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MEDITATION

Lovensstof

“Geloofd zij de Heere, dag bij dag overlaadt Hij ons. Die God is onze zaligheid. Sela. Die God is ons een God van volkomene zaligheid; en bij den HEERE, den Heere, zijn uitkomsten tegen den dood.”

—Psalm 68:20, 21.

Het zal spoedig dankdag zijn.

En de wereld doet mee. De wereld, ten minste hier in Amerika, doet mee aan dankdag-vieren. Hebben we niet onzen nationalen dankdag, tezamen met een proclamatie van Presidentswege?

De atmosfeer is dier mate verdoezeld en verduisterd, dat we bijkans niet meer weten hoe te oordeelen.

Geloofd zij de Heere!

Vraagt dan in Uw omgeving wat men denkt van den nationalen dankdag, tezamen met de proclamatie van den President, die America opwekt om God te danken op dien dag voor alle aardsche zegeningen die we zoo ruimschoots ontvingen. Vraagt het, en ge zult U verwonderen met groote verwondering over de vele en verschillende antwoorden die ge zult ontvangen.

De kerken die ons uitwierpen spraken van algemeene genade in verband met dit danken der wereld. Triumfantelijk riep men het ons toe: Ziet ge niet, hoe er nog overblijfselen zijn van het goede? Leest toch de dankdag proclamatie van den President!

Er is een wazige atmosfeer.

En toch behoefde dat niet.

Het is duidelijk genoeg: alleen de uitverkoren, wedergeboren, bekeerde, geloovige Christen dankt God!

God danken is een onmogelijke taak voor den mensch die in de zonde viel, en stierf. Sindsdien kan zulk een mensch Gode niet behagen. Het vleesch onderwerpt zich der wet Gods niet, want het kan ook niet. Die wet is de wil Gods voor het creatuur, naar Zijn beeld geschapen. En de vervulling van die wet is de liefde

Gods. En de uiting van de liefde Gods naar God toe is de dank. Zoo loopt de lijn. En in het trekken van die lijn zijt ge den goddelooze allang kwijt. Hij kon niet mee, want hij is vleesch, vleesch puur en simpel.

Het neemt almachtige genade om te danken.

En dan looft men.

Dan looft men God!



Geloofd zij de Heere!

Dat is eigenlijk alles. In die weinige woorden hebt ge het centrale doel van de schepping, de herschepping en de voorturende onderhouding tot in alle eeuwigheid.

Geloofd zij de Heere!

Waarom?

Hij overlaadt ons.

Wat een beeld!

Overladen is wanneer ge te veel hebt. Ge kunt het niet op. Er is te over van alles. Een beeld hebt ge ervan als er een goed appel-jaar is. Gaat dan naar den boomgaard, en aanbidt. God gaf zoo ontzaglijk veel. Ge leest elders van een overvloeiende fontein.

Ja, het is straks weer dankdag. Dan zullen we vergaderen in Gods Huis om te danken voor alles wat de Heere ons schonk.

En vooral in dit land is er zoo veel! Er is zoo ontzaglijk veel.

Een zuster van Ds. Andrew Petter liet ons gekleurde lichtbeelden zien van ellendige menschen in een verheidensch land. En toen we naar huis gingen was ik zeer ernstig gestemd. Want het was toch al te erg. Schokkend kwam het voor mijn aandacht, dat wij toch zoo ontzaglijk veel hebben wat die arme stakkerds daar moeten missen.

Ergens heb ik gelezen van een ander volk, dat van jaar tot jaar, in het seizoen wanneer er geen landvruchten meer zijn, de basten van boomen eten.

En wij?

We hebben plaats gekregen op de aarde. Er zijn gedurig verscheidene meters grond;—en ge wandeldet daarhenen. Er is lucht voor den ademtucht, veel meer

dan ge behoeft. Er is leven voor Uw ziel en lichaam. Werd het koud zoo was er warmte en gezelligheid in Uw woning en ge lachtet. Het was U aan te zien, dat God niet voor niets zegt: U gevende brood en vroolijkheid.

Dorst is er eigenlijk nooit, maar als er zoo iets dat het dorsten benadert bij U gevonden werd, zoo was er water, en water te over! En ge hebt gedronken naar hartelust.

De Heere gaf zomer en Hij is bezig om U den winter te geven. Maar voor elk seizoen is er kleeding. Ik hoor U praten van een winterjas en handschoenen en dassen. De Heere weet, dat Hij straks Zijn ijs zal henenwerpen in stukken, en dan wordt het koud. Ge moet verwarmd worden. Hij wil niet dat ge bevriest.

En zoo kom ik als vanzelf tot het voedsel. Ik word er moe van. Ik kom nooit klaar. Waar is het begin en het einde van alle lekkernijen in dit land. Waar ter wereld is er zulk een "standard of living" zooals hier in dit goddelooze land? Ik ben het nog niet vergeten hoe men met goddeloosheid ploegde toen de "steaks" wat dunner werden en wat minder. Men sjouwde met een blikken pannetje spekvat naar den slager. Dat waren de dagen van distributie. En men durfde het bestaan om te klagen.

En al dien tijd schaarden duizende heidenen zich rondom den boom om hun middagmaal van boombasten te eten. Sommigen van hen hadden zelfs geen boombast, en zij stierven van honger.

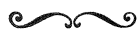
Elken avond komt God en zegt: leg U neder om te slapen; sluit dan stil Uw oogen toe! Ge hebt rust noodig. De geleerden weten nog niet hoe de versterking des slaaps gewrocht wordt: ze studeeren er nog over. Ze weten dat het door den slaap komt, maar het hoe en het waarom weten ze niet. Maar het feit is er. God versterkt U door den slaap. En we hoorden Uwe ademhaling. En al dien tijd, in diepen nacht, staat God bij Uw bed, spreekt Zijn woord, en ge wordt van uur tot uur sterker, totdat het morgen wordt, en dan zegt God: Word wakker! Het is tijd om op te staan. Ja, ge kunt het U aanvoelen dat ge veel sterker U gevoelt dan gisteravond bij het naar bed gaan!

Ziet ge, alle deze dingen doet God!

En er is zoo ontzaglijk veel meer.

Deze Heere heeft over mijn schouder alle deze dingen gelezen, en Hij weet hoeveel meer er is. Ik weet het niet. We weten zoo bitter weinig.

Ja, het is maar weinig dat we weten. Maar dat weinige is zoo overstelpend veel, dat onze ziel zegt en zingt: Loof den Heere, mijne ziel!



Ik heb geen tijd om het U te zeggen hoeveel ik weet van Gods daden in de natuur, van alles wat Hij doet voor Uw lichaam en ziel hier op aarde. Ik moet mij haasten om te komen tot het schrijven van het hoogst

noodige, van de dingen die den hemel zullen doen ruischen tot in eeuwigheid.

Ik twijfel er zelfs aan of de zanger bij het dichten van dit lied, gedacht heeft aan de natuurlijke dingen. Ik denk, dat hij uitsluitend gedacht heeft aan de geestelijke dingen van Gods Koninkrijk.

Oordeel zelf, lezer. De tekst zegt: Geloofd zij de Heere, dag aan dag overlaadt Hij ons. Die God is onze zaligheid. Sela. Ik heb de laatste woorden cursief laten drukken, want daar wilde ik U attent op maken. Het overladen worden van dag tot dag staat in verband met het feit, dat God onze zaligheid is. En dat is geheel wat anders dan ademtocht en aarde; kleeding en onderdak; een volle maag en een zacht bed; vriend en magen om ons heen. De zaligheid heeft daar eigenlijk niets mee te maken.

Laat mij het nu eens heel duidelijk mogen zeggen: Ge kunt al die dingen missen en toch overladen zijn met Zijn gunstbewijzen. Denkt aan Lazarus aan de poort des rijken. Die stakkerd mag toch ook psalm 68 wel zingen? Wat zeg ik? Ik ben van de overtuiging, dat juist een man zooals Lazarus dien psalm kon zingen. Hij had een groote mate van zaligheid. Dat komt wel uit als de engelen vragen: Jehovah! waar is de plaats voor dezen bedelaar? Dan zegt God: Dáár, in den schoot van Abraham. Ge gelooft toch wel, dat Abraham een vooraanstaande plaats heeft in den hemel der hemelen?

Dankdag moogt ge wel houden, maar zorg er dan voor, dat Uw armste broeder mee kan zingen met U. Ge moet niet doen, zooals ik eens gehoord heb van zekeren Dominee. Die man hield een Dankdag predikatie en sprak over alles en nog wat, vooral over den grooten oogst die juist binnengehaald was. Maar aan het einde van zijn preek dacht hij er aan, dat sommige van zijn leden een misgewas hadden. Welnu, die veel gehad had die moest veel loven. En de man van het misgewas had toch nog wel wat ontvangen, bezat toch nog wel heel wat, waarvoor Hij God kon danken.

Hoe zou die man preeken als er eens niets geoogst werd? Als de vijand eens kwam om ons land eenvoudig-weg te vernielen? Het kan verkeeren!

Zorg er voor, dat de armste en de ellendigste op aarde ten volle met U mee kan zingen. Dan is het goed.

Al Gods volk, geheel Israel moet dezen psalm zingen op Dankdag.

Looft den Heere!



Geloofd zij de Heere!

Hij is onze zaligheid.

Hij is onze Jezus. Denkt er aan, dat het tweede lid van Jezus' naam zaligheid beduidt. God is onze zaligheid, en dat is Jezus.

We hebben heel wat opgesomd zooeven van de aard-

sche dingen die zoo heerlijk zijn om te nuttigen en te gebruiken. Maar past toch op! Ge kunt al die dingen hebben en toch dood-ongelukkig zijn. Denkt er toch om, dat God elk oogenblik bij den duivel staat om hem te onderhouden, om hem het aanzijn te geven, om dien duivel te verzorgen van stonde tot stonde. Is dat zaligheid?

Er is slechts één ding dat ge werkelijk behoeft, en dat eene ding is de zaligheid.

Wat is het?

Zaligheid is dat ge vol zijt van God. Dat ge hier op aarde in beginsel verzadigd wordt met Zijn Goddelijk Beeld, en dat is weer Jezus.

Zaligheid voor U, armen zondaar, is dat ge Uw zonden en schulden kwijtraaktet. Dat is ware zaligheid. Van uit het oogpunt van een armen zondaar is er geen grootere zaligheid, dan te hooren van Gods lippen: Ga heen in vrede: Uw zonden zijn U vergeven!

Zeg dat ik de geheele wereld heb als mijn absoluut eigendom. Dan heb ik alle oogsten en alle banken met goud en zilver. Dan ben ik Diktator van allen. Dan moest alles mij dienen. Maar God mis ik en daarom ben ik zonder hoop in deze mijne wereld. En die God die ik mis is mijn Rechter. En die Rechter zal mij aan het einde van mijn leven op deze mijne aarde voor Zijn troon trekken en zeggen: Geef mij het antwoord op alle Mijne vragen van recht en gerechtigheid! Ziet ge niet, dat ik dan vreeselijk ongelukkig ben? En zoo was ik toch ook toen ik mij nog baadde in pracht en praal gedurende mijn ijdele leven op deze mijne aarde?

God is mijn volkomene zaligheid, zegt de dichter van dezen psalm.

Dat is eerst, dat ik mijn zonde en schuld verlies in het dierbaar bloed van Jezus.

Ja, daar wil ik gaarne van zingen op dankdag. Dat is ware zaligheid. Als ik dat weten mag, dat alle mijne zonden achter Gods rug geworpen zijn in den oceaan van eeuwige vergetelheid, dan zeg ik met David: Gij hebt vreugde in mijn hart gegeven, meer dan ten tijde als *hun koren en hun most vermenigvuldigd zijn*.

Spreekt daar van op den dankdag en dan zullen alle kinderen Gods zingen. Ze zullen zingen van gena.

Loof den Heere, mijne ziel.

En vergeet gene van Zijne weldaden.



Hij is immers Uwe volkomene zaligheid?

Zaligheid is vol te zijn van Gods gemeenschap.

Wat is de andere pool? Ledig om te zwerven in de oneindige diepten van den eeuwigen dood. Al den tijd van dat eeuwig zwerven wordt ge dan nagezeten door den toorn Gods die een vlamvend Vuur is voor de god-geloozen.

Die zondigt moet sterven.

Dat is een wet die altijd door gaat. Daar zijn geen uitzonderingen op.

En toch, mijn tekst spreekt van uitkomsten tegen den dood.

Ja, daar zit een wondere geschiedenis aan vast. Ik zal moeten spreken van Jezus Christus, van God die Zich openbaarde in het vleesch. Ik zal moeten zingen van het eeuwig Evangelie.

De uitkomst tegen den dood is de opstanding van den Heere Jezus.

Hij nam al Uw last op Zich, en dat beteekende voor Hem, dat Hij den dood moest sterven. Het beteekende voor Hem, dat Hij verworpen moest worden, den toorn Gods dragen, en jammerlijk verlaten worden.

Maar Hij is God, te prijzen tot in alle eeuwigheid. En omdat Hij God is kan Hij al dien last dragen en wegdragen. De God-mensch is zoo goed en zoo lief en zoo gehoorzaam, dat de banden des doods, des eeuwigen doods Hem niet kunnen houden. Hij moet uit het graf. Er zijn **UITKOMSTEN** tegen den dood bij Jezus.

En zoo verrees Hij als de Christus Triumfator.

En omdat Hij Uw Vertegenwoordiger is, Uw Substituut, en dan wel zoo intiem, dat Hij Uw natuur op Zich nam, mensch werd, daarom zijn er dan ook uitkomsten tegen den dood voor U en voor al de gekenden Gods. Zoo wie aan Jezus gegeven is, die komt uit den dood te voorschijn. Dat blijkt alreede hier op aarde. Indien ge een van die gekenden zijt, hoort ge Zijn stem als Hij zegt: Sta op uit de dooden!

En de opstanding uit de dooden is eigenlijk de grootste zegen die U kan geworden. Een nieuw mensch te worden, zegt me, is er iets heerlijker? Indien ge een nieuw mensch geworden zijt, dan smaakt ge alreede hier aan deze zijde van het graf wat het zeggen wil om te loven, om God te loven. Ge gelooft toch wel, dat het Paradijs-leven juist dit is en niets meer of minder? Dat is al wat de Engelen Gods en de volmaakt rechtvaardigen nu doen, en doen zullen tot in alle eeuwigheid.

Er zijn uitkomsten tegen den dood.

Inplaats van omhangen te zijn en doordrongen te zijn van den dood, ontvangen zulke menschen het eeuwige leven. Zij leeren God kennen, en Zijn Zoon dien Hij gezonden heeft.

Maakt dan gezang met vroolijk gejuich op den Dankdag. Zingt Gode en Zijn Zoon over alle deze dingen. Dan is er ook plaats om te zingen van de aard-sche dingen die zoo ruimschoots Uw deel waren. Dan zult ge zien, dat zij niet het belangrijkste zijn van alles. Dan ziet ge de juiste proporties. Dan zegt ge: Mijn ziel: Loof den Heere! Want die God is mijne zaligheid! Bij Hem zijn uitkomsten tegen den dood, en dat is het eeuwig leven daarboven bij God!

G. Vos.

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EDITORIALS

As To Conditions

The teaching of the Canons of Dordrecht, in regard to the subject we are now discussing, is very clear and emphatic.

On the one hand they present election as unconditional and absolute. The Remonstrants, as we all know, did not literally deny the Scriptural truth of election, but made it contingent upon the faith of man, and upon his perseverance to the end. But our fathers of Dordt rejected the Arminian doctrine, and maintained that election is unconditional and absolute. It is not contingent upon anything in man, or upon anything that he can do or must accomplish, but rests in the sole good pleasure of His will.

It is defined as follows:

“Election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, before the foundation of the world, he hath out of mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of his own will, chosen, from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault, from their primitive state of rectitude, into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ, whom he from eternity appointed the Mediator and Head of the elect, and the foundation of salvation.” Canons of Dordt, I, A, 7.

Here we have, as you will notice, an infralapsarian definition of election. But it teaches very emphatically that election is unconditional, and that it rests only in “the sovereign good pleasure of his own will”.

And this alone would be sufficient to rule out all possibility of speaking of *conditions* in connection with salvation. For it must be evident to all, that if election, from which all our salvation flows, is absolute, salvation itself, whether in the objective or in the subjective sense of the word, can never be said to be conditional on anything man must do.

But this is not all.

The Canons do not leave it to us to draw the conclusion from their definition of the truth of election, that salvation is unconditional, and that faith may never be presented as a condition unto salvation, but they also state this truth clearly.

Already in the same article in which the definition of election occurs, quoted above, we read:

“This elect number, though by nature neither better nor more deserving than others, but with them involved in one common misery, God hath decreed to give to Christ, to be saved by Him, and effectually to call and to draw them to his communion by his Word

and Spirit, to bestow upon them true faith, justification and sanctification."

It is plain from this article that faith, together with all the other blessings of salvation, is a gift of God which flows from the unconditional decree of God, and is, therefore, never itself to be presented as a condition.

But this truth is expressed still more clearly in other articles of the Canons.

Beautiful, in this respect, is the language of Art. 8 of I, A, which presents the counsel of God as the only source of all our salvation, for according to that counsel and purpose of his own will, "he hath chosen us from eternity, both to grace and glory, *to salvation and the way of salvation, which he hath ordained that we should walk therein.*" (cursives are mine). How clearly and beautifully it is expressed here that the whole of salvation is determined by the counsel of God! Salvation and the way of salvation, regeneration, calling, faith, justification, sanctification, perseverance, and glorification,—it is all of God. And not only that, but He has also ordained that the elect should, and do walk in that way. How utterly impossible it is, then, to conceive of faith as a condition which man must fulfill in order to obtain salvation, or to enter into the covenant of God!

That this is, indeed, the meaning of the Canons is evident also from I, A, art. 9. There we read:

"This election was not founded upon foreseen faith, and the obedience of faith, holiness, or any other good quality or disposition in man, as a prerequisite, cause or condition on which it depended; but men are chosen to faith and to the obedience of faith, holiness, etc., therefore election is the fountain of every saving good; from which proceed faith, holiness, and the other gifts of salvation, and finally eternal life itself, as its fruits and effects."

Notice, first of all, that here, for the first time, the term *condition* is used. But it is put in the mouth of the Remonstrants. We will call attention to this again, for in the Canons we will meet with the term *conditions* more often, but always in the same condemnatory sense. To the fathers of Dordt it represents, not a Reformed, but an Arminian notion. This should certainly teach us a lesson. Dr. Schilder wrote in one of his articles in *De Reformatie* that there are Reformed people that are "vuurbang" i.e. afraid as of fire, of the term "condition". Well, I belong to them. And I dare say that I am in good company. The fathers of Dordt also were "vuurbang" of the term, witness the fact that they never use it for the positive exposition of the Reformed truth, although they were well acquainted with the term, but always mentioned it as an Arminian term expressing an Arminian idea. And why, pray, should we play with fire?

For the rest, it is very plain that there is no room

for the concept *faith as a condition* in the article quoted above. For faith does not occur as a condition in the counsel of God, and if it does not occur in that relation in God's eternal purpose, it cannot possibly occur in that relation in the historical realization of salvation, nor in the experience and consciousness of the people of God. We are not chosen, and therefore, we are not saved on condition of faith, or of the obedience of faith; but we are chosen *to* faith, and *to* the obedience of faith, and, therefore, we are saved through the instrument of faith, and in the way of obedience. That, and that only is Reformed language.

The same Arminian use of the term condition is referred to in the very next article of the Canons, I, A, 10. There we read:

"The good pleasure of God is the sole cause of this gracious election; which doth not consist herein, that out of all possible qualities and actions of men God has chosen some as a condition of salvation; but that he was pleased out of the common mass of sinners to adopt some certain persons as a peculiar people to himself."

The meaning of this is plain. The Arminians denied the truth of personal election. Instead, they invented the theory that God had selected certain qualities as a condition of salvation. The chief of these qualities is, of course, faith. Hence, the Arminians drew the conclusion, that, in the counsel of God, and, therefore, also in reality, faith appears as a condition of salvation. But note, that our fathers rejected this notion, and emphasized the truth of unconditional and personal election. Again I say that the term *condition* or *faith as a condition* is an Arminian term. We should not even attempt to use it in a sound sense. For by making this attempt, we willfully classify ourselves with the Arminians. And why should we want to adopt their language? There is absolutely no need for it in Reformed terminology.

Again, the same denotation of the term *condition*, i.e. in the Arminian sense, is referred to in the "Rejection of Errors" under caput I of the Canons.

We read in I, B, 3: (The true doctrine concerning Election and Rejection having been explained, the Synod rejects the errors of those):

"Who teach: That the good pleasure and purpose of God, of which Scripture makes mention in the doctrine of election, does not consist in this, that God chose certain persons rather than others, but in this that he chose out of all possible conditions (among which are also the works of the law), or out of the whole order of things, the act of faith which from its very nature is undeserving, as well as its incomplete obedience, as a condition of salvation, and that he would graciously consider this in itself as a complete obedience and count it worthy of the reward of eternal life. For by this injurious error the pleasure of God

and the merits of Christ are made of none effect, and men are drawn away by useless questions from the truth of gracious justification, and from the simplicity of Scripture, and this declaration of the Apostle is charged as untrue: 'who saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal.' II Tim. 1:9."

After what I wrote above on I, A, 10, it is not necessary to comment elaborately on this article. I quote it here chiefly because it furnishes another proof for my contention that the term *condition*, and *faith as a condition* is not Reformed, but Arminian, and for that reason should be scrupulously avoided by us. When the Arminians teach that, in the counsel of God, faith and the incomplete obedience are chosen by God as a condition of salvation, they mean, of course, to deny sovereign election and reprobation, and to present salvation as a matter that is contingent upon the freewill of man. Such is the implication of the term in the thought-structure of the Arminians throughout. And our fathers, understanding very well that words not only have meaning in themselves, but deserve significance also from the *usus loquendi*, i.e. from the common use of a term, avoided it altogether.

We will do well if we follow their example.

H. H.



THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

PART TWO

Of Man's Redemption

LORD'S DAY XXVII.

2.

Different Views Of The Covenant. (cont.)

To this we may add the consideration that this follows also from the fact that the covenant is historically established in the line of continued generations and that infants as well as adults are comprehended in the covenant of God. How could they be included in the covenant if the establishment of it were a pact and depended upon the consent of the covenanting parties. Reformed theologians generally have felt that it is absurd to speak of the covenant as an agreement, a mutual alliance, between the infinite God and the covenant as an agreement, a mutual

alliance, between the infinite God and the speck of dust that is man; and therefore they usually admit that it is unilateral in its establishment. But if this be true, it depends throughout on God alone. It is no longer a pact; it has no conditions; and God sovereignly performs all that belongs to the establishment and realization of the covenant. He alone, and sovereignly, determines who are to be received into the covenant relation with Him; and on His faithfulness alone it is based. God is faithful: that is the reason why the covenant is eternal. He maintains it: that is why it cannot be broken. It is an everlasting covenant.

And here lies another reason why the Scriptural idea of the covenant cannot be correctly represented by those notions of it that make it a way to salvation, or a means to an end. It is an everlasting covenant: "I will make an everlasting covenant of peace with you." Isaiah 55:3. "I will make an everlasting covenant with them." Isaiah 61:8. "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Jer. 32:40. "Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore." Ezek. 37:26. Similarly our Baptism Form speaks of an eternal covenant of grace. Now a way is not everlasting: when the destination is reached, the way is come to an end. A means is not eternal: when the thing to be effected by it has been attained, the means has served its purpose. An everlasting covenant, therefore, is not a way or a means, but is the destination, the end itself. It is not accidental, but essential.

We must, therefore, look for a definition of the idea of the covenant in a different direction.

* * * *

3.

The Idea Of The Covenant.

We can agree with Dr. Bavinck when he states that the covenant is the very essence of religion,—of religion, that is, in the sense of fellowship with the living God. And we would express this somewhat more clearly and concisely by maintaining that the very essence of the covenant is fellowship with the ever blessed God. We can also agree with Dr. Kuyper when he defines the covenant as an act of friendship. And again, we would emphasize this idea by insisting that the covenant itself is essentially a relation, a bond, of friendship. Accordingly, we would define the idea of the covenant as that living bond of fellowship between God and man that assumes the particular form of friendship. And by friendship we mean such a bond of fellowship and intimate communion of love that

subsists between persons on the basis of the highest possible equality, but that differ in respect to personal properties. Friends have no secrets; they enter into each other's life. And this is possible only on the basis of equality. Like knows like. On the other hand, true friendship is fellowship; and fellowship cannot subsist between persons that are identical in every respect. They must supplement each other. Perfect friendship is a bond between persons that, together form a perfect unity, that lacks nothing, and into which no other can ever enter. Hence, on the basis of equality there must also be personal distinction. And the idea of the covenant is briefly expressed in the term friendship, or bond of friendship, between God and man. In that bond God is the Friend-Sovereign, Who reveals Himself to man, leads him into the secrets of His counsel, opens His heart to him, and causes him to taste His blessed grace. And man is the friend-servant of God, who dwells in His house, walks and talks with Him, loves him with his whole being, and consecrates himself and all things in the house of God to His praise and glory. Indeed, the covenant is the very essence of religion.

The deepest ground of this covenant relationship between God and man is the triune God Himself, of Whose triune life it is at the same time the highest revelation. For God is in Himself, apart from any relation to the creature, a covenant God. For He is one in Being, yet three in Persons. The equality of the Three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is absolute, for it rests in the oneness of the divine essence. One in being and nature, one in mind and will, one in all the essential and ethical attributes, in eternity and immensity and immutability and independency, in simplicity and sovereignty, in knowledge and wisdom, in holiness and righteousness, in grace and beauty, in love and mercy,—absolutely one and equal are the Three Persons of the Godhead. In infinite perfection they enter into one another's nature and life. Each knows the others as he is known, yet they are personally distinct and possess their own personal properties, as is expressed in their personal names. The Father eternally subsists in the divine Essence as Father, the Son as Son, the Holy Ghost as Spirit. And, yet, also in their threeness they constitute a completeness, a unity, an exclusive whole or union. They belong together. No other person could possibly be conceived as added to that adorable threeness. The Father generates the Son and breathes forth the Spirit unto the Son. The Son is generated by the Father and breathes forth the Spirit unto the Father. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father to the Son as the Spirit of the Father, and returns as the Spirit of the Son unto the Father. And on the basis of that absolute equality by personal distinction the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity live an eternally perfect covenant life

of friendship. The Father knows and beholds and loves the Son through the Spirit. The Son knows and loves and beholds the Father through the Spirit. The Holy Ghost, searching the depths of God, knows the Father through the Son in Himself. The covenant life of the triune God is the ultimate ground for the covenant relationship between God and the creature.

That this idea of the covenant is based on the teaching of Holy Writ is not difficult to demonstrate. In paradise God reveals Himself to Adam and speaks to Him as a Friend with His friend; and Adam knew God in the cool of day. The first creation is concentrated in Paradise, the house of God. Paradise has its significant center in the tree of life, that symbol of life in God's fellowship. And the whole is concentrated in man, who is placed over the whole house of God to have dominion over all creatures. In the heart of man is the ethical center of the whole creation. And through that heart all creation is united to the heart of God. Adam is the house-servant of God in the covenant friendship. Of the early saints we read that they walked with God, a term denoting intimate fellowship and friendship. Gen. 5:22; 6:8. We read that they talk with God, that God reveals His counsel to them and hides nothing from them. Gen. 6:13; 9:9; 18:17ff. Abraham is called the friend of God. Is. 41:8; James 2:23. To Moses the Lord spoke as a man speaketh with his friend. Ex. 31:11. And the Lord knew him face to face. Moreover, it is the idea of the covenant that is symbolized in the tabernacle and the temple, expressing the idea of God's dwelling with His people under one roof. And it is well-known that the covenant relation between God and Israel is presented as a marriage relation, that most intimate of all human relationships, and that unfaithfulness, too, and transgression of the covenant is called adultery. The highest realization of the relation of God's people to Him in Christ is expressed in the words of the sacerdotal prayer: "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfect in one." John 17:23. Almost defined is this idea of the covenant in Psalm 25:14: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them his covenant." The Church is the temple of the living God, and she has the promise: "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." II Cor. 6:16. And the end of all, the highest realization of God's purposes of salvation, is expressed in the words of the great voice out of heaven: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." Rev. 21:3. In the new Jerusalem God's people shall walk in the light of the glory of God, and they shall see His face. Rev. 22:4. God's covenant of friendship shall have been realized in its highest heavenly perfection.

Reformed theology is no doubt correct when it emphasizes that the reason for and purpose of all the works of God *ad extra* is the glory of God. God wills to glorify Himself; and God's Self-glorification is His revelation, the revelation of all His glorious and blessed virtues in the greatest possible creaturely measure and on the highest possible plane. To this will to glorify Himself and to reveal Himself in all the beauty of His adorable perfections and in all the blessedness of His divine life belongs His eternal purpose to reveal Himself in His blessed covenant life of eternal friendship. But how could this covenant life of God be revealed otherwise than unto and through a people that would have a place in His fellowship, to whom He would reveal His secrets and that would be able to taste His marvelous love and grace. The triune God, therefore, from before the foundation of the world determined to form a people that would have a creaturely place in the fellowship of the divine family. And if we must speak of a covenant of redemption, a *pactum salutis*, a covenant of peace, I would say that it is the eternal purpose of the triune God to reveal His own covenant life to the highest possible degree and on the highest possible plane by establishing the covenant relation of friendship between Himself and His people.

But this required the formation of a people, of a creature that would be in the highest possible creaturely measure like unto Himself. For, as we said, the bond of friendship presupposes a basis of likeness. Hence, God in His everlasting counsel determined upon and conceived of a people that shall be conformed according to the image of His Son, that He may be the firstborn among many brethren. The first of these covenant creatures in the divine conception is the Christ, the Son of God in human flesh, and that, too, as the resurrected Lord. The risen Lord is the firstborn of every creature in the counsel of God. In Him the likeness of God is realized in the highest possible degree and measure. You understand that this means that I conceive of the counsel of God in a strictly supralapsarian light. History may be, and no doubt is, *infra* in its order of events. But God's eternal purpose and good pleasure dare not be conceived otherwise than according to the supralapsarian order: what is ultimate in history or in the realization of God's pleasure is first in His eternal counsel. Not the first world, but the new creation is the goal from the beginning, because it is first in the decree of God. Not the first covenant, but the eternal tabernacle of God on a heavenly plane has the first place in the counsel of God. Salvation is no repair work, but the realization of God's eternal pleasure, of Him Who knows all His works from the beginning. And since all things in the new world are concentrated in the glorified Son of God in the flesh, and He is the Head of all things in that new world, and all things are created unto Him and for

Him, we repeat with emphasis that in the eternal good pleasure of God the risen and glorified Christ is the firstborn of every creature. In Him God wants to reveal His glory. He is the highest central realization of that likeness of God which is the *conditio sine qua non* for the highest possible realization of God's covenant of friendship with men. This is the meaning of that marvelous passage in Col. 1:15ff.; "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell."

With Him, then, the covenant of friendship is first of all established. And in the incarnated, crucified, and resurrected Christ there is the highest possible creaturely likeness of God. And to Him are given all the elect, the sons whom God wants to lead to glory, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. They are chosen in Him and unto Him; and they are ordained to be conformed according to His image, in order that the covenant of friendship, centrally realized in the risen Lord, the Head of the Church, might be reflected in millions upon millions of sons of God, and so all might redound to the praise of the triune God. And what is more, unto Him and His Church all things in heaven and on earth are given: for Christ is the Head of heaven and earth. In Him as the Head all things must be gathered together. And in God's counsel they are conceived as united in Him, so that the whole creation is a house of God in Christ and through His Church. The covenant of God embraces every creature, and all things must serve the new man in Christ, that he may serve his God. Of this all-embracing idea of the covenant the rainbow which God established in the heavens after the flood is a sign and symbol. And unto that glorious realization of God's heavenly and all-embracing covenant all things that are accomplished and must be accomplished in time are subordinated and made subservient. Even creation and the fall, sin and death, reprobation as well as election,—all must serve the realization of God's everlasting covenant of friendship in Christ and His Church.

You understand that I refer now to the counsel of God, not to the order of things in time. If you bear this in mind, you will also discern the sharp difference between this and the Barthian idea of the covenant, as presented, for instance, by Walter Künneth in his book under the title, "Die Theologie der Auferstehung".

He expresses a view very similar to that presented above, but he refuses to proceed from a supralapsarian conception of the counsel of God, applies the truth that the risen Lord is the firstborn of every creature to creation and its development, and leaves at least the impression that creation culminates and reaches its perfection in the resurrection of Christ, and that, too, in the way of development and in virtue of an inherent "Triebkraft" in creation as originally called into existence by the Word of God. To this view we can, of course, not subscribe.

But we do believe that when God created the first world He had the second in view; when He formed the first Adam, He did so with a view to the last Adam, the Lord from heaven, the risen Christ, the firstborn of every creature. The original creation is an image of the new world that is to come. But it is not its beginning. The first man is the image of the second, but he can never develop into him. The chasm between the two can be bridged only by the wonder of grace, that has its central revelation in the incarnation of the Son of God, and through His death in the resurrection and glorification of Christ the Lord. It is not by the *Triebkraft* of the original creation, but by the irresistible power of the wonder of grace that all things are raised from their original earthly level, and that, too, through the depth of sin, death, and the curse, to the height of glory in God's eternal covenant of friendship.

In the first paradise we behold the first, the earthly realization of the covenant of friendship. That covenant was not an agreement between God and Adam, made sometime after his creation as something new and additional. But it was the living bond of fellowship, according to which Adam was the friend-servant of God, set over God's entire earthly house, so that all things must serve him, that he might serve his God. And also this covenant relationship functioned *a parte hominus* on the basis of the fact that he was created in the image of God, in true knowledge, righteousness and holiness. Even as Adam in his nature reflected the nature and virtues of His Creator, so his relation to and life with God reflected from the moment of his creation the life of the Triune.

But Adam did not regard his exalted position. Through the instigation of Satan he violated the covenant of God and made himself worthy of His fierce anger, death, and the curse. He dies and becomes corrupt, dead in trespasses and sins, an exile from the house of God. And in him all men, including the elect, the sons God had ordained unto glory, fell into sin and death. There was no way out as far as man was concerned. As far as it lay in his power, he had destroyed the covenant of God. The return to the fellowship of God had, from man's viewpoint, become forever impossible.

But man's impossibility is God's medium for the

revelation of His glorious grace. He had provided some better thing for us, the perfection of His covenant of friendship in Christ. Adam violated the covenant of God, but God maintains it. Adam and all the elect fall upon Christ, Who stood behind them, according to God's eternal good pleasure. And God at once reveals His covenant as it is eternally fixed in Christ. For He announces that He will put enmity between Satan and the woman and between their mutual seed and that the cause of the Son of God shall have the victory. That covenant is to follow the antithetical line of election and reprobation. And for the revelation of this covenant of Christ in the elect, with its antithesis in the reprobate, the stage is set in all creation. Man is subjected to temporal death, separated from the tree of life. The conception of the woman is multiplied, in order that Christ may come quickly, as always, and her sorrow shall be great. The ground is cursed and will produce thorns and thistles. Not only will man eat his bread in the sweat of his face, but he will also eat and drink his own death. And the creature is made subject to vanity, so that all real culture by the fallen lord of the earthly creation is forever become impossible. But upon that stage God reveals His covenant; and through that darkness He causes the light of the promise, the light that shines from the resurrection of Jesus Christ, to penetrate, filling the heirs of the promise with hope.

He reveals that covenant to Noah and his seed as a covenant that embraces the whole creation, so that also the creature, groaning in the bondage of corruption, may look forward in hope to the glorious liberty of the children of God. He reveals that covenant to Abraham, His friends, as running in the line of generations, but as embracing nevertheless all the nations of the earth. He establishes that covenant at Sinai, placing it, however, under the law, in order that sin might abound and under the taskmaster the children of the promise might look the more earnestly for the *telos* of the law in Christ. And all through the dispensation of that covenant of Sinai the powers of darkness and an adulterous people exerted themselves to violate and to destroy the covenant of Jehovah. Yet, in the fullness of time He realized the covenant of friendship, uniting Himself with His people centrally in the incarnation, the Son of God come in the flesh, God of God tabernacling with us, laying the basis of righteousness in the atoning sacrifice and perfect obedience of the Servant of Jehovah, and raising the firstborn among many brethren and the firstborn of every creature from the dead to exalt Him at His right hand in heavenly glory. He establishes that eternal bond of friendship in the new covenant through the Spirit of the risen Lord indwelling in the Church, by Whom He writes His law in their hearts so that they all know Him from the smallest to the greatest.

And still the counsel of God concerning His everlasting covenant is not finished. One more revelation of the wonder of grace is yet to be expected, when the glorified Son of God shall be revealed from heaven, the old things shall pass away, and all things shall be made new. Then He shall make our mortal bodies like unto His most glorious body by the power whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself. Even creation shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption to participate in the glorious liberty of the children of God. And all things shall be made conformable to the glory of the risen Lord. The tabernacle of God shall be with men in heavenly glory; and as friend-servants in the house of God, a royal priesthood, we shall have perfect fellowship with the triune Jehovah, see Him face to face, know even as we are known, and taste and declare that the Lord is good forever and ever.

H. H.



OUR DOCTRINE

The Counsel Of God. (1)

The Place Of This Concept In Dogmatics.

We have now come, in our discussion of "our doctrine", to the counsel of God. The place which this concept occupies in Dogmatics is important. Dogmatics we have defined as the systematic knowledge of God as based upon the Holy Scriptures. Until now we have discussed the Knowledge of God, the Trinity, the Covenant, and the Attributes (incommunicable and communicable). We noticed that our conception of the Covenant is based not merely upon the definition of the word "covenant", but upon the development of this truth as it occurs throughout Holy Writ. To be sure, also the word, "covenant", appears in the Scriptures as referring to the eternal and heavenly relationship of living friendship between God and His people in Jesus Christ, our Lord. The word appears in this sense in passages in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea, and also in the Lord's dealing with Abraham and Noah. Of this covenant, for example, the rainbow is a sign, and what is the rainbow but a sign of the breaking through of the Sun of Righteousness through the night of the darkness of our sin and guilt, and the righteous judgments of God? However, this covenant idea of a relationship of living friendship appears and is taught throughout the Word. Of tremendous importance in this connection is a passage such as Gen. 3:15. This text may surely be considered as a key passage in the

Word of God. The Lord will establish enmity between the seed of the woman and that of the serpent. Enmity is essentially friendship, the friendship of the living God. That God will establish enmity certainly signifies that He will instill His friendship and love in the hearts of His own. And this will continue throughout the ages. Besides, we must note that the Lord will establish this enmity. Hence, the enmity between the seed of the woman and that of the devil, the friendship of the Church which causes that Church to be the party of the living God and that also over against the kingdom of darkness, is solely the work of Jehovah and is, therefore, strictly unilateral, one-sided, proceeds exclusively from the Lord. And, this is the teaching throughout the Word of God. The entire Old Dispensation appears in the symbol of the temple, God's *dwelling-place* with His own. Heaven is described as the house of the Father with many mansions. And, furthermore, eternity is held before us in Holy Writ as the eternal tabernacle of God with man, in which the Lord will dwell with His redeemed and perfectly sanctified people in heavenly perfection and immortality. No truth can be higher than this relationship of living friendship with the alone blessed God, and this is presented in the Scriptures as being realized with the believers and their seed according to the eternal and divinely sovereign good pleasure of Jehovah.

We have, therefore, been discussing thus far the Essence, Being of God, the life of God Himself, not of course apart from the Scriptures, but as revealed unto us in the written Word of God. We are now ready to discuss the works of God as revealed in all His works, His works of creation and recreation. Before we proceed with this discussion, however, we must first inquire into the Counsel of God, the Divine Origin and Cause of this revelation of the Lord in all the works of His hands.

The Importance Of The Counsel of God.

The importance of the truth of the counsel of God is evident, first of all, from the fact that it is everywhere taught in Holy Writ. We will return to this Scriptural evidence in this series of articles. And, secondly, this concept is important because of the very nature of the subject. The Scriptural doctrine of God's counsel or decrees maintains the absolute sovereignty of the Lord. Our conception of it determines our conception of God and, vice versa, our conception of the living God determines our conception of His counsel. If God be truly God, absolute and all-sufficient, His counsel must be maintained in the strictly sovereign, all-comprehensive, efficacious, irresistible, unconditional sense of the word. God and His counsel are one; as the Lord is, so is His decree. The history of the Church throughout the ages verifies the truth that an arminian conception of man and salvation is always accompanied

by a denial or silencing of the strictly sovereign character of election and reprobation—this can be readily discerned in the Roman Catholic-Lutheran-Remonstrant (Arminian) development of this truth as revealed in the Scriptures. We purpose to refer to this line in this series of articles on the Divine decrees. It is not difficult to distinguish the Roman Catholic-Lutheran-Remonstrant development of this truth from the Pauline-Augustine-Gottschalk-Fathers of Dordrecht line of development of the same concept. Besides, the counsel of God is, of course, the origin of all things. This lies in the very nature of the case. Our conception of God's counsel must, therefore, be of the greatest importance. If we err at the origin of our conception and thinking, we must necessarily go astray in all our thinking and conceptions. And this applies, not only to an open denial and repudiation of God's sovereign decrees, but also to a failure to accord it to its proper place in our preaching and instruction.

The Issue Defined.

We can speak, first of all, of the counsel of the Lord in the general sense of the word. When we speak of the counsel of God in general we refer to it in its broadest, all-comprehensive sense, as embracing all things. As such, the counsel of God refers to the eternal thoughts, wisdom, knowledge of God, whereby He eternally and sovereignly willed, foreordained, prescribed the existence and being and development of all things in heaven and on earth and in the waters under the earth, of the things rational and irrational, animate and inanimate, organic and inorganic, the life of man and beast, of tree and plant, of all things that move and are, of the entire creation.

This is everywhere the teaching of Holy Writ. On the one hand, the Old Testament abounds in eulogizing the counsel of God. The Lord, e.g., is the Creator of all things, and, therefore, the Architect of the universe. He created, sustains, governs all things by His word and with wisdom—"By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth"—Ps. 33:6; "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all: the earth is full of Thy riches."—Ps. 104:24; "Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou Me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest: or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof? When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Or who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, as if it had issued

out of the womb?" f.f.-Job 38. Emphatically the Scriptures declare that God knows the things that shall be and announces them beforehand, as in Is. 44:23-24: "Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it; shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel. Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, and He that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things: that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by Myself;"—in Is. 42:9: "Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them."—in Is. 41:22-23: "Let them bring them forth, and shew us what shall happen: let them shew the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together."—in Is. 43:9-12: "Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and shew us former things? let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, It is truth. Ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord, and My servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He: before Me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after Me. I, even I, am the Lord; and beside Me there is no saviour. I have declared, and have saved, and I have showed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God."—in Is. 44:7: "And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for Me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them."—in Is. 46:10: "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure:"—in Is. 48:3-11: "I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of My mouth, and I shewed them; I did them suddenly, and they came to pass. Because I knew that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass; I have even from the beginning declared it to thee; before it came to pass I shewed it thee: lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them. Thou hast heard, see all this; and will not ye declare it? I have shewed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them. They are created now, and not from the beginning; even before the day when thou heardest them not; lest thou shouldest say, Behold, I knew them. Yea, thou heardest not, yea, thou knewest not, yea,

thou knewest not; yea, from that time that thine ear was not opened: for I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb. For My Name's sake will I defer Mine anger, and for My praise will I refrain from thee, that I cut thee not off. Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. For Mine own sake, even for Mine own sake, will I do it: for how should My name be polluted: and I will not give My glory unto another."—in Amos 3:7: "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets."

In prophecy He proclaims before hand the things which shall happen and as they shall happen, as in Gen. 3:14, f.f.; "And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. . . .", in 6:13, f.f.: "And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before Me: for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. . . ." in 9:25-27: "And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant."—in 12:2-3: "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."—in 15:13-15: "And He said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not their's, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age."—see also Gen. 25:13 f.f. and 49:8 f.f.

Also, the days of a man's life are all determined beforehand, before he is born. This we read in Ps. 31:15: "My times are in Thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me."—in Psalm 39:5: "Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreath; and mine age is as nothing before Thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah."—in Ps. 139:15: "My substance was not hid from Thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth."—and in Job 14:5: "Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with Thee, Thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass."

Indeed, the entire Old Testament, with all its prophecies, shadows, types, and symbols, constitutes a Divine prophecy of the future as, e.g., in connection with the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ, in all His suffering and death, followed a specific program which was outlined for Him in the Old Testament, and which, therefore, has been planned and willed by God from before the foundation of the world.

On the other hand, also the New Testament abounds in this testimony concerning the counsel of the Lord. In Acts 15:18 we read: "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world." The counsel of God precedes all things and it embraces all things. We read in Eph. 1:11: "In Whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." Moreover, it also includes the sinful deeds of men. This is clearly held before us, e.g., in Acts 2:23: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain;"—in Acts 4:28: "For of a truth against Thy holy child Jesus, Whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done."—and in Luke 22:22: "And truly the Son of man goeth as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed!"

The Lord has determined the dwellingplace of all the peoples of the earth and also the bounds of their habitations, Acts 17:26: "And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitations."

The will of God is revealed in the destruction of Judas, John 17:12: "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy Name: those that Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.", in the reprobation of Esau, Rom. 9:13: "As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.", in the hardening of the ungodly, Rom. 9:18: "Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth.", in the raising up of Pharaoh, Rom. 9:17: "For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew My power in thee, and that My name might be declared throughout all the earth.", and in the endurance of the vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction, Rom. 9:22: "What if God, willing to shew His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction."

Moreover, Christ *is appointed* not only unto the

rising but also the falling of many, Luke 2:34: "And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against;" unto judgment, John 3:19-21: "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God", and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, I Pet. 2:7-8; I Thess. 5:9; Judas 4: "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner. And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also *they were appointed*. . . . For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

Besides, the unbelief of the wicked is ascribed to the will of God, John 12:37-41: "But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. Those things saith Esaias, when he saw His glory, and spake of Him", and also the faith of the people of God, Acts 13:48: "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." And do we not read in John 10:26: "But ye believe not, because ye are not of My sheep, as I said unto you." We must understand this word correctly. Jesus does not say that they are not of His sheep because they believe not, but that they do not believe because they are not of His sheep. It is, therefore, clear that the unbelief of the Jews is ascribed to the fact that they are not of His sheep, and hence to the sovereign will of the living God. And in Matt. 10:29-30 we are told that the Lord has counted all the hairs of our heads, and that not a sparrow falls off the house top without the will of our heavenly Father: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? (hence, they are not of much value—H.V.) and one of them shall not fall on the ground without

your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." We may therefore conclude that the counsel of God, understood in its general, broadest sense, must be understood as all-comprehensive, as embracing all things, the existence and being, the development, and the activity of every form of existence throughout the universe, in the heavens above, upon the earth below, and in the waters under the earth.

H. Veldman.



Reply To Dr. K. Schilder

(Conclusion)

Let me repeat the line of thought of the professor's article, the second half of which I must still treat. As was said the professor charges me with two, I should have said, three follies.

1) My first folly, according to the professor, is my saying, that Rev. Hoeksema's dogmatic structure, opinion, coherent view "over alles en nog wat" is official doctrine in our communion just because it is Rev. Hoeksema's view and through the success that he had in binding it on our people.

I made plain that the professor cannot point to a single statement in any of my articles that can justify his telling his readers over there in the Netherlands such a thing. Such a saying from my pen would indeed be absurd and as untrue as it is absurd. Not Rev. Hoeksema's thetical view "over alles en nog wat", but his covenant-theology—the teaching that the promises of God are given only to the elect—is official doctrine in our communion, and this for the sole reason that it was officially adopted.

2) My second folly, according to the professor, is my saying that Rev. Hoeksema's covenant-theology was *unwritten* and as *unwritten* officially adopted. Were this true, says the professor, the Protestant Reformed officially adopted Rev. Hoeksema's *unwritten* creed, dogmatic structure, opinion, coherent view, thetical view "over alles en nog wat". But that is inconceivable. It simply cannot be true. And it isn't true. Fact is, the professor goes on to say, that all the Protestant Reformed have is the Confession, the Three Forms of Unity, and not the covenant-theology of collega Hoeksema.

But as I made plain, the facts are these. Not Rev. Hoeksema's thetical view "over alles en nog wat", but his covenant-theology, the teaching that the promises of God are given only to the elect, is *written*—written indeed—and as *written* also officially adopted, and therefore binding indeed. The "how" of this adoption has been fully explained.

Here the professor has my reply to what we have in the following paragraph from his pen (quote), "Now this time I am not going to say a word about the theology of the Liberated." (That is really a pity. I would like to hear the professor on that theology, that covenant-theology of the Liberated, the teaching that the promises of God are given to baptized elect and non-elect alike). The professor continues (quote), "But I do want to say something about the theology of the Protestant Reformed brethren. If Rev. Ophoff dare aver that the unwritten creed, nevertheless officially adopted, is binding in his communion, well, then it is time to hold him to the spirited word of Rev. Hoeksema's Triple Breach, p. 24, that I, *mutatis mutandis* (necessary changes having been made) would now like to hold before him: 'The Formula of Subscription contains always still nothing more than that we (the subscribers of that document, the officebearers in the church) declare our willingness to maintain and defend the Three Forms of Unity.'

Remark. We wholeheartedly can indorse that statement from the Triple Breach. Truly, that is all that the Formula of Subscription contains, to wit, a promise to maintain and defend the Three Forms of Unity. And before our own consciousness we have been holding ourselves to that promise through the years, also in our officially adopting the written teaching that the promises of God are given only to the elect and in our official rejection of the written logical contrary of that doctrine. For that doctrine, teaching, we firmly believe, is the plain teaching of those Three Forms, so that, according to our firm belief, all that we were doing in officially adopting that written teaching is precisely what the Liberated, according to their belief and public statements, were doing when they officially rejected the teaching of the synodicals to the effect that the promises of God are given to the elect only. What we were doing, we believe, is returning to the Confession. And, of course, the question is—and this is the question indeed—who *actually* returned to the Confession, the Protestant Reformed or the Liberated? We certainly would like to discuss with the Liberated brethren precisely *that* question. We are convinced that we did. And as holding that conviction we are exceedingly willing to debate the matter.

Again quoting from Rev. Hoeksema's Triple Breach, the professor continues, "A little further, p. 24/5 (of the Triple Breach), 'In 1924 office bearers were deposed because they refused to subscribe and express their agreement with the Three Forms of Unity. These office bearers had promised to hold themselves to the Three Forms of Unity without any additions.'

Remark. We can wholeheartedly subscribe also this statement from the Triple Breach of Rev. Hoeksema. For it is simply a statement of what at the

time and still is our conviction. Our conviction was and still is that the Three Points are, as Rev. Hoeksema states in the aforesaid booklet, three additions to the Confession and not the very Confession itself. Such being our conviction, we might not, and also did not, subscribe the Three Points. But, I repeat, the teaching that the promises of God are given only to the elect is, according to our firm belief, the very Confession, the only true interpretation of it. Hence, we would have had absolutely no scruples in subscribing that teaching, had they so required. For, certainly, we did not desire that rupture between us and the Christian Reformed brethren. We did all within our power to prevent it. Why should we then have been unwilling to subscribe the truth, if that could have held us together? We would have committed a heinous sin before God had we allowed ourselves to be deposed in our office for the mere and sole reason that we didn't want to be told.

The professor continues, "Rev. Hoeksema reproved the Christian Reformed church, and, I believe, rightly so, as follows: 'If the Christian Reformed Churches wanted to be honest, they would so have to alter the Form (the Three Forms of Unity), that in it the Three Points of 1924 also received a name.' I (Dr. Schilder) share that opinion."

Remark. I (Rev. Ophoff), too, share that opinion (of Rev. Hoeksema). So here the professor and I again agree. Certainly, the Christian Reformed brethren, then, should have been honest enough to make room for the Three Points by changing—mark you, changing—the Confession. And the reason is simple. As Rev. Hoeksema stated in his Triple Breach, these points, so we believe, are not the Confession but verily additions to it.

And now I must confess that I can see no logical connection between what the professor has just said and what he in the same paragraph next writes (quote) "If Rev. Ophoff, what I otherwise do not believe, thinks that an unwritten creed is binding, let, then, the Protestant Reformed churches write down on paper that which is unwritten, and definitely name it among the papers which, let us say, the catechumens of 1949 must receive 25 years after 1924."

Reply. The professor shall have to admit that the necessity under which he here wants to place us is really no necessity at all if the doctrine in question is written in our hearts; if it is the consensus of opinion, better said, conviction, among us that the doctrine is the plain teaching of our Confession; and if it already has been put in writing, and as written officially adopted.

The professor concludes, "As long as this has not happened, and I suspect that it never will happen, I know not how to honour the Protestant Reformed

churches better, than to say to everyone: hands off, because we have there the Three Forms of Unity and nothing else,—Rev. Hoeksema himself has said it.” I fail to grasp what the professor means by the expression „hands off”. Hands off what? Our confession? Do not change that symbol by the addition of propositions foreign to its doctrine? If that is what is meant, I again fully agree, of course. The rest of the sentence is clear. True, we have the Three Forms and nothing else in the way of corrupting additions. And the teaching to the effect that the promises of God are only to the elect is our official interpretation—of the Confession. Rev. Hoeksema has said it not so long ago in the Standard Bearer. And we all say it with him, not because he said it, but because it is true.

It is therefore as the professor tells his readers. All that we as Protestant Reformed have is the Confession, the Three Forms of Unity, but the Confession so interpreted as to yield the teaching that the promises of God are given only to the elect. That teaching, we believe, is the only true interpretation of the Confession. And on that teaching hangs not Rev. Hoeksema’s thetical view “over alles en nog wat”, but our covenant view, theology. The ensign, so to speak, of that view, theology, is exactly that teaching. To distinguish our covenant-theology from other covenant-theologies, for example from that of the Liberated, it would not be amiss to call it the promises-of-God-given-only-to-the-elect covenant-theology of the Protestant Reformed. Indeed, it is really as plain and as simple as all that.

3) My third folly, according to the professor, is my saying that the Protestant Reformed in their rejection of the Three Points repudiated the covenant-theology of Prof. Heyns, the dogmatic construction of the professor, his opinion, coherent view, thetical view “over alles en nog wat”. Such is my folly here—a folly that the professor means to expose in all its great foolishness. For he writes (quote), “It is not true that a theology, for example of Heyns, was rejected. Propositions were rejected, nothing more. Back of them lie, of course, more than a fragment, not to say: back of them lie all kinds of shreds of theology; but even as in 1944 the people who cast us out, had all kinds of theological ideas in their heads, the one about the church, the other about the sacrament, a third about the promise, and the one for that and the other again for some other reason, some in all likelihood for all kinds of casual reasons, nodded their approval, when the chairman brought to a vote as binding, the deliverances, the propositions, so, too, in 1924. We only cause ourselves a hopeless amount of work should we also still have to deal with all those theologies. Don’t take offence, but such a construction of the present church life dangerously approaches the myth.”

This, then, is my great folly, namely, my contention that in rejecting the three points, the Protestant Reformed repudiated all that lies back of those points: the theology of Heyns and of all the delegates to synod, their shreds of theology, all kinds of theological ideas in their heads about church, sacrament and the promise including all kinds of casual reasons back of their nodding their approval, when the points as binding were brought to a vote.

In replying, all I have need of is to direct attention to the proposition on which the first of the three points was made to repose,—the proposition to the effect that the preaching of the gospel is grace for all—elect and non-elect—to whom in the providence of God it is presented. And that is Heynsian theology. And that theology was rejected together with the first point.

That theology, doctrinal proposition, does not, of course, stand alone. It is surrounded by other doctrinal propositions, to which it is radically related and in union with which it forms a distinctive covenant-view, theology, the Heynsian. Basic to this view is the proposition that the promises of God are given to elect and non-elect alike. On that proposition this whole view hangs. It is, therefore, not amiss to speak of the promises-of-God-given-to-all covenant view, theology, of Heyns. Not with all kinds of theological ideas in the head of Heyns’ or in anybody else’s head have we to do, but with this Heynsian covenant view. For it was officially rejected with the three points in 1924.

The professor in the sequel of his article objects to identifying the Heynsian covenant-view with that of the Liberated. He tells his readers that he, himself, rejects the first point of 1924 and definite constructions of Heyns. But that is his inconsistency. For he at once holds that the promises are given to all the baptized, elect and non-elect, alike.

I still have a question. As we know, by synodical action in the communion of “Gereformeerde” churches in the Netherlands, that promises-of-God-given-only-to-the-elect theology was made binding. Every office-bearer was asked to express his agreement with it. Dr. Schilder and his brethren in the service—professors, ministers, elders, and deacons—refused. Action was taken against them, and they were deposed in their office. Synod’s action was the striking of what turned out to be an always widening breach between brethren of the same household of faith.

Here, then, is my question? Why did Dr. Schilder and his brethren refuse to subscribe that covenant-theology? Let me put the question to ourselves. Why in our communion did our original consistories back in 1924 refuse to subscribe the Three Points? Was their reason the following?

1) They had no earnest convictions regarding the doctrine contained in those points, but only opinions.

Their attitude was more or less neutral. They had a feeling that the doctrine was unscriptural but they did not know. They were not certain. At the moment, they were unable in their minds and hearts to take a firm stand against or for the points. As led by Rev. Hoeksema, they had been studying the doctrine and its contrary for a long time. But as yet no settled and firm beliefs had formed in their soul. They felt that, before they ever would be able to say with earnest conviction, that the Three Points were sound doctrine or heretical, they needed much more time, perhaps years, for study. Hence, their ideal with respect to the doctrine of the Three Points and its logical contrary was a legal state in the church in which every one was free to take whatever attitude his heart bade him with respect to the points, and to live that attitude, denying or affirming those points, as he should choose.

Was this the state of heart and mind of the three original consistories and their pastors—Revs. Hoeksema, Danhof, and the undersigned—with respect to the three points? And did they refuse to sign those points because, being still in great doubt, they, according to the word of the apostle, would be damned, should they yield? And is this what they in their refusal to subscribe the points declared: We are not returning to the Confession in our minds and hearts. For we have no convictions regarding the doctrine of the points. So then, we are returning to that ideal legal state (just described) the watch-word of which is: nothing binding.

Now this, certainly, is not what those three original consistories declared, meant to declare and actually did declare, in their refusal to subscribe the Three Points. How could they with a good conscience have allowed themselves to be deposed in their office without first revealing to Classis their doubt and petitioning Classis to bear them in their doubt as members of the Christian Reformed communion of churches, and thus refrain from demanding of them that they subscribe the Three Points. And it is not unlikely that the Classis would have been willing to bear them in their doubt on the condition that they solemnly promise to refrain from attacking the doctrine of the points either by the written or spoken word; but to keep silence until through the searching of the Scriptures, they should be able to take a stand either against or for the Three Points.

In a word, had that been the state of mind and heart of those original consistories, how could we today justify our separate existence as a communion of Protestant Reformed Churches. I don't see it.

2) But, certainly, that was not the state of mind and heart of the three original consistories with regard to the Three Points and its contrary doctrine. Those consistories, the pastors of those consistories, had earn-

est and firm convictions regarding the doctrine of those Three Points. It was their earnest conviction that the doctrine of those points was in conflict with the Scriptures and our Confession. It was their firm conviction that, should they subscribe the three points, they verily would be binding themselves to denying and attacking the Gospel of God and to proclaiming the lie in the pulpit. And in that conviction, they refused to subscribe the Three Points. In that conviction they allowed themselves to be deposed in their office. And their firm belief was that in openly repudiating those points, they were returning to the confession indeed. Let no one say, therefore, that the contrary of these points, the contrary of the First Point—that promises-of-God-given-only-to-the-elect covenant-theology is not binding in our communion. To deny that is to be making it impossible for ourselves to justify before God our separate existence as a communion of Protestant Reformed Churches.

How is Dr. Schilder and his brethren justifying their separate existence as a communion of Liberated churches? The question is pertinent because of their saying that in their refusal to sign the points they were returning to that legal state that has for its watch-word: we do not bind one another;—returning to that state with respect to the doctrine of those points and its logical contrary.

One or two: 1) Their refusal to sign those points was an act expressive of their earnest conviction that the doctrine of those synodical points is heretical, and that in repudiating it, they were returning to the Confession and the Scriptures, and then the contrary doctrine of the points is binding in their communion; 2) or they were not acting from earnest conviction; and in that case the contrary doctrine of those points cannot very well be binding in their communion. But how then are the brethren justifying their separate existence as a communion of Liberated churches? That is really my question.

The trouble with the Liberated brethren is that they say two things. They say: 1) We did return to the Confession. (Prof. Schilder said this in his article that I am now treating). Hence, in repudiating that promises-of-God-given-only-to-the-elect covenant theology of the Synodicals and in embracing its logical contrary, we did act from conviction. That "promises-of-God-given-to-baptized-elect-and-non-elect covenant theology is binding in our communion. Our separation therefore is justified. 2) And they say, "that covenant-theology of ours is not binding in our communion. We did not act from conviction. Our separation is not justified.

The Liberated brethren must stop saying two things. They must say either the one or the other.

G. M. Ophoff.

Christ Brought As A Lamb To The Slaughter

We turn to the 6th and 7th verse of the 23rd chapter of Isaiah and read here God's Word as follows, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquities of us all. He was oppressed and was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before His shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth."

"All we as sheep have gone astray," so the prophet sets out in this passage. Here, too, the pronoun "we" has reference only to God's people, to the church of the elect. For we deal here with a confession of sin and with a proclamation of the truth about the man of sorrows, Christ Jesus. And confessing sin in tears of true contrition of heart and witnessing for the truth, as the prophet here does, are good works that Christ prepared only for His people, that they should walk in them,—thus prepared for all such who by the mercy of God confess from the heart, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to His own way."

For that verily is our great sin before God. As the flock of God, we, His elect people, strayed from Him our shepherd even at the dawn of history in Adam our first father, representative, and head. There in paradise, embracing the lie of Satan, "Thou shalt be as God," we arrayed ourselves on the side of the temptor, against God our shepherd. Right there and then we all like sheep went astray; we turned every one to his own way. Right there and then we crucified God the first time. Literally, of course, that wicked doing of our first father was not ours. But let us not imagine that what Adam did there to God in Paradise is beneath any of us. If Adam, a man created in the image of God, namely, created in true knowledge, righteousness and holiness, was capable of such an atrocious doing, what can be expected of men dead in trespasses and sin, such as we by nature are. Apart from the redeeming grace of God, we walk in Adam's footsteps. For, as Paul tells us, by that one transgression of Adam, sin entered the world and death by sin, and so death passed unto every man, in that all have sinned,—death passed unto every man, spiritual death. And what is spiritual death but the corruption of the whole nature, a hereditary disease wherein infants themselves are affected even in their whole nature, a hereditary disease wherein infants themselves are effected even in their mother's womb, and which produceth in us all sorts of sin, being in us a root thereof; and therefore is so vile and abominable in the sight of God, that

it is sufficient to condemn us all. Indeed, apart from the grace of Christ we walk in Adam's footsteps, and do the will of our father, the devil.

You are inclined to doubt this. It cannot be as bad as that, you say. Turn with me then to the first chapters of the book of Exodus. This portion of Holy Writ presents to us the people of Israel, the church of God of the Old Dispensation as groaning under the yoke of Pharaoh. The Lord took mercy on His people. In His love He delivered them from their bondage. During their residence in that terrible wilderness of Sinai He kept them as the people of His eye. He led them. He instructed them. He clave the rocks in the wilderness and gave them drink; He rained down manna upon them, neither did their feet swell all those forty years. He drove out the nations mightier and greater than they were and gave them Canaan, their promised inheritance. And into the rest of Canaan He entered with them. He was to them a shepherd indeed. How did the people of Israel respond? They forsook the Lord who made them. They set no value on the God of their salvation. They despised and rejected Him. They provoked Him to jealousy with their idols and their abominations. They sacrificed unto devils and to new gods that they knew not. And when, in the fulness of time, their shepherd, the Lord God of Israel, stood before them in human flesh, the incarnate Son of God, they crucified Him.

And let us not say, The Jews did that. But let us say, by nature, without the grace of God intervening, we, too, would have crucified the Christ had He been walking with us there in Canaan. For this is the truth. Our text tells us so. Are we not as God's believing people confessing with the prophet "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way"? Verily, the prophet had reference to the sin of crucifying the Christ, when he gave utterance to that confession. First we crucified God in Paradise and again when He stood before us in His Son incarnate, the Lord Jesus Christ. "We have turned every one to his own way." We must take careful notice also of this statement. Ordinarily we say of a man that he turns to his own way when he follows his own ideas and imaginings and will take advice of no one and thus goes his way alone. That is somewhat of an illustration of the charge lodged against us here. Every one of us, forsaking, crucifying God, turned to an idea, a vain imagining, that was whispered in man's soul by the devil in paradise—the idea, the lie, "Thou shalt be as God." Making that idea, that lie his own, every man by nature says in his heart, "I am a God in my own right, equal with God; and all things, including God Himself, exist for me and must serve me only." So speaks every one of us in his heart. That idea, vain imagining, every one of us by nature pursues in the attempt to make good his claim,—pursues with all his

mind and will and strength and heart. It is the only way of life that each of us knows for himself. Hence, we are utterly selfish by nature, self-absorbed, self-centered in our depravity. Before the shrine of self we are prostrated. Self we seek and in self we begin and end with all our thinking, willing, striving, purposing and doing; and God is not in all our thoughts. Each of us takes thought of but one thing, namely, his own self, his own interests, advantages, advancement, name, fame, and glory; and sinful pride shines out of our eyes. It can only mean that by nature we are *that* badly scattered by sin that no two of us are together as united in a common love of God and of each other. Apart from God's redeeming grace there is, there can be, no true unity among us; nor may there be; but only strife, contention, debate, murder violence, and gory war. For all we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.

Thus there is a way of sin to each of us that is his very own; and in our own individual way of sin each of us walks, that is, desires, wills, thinks, strives; purposes and acts, according as we deem it expedient and imperative to the realization of our own personal ambitions, so that from second to second and from moment to moment throughout our whole lives our iniquities accumulate until they form a mountain of iniquities that rises up against us and calls for our eternal doom. Such is our plight by nature. However, the phrase "by nature" must be added by all means.

For, looking in the Scriptures, we again see a wonderful thing. We, God's believing people, see ourselves in heaven with Christ a great family of redeemed, blameless and holy before God and thus one, truly one, by a common faith in God through Christ, one in a common love of God and of one another shed abroad in our heart by God. Looking in the Scriptures, we see ourselves a people whose righteousness goeth forth as brightness; we see ourselves a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, shewing forth the praises of our God by whom we were called out of darkness into His marvelous light. What is the explanation? Our text gives the explanation. It is this: God laid on Him, His suffering servant, the iniquities of us all; and He was oppressed and was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth. He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so He opened not his mouth." Mark you, as oppressed and afflicted on account of the transgressions of us all, laid upon Him By God, He opened not His mouth. It is the silence of our oppressed and afflicted Saviour that has the emphasis here. It is all important. The gospel narrators direct attention to it over and over. The chief priests and elders, Matthew relates, seek many false witnesses against Jesus but they find none whose wit-

ness will hold up in court. Finally, there come two, who say, "This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days." Jesus does not reply. It is stated: He opened not His mouth. He is silent. Sorely provoked, the highpriest, rising to his feet says to Him, Answerest thou nothing? But Jesus, it is again stated, held His peace. He is taken to the court of Pilate. The priests and the elders are there, too. They accuse Him of many things. And again the statement occurs, "He answered nothing. He opens not His mouth. Pilate is at a loss what to make of Jesus' silence. Says he to Him, "Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?" This is followed by the statement, "And he answered him never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly." How true the saying of the prophet, "He was oppressed and afflicted, and he opened not his mouth."

But should Christ not have opened His mouth? The question is pertinent in view of Christ's innocency. If He, like we, were a sinner, a thief or robber or a murderer, it indeed would have behooved Him to hold His peace under all that vile treatment that they afforded Him. King David had understanding of this. Absalom had inaugurated against David a rebellion for the purpose of capturing his father's throne. David must flee. Arriving at Bahurin, there appeared on the other side of the brook one Shimei of the family of the house of Saul. The man takes up stones and casts them at David. He shouts to him, "Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial." One of the king's escorts wants to make an end of the man right there and then. "Why should this dead dog curse the king?" said he to David. "Let him alone, let him alone," David replies, "for the Lord hath bidden him." So does David forbid his companion to put that vile man of Saul's house to death. It means that he refrains from speaking the word that would have put an end to that cursing of the man. And with reason. Being a sinful man, who had fallen into gross sins, David was deserving of that abuse. And he understands, And he opens not his mouth. But Christ was the holy Son of God. Yet wicked men empty upon him the vials of their carnal wrath, and He opens not His mouth. There is but one explanation. He was oppressed and afflicted on account of the iniquities of us all that the Lord laid upon Him. Understanding, He opened not His mouth. But just what can it mean that He opened not His mouth. This question, too, is pertinent in view of the fact that during the hours of His passion He did open His mouth over and over.

Before the priests and elders He confesses that He is the Son of God and adds that they shall see Him sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven in judgment. In reply to Pilate's question, "Art thou the king of the Jews," He declares, "Thou sayest it." Still other words He speaks to Pilate

bearing on the nature of His kingdom and the origin of Pilate's power to sit as judge on His case. On the road to Golgotha He counsels the women to weep for themselves rather than for Him. On the cross He speaks words that join together Mary and John in the relation of mother and son. "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise," are His words to the penitent thief on His right. He complains that He is athirst. From out of the darkness that envelopes His cross He cries to the Father. When it is again light, He jubilantly exclaims with a loud voice, "It is finished." Then He commits His spirit into the Father's hands and gives up the ghost. So He did open His mouth.

However, and it is this to what the prophet has reference, as bowed down under the weight of the transgressions of us all, and with the Father smiting, bruising, afflicting, and wounding Him for our sins, thus with all the billows of God's wrath going over Him, He did not once in carnal wrath open His mouth to curse His terrible lot, to damn and to slay us with the breath of His mouth for crucifying Him, and to blaspheme God for giving Him over. There was no such wrath in Him to be sure. He was our highpriest, holy and undefiled; the good shepherd, laying down His life for His sheep, with the love of His sheep burning like a fire in His soul. So, He opened His mouth not once in those dreadful hours, yea, He opened His mouth indeed, but only to intercede for the transgressors and to cry to God, "I love Thee." Accordingly, He was brought like a lamb to the slaughter, mark you, like a non-resisting lamb or sheep. So far was He from resisting those who came to take Him captive that He gave Himself into their hands. Went He not out to them? Said He not to them, "Whom seek ye?" And when they said to Him, "Jesus of Nazareth we do seek," was not His reply, "It is I, take me, I command thee", such is the implication here. They take Him in obedience to His command, and by His very own power, thus as creatures living and moving and having their being in Him, He being very God. Truly as a sheep was He led to the slaughter, to the place of His slaughter, which was Golgotha. And there they dealt with Him like men deal with sheep. Men shear this creature, do they not? They thereby rob the sheep of its coat of wool. And there it stands, does the sheep, naked and shivering. So dealt they with Christ. They unclothed Him and hung Him naked on a cross. But again, as a sheep is dumb before his shearers, so He opened not His mouth. Verily, all we like sheep have gone astray. And the Lord laid on Him the iniquities of us all. And He bore them all away, just because, as smitten and afflicted, He opened not His mouth, thus gave Himself in perfect and holy devotion. On this very account, His afflictions and nameless sorrows were received of the Father as a covering for all our sins, thus as the payment of all our moral debt before Him. And therefore we do now be-

hold in the Scriptures that wonderful thing—a great family of redeemed, in heaven, blameless and holy before God. You may be asking, Do I belong to that family? If you believe in God through Christ, you do belong to this family.

G. M. Ophoff.



SION'S ZANGEN

Jehova Tot Adonai

(Psalm 110; Slot)

De vorige maal hebben we mogen luisteren naar de Godspreek, hoe Jehovah tot David's Heer zeide: Zit aan Mijne rechterhand! De lijdende Knecht des Heeren is na een weg van onuitsprekelijk lijden door den Vader verhoogd aan Zijne rechterhand.

Nu verder. God is nog niet uitgesproken. Hoe zou het ook! Zijn Woord is eeuwig.

Zit hier aan Mijne rechterhand, Mijn Zoon, totdat Ik Uwe vijanden zal gezet hebben tot een voetbank Uwer voeten.

Het mag vreeselijk klinken, maar Jezus heeft altijd vijanden gehad.

Noemt het dwaas indien ge wilt, dwaas om U te zetten tegen Jezus; welnu, die dwaasheid is begaan voor bijna zes duizend jaren. Kain was een vijand van Jezus, en daarom doodde hij Abel. En dat is het schema geweest van een groot bloedbad. Jezus is gedurig gekruist door alle eeuwen heen.

En achter de menschen die zich al vloekende tegen Jezus gezet hebben, staat Lucifer, Satanas, de duivel. En met hem de drommen van duivelen die hun lot geworpen hebben met hem.

Ziet, dat zijn altemaal vijanden van Jezus.

En als ge dan voort blijft gaan met vragen, en zegt: maar wie zijn dan toch die vijanden? Waaraan kunnen zij onderkend worden, dan zal Jezus zelf U het antwoord geven: Die niet voor Mij is die is tegen Mij! Daar is het volle antwoord.

Die vijanden hebben gruwelijk huisgehouden in de huishouding Gods. Zij hebben de kinderen van God gemarteld en geslagen, gestriemd en gedood, van eeuw tot eeuw.

Hoe men Jezus gehaat heeft en wat het karakter van die haat geweest is en nog is, kunt ge zien bij het verschijnen van dien Zoon op aarde. Wel mag Jezus zeggen: ze hebben Mij gehaat. En de echo is: en ze zullen U haten.

Dus alle goddeloozen en alle duivelen zijn de vijanden van Jezus.

En nu zegt Jehovah tot Jezus: Zit hier aan Mijne

rechterhand, totdat ik alle die vijanden zal gezet hebben tot een voetbank Uwer voeten!

Dat is figuurlijke taal. En ze is zeer sprekend.

Een voetbank, wel, een voetbank is waarop ge Uw voeten zet. Dus het is een meubelstuk dat onder Uwe voeten behoort.

Ge moogt dat dan ook letterlijk toepassen. De vijanden van Jezus komen straks allen onder Zijne voeten terecht. Hij zal Zijn voeten zetten op den nek van Zijn vijanden. Ik lees nu en dan van die symboliek bij oude volken. Als men zijn vijand overwonnen had, en als die vijand niet gesneuveld was in den strijd, dan liet men hem knielen voor zijn overwinnaar en dan zette die koning of prins zijn voet letterlijk op den nek van zijn vijand. En die symboliek behoefde geen verklaring. Ze was duidelijk.

En zoo zal het ook gaan met een ieder die zich ooit keerde tegen Jezus. Ze zullen allen vernederd worden voor onzen Heiland.

Hoe zal dat in zijn werk gaan? Het volgende vers zal ons daarin onderwijzen. "De HEERE zal den schepter Uwer sterkte zenden uit Sion, zeggende: Heersch in het midden Uwer vijanden."

De schepter is symboliek voor koninklijke waardigheid en macht. Een koning behoort een schepter in zijn hand te hebben. Dat men die symboliek nog steeds verstaat kunt ge zien op de photographieën die gemaakt zijn bij het onderteekenen van den wapenstilstand in dat beruchte schooltje: de opperbevelhebber der Duitse macht had een soort schepter in zijn hand die hij op de tafel neerlegde tijdens het onderschrijven van de stukken.

Zoo ook heeft Jezus macht. Hij is eigenlijk de eenige die macht heeft. Alle macht die ge gewaar mocht worden is afgeleide macht van Jezus' macht. Hij zeide eenmaal: Mij is gegeven alle macht in hemel en op aarde.

En het centrum waaruit die macht tot openbaring komt is Sion. Dat is mooi. Sion het hoofdkwartier van den goddelijken Held Jezus. Sion, het hoofdkwartier van de sterkte van Jezus! Het is om van te zingen.

Luistert naar God's eigen stem: Heersch vanuit Sion in het midden Uwer vijanden! Dat is een gebod van God tot Jezus. En Hij gehoorzaamt altijd.

Ja, het klinkt wel wat vreemd: Sion, het hoofdkwartier van Koning Jezus, en dan heerschende temidden van Zijn vijanden? 't Klinkt vreemd. Is er nu iets op aarde dat zwakker is dan Sion? De stakkerds hebben geen leger, geen aardsche wapenen, geen aardsche macht en kracht. Hoe zal Jezus nu heerschen over Zijn vijanden?

Denkt er om, dat Sion op aarde is, maar ook in den hemel. Toen Jezus opvoer naar den hemel toen is Sion meegegaan. Sion is hetzelfde als Jeruzalem, en dat Jeruzalem is nu hemelsch en is ons aller moeder.

Let er toch op, dat het Lam staat op den berg Sion,

en rondom Hem staat Zijn kerk. En dat Lam is de eigenlijke Regeerder van het geheele heelal. Ook op dit huidig oogenblik is Jezus de Koning der koningen en de Heer der heeren. Hij voert uit het welbehagen des Vaders in oorlogen, revoluties, pestilentiën, stormen en orkanen, en in alle dingen die er zijn. Hij heerscht in het midden Zijner vijanden vanuit Sion. En gij weet het ook, want ik heb U hooren zingen: en onze Koning is van Israel's God gegeven!

Indien ge verdere kommentaar wenscht aangaande dit heerschen van Jezus vanuit Sion in het midden Zijner vijanden, dan moet ge ter school gaan bij Johannes op Patmos. Die zal U verhalen van een gezicht in den hemel. Daar zat EENE op den troon, en die EENE is God. En op Zijn rechterhand was een boek, en niemand werd er gevonden in het gansche heelal die waardig was om dat boek te nemen, zijn zegelen te verbrekken, en de inhoud van dat boek te doen geschieden. En Johannes weende gansch zeer. Maar hij werd getroost, want er was Eene gevonden, en die Eene was Jezus, de Leeuw uit Juda's stam. En Hij kwam en nam het boek, en Hij verbrak de zegelen: en de rest weet ge. Toen zijn de dingen gekomen en ze zijn geschied.

Laat dat U troost zijn in dit smartelijke leven. Alles wat er geschiedt komt vanwege dit vers. Jezus regeert in Sion temidden van Zijn vijanden. Alles wat gebeurt, al is het nog zoo vreeselijk, komt van Hem die den schepter des Konings draagt. Er gaat eigenlijk niets verkeerd. Het volgt het programma van God, het programma van dat boek op de hand Gods.

En in de kerk?

In de kerk is het net zoo, en toch weer anders.

Het is in de kerk net zoo, want daar regeert Jezus allereerst. Net zoo, want al wat Jezus hebben wil, dat geschieden zal in de kerk, geschiedt ook. Hij heeft het erop gezet, dat al de uitverkorenen gered zullen worden: en het geschiedt. Hij wil, dat dit volk op Hem en door Hem op God zullen vertrouwen: en het geschiedt. Hij wil, dat Zijn volk geplaagd, gehaat, verzocht, gemarteld zal worden door alle eeuwen heen: en het geschiedt. Alles wat er geschiedt in de Kerk geschiedt naar het programma van Jezus. Soms moet de kerk ondergaan voor lange jaren in een atmosfeer van valsche profetie, om dan weer op te bloeien in reformatie. Hij roept Zijn speciale mannen Gods om te leiden, en het gebeurt. O ja, Jezus regeert in de kerk. En als het benauwd wordt en als er tranen, lijden en bloed komt, dan moet ge er aan denken, dat Koning Jezus het zoo beschikte. Praat nu niet van des menschen verantwoordelijkheid, want die loochen ik niet. Die blijft er voor alle goddeloozen. Als Jezus de roomschen gebruikt om Luther te beproeven, dan is Zijn doel heilig; maar dan zullen de roomschen moeten boeten voor die vreeselijke daden. Als echter maar duidelijk is, dat Jezus regeert, en dat Hij altijd regeert. Niets kan U overkomen of het is gewild door Koning Jezus.

En toch is het ook anders dan Zijn regeeren in de wereld. Anders, want ik zie een gehoorzaamheid aan Koning Jezus die lieflijk is en welluidt. Ik zie een volk dat zeer gewillig is op den dag van Jezus' heirkraft. De dag van Jezus' heirkraft is nu, is er geweest van het oogenblik af, dat God Hem die macht schonk en dat is bijna twee duizend jaren geleden. Nu dan, gedurende al die jaren is er een volk geweest, dat gedurig gebeden heeft: Spreek, Heere, Uw dienstknecht hoort! Er is Gode zij dank, een gewillig volk.

Paulus zeide: het is niet desgenen die wil, noch desgenen die loopt, maar des ontfermenden Gods. En daar hebt ge ook het antwoord op de vraag: hoe werd dit volk zoo gewillig? Het antwoord is: de ontfermende God! Als die ontferming U geworden dan zijt ge gewillig om het mandaat van Jezus aan te nemen en uit te voeren.

En ge doet dat lieflijk en schoon.

Want luistert: het volk is gewillig in heilig sieraad, ze komen aan met drommen vanuit de baarmoeder des dageraads in de dauw der jeugd. Wat een beschrijving!

Het is alles schoon aan de heiren van Jezus.

Doch om die schoonheid te zien, moet ge geestelijk gezicht hebben.

David juicht ervan elders: Zeer heerlijke dingen worden van U gesproken, O Stad Gods! Of ook: gij zijt een vreugde der gansche aarde!

Alles schittert en glinstert aan Sion en de Sionieten!

Hoe kon het anders: zij komen uit de baarmoeder des dageraads! Ze worden vergeleken bij het licht van de zon. En licht in de Heilige Schrift is immers het inbegrip van alles wat lieflijk is en welluidt. Licht is deugd, het deugdenbeeld van God. En die deugd wordt gegeven aan Sion, door Jezus Christus, den Heere. Hij is het die de Eerste is in het ontvangen van al die schoonheid. Zoo hebben Hem de profeten gezien en hebben van Hem gezongen. Een van hen zeide: alles aan Hem is zeer begerlijk!

En de Sion-heirkraft ontvangt al die schoonheid door Hem. Hij deed dat door Zijn Heiligen Geest uit te storten in hun midden, en ook door Zijn dierbaar en heerlijk Woord hun te geven. Hebt ge die beiden dan zijt ge schoon, goddelijk schoon. Dan zult ge met Uw schoonheid pralen gelijk een duif in 't zilverwit, en 't goud dat dan op Uw veedren zit, belonkt door zonnestralen. En die zonnestralen is het glimlachen van God als Hij U aanziet in dien Zoon.

"De Heere heeft gezworen, en het zal Hem niet berouwen: Gij zijt Priester in eeuwigheid, naar de ordening Melchizédeks."

God spreekt alzoo tot Jezus.

We zullen nu niet spreken aangaande dien Melchizédek in alle bijzonderheden. Het is niet noodig. Het punt waar het hier om gaat is het feit, dat Jezus een Priester is die zijn ordening niet ontvangt in de opeenvolgende geslachten van vaders en kinderen, zooals

Aaron en zijn zonen. Jezus is niet *een* Priester, maar Hij is DE Priester, de eenigste Priester. Hij is Priester naar de ordening Melchizédeks, d.w.z., die laatste ontving zijn priesterschap in het oude Jebus niet van zijn vader, noch zou hij het doorgeven aan zijn zoon. Als priester stond Melchizédek daar voor het aangezicht van Abraham alsof hij geen priestervader had. En zoo is Jezus de Priester Gods. Ik mag daar niets aan toe voegen. Alle toevoeging zou het verzwakken. Jezus is de eenigste priester. Er is geen ander. En als ge dan spreekt van het feit, dat wij allen priesters zijn, dan is het antwoord, dat wij ontvingen van Zijn zalving, dus dragen wij niet dan iets van Zijn priesterschap.

Vraagt ge: maar waarom moet dat zoo gezegd en niet anders, dan is het antwoord, omdat een priester een liefhebber is. En er is maar één liefhebber der zielen, en dat is Jezus. Hebt gij ook lief? Dan komt dat omdat die Liefhebber der zielen in U woont, en niet anders.

En het verband tusschen dit vers en het voorgaande is dit: de heirkrachten van Jezus' leger van de vorige verzen zijn een openbaring van de liefde Gods die schittert in dien Priester Gods. Alle vertooning der schoonheid vanuit den dageraad des Lichts, is een openbaring van de onuitsprekelijk lieflijke liefde Gods. En de Drager van die Liefde bij uitnemendheid is Jezus, de eeuwige Priester.

En dan keeren we weer terug tot het vorige tafereel: We zien Jezus, de Held Gods. En God staat ten allen tijde aan Zijn rechterhand. En door die Goddelijke kracht zal Hij "Koningen verslaan ten dage Zijns toorns."

"Hij zal recht doen onder de heidenen: Hij zal het vol doode lichamen maken; Hij zal verslaan dengene, die het hoofd is over een groot land."

Hier hebben we denzelfden strijd als die van de eerste verzen, maar nu meer uit het oogpunt van het einde. Dat "vol doode lichamen" schijnt te zien op het einde der dagen, zooals ook Johannes in de Openbaring spreekt. De laatste wereldoorlog begint dat einde te toonen. Vooral de laatste dagen van Hiroshima en Nagasaki. Dat waren de doode lichamen van Jezus' strijd. Van beide zijden.

En dan die groote van een groot land! Dat zal wel de Antichrist zijn.

Maar hij zal niet vermogen tegen Jezus.

Waarom niet? Hierom: "Hij zal op den weg uit de beek drinken; daarom zal Hij het hoofd opheffen."

Het opheffen van het hoofd van Jezus is zeker Zijn opstanding. En het drinken uit de beek is het ontvangen van het krachtige leven Gods. Water in de Schrift is immers de gaven Gods door Geest en Woord? Welnu, Jezus is de eerste Ontvanger van al die heerlijkheden. En dan die van Jezus zijn. Hallelujah!

G. Vos.

FROM HOLY WRIT

EXPOSITION ON HEBREWS 12:5, 6

It is a remarkable fact, at once dead earnest and comforting for the believer, that the Word of God is always practical. The Bible never is dry scholasticism. It is never interested in a system of truth and doctrine for the mere sake of this system and doctrine. It is always the Word of God, the means of grace employed by the Holy Spirit to work faith and repentance in Christ, or to take away all excuse from unbelief and disobedience.

But mere *system* of truth the Bible is never.

This, of course, does not mean that the body of truth as systematically arranged in Reformed theology is not Scriptural.

But that is not the question here.

We merely mean to state that the Bible is not at all a mere system. It is the Word of God spoken in former times by God through the prophets and the Word of God spoken in these last times through His Son. As such it contains a system of truth. But these truths are so used and handled in Scripture as to be the doctrine of godliness. Thus the apostle Paul writes: Every inspired Scripture (writing) is profitable for instruction, admonition, correction, for the chastisement unto righteousness, that the man of God be thoroughly made fit unto every good work. Paul is here not speaking in defense of the inspiration of Scripture. That is assumed. He did not here write in its defense. But he calls attention to the very tendency, the inherent practical import of the Word of God. And this practical inherent quality is there just because it is inspired of God.

This practical thrust of the Bible must not escape us in the words of our text. Our text does not here speak about the church in the abstract. It does not speak in the third person. Such is the case in dogmatics! Yes, we need dogmatics. But in our text it is not dogmatics. But it is the Heavenly Father addressing His "sons". He is speaking *to* them, He is addressing us. God here "reasons with us as with sons", and says to us: *My son! do not count lightly the chastening of the Lord, neither faint thou when thou art rebuked of Him!*

This must not escape us.

We must surely give heed to this direct speaking of God to us!

Now someone may remark, that the book from which the writer to the Hebrews here makes this quotation is the book of Proverbs, and that this book is not really a book at all, revealing the Mystery of faith and of godliness, but that it merely is the sum-total

of the many "proverbs" written by Solomon, a collection of very practical sayings containing earthly wisdom. Thus, at least, has been the contention of many so-called Biblical scholars, and of not a few who insisted that they believe the Bible to be the revelation of the full counsel of God in Christ.

We would place overagainst this contention, that in the mind of the Old Testament church, the church as she was guided by the Holy Spirit of Christ, this book received its rightful place in the Canon, a place among those inspired writings which are unto the instruction in righteousness, that the man of God be thoroughly furnished unto every good work! Thus it is here understood by the inspired writer to the Hebrews. It is here layed down as the rule of faith and godliness for the believers in Christ Jesus.

Then, too, it must be remembered that the very real subject addressing the "son" in Proverbs is not Solomon at all, but God, the Lord, as He is the Father of all His sons in Christ. Only, He employs Solomon to say this. But God remains the speaker. Not to keep this in mind will take the very power out of this text, the power of comfort and admonition. But keeping this in mind we hear the voice of our heavenly Father in Christ Jesus, which speaks unto us as to sons!

This word of exhortation of God may come to us in divers manners and times, (Heb. 1:1), but it *always speaks* to us as unto sons. It is always a word of the heavenly Father to His sons, sons by virtue of election and adoption unto children. Such is the implication of the Word of God here in Proverbs. And that such is its very nature is also proven by the selection of the relative pronoun "which" in the Greek (eetis) in the phrase "which speaks unto you as unto sons". This particular pronoun in the Greek indicates that this which is here stated is always true. It underscores the very nature of this "exhortation". Literally we should translate: "the exhortation, *which is always of such a nature*, that it speaks to you as to sons". (vs. 5).

Hence, what was true in the case of God's people in the Old Testament dispensation is still true now in the New Testament. The speaking of the Father, and His attitude and purpose in speaking did not change. This purpose of the word of exhortation is just as unchangeable as God is Himself, for Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever!

It was not only the word of exhortation of this particular text in Proverbs 3:11-12 that speaks thus, but thus is the language of the Father in every "divers times and manner". Also when God speaks in the form of the prophecies such is the case. For God uses this same language in all of the prophets, saying: "I shall be unto you a Father, and ye shall be unto me as sons and daughters". Thus speaketh "the Lord Almighty". II Cor. 6:18. And Paul does not here give

us merely an isolated instance of this speaking of the Father, but this is a compendium statement of the very constant attitude and treatment of the covenant God with His children. This will be verified by a hasty comparison of II Sam. 7:8, 14; Is. 43:6; Jer. 31:9 and 32:38; Hos. 1:10 and Amos 4:13. A detailed discussion of this matter, which would indeed be interesting and edifying, would lead us too far from our purpose in this article.

We are satisfied if only it is clear, that the "which speaketh unto you as unto sons", is the constant and ever repeated way of the Father in addressing us!

We trust that such now is clear.

We, therefore, now turn our attention to the specific instant of this exhortation. We notice that the following points are here underscored:

1. That in the very general and glorious perspective of the book of Hebrews the call to return to the beaten path of the saints, the way of faith and godliness, the way of boldness and freedom to enter into the most holy place of God, comes *to the sons*.

2. That it is emphasized in this letter that we are these sons in the eternal Son, Who having made a purification for all of our sins sat down at God's right hand. All of God's dealing with Christ was exactly as with the sons. Christ, to be sure is in the unique position of being the King-Priest, the Redeemer. Yet, even so the Christ must learn obedience from that which He suffered, and must be perfected through suffering. Heb. 2:10. He must be tempted of all things just as we, that He may be a merciful Saviour and High Priest. God always says even to Him: My Son, in whom I have all of My good pleasure, I can only make of you what I desire through your sufferings. It thus "*behooved God*" to speak to His Only Begotten Son in our flesh! It is the *must* of God. The Son of man *must* be lifted up on the Cross and thus be perfected!

3. In Him we too are then treated as Sons. He who does not receive this treatment in Christ is not a son! For all the sons are partakers of this. To this Jesus referred when He said: let it be enough unto a servant to be like unto his lord! Hence is filled up in us what is still lacking in the suffering of Christ. Col. 1:24. If we suffer with Christ we shall also be glorified together with Him. Rom. 8:17.

4. That into this general perspective of Holy Writ, which is full of grace and glory, we must place our text which has an immediate context. It states: And ye have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin. (vs. 4). That was true of Jesus. He resisted unto blood. He is the chief Captain and Finisher of our faith. He has walked this way of the dealing of God with His Sons in His place as the One Who is not ashamed to call us brethren, saying, "Behold, I and the children which Thou hast given me", Heb. 2:13; Is.

8:18. He never fainted when He was reproved, yea, not even when He was utterly forsaken of God, saying: My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me. Even there the word of exhortation came: My Son, do not faint when Thou art reproved! He did not faint for the joy that was set before Him. Thus He endured the cross and despised the shame!

5. Not to see the Father's dealing with us in our personal way of suffering and affliction is therefore indeed not a sign of spiritual strength, of the power of faith and necessary patience, but is a sign of feeble hands and weak knees. It is not the "faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen". And in this case what is "not seen" but believed is that our lot, our particular afflictions are a cause for real joy and encouragement, because the lines have fallen unto us in pleasant places! Our affliction is that of the treatment of a Father for His sons. We have the same lot as that of the external Son. Suffering to enter into glory. And it thus behooved the Father to deal with us, as speaking unto sons!

Such is the glorious truth of the gospel, the glad tidings concerning the redemption in Christ turning all of our sorrows into joy, and our tears into laughter!

For we must become partakers of God's holiness in Christ Jesus. And to make us partakers of this, God casts us into trials, afflictions in infinite love. We have such a long way to come, but the way leads into the most holy place through Jesus' flesh; for this flesh is the rent veil through which we enter, in humble boldness by faith. Here we see with Asaph the real character of our afflictions that are ours every morning. And from this vantage point of faith in the holy place we also see distant scenes and exclaim: Thou wilt lead me with Thy counsel, and afterwards take me to glory!

Here in the holy place we have a foretaste of the eternal joy, and exclaim: O love of God, that will not let me go!

And, O, the blessedness of seeing this. More and more we then begin to ask by faith after His will. Thus we become partakers of His holiness. Thus our faith is exercised. We exercise ourselves unto the godliness that has the great reward for this life and for the life to come. All other things do not merely recede to the background, but all things are then viewed in the light of this glorious treatment of God, who always speaks unto us as unto sons! This affliction is then not the overpowering might of the tyrant to crush us, but it is the master touch of the Chief Architect and Builder, of the Father making us perfect sons. And then in faith you say: That son am I. God is speaking to me! Nay, we turn unto the Lord and cry: Thou art my Father! Abba, Father. God, my Father, the



Father of Jesus my Lord *corrects* me and thus perfects His love in me!

Our life is then not barren but fruitful. Our feeble knees are then no longer evident and the weak hands and strengthened, and our youth is renewed like that of the eagle. Our heart will then no longer be fearful, for God has come to save us in His chastening.

Our life, which otherwise is as a desert will then blossom as the rose in the excellencies of holiness. And the hope of presently seeing the Lord shall glow in our hearts and we shall thus be kindled on toward that day, when the ransomed of the Lord shall come with singing unto Zion, to which mountain we have arrived. (Heb. 12:22-24). And everlasting joy shall be on our foreheads!

Being thus exercised by affliction and the Father's chastisement we shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

G. Lubbers.



Doings In Doon

During the past eight months we, in the congregation of Doon, have been through the Lord's dispensation without a pastor. On Sunday, February 6, the Reverend John Blankespoor preached his farewell to the congregation. This was followed on the evening of February 10 by a congregational farewell to Reverend and Mrs. Blankespoor and their family, at which the congregation wished them the Lord's blessing in their new field of labor. And even as it pleased the King of His Church to take from us our beloved pastor, Reverend Blankespoor, He also gladdened our hearts by bringing to us another of His servants, that he might proclaim unto us the Word, both in the weekly services and by means of the many other pastoral labors. Thus our hearts were filled with rejoicing and thanksgiving to our covenant God when we received the glad tidings that Candidate H. C. Hoeksema was coming to help us.

It was a memorable evening in Doon, that evening of October 13, 1949. Our little auditorium was filled to capacity, not only by those of our own congregation, but also by many of our brethren from the surrounding congregations,—attracted there not only because of their feeling of unity and fellowship with Doon, but also because the Consistory of Doon had asked Reverend Herman Hoeksema, father of their pastor-elect, to be present and to deliver the sermon for the occasion. This was the first time that Reverend Hoeksema had been present in Northwest Iowa since the time that he was stricken nearby here two years ago. And so from far and near our people were represented in Doon that evening. The Reverend Hoeksema charged both

the congregation and the pastor-elect, his son, in his own inimitable way in a sermon on II Timothy 4, verses 1 and 2: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine." The attention of both congregation and pastor-elect was drawn very vividly and directly to the meaning, manner, and significance of the charge to Preach the Word.

Sorry to say, Rev. and Mrs. Hoeksema could not remain long in the West, but many of us here in the West entertain the sly hope that perhaps the attraction of having their son here may bring them sometime for a longer stay, and perhaps for a few lectures and sermons in Doon and elsewhere. An invitation is not needed!

On the 16th of October our new pastor preached his inaugural sermons. In the morning he chose for his text Romans 1:16-17, calling attention to "The Gospel, God's power Unto Salvation". In the afternoon he drew the attention of the congregation to "Zion's Calling as the Proclaimer of Good Tidings", preaching on Isaiah 40:9.

October 10 was the date of a congregational reception for the purpose of welcoming the new pastor and his family into our midst. A very enjoyable evening was spent by all in making the acquaintance of both the pastor and his wife as well as by the Reverend and Mrs. Hoeksema in making the acquaintance of their new congregation.

With gratitude we remember the faithful labors of the Reverend Blankespoor, who spent some 6 years in our midst. And our prayer is that the Lord may bless him in his new field of labor. We also wish to thank especially our counsellor, the Rev. A. Cammenga, for his assistance and for his part in the installation ceremony. And to the Rev. S. Cammenga go our thanks as well for his help as counsellor *pro tem*. And to all the ministers of Classis West, as well as to our missionaries, who supplied our pulpit during our vacancy, we express our sincere thanks.

By the time that this is published, of course, the congregation and pastor of Doon have settled down a bit,—settled down to the normal of a busy congregational life. And it is our prayer that we may, with our new pastor, experience a fruitful ministry of the Word under the blessing of our gracious heavenly Father, and that with all our Protestant Reformed Churches we may experience that the Lord doth prosper Zion, and may have grace to be true to the glorious heritage which He hath given us.

The Consistory of Doon, Iowa,
J. Vanden Top, Clerk.