintain that the Formula of Subscription is binding upon its subscribers—office bearers in the churches—also in their difficulties respecting *all synodical and classical decisions*. For the fact of the matter is that the Formula of Subscription is binding upon its subscribers in their difficulties and different sentiments, such as they might have—only respecting the adopted creeds of the churches and thus not respecting any or all synodical and classical decisions. This is plain. The first paragraph of this Formula reads, "We, the undersigned, professors of the Christian Reformed Church, Ministers of the Gospel, elders and deacons. . . . do hereby sincerely and in good conscience before the Lord, declare by this our subscription, that we heartily believe and are persuaded that all the articles and points of doctrine, contained in the Confession and Catechism of the Reformed churches, together with the explanation of some points of the aforesaid doctrine, made by the national synod of Dordrecht, 1618, '19, do fully agree with the word of God. . We promise to faithfully teach and defend the

aforesaid doctrine. . . . etc." But the Formula of Subscription also requires of its subscribers this, namely, that they refrain from voicing their difficulties and different sentiments either privately or publicly by the word spoken or written—refrain from this before as well as after classis and synod have spoken, thus submitting to the judgment of classis and synod under penalty in case of refusal, to be, by that very fact, suspended from their office. As, according to G. Hoeksema, the Formula of Subscription is binding on the office bearers also *in their difficulties respecting all classical and synodical decisions*, it follows that also the requirement of this Formula last quoted is binding on them in these difficulties. It means that, according to G. Hoeksema, no officebearer, no Christian Reformed consistory, has the right to criticize, in public or private, by the written or spoken word, a single decision of the Christian Reformed Synod that was recently held. All that an office bearer can do, if he feels that one or more of synod's decisions are contrary to Scripture, is to try to convince the next synod; and in the meantime he must remain profoundly silent respecting his difficulties, under penalty in case of refusal, to be, by that very fact, suspended from his office. And if Synod cannot see the light, he nevertheless submits to synod's judgment, again under penalty in case of refusal to be, by that very fact, suspended from his office. This, according to G. Hoeksema, is Reformed Church Polity. But it is not reformed. It is a kind of polity calculated to elevate classis and synod to the position of lord's and master's of the churches. Yet, verily, this is the polity, the rule of action to which the Christian Reformed Classes, Grand Rapids East and Grand Rapids West held the ministers and their consistories whom they were treating back in 1924. And because these ministers and their Consistories could not allow themselves to be bound by such an atrocious polity, rule of action, they were deposed on the ground of insubordination to ecclesiastical authority—the authority of Classis, and these Classes had the support of the entire theological faculty at the Christian Reformed Seminary on whose advice they acted.

Assuredly, every member in the Christian Reformed communion of churches, every consistory, every office bearer, may criticize publicly and privately, should be allowed to criticize by the word spoken and written, any or all of the decisions of the Christian Reformed Synod that has recently been held to their very heart's content. With this statement of mine, the Rev. H. J. Kuiper, the editor of the Christian Reformed "Banner" is in full accord. For he freely criticizes, even in the severest terms, some of the decisions of the last synod of his churches. We find these criticisms of his in "The Banner" for August 23, 1946, under the title: "Where Synod Failed". Here is 'one such criticism from the reverend's pen, "Even more serious

than the mistake just discussed was the tragic decision regarding our work of Netherland Relief. Indeed, tragic is the right word." The Rev. H. J. Kuiper criticizing in language that is truly condemnatory Synod's decisions! That may well be considered strange, considering that in 1924 and thereabouts he indicated through his action as classical delegate that he was in full accord with that rule of action for all synod's decision that G. Hoeksema imagined to have discovered in article 31 of the Church Order and in the Formula of Subscription. But today he freely and severely criticizes the decisions of his synod and thereby lets it be known that, as far as he is concerned, that rule of G. Hoeksema doesn't exist. And of course today it doesn't exist for G. Hoeksema either or for any of the leaders in the Christian Reformed Churches. The brethren, one and all, have undergone a change of heart with respect to that rule. Space and time forbid answering the question how this is to be accounted for. But the question *can* be answered.

The churches — consistories, office bearers, and common members,—do have the right certainly to freely and severely, if need be, criticize Synod's decisions, the decisions of that recent synod. If there be any one who feels in his heart that one or more of synod's decisions militates against the Scriptures he should and must be allowed both in private and in public and by the spoken and written word, to make this plain to all the churches and to every member in the churches. And if that decision be proved to be contrary to God's Word, that is, if the Protestants or Protestant succeed in proving this, not to the satisfaction of Synod certainly (synod is no longer in existence, as it has adjourned) but to the satisfaction of themselves and all the churches—consistories, office bearers and common members—the decision, certainly, must and need not be considered binding. And when the churches again meet in synod, they rescind the decision; and all God's people in the churches are sincerely grateful that the un-Scriptural decision was exposed for what it is, grateful to the protestants who were the first to raise their voice in protest against the decision. But of course, if the protestant—the protesting office bearer or consistory—does not succeed in proving to the satisfaction of the churches that the decision is contrary to the Scriptures, the *churches*, having studied the difficulties of the aggrieved but without being convinced, congregate in synod to advise the aggrieved one (not request or command) that he acquiesce in the decision (not that he obey. Such terms as *command* and *obey* in the mouth of the major assemblies imply the hierarchy), and to sever the denominational tie, if the protestant—the aggrieved Consistory,—cannot conform for conscience sake. The churches, as congregated in synod, do have this right; but it is a right that they must exercise most reluctant-

ly and only with great caution. A communion of churches, genuinely and profoundly interested in the truth, and fearful of error, will heartily welcome and greatly prize a thorough and critical study of all its classical and synodical decisions by all the members. A communion of churches, so minded, will refrain, and instruct its synods to refrain, from threatening a consistory or office bearers with ejection from the denomination, the moment such office bearers or consistories raise their voices in protest against a synodical or classical decision. For such a communion of churches are interested in truth and not in ridding themselves of some persons whom they do not like.

The church polity to the defense of which G. Hoeksema arises in his brochure is unreformed. It is an insult to God's people. That our Reformed fathers, having set the bishop of Rome in his place, should nevertheless have delivered to the churches an ecclesiastical constitution elevating the synod to a position of lordship over the church! This is inconceivable; and it is not true. Certainly the glorified Christ did not pour of His Spirit upon Synod in contradistinction to the churches. It is the *church* that he leads into all truth. And the right to determine and decide whether synod, in its decisions and credal formulas, abides in the truth, whether its voice is the voice of the Spirit, testifying through the Scriptures with the spirits of God's redeemed sons, belongs not to the synod in contradistinction to these sons but to these sons as congregated in synod. And for this responsibility these sons are well qualified. For in the words of the apostle, they have received the anointing and the anointing which they received abideth in them, and they need not that any man teach them.

G. M. O.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

Seeing Face To Face

At first, Corinthians 13, the 12th verse, we read, "For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know even as I am known." The apostle here compares the rights and privileges of God's believing people in this present dispensation of the world, with their privileges and rights in the state of heavenly perfection and glory of the church on the new earth. And he discerns a remarkable difference. "Now they see through a glass darkly; then, face to face. A rendering that comes closer to the original text would be

"Now we see by means of a mirror, a looking glass, in an enigma, that is, in a phraseology or language, more or less obscure. It is evident that, in setting forth the thought that he means to convey, the apostle makes use of a figure, which must be thoroughly understood, if we are to understand the Scriptures at this place. The figure is that of beholding, let us say, your friend in a mirror and beholding him, not in a mirror, but directly. There is a difference, is there not? When you behold the form of your friend in a mirror, you stand with your back to your friend and he stands back of you, that is, you do not face him nor he you; what you face is, his reflected form in that mirror. But you turn you about, and now you directly face your friend and he faces you. You now see him face to face and not by means of a mirror. This is the figure the apostle employs. Then, too, we must bear in mind, by all means, that the mirror of Paul's figure is one in use in ancient times. Bear in mind, we must that what, in Paul's day, did service as a mirror was a slab or sheet of polished metal, and that, on this account, ancient mirrors gave but a dark and dim reflection of an object. In this, they certainly differed from our modern mirrors, which give, not a dark and obscure but a bright and perfectly plain reflection of an object. It is indeed true, then, that, when the ancients saw *themselves*, or whatever object it might be, in their mirrors, they saw in a glass darkly. Now such is the plain sense of the figure here employed. But we must now lay hold on the spiritual truth set forth. It is this. Now God's people see in a mirror darkly; then, in the state of perfection and glory, that which they now behold in a mirror darkly, they will see face to face, that is, having as the direct object of their vision.

There are questions here, the first of which is: Whom do God's people see, now in a mirror, then face to face. They see God. But, one may ask, Do the believers see *God*? Shall they see Him ever? They do see Him and they shall see Him even as He is. Such is the promise to them. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," Matt. 5:8. "And we know," says John, "that we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." I John 3:2. But one may again ask, How can finite and sinful men, be they believers, see God; how shall they see God ever, mark you, see *God*, the only, spiritual, eternal, incomprehensible, invisible and infinite God? God's people do see Him, and they shall see Him, even as He is, and seeing Him, they live and shall live everlastingly. But how can it be? It can and shall be. Not, to be sure, that they see and shall see ever the spiritual, infinite and on this account, invisible God as such, but they see and shall see God as revealed in a face—His face—a face wholly adapted to the measure of man's capacity to see and to know God. For, mark you, God has a face. And

the face of God is Christ Jesus. Now, as the face of a human reflects the spirit of a human, his heart, the inward and invisible man, the character of that man, the hidden thoughts and intents of that man, his hates and loves, joys and sorrows, so do we see reflected in Christ the very heart of God, the glory of His invisible being, the infinite goodness, the love, mercy and compassion, the wisdom and the power, the holy indignation and righteous anger of God. For Christ is God's face. Seeing Him, we see God. Did not Philip's question, "Lord, show us the Father," elicit from Christ this reply, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me Philip? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?" Verily, Christ is the face of the Father, the triune Jehovah. For He is the incarnate Son of God. He came from God and went to God. The Spirit of God rests upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. In truth, Christ is the face of the Father; for He is in the Father and the Father is in Him. And the words that He speaketh, He speaketh not of Himself; but the Father that dwelleth in Him, He doeth the works. In Him, God's face, the believers see God. They see God's face.

Now the thought that the apostle desires to emphasize is that, in this present dispensation, the believers see this face—the face of God—Christ Jesus—in a mirror, but that, in the life to come, in the state of perfection and glory, they shall have this face as the direct object of their vision and thus no longer see this face in a mirror. First, there is this question: What is to be understood by this mirror, in which we now see God's face—the Christ of God. This mirror is the Holy Scriptures. The Scriptures reveal Christ, God's face. They set forth the Christ—God's face—in all His significance as the Mediator of God and man, through whose cross God was reconciling the world—God's world, not man's—to Himself. The Scriptures, then, are the mirror in which God's people behold God's face, Christ Jesus. And well may the apostle compare the Scriptures to a mirror. For consider that, what you directly behold in a mirror is not the very object but that object as reflected in the mirror. So, too, what we behold directly in the Scriptures is not the very Christ Himself, for Christ is in heaven and He is a heavenly Christ—but what we behold in the Scriptures is the very Christ as set forth by the Scriptures, as preached by the Scriptures, thus the Christ as reflected by the Scriptures. The Scriptures, then, are indeed the mirror that reflects Christ—the face of God.

But the real point to the apostles reasoning is that the believers now see through a mirror darkly. The meaning of this statement from the apostle's pen is,

that what God's people see in the mirror of the Scriptures is but a dark and obscure reflection of the heavenly Christ, God's face. Where lies the cause of this? The cause lies in that mirror, in those Scriptures. The Scriptures, let it be considered, are earthy. They speak to us of heavenly things, of the heavenly Christ, that heavenly face of God, in terms of an earthy language. To illustrate, the Scriptures speak of Christ as bread and water, as wine and milk. I am the true bread, says Christ of Himself. The Scriptures speak of Christ as the morning star, as the sun, as the lamb, as the lion. But what have we here but an earthy picture, reflection, of a heavenly Christ, in an earthy mirror, our Scriptures. The book of the revelation of John contains a description of the heavenly glory of the New Jerusalem. It has the glory of God. Its light is like a stone most precious, even like a jasper-stone, clear as crystal. And its streets are like unto pure gold. One may say, it is heavenly gold of which the apostle here speaks. It is well. But the only gold that we ever have seen is earthy gold, so that, what we have also here is an earthy picture, reflection, of a heavenly thing in an earthy mirror, our Scriptures. Now, as the heavenly far surpasses the earthy in glory, it must follow that the earthy Scriptures cannot otherwise but obscurely reflect the heavenly, the heavenly face of God, Christ Jesus.

It is indeed as the apostle saith, "we now see by a mirror in an enigma, that is, in an obscure, dim, dark phraseology. And it is well that it is thus. Can we look directly into the face of the sun that shines in our heaven? We cannot. The dazzling brightness of that face would destroy our vision, so that we would see never again. How could we directly behold the heavenly Christ, God's heavenly face, we who are earthy and sinful. The heavenly radiance of that face, as unobscured by the mirror of earthy scriptures, thus, as the direct object of our vision, would destroy us."

In his vision, John saw one like unto the Son of man with hairs white like wool, as white snow and with eyes as a flame of fire. It was the glorified Christ. And when John saw him, he fell as dead at His feet. Moses once prayed that he might behold God's face. But while God's glory passed by—the glory of His face—God put him in a cliff of the rock and covered him with His hand, so that all that Moses saw was the back parts of His glory, the glory of God obscured.

Paul knew a man—the apostle speaks here of himself—Paul knew a man in Christ, whether in the body he could not tell, or whether out of the body he could not tell, caught up in the third heaven, in paradise, where he stood face to face with the heavenly, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter, and that no man, who bears the image

of the earthy, is occupied with earthly images of the heavenly, and who is a sinful man, can utter.

While in the house of this earthy tabernacle, God's people can endure to behold but a dim reflection of God's face in the mirror of earthy scriptures. That and that only is all they do behold now in the present dispensation of the world. And occupied, as they are, with an earthy reflection of the heavenly, beholding with earthy eyes the earthy reflection of a heavenly Christ, God's own face, in the mirror of earthy scriptures, it must follow that they know in part and in part only, and that they prophesy in part. For they see not face to face but in a mirror darkly. Hence, they speak as children, they understand as children, and they think as children and thus do not speak, understand, and think, as perfected and glorified saints in heaven, seeing God face to face, and thus seeing Him as He is. Their forms of speaking, understanding, and thinking, belong to this earthy. But it shall not always be true. For that which is perfect *shall* come. God's people *shall* appear with Christ in glory—with Christ, with whom their life is hidden in God. They will then be like God, holy as He is holy, for the last vestige of sin that now still riots in their flesh will then have been obliterated. Then they shall see not, as now, the reflection of His face in the mirror of earthy scriptures, but they shall see directly His very face, thus see face to face, the face of God, which is Christ, in its unobscured glory. And their joy shall be full; for then they will see God as He is in Christ. And their prophecies shall fail, that is, their prophecies of things heavenly in terms of an earthy language—that shall fail. And their tongues shall cease, that is, their earthy phraseology, in which they prophesied, praised, confessed, and witnessed—that shall fail. And their knowledge shall vanish away, that is, the knowledge of things heavenly that was theirs through the mirror of earthy scriptures—that shall vanish away. All this shall fail, cease, vanish away, when that which is perfect shall come: the perfect heavens and the perfect earth, where the tabernacle of God is with men, and the perfect saint, and the perfect praise and thanksgiving, which is the praise and thanksgiving in terms of a language that is heavenly, and the perfect tongue, which is the heavenly tongue speaking a heavenly language; and the perfect knowledge, that is, a knowledge of God, which shall be theirs through seeing God face to face in Christ.

Then the redeemed of God shall know even as they are known, that is, know as God knows them. And He knows His people not certainly according as He beholds them indirectly in the mirror of earthy scriptures, but He knows them according as they are in Christ everlastingly before Him directly, as engraved in the palm of His hand.

But let us understand the apostle well. The comparison here is not between the false and the true, the false prophecy and the true prophecy, the false tongue and the true tongue, the false knowledge and the true knowledge, but between the less and the more, the imperfect and the perfect in regard to what is true. The thought conveyed is that prophecies and tongues and knowledge shall fail, cease and vanish away, not because they are false, but because, as to their forms, they belong, as was said, to this present age, to the earthy, and thus can have no place in the perfected and glorified church in heaven. Thus, the apostle does not by his reasoning bring our scriptures under a cloud, as though they are false or to a degree unreliable because they are earthy. The scriptures are the infallible word of God. Though they speak of things heavenly in terms of an earthy language, what they reveal of things heavenly is true and adequate. When that which is perfect is come, when God's people see face to face, the earthy scriptures, too, shall vanish away, not certainly because they are false but because they are earthy, and because, as an earthy revelation of things heavenly, they shall have served their purpose.

In the light of what has been presented, we can now understand the apostle, when he says, "But whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether their be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part and we prophecy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know, even as I am known".

G. M. O.

SION'S ZANGEN

Een Sabbatslied

(Psalm 92; Tweede Deel)

We stonden al een keer stil bij dit Zondagslied. We hebben met den dichter ingestemd toen hij zeide, dat het goed was om den Heere te loven. Dat zullen U de engelen Gods van harte toestemmen, mitsgaders de verlostte rechtvaardigen die nu al voor Gods troon zingen,

O Heere! hoe groot zijn Uwe werken, zeer diep zijn Uwe gedachten.

Ziet daar de uitwerking van Gods daden op het hart dat Hem vreest.

Eerst, zien we dat zulk een mensch de werken Gods ziet. Ge zult zeggen: wel, dat is toch wel duidelijk genoeg!? Neen, geliefde lezer, dat is niet duidelijk genoeg. De goddelooze ziet Gods werken niet. Als de God der eere dondert, dan spreekt hij van allerlei werken der natuur en dan heeft hij het alles verklaard; evenwel, er is een ding dat hij er uitgelaten heeft en dat eene is God.

Maar Gods volk ziet zijn werken. Tenminste in beginsel. Er zijn dagen en uren, dat er als 't ware een waas komt over het geestesoog van Gods volk en dan ziet hij ook vaak niet veel van Gods werk. Dan verkeert hij in bittere klacht en bevindt zich in een juist tegenovergestelde toestand dan wanneer hij zingt: Ik zal nauwkeurig op Uw werken en derzelve uitkomst merken en inplaats van bittere klacht daarvan spreken dag en nacht.

In beginsel echter ziet Gods volk de werken Gods. Na hetgeen we zeiden in het vorige artikel behoeven we hier niet veel uit te weiden. Alleen wilden we hier weer zeggen, dat God alles doet. Alles wat beweegt beweegt zich in God en door Zijn macht en kracht. Er is geen macht en kracht om te denken, spreken en te doen dan alleen uit God.

Daarom is dit vers zoo fundamenteel. Indien ge gezond staat tegenover de waarheid die in dit vers beliden wordt, dan staat ge gezond tegenover de geheele waarheid. Fundamenteel, zeiden we. Op dit vers wordt de alleen goede beschouwing van God die waarlijk God is gebouwd. Als ik het eens zoo mag zeggen: dit vers is door en door gereformeerd. Vooral als we letten op het tweede lid van het vers, en dan in verband met het eerste lid: Hoe diep zijn Uwe gedachten. En als we dan opletten op wat er volgt, dan zult ge bekennen, dat het hier gaat over den Raad Gods van verkiezing en verwerping.

Luistert slechts: Een onvernünftig man weet daar niet van, en een dwaas verstaat dit niet: dat de goddeloozen groeien als het kruid, en alle de werkers der ongerechtigheid bloeien, opdat zij tot in eeuwigheid verdelgd worden.

Dat zijn Gods werken welke de dichter zoo groot zijn; en dan zijn de gedachten Gods die zoo diep zijn, volgens den dichter.

Ach, als de Synode van 1924 naar Gods Woord geluisterd had hetwelk door deze woorden weerklinkt, zoo zou ze nooit die dwaze drie punten hebben aangenomen. Er is o zoo veel gesproken en geschreven over de gezindheid Gods jegens de goddeloozen. Welnu, hier hebt ge een versje, dat die gezindheid Gods jegens

de goddeloozen bezingt. En ge moet er nog wel van zingen op den sabbatdag!

Hier worden heel wat dingen geleerd. Laat ons er op letten, om Gods wil en om onzer arme zielen wil.

Eerst, de goddeloozen en de werkers der ongerechtigheid bloeien en groeien als het kruid. Ik denk, dan niemand mij zal tegenspreken, wanneer ik deze woorden zoo uitleg, dat zij beteekenen, dat de goddeloozen voorspoed hebben in dit tijdelijke leven, dat het goed gaat, dat zij succes hebben, dat zij zelfs buitenmate veel succes hebben. Daar zijn we het toch wel met elkaar over eens. Ik zou zelfs de stelling willen verdedigen, dat deze waarheid even sterk door de ervaring geleerd wordt. Ik denk, dat een ieder mensch overal en altijd dat kan zien, dat, namelijk, het den goddeloozen meestal goed gaat, niet altijd, maar toch over het algemeen.

Tweedens, leert de tekst, dat God een doel daarmee heeft. Let wel, God heeft een doel er mee, dat het den ongerechten zoo wel gaat. Hunne oogen puilen uit van vet! Het zij zoo! God bedoelt daar wat mee. Wat bedoelt God daar dan mee? Dit: dat zij tot in der eeuwigheid verdelgd worden. Vreeselijk zegt ge? Ja, maar we hebben nog niet een woord gezegd van hunne goddeloosheid en hunne ongerechtigheid! Zie deze mannen zijn goddeloos! En *dat* is vreeselijk. Goddeloos beteekent, dat gij het zonder God kunt stellen (natuurlijk alleen in Uwe gedachten: zonder God kan niemand bestaan). Zulk een mensch leeft zijn geheele ijdele leven alsof er geen God bestaat. Hij is zichzelf tot een god. Alles doet hij om zichzelfs wil en alles tracht hij te doen draaien rondom den spil van zijn sympathie of antipathie.

Daar komt nog bij, dat hij ook ongerecht is. En dat is een groote ondeugd. Het beteekent, dat ge in al Uw willen en begeeren tegen den wil van God ingaat. Om het anders te zeggen: al wat ge dan doet beantwoordt aan het kwade, het booze, het vuile, het kromme en verkeerde.

Dat volk nu, gaat voort in dien weg van goddeloosheid en ongerechtigheid met Gods doel, dat ze tot in der eeuwigheid verdelgd zouden worden. En dat is recht. De goddelooze moet verdelgd. En de ongerechte man moet tot in eeuwigheid verdelgd. Dat is volkomen recht. Alle dingen hadden alle hunne jaren duidelijk God gepredikt. Overal hoorden ze duizende stemmen die in een waar koor zongen: God is God! En ze stopten hunne ooren toe, zoodat Petrus zal spreken van een vreeselijk oordeel, namelijk, dat willens hun zekere dingen onbekend zijn.

Derdens, leert de tekst, dat zij tot in eeuwigheid verdelgd worden. Neen, ik heb hier niet hetzelfde onder het oog, als waarvan ik sprak onder de tweede opmerking. Daar sprak ik van het doel Gods. Hier spreek ik van datgene wat God bedoelde: de verdelging

der goddeloozen en ongerechte mannen tot in eeuwigheid.

Evenwel, veel kunnen we hier niet van zeggen. 't Is zoo ontzaglijk, vreeselijk en onuitsprekelijk. Ook ongekend, tenminste, we weten er zoo weinig van. En toch, dat weinige is zoo vreeselijk, dat de menschen er maar liefst niet van hooren.

Doch dat is valsch en in-verkeerd. We mogen niet zwijgen van de hel. Wat zoudt ge denken van een doctor die het voor zijn patienten verzwijgt als ze met een vreeselijke ziekte behept zijn, die hen sleept naar een vreeselijk einde?

God zal alle goddeloozen verdelgen. Dat gaat Hij doen door ze in de plaats te werpen die voor den duivel en zijne engelen bereid is.

Gods Woord heeft van die plaats getuigd. Het brandt er, het rookt er. De rook van de pijniging gaat op tot in alle eeuwigheid. Men kauwt er zijn tong van pijn. Men dorst daar een ongekenden dorst. Men moet het lieflijk aangezicht van God en van engelen en van goede menschen missen. Zijn kameraden en gezellen zijn duivelen en alle booze menschen. Men moet daar weenen en tandenknarsen.

En het ergste is dat men daar wanhopig is. Er is geen hoop meer. Men komt er nooit meer uit.

We danken U, o God! Dat ge ons van zoo groote dood verlost hebt!

Vierdens, leert de tekst, dat een onvernunftig man en een dwaas van bovenstaande dingen niets verstaat.

Een onvernunftig man is een man die de beteekenis der dingen niet kent, en een dwaas is een mensch die het doel der dingen niet weet. Een vernunftig mensch is hetzelfde als een verstandig mensch. Een verstandig mensch kent de dingen in hun verband. En een wijs man weet waar die dingen in hun verband voor gebruikt moeten worden, namelijk, tot de eere en roem en prijs van God.

Dit gedeelte veroordeelt de Synode van 1924. Die hebben de dingen niet verstaan, doch hebben dwaasheid gepreveld in hun drie punten. En indien ze het wel wisten, dan is het erger. Dan hebben ze tegen beter wil gehandeld; en dat is groter zonde. De misdadiger in Chicago weet van de waarheid in dezen tekst niets. Doch de afgevaardigde naar de Kalamazoosche Synode allicht wel wat. Sommigen van hen zeer veel. En toch spraken ze alsof Psalm 92 nooit gedicht was. Dat is groter zonde.

En dat wij het weten en ernaar handelen mogen, ook in onze belijdenis en handel, is genade. Genade voor genade! Gode tot lof.

Maar Gij zijt de Allerhoogste, in eeuwigheid de Heere!

De Allerhoogste is God. Het legt er nadruk op, dat er niets of niemand is die met den Heere verge-

leken kan worden. Hij is de geheel Andere. We kunnen zelfs niet indenken, wat God tot God maakt. Zijn Wezen kunnen we niet indenken, verstaan, begrijpen. We mogen Hem dan al kennen mogen, dat is verre van Hem te verstaan. Een ding weten we goed en dat is, dat Hij boven ons verstand uitgaat, dat Hij de Allerhoogste is. Om U nu eens goed te doen gevoelen, wat we hier belijden, moet ge U afvragen wat het zeggen wil om nooit een begin gehad te hebben. Gaat ontelbare millioenen van jaren terug in Uwe gedachten, en daar is God, te prijzen tot in alle eeuwigheid. Hij is van eeuwigheid tot in eeuwigheid, de Ongevormde, de Onmetelijke, de in Zichzelf Bestaande. Laat ons slechts eerbiedig neerknielen en het bekennen: Gij Heere zijt groot en nooit genoeg te prijzen! Alles wat er over blijft is om Hem te aanbidden.

En in eeuwigheid de Heere!

Dat is nog mooier, als ik dat tenminste mag zeggen. Laat me het zoo zeggen: deze waarheid klinkt *ons* mooier in de ooren. Want het spreekt van den Heere. En de Heere is Jehovah. En Jehovah is de God des Verbonds, die nooit laat varen de werken Zijner handen, omdat Hij de eeuwig Getrouwe is.

Hebt ge wel eens gehoord van liefhebbers die elkaar blauwe bloempjes stuurden? Het blauwe van die bloempjes sprak dan van trouw. Men noemde ze "vergeet-mij-nietjes".

Zoo zie ik wel eens op naar den blauwen hemel en smelt weg in bewondering van des Heeren trouw. Wat een onmetelijke blauwe hemel. Wat een azuur van den getrouwe Getuige! Door dien blauwen hemel roept God ons toe: Ik zal U nooit vergeten! Zou een liefhebbende moeder haar zuigeling vergeten? En toch, indien zij vergat, Ik zal U nimmermeer vergeten. Tot in eeuwigheid toe de Heere. Dat wil zeggen, dat toen ik in zonde viel, God Zijn Woord aan mij gestand heeft gedaan. Toen ik doemschuldig werd, heeft Hij mij niet vergeten, doch Jezus gegeven voor een rantsoen mijner ziel. O God! hoe zullen we U daarvoor danken!?

De eeuwigheid zal niet te lang zijn om in schoone muziek en lieflijk zingen het U toe te zingen, dat Gij niet alleen de Allerhoogste zijt, doch tot in eeuwigheid de Heere, de God des Verbonds!

We zullen nooit uitgeput raken om het elkaar en den Heere te zeggen, neen, te zingen, dat Zijne goedertierenheid tot in der eeuwigheid is.

Want zie, Uwe vijanden, o Heere! want zie, Uwe vijanden zullen vergaan; alle de werkers der ongerechtigheid zullen verstrooid worden. Maar Gij zult mijnen hoorn verhoogen gelijk eens eenhoorns; Ik ben met versche olie overgoten.

Het is vreeselijk om een vijand Gods genaamd te worden. Dat geschiedt alleen als we vrienden van de wereld zijn. De wereld is de lust des vleesches en

de lust der oogen en de grootheid des levens. Als we vrienden zijn van zulk een vuil ding, dan zijn we, dan worden we gesteld tot vijanden Gods.

En dan moeten we vergaan en dan worden we verstrooid, zegt de tekst. Ja, nu gaat het nog al, al is het dan ook, dat men God niet vreest. Er is wel ellende, doch de mensch slaat er zich wel door heen, zoo als het dan heet. Men bindt zich tezaam in benden, volken, de goddelooze menschheid, zooals in de dagen van Nimrod, maakt zich een naam, bouwt zich een stad, maakt zich een rijk, onderwerpt de aarde en de elementen aan zich en zoo staat de mensch der zonde met gebalden vuist voor God.

Maar, o wee!

Ze zullen vergaan. Ik weet niet wat ik hiervan zeggen zal. Ik heb vergaan hout gezien, vermolmd, verrot, vervallen. Wat zal er van den zondaar toch wel worden. Zijn oordeel zal niet dan vreeselijk zijn.

Verstrooid, uiteen gereten, voor eeuwig op de vlucht gejaagd worden de goddeloozen. Ik denk aan het eerste berijmde vers van Psalm 68. Al sidderende vluchten! Om van te rillen.

Doch mijn hoorn zal God verhoogen.

Het wil zeggen, eerst, dat mijn hoorn hier verlaagd is geworden. Ik was zondaar, doemwaardig. Ik was gehaat door de wereld en uitgeworpen en had geen kracht meer.

En nu verhoogd. Verhoogd van mijn vijand, verhoogd van de aarde en het aardsche tot in den hemel daarboven bij God.

G. V.

IN HIS FEAR

Our Baptism Form (5)

Our baptism always has a special significance for us because of the fact that we and our children receive the sacrament in our infancy. Turning from a discussion of the significance of the sacrament to a discussion of the baptism of infants, the Form states: "and although our young children do not understand these things, we may not therefore exclude them from baptism. . . ."

It is worthy of note, that the fathers did not say that children of believing parents may receive the sacrament of baptism, but that they must. They were,

no doubt, well aware of the fact that believing parents count it a privilege to present their children for baptism. Yet this is hardly the viewpoint here. They also realized that infant baptism has met with opposition within the church since the early days after the apostles, and it is from this aspect that they assert that we may not exclude our children from baptism. To express it positively, the church must baptize her children.

In our day the doctrine of infant baptism is denied especially by the Baptists of various sorts. Their arguments are chiefly threefold.

First of all, they maintain that Scripture nowhere demands that infants be baptized. To them it is a conclusive argument that not a single text can be found in Scripture demanding the baptism of infants. In fact, they maintain that no single instance can be found where infants were baptized. They will grant that infants of eight days received the sign of circumcision in the old dispensation, but they hasten to add that this was no baptism. Circumcision, according to them, was a special sign given to the Jews as a mark of distinction, distinguishing them from the other nations of the world. It was a sign that God had established His covenant with Israel. The church of the new dispensation does not in any way share this distinction. Israel is and always will remain a separate people with a separate covenant, promises and blessings. The Baptist is always necessarily a Millennialist.

The second argument offered is, that Jesus demanded faith before baptism in the "great commission". Mark 16:15, 16. "And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." The argument is simple enough. Jesus demands a profession of faith before baptism. Children cannot profess a conscious faith. Therefore children cannot be baptized.

And the third argument is, that all infants who are baptized are not saved, even as experience teaches that some children baptized in infancy proved to be unbelievers later in life. If baptism is a seal of the washing away of sins, and it is that to every one that is baptized, the result must be that baptism does not always speak the truth. So to avoid the contingency that the sacrament might lie, no one can be baptized except those who first profess their faith. Infants must not be baptized.

In answer to these arguments the following objections must be raised. 1. First, that there is no need for a special command to baptize infants. God gave the sign of His covenant to Abraham as the father of believers, with the command that he should pass this sign on to his seed. The covenant passed over from the old to the new dispensation, continuing

in the line of generations, in the believers and their seed. At the transition from the old to the new dispensation the outward sign was changed, so that water baptism took the place of the bloody sign of circumcision (Col. 2:11, 12). But God never withdrew His command to place that sign upon the seed of the covenant. As long as the command is not withdrawn we cannot slight it with impunity. Let the Baptist prove the contrary.

This is in substance the main argument of our Baptism Form, saying, "God speaketh unto Abraham, the father of all the faithful, and therefore unto us and our children (Gen. 17:7), saying, "I will establish My covenant between Me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." This also the apostle Peter testifieth, with these words (Acts 2:39), "For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Therefore God formerly commanded them to be circumcised, which was a seal of the covenant, and of the righteousness of faith; and therefore Christ also embraced them, laid His hands upon them and blessed them" (Mark 10). See also such passages of Scripture as Rom. 4:11; Rom. 9:6, 7; and Gal. 3:8. In this connection everyone should read the pamphlet written by the Rev. H. Hoeksema entitled, "The Biblical Ground for the Baptism of Infants." This has lately been reprinted and is obtainable from the Sunday School Mission Publishing Society, 755 Fuller Ave., S. E., Grand Rapids, Michigan.

2. Secondly, that Jesus demands faith before baptism in the "great commission" does not exclude the baptism of infants. It is true, that Jesus instructed His disciples to preach the Gospel and to baptize those who professed their faith as a result of this preaching. We can also rest assured that the apostles and their helpers faithfully carried out this mandate to the letter. We need but refer to the example of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. The eunuch said, "See, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?" And Philip answered, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." Yet the apostles interpreted these instructions to mean, that when the adults professed their faith, not only the professing believers, but their whole households were baptized. We need but refer to Acts 16:15, the example of Lydia, and Acts 16:33, the example of the jailor at Philippi.

Moreover, this second argument of the Baptists can only lead to the conclusion that all children dying in infancy are lost. The text adds, "but he that believeth not shall be damned." If this must be made to apply to children who are not able to profess a conscious faith, instead of to those who harden themselves against the Word in unbelief, there can be but one

conclusion, and that is, that all children of believing parents dying in infancy are damned. The Baptists may try to escape this dilemma by saying that "by the judgment of love" he regards all children dying in infancy as saved. But the text is against him, for the text states, "but he that believeth not shall be damned", and this he wants to apply to infants. Baptists may have their consecration services for their infants, assuming the responsibility of showing them the way of salvation, and thus trying to save them, but they cast away the promise of God, "I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed after thee."

Here it is interesting to note, that in the degree that the church departs from the truth to drift away into the streams of Arminianism, in that degree infant baptism loses its significance for her. No one can help but detect the strain of the free-will error always running through the arguments of the Baptists. After all is said and done, the two streams of error flow freely into one rushing torrent of heresy, depriving the church of her means of grace, and sweeping her with it into destruction.

3. The final argument of the Baptists, that baptism of infants makes the sacrament often untrue, can be charged against infant baptism no more than against the baptism of adults. The Baptist should see that this would also have been the case with circumcision in the old dispensation, because many more were circumcised who had no place in the covenant, even as Esau, with whom the Lord was "not well pleased." I Cor. 10. Secondly, adult baptism does not insure that each baptized person is saved, no more than does infant baptism. There are and always will remain hypocrites in the church, who profess their faith and carry the sign of baptism through life, yet make themselves guilty of apostacy. And finally, baptism never was intended to guarantee the salvation of each individual, no more than circumcision in the old dispensation. It is a seal of the justification which is by faith, which God promises in His Word and seals in baptism. Rom. 4:11.

As basis for the baptism of infants, the Form states: "We may not exclude them from baptism, for as they are without their knowledge partakers of the condemnation in Adam, so are they again received unto grace in Christ!"

This is most significant. It may be paraphrased as follows: Our children are partakers of the condemnation in Adam. They are also received unto grace in Christ. *And both without their knowledge.* Purely according to sovereign good pleasure. Therefore God has willed that they should receive the sacrament of baptism in their earliest infancy, for infant baptism expresses exactly that amazing truth, that it is not of him who willeth, nor of him who runneth, but of God Who sheweth mercy.

Our children are partakers of the condemnation in Adam. God created the whole human race as an organism, a legal corporation, with Adam as its representative head. When Adam sinned by eating of the forbidden tree, the whole human race sinned and fell. This is the plain teaching of Scripture, as for example in Rom. 5:12, "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, *for that all have sinned.*" From this follows that we and our children stand guilty in the original guilt of Adam. Even as Adam's sin is our sin, so his guilt is our guilt, which we increase daily. And from this also follows that we and our children are conceived and born in sin. Through the disobedience and fall of our first parents our whole nature became corrupt. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." Job 14:4. And Psalm 51:5, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Our children come into this world with our guilt and our pollution. And that according to sovereign good pleasure.

Again, according to that same sovereign good pleasure they are received unto grace in Christ. Even as sin and guilt are passed along in the line of generations, so God manifests His mercy in the line of generations. Immediately after the fall in paradise God spoke of the promised Seed. The church could be saved only by faith in the promise of that seed, for they were saved in hope. But the church herself was also instrumental in bringing forth that Seed. Imagine for a moment what would have happened if Adam and Eve had committed themselves to the now so common practice of birth-control, stubbornly refusing to bring forth children in sorrow. The church could never have come into existence, and even the Christ could never have been born. But God gathers His church in the line of generations from paradise to the end of time, fulfilling His promise of salvation and realizing His Word unto her, "I will be thy God and the God of thy seed after thee." Thus it is not a matter of choice for us whether we be born a Hottentot or in the sphere of God's covenant, whether we have unbelieving parents or parents upon whom God has bestowed His grace. We have no more to say about that than the time and place of our birth, or whether we should be born male or female, rich or poor. It is all sovereign good pleasure, for it is not of him who willeth, nor of him who runneth, but of God Who sheweth mercy. Infant baptism speaks to us of the sovereign grace whereby God loves His own for His name's sake. No wonder that the truth of God's covenant and infant baptism are the peculiar heritage of those who love and cherish the Scriptural and Reformed truth of God's sovereign grace. Let us hold that which we have, that no man take our crown.

C. H.

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Shame on Calvin College	L.V.	264	11	War of Innocent III Again the Cathari	G.M.O.	394	17
Shameful Indifference	B.K.	432	18	Week at our School—A	M.G.	311	13
Sign of the Times—A	L.V.	141	6	We Too	M.G.	360	15
Significance of Christ's Exaltation	H.H.	271	12	What a World	L.V.	191	8
Continued	H.H.	294	13	When to Start Indoctrination	J.D.	281	12
Singing in Church Services	L.V.	237	10	Wicked Answer—A	L.V.	236	10
Sion De Geboorteplaats der Volkeren	G.V.	63	3	Wicked Deed of the Gibeathites and the War			
Small Congregations	L.V.	214	9	Again Benjamin	G.M.O.	34	2
Soul—The Immortality of the	H.H.	31	2	Continued	G.M.O.	60	3
Sovereign Love (Med.)	H.H.	265	12	Continued	G.M.O.	85	4
Spirit of Christ—The	H.H.	487	21	Wij Vliegen Daar Heen (Med.)	H.H.	145	7
Spirit of God—The	H.H.	392	17	Will You be One of Them?	M.G.	381	16
Continued	H.H.	419	18	Wondere Veiligheid	G.V.	426	18
Spirit—The Convicting Office of the	A.P.	476	20	Continued	G.V.	449	19
Continued	A.P.	501	21	Continued	G.V.	471	20
Spirit—The Outpouring of the Promised	H.H.	409	18	Worship in the Nicene Age—The Change in			
St. Thomas of Canterbury	G.M.O.	325	14	Public	G.M.O.	59	3
Stedfastness and Our Young Peoples' Societies	H.H.	46	2	Yesterday's Example of Unbelief (Med.)	H.H.	457	20
				Youth Says	M.G.	311	13
				Zuivere Godsdienst—De (Med.)	H.H.	481	21