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MEDITATION

De Opgang Uit De Hoogte

"Om zijnen volke kennis der zaligheid te geven, in vergeving hunner zonden, door de innerlijke bewegingen der barmhartigheid onzes Gods, met welke ons bezocht heeft de opgang uit de hoogte, om te verschijnen dengenen die gezeten zijn in duisternis en schaduw des doods, om onze voeten te richten op den weg des vredes."—Lucas 1:77-79.

Er is een vogelenkoor dat zingt en kweelt en kwinkeleert bij 't krieken van den dageraad. Vraagt het vooral aan de bewoners van het vlakke land, en ze zullen U vertellen van het liefelijke gezang der vogels als de zon aan 't opkomen is.

Daar zit symboliek in. Want zoo is het ook met het koor der uitverkoren zangers die de Zonne van Gods Evangelie op zagen komen om een lieflijk licht te verspreiden. Die zangers zijn door de eeuwen heen geweest als geestelijke nachtegalen, zingende en kwinkeleerende van de liefde Gods die geopenbaard zou worden in den Messias.

O leest het in de profetiën van Jesaja vooral, hoe die zanger Hem zag die de hemelen zou doen ruischen van onbegrijpelijke liefde Gods. En als ge Petrus' brief leest, dan hoort ge het hoe de Profeten ondervraagd en onderzocht hebben van de zaligheid, onderzoekende op welken of hoedanigen tijd de Geest van Christus die in hen was, beduidde en te voren getuigde het lijden dat op Christus komen zoude, en de heerlijkheid daarna volgende.

Welnu, dat geestelijke, profetische vogelenkoor Gods heeft gezongen tot op de geboorte van onzen Heere en Heiland, wiens geboorte we straks weer hopen te vieren met elkaar. Zoo hebben we gelezen in het Goddelijke Woord van het kindeke Johannes, opspringende van vreugde in zijn moeder Elisabeth, omdat zijn Zaligmaker binnenkwam. Dan is daar Maria's lofzang, het lied der Engelen in Bethlehem's velden, de herders prijzende en lovende God, de lofzang van Simeon en van Anna, en eindelijk, daar is ook de lofzang van Zacherias, waaruit we dezen keer eenige verzen kozen tot onze overdenking. Dat waren allen zangen, zangen van lof en van prijs, van blijdschap en van vreugde over het lieflijke Evangelie: God heeft Zijn volk bezocht en Hij zal Zich over Zijn ellendigen ontfermen.

En dat is de geboorte van Jezus Christus, onzen Heere.

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Ge hoordet van een volk, dat gezeten was in duisternis en schaduw des doods.

We hebben hier te doen met figuurlijke taal, met beeldspraak. En de idee van duisternis wordt vaak in de Heilige Schrift gebruikt om den natuurlijken staat des menschen te beschrijven. Op duizend bladzijden van Gods Woord kunt ge lezen van die duisternis die ons van nature omvangt. Op één plaats zegt Paulus zelfs, dat wij van nature duisternis *zijn*. Ef. 5:8. En in hetzelfde verband spreekt Paulus van de onvruchtbare werken der duisternis, waarmede we geen gemeenschap zullen hebben. En in Rom. 13 worden we vermaand om de werken der duisternis af te leggen, en in dat verband zien we, dat die werken der duisternis zijn brasserijen, dronkenschappen, in slaapkameren wandelen en ontuchtigheden, twist en nijdigheid. Bovendien is ook wel duidelijk wat duisternis is in geestelijken zin, want de duivel wordt de vorst der duisternis genaamd, en de duivel is immers het inbegrip van alles wat boos is?

Natuurlijke duisternis is ontstentenis van licht, onmacht om te zien, te wandelen en te leven.

Past dit nu toe in geestelijken zin, en ge zult de idee van geestelijke duisternis benaderen. Dan zult ge zien hoe geestelijke duisternis ontstentenis van het

groote Licht is, en dat is God. Iemand die duisternis is en in de duisternis wandelt is zonder God en zonder hoop in de wereld. Hij ziet God niet, wandelt niet met Hem, en daarom heeft geen geestelijk leven.

Vreeselijke positie! Dat is de toestand van elk natuurlijk mensch, komende in de wereld.

En let er nu op, dat de idee van geestelijke duisternis ook verklaard wordt door de toevoeging van de schaduwe des doods. We zijn dood van nature, onbekwaam tot eenig goed en geneigd tot alle kwaad.

En let er ook op, dat we van nature in dien toestand *zitten*. Dat ziet op de absolute onmacht waarin we verkeeren. Dat duidt den mensch van nature aan, den mensch der zonde en der schuld. Hij is schuldig voor God en vol des verderfs. En hij is onmachtig om op den weg des vredes zijn voeten te richten. Dat is een vreeselijke toestand! Dat is een vreeselijke duisternis en schaduwe des doods. Dan is het hart duister, en dat wil zeggen, dat het vol is van zonde, schuld en ondeugd. Dan is het verstand duister en dat beteekent, dat het vol is van booze overleggingen, godslasteringen, en haat tegen God en den naaste. Dan is hij boos in alle zijne genegenheden, met hand en voet, met gave en talent. Dan wandelt hij op duistere paden der zonde en is op reis naar de buitenste duisternis. Vreeselijke positie!

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Evenwel, luistert nu naar den naam die God aan sommigen van dit menschelijke geslacht geeft. Hij noemt hen Zijn volk. Ge gevoelt direct, dat hier meer in zit dan net maar bezitting. God bezit alles. De duivel is ook van God.

Neen, hier zit meer in. En het is ook wel duidelijk. Want God heeft het ons immers geopenbaard in Zijn Woord. Het is zelfs het groote en lieflijke centrum van dat Woord.

Waar we het oog op hebben? Dit: de liefde Gods. Het bezittelijke voornaamwoord *Zijn* ziet op Zijn eeuwige liefde voor dat volk. Van dat volk zeide Hij immers in Jeremia: Ik heb U liefgehad met een eeuwige liefde?

O ja, dit is een zeer particulier volk.

Van eeuwigheid tot in der eeuwigheden zijn zij Zijn volk.

Doch in den tijd zijn ze schuldig en goddeloos, ellendig en jammerlijk, naakt en blind, en ver van huis. Ze zitten in de duisternis en de schaduwe des doods. Zoo vinden we hen in den tekst. Maar ze zijn Gods volk, een volk, dat Hij verkoren heeft in eeuwige voorkennis der Goddelijke liefde, en van die liefde zullen we nu moeten spreken.

We hooren van de Goudglansen van Goddelijke Barmhartigheid.

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Dit is het Evangelie. Dit is de blijde boodschap van Gods eeuwige ontferming. Let er toch op, dat het Evangelie van Christus' geboorte een eeuwigen achtergrond heeft. Dat komt zoo maar niet uit de lucht vallen. O meen. Maar het is uitgedacht door den alwijzen God en Vader van onzen Heere Jezus Christus. En daarom lezen we in Openbaring van het *eeuwig* Evangelie.

En nu gaat de tekst voort om te spreken in beeldspraak. Het volk dat in die vreeselijke duisternis zat ziet de Opgang in de Hoogte! Dat is de zon die aan de kimme verschijnt om 't aardrijk te verlichten. In geestelijken zin is het de komst van Christus Jezus die ons den Vader verklaren gaat, den Vader die de Vader der lichten is. En die Zonne staat aan de kimme van Gods hemelen. De geestelijke Zon, en dat is Christus, is aan 't opkomen. Het is de dageraad der kerk op aarde.

Het begint te dagen in het Oosten van God's eeuwige liefde. Zoo kunnen we ook eenigzins verstaan waarom Jezus Zichzelf het Licht der wereld noemt. Hij kwam om Zijn volk te bezoeken. En Hij kwam uit de Hoogte.

O, Hij heeft ons heerlijk bezocht: Hij kwam zóó dicht bij ons, dat Hij ons gelijk werd, uitgenomen de zonde. Hij is vleesch van ons vleesch, en geest van onzen geest. Hij bezocht ons zoo intiem, dat Hij ons tot een oudste Broeder is. Dat is de Vleeschwording.

En als ge nu vraagt: maar waarom kwam Hij zoo dicht, zoo intiem bij ons? Dan is ons antwoord een van de lieflijkste zangen van het eeuwig Evangelie: Hij kwam zóó dicht bij ons, omdat Hij onze zonde en schuld op Zich moest nemen. Daarom kwam Hij in ons eigen vleesch. Hij werd onzer een. En het doel was om onzen zondelast weg te dragen, zoodat die zondelast nooit ons meer zou wegdrukken in eeuwige verdoemenis.

En in de tweede plaats kwam Hij zeer dicht bij ons om ons door Zijn Geest en Woord tot Zijne broederen te maken. Daarom kwam Hij ten slotte door den Heiligen Geest. Dat is de beteekenis van Pinkster. Jezus komt terug tot ons in den Geest om vlak bij ons, om in ons te wonen.

En die bezoeking van Jezus Christus was uit de Hoogte. Ook daar zit een schoone beteekenis in. Het wil zeggen, dat er geen andere weg was. De duistere aarde, de duistere door de zonde verdorven aarde, kon zichzelven niet belichten.

Het moet van boven komen zegt het volk. En dat is waar. Dat is eeuwig waar. Als het niet van boven

kwam, dan zoudt gij en ik tot in de hel toe verworpen worden. Bij menschen der geestelijke duisternis past de buitenste duisternis, voortgezweept door den vorst der duisternis.

Maar nu? Van uit de duizelingwekkende Hoogte van God's erbarmen komt de Opgang, en dat is Jezus.

En zoo zegt de tekst, dat dit opgaan van de Zonne der gerechtigheid geschiedde door de innerlijke bewegingen der barmhartigheid onzes Gods. Het is de liefde Gods die Zich nederbuigt tot het voorwerp van Zijn liefde, dat in groote ellende verkeert, met de zucht en voornemen om dat voorwerp uit zijn ellende te verlossen.

Het waarlijk groote is ook teeder. Hoe anders is dat in onze goddelooze wereld. Daar zijn de grooten hard en wreed. Maar God is een God die innerlijke bewegingen der barmhartigheid heeft voor Zijn volk.

En die Goddelijke barmhartigheid is geopenbaard in de komst van Zijn Zoon, in Zijn lijden en kruisdood, in Zijn verrijzenis en hemelvaart, in Zijn terugkomst in den Heiligen Geest en Zijn belofte om weder te keeren in den dag Zijner glorie, wanneer Hij die voorwerpen Zijner liefde thuis zal halen, om dan eeuwig bij den Heere te zijn.

En nu zullen we nog wat hooren van de schoone vrucht dier barmhartigheid Gods, van dien Opgang in de Hoogte. Er komt een wandel in het licht. Daar zingt Zacherias van in den tekst.

En dan is daar eerst de kennis der zaligheid. Die kennis zal vrucht zijn, en is vrucht geworden van dien Opgang in de Hoogte, van dien Jezus.

Wat is zaligheid? Zaligheid is die zegen voor een mensch, wanneer al zijn nooddruft geheel en al vervuld wordt. En wat is de ware nooddruft voor een mensch? Wel, als ge een antwoord wilt hebben op die vraag, dan moet ge niet luisteren naar den mensch zelve. Neen, want dan ontvangt ge allerlei verkeerde. valsche antwoorden. De een zegt: volop eten en drinken. Een ander, het schoone en lieflijke der wereld, al de schoonheid die genoten kan worden door onze natuurlijke zintuigen. Nog weer een ander zegt: het bezit van een stuk der wereld, en dan zoo groot mogelijk. Maar God zegt: wat zal het U nutten indien ge de geheele wereld zoudt bezitten en schade lijden aan Uwe ziel? Al die antwoorden, en nog meerdere, zijn niet het juiste antwoord.

God Zelf zal U het antwoord geven door Zijn Zoon: Zoekt eerst het Koninkrijk Gods en Zijne gerechtigheid! Ge kunt het nog korter vinden in hetzelfde Woord van God: en het is dit: rijk te zijn aan God. God te mogen hebben voor zijn deel in tijd en eeuwigheid. Dat is de eenige nooddruft, mijne broeders en zusters. Als ge dien God hebt, maar moet liggen aan de poort des rijken vol van zweren, dan zijt ge toch gelukkig voor tijd en eeuwigheid. En als ge dan sterft, dan zullen de Engelen Gods komen om U naar boven te bregen, en dan zult ge een plaats hebben in Gods eeuwig Koninkrijk.

Dat is de zaligheid.

En het kennen van die zaligheid moet U geschonken worden. Dat zegt de tekst. Leest er toch vooral niet overheen. "Om Zijn volk kennis der zaligheid te *geven.*" God moet onze oogen daarvoor openen, en dan zien we het. En wat staat nu in den weg tot de genieting van die zaligheid? Dit: onze zonden en schulden voor God. Maar God zegt: om te geven de kennis der zaligheid *in vergeving hunner zonden.* O, als die zonde vergeven kan worden, dan wordt het licht, dan wordt het heerlijk om te leven. Het zijn die vreeselijke zonden die scheiding maken tusschen ons en onzen God. En nu is het eeuwig Evangelie van den Opgang uit de Hoogte, dat Hij onze zonden vergeeft. Die zonden worden weggedragen door Jezus aan het kruis om nooit weder te keeren. God werpt die zonde weg in een zee van *eeuwige vergetelheid.* 't Is om van te zingen!

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En, eindelijk, komt er sprake van een wandeling op den weg des vredes. Eindelijk, zeiden we. En terecht. Dat is het einde, dat is het einddoel van God. Hij wil Zijn volk dat Hij liefhad met een eeuwige liefde op dien weg zien wandelen in de genieting van onuitsprekelijken vrede. Het is een vrede die alle verstand te boven gaat. Vrede is stille aangename rust. Vrede is harmonie tusschen God en Zijn volk. Vrede is die toestand en staat wanneer er harmonie is tusschen den hartslag Gods en Uw hart. Dan leeft ge en denkt ge en spreekt en jubelt ge gelijk Vader, Uw Vader in de hemelen.

En dat alles in de sfeer van liefde. Daarom zingen we: Wat vree heeft elk die Uwe Wet bemint; zij zullen aan geen hinderpaal zich stooten! En de weg des vredes is Jezus. Hij is de Weg, de waarheid en het leven. Hij is de Weg naar Vader heen. En daarom is het ook een weg des vredes. Op dien weg zult ge altijd het Bloed zien, dat betere dingen spreekt dan het bloed van Abel. Dat bloed van Jezus maakte dien weg tot een weg naar Vader heen. En op dien weg wordt ge gezet door den Heiligen Geest die U het Woord verklaart. En het licht van dat Woord onderricht U om naar God te wandelen. En ge komt zeker uit in den boezem Gods in Zijn eeuwige armen. Deut. 33:27.

Daarom zingt Gods volk van alle eeuwen: Uw Woord is mij een lamp voor mijnen voet! Dat is zaligheid nu en groote zaligheid straks!

G. Vos.

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EDITORIALS

The Synod of 1951

A second objection from the collated material of Classis West concerned the literal quotation of the Three Points adopted by the Synod of Kalamazoo, 1924. The objection was that the Declaration did not quote the Three Points in full, and requested that this should be done. And a motion was made to amend point I by quoting the Three Points literally.

Rev. H. Hoeksema: A mere literal quotation of the Three Points certainly would not express their meaning. This concerns especially the First Point, which is very ambiguous. If we insist on quoting the Three Points literally, we certainly must also quote the proofs which the Synod of Kalamazoo adduced for Point I. For it is in connection with the proofs that Point I teaches the general well-meaning offer of salvation in the preaching of the gospel to all men, elect and reprobate. As is well known, this "puntje van het eerste punt," which really teaches that the reprobate receives grace in the preaching of the gospel, is the chief heresy of all the Three Points. And therefore, a mere literal quotation, without the proofs, would not help us.

The motion is put to a vote, and fails to carry.

A third objection deals with the substitution of "the promise of the gospel" for "the preaching of the Gospel". The objection is that, whereas the Three Points deal with the preaching of the gospel, the Declaration substitutes the promise of the gospel. And a motion is made to strike out *promise* and insert *preaching*.

Rev. R. Veldman: There is something unfortunate in this substitution of promise for preaching in the Declaration. Historically this substitution is not correct. I would like to express something concerning the twofold fruit of the preaching and of the twofold purpose of the preaching of the gospel. The word **promise** anticipates rather than refers to past history, as the term **preaching** does. We always objected to the First Point because it presented the preaching of the gospel as a well-meant offer of salvation on the part of God to all men, elect and reprobate. And therefore I think that **preaching** is more historically correct.

H. H.: Will it satisfy the objection of the Rev. R. Veldman, if we say, "the promise as preached?"

Rev. R. Veldman: I have no objection to what is written. With that I can fully agree. But I rather object to what is not written.

Rev. H. Hoeksema: I do not think that it is quite correct to distinguish between preaching and promise. They are both an oath of God. Our Confessions do not make that distinction either.

Rev. L. Doezema: The expression "the promise as preached" would still refer to the promise as such. But we want something that refers to the preaching as action.

Rev. J. van Weelden: The promise of the gospel is the content of the preaching. And I think that we must distinguish between the content and the activity of the preaching.

Rev. J. Howerzyl: Is it the contention of the Rev. G. M. Ophoff that if this amendment is passed, we would lose the truth that the gospel as to its content is only for the elect?

Rev. L. Doezema: I am insisting on this terminology which expresses the activity of the preaching because it is Scriptural. And we are in the service of God and of the church when we make sharp distinctions. I can distinguish between evangelizing and preaching, or heralding.

Rev. G. M. Ophoff: I am surely in favor of making sharp and clear distinctions. The sharper the distinctions the better. I am very much afraid of putting in undue or incorrect phraseology, that is ambiguous and that weakens the clear distinction.

Rev. L. Doezema: We are stronger if we substitute **preaching** for **the promise.** It is much more to the point to refer to the activity of the preaching.

Rev. H. Hoeksema: I am afraid that we do not distinguish between the preaching and the mere declaration of the gospel by men. These are by no means the same. Preaching implies much more than the mere declaration of the gospel by men as such. Preaching is a means of grace, according to our Confessions, and therefore it is a proclamation of the promise by the church—a proclamation that is based upon the Scriptures, upon the authority of Christ, and that stands in the service of the efficacious Word of Christ. There is no real preaching except when Christ preaches And His Word is always efficacious. Then, and then only, can preaching also be the main key of the kingdom of heaven. Man's proclamation as such has no power either to open or to shut the kingdom of heaven. But according to the Confessions, preaching is a means of grace because it stands in the service of the efficacious Word of Christ. And that preaching of the gospel Christ makes a savor of life unto life, but also a savor of death unto death. Preaching, therefore, is something different from the declaration of the gospel by mere men. In Lord's Day XXV it is said that the Holy Ghost works faith in us by the preaching of the gospel. True preaching, therefore, is a means of grace.

Rev. R. Veldman: I fully agree. But the question is whether the Christian Reformed Churches in 1924 meant that by their First Point and its proofs. If nevertheless we want to express this, we ought to define it so that other churches may know what we mean.

Rev. J. Howerzyl: I agree also with the Rev. H. H. But that exactly shows me that we need "preaching" here instead of "the promise."

Rev. J. van Weelden: We have here a fine distinction between "preaching" and "the declaration of the promise". This is not according to Lords Day XXXI, Qu. 84, where we read that the kingdom of heaven is opened and shut by the preaching of the holy gospel "when according to the command of Christ, it is declared and publicly testified to all and every believer, that, when they receive the promise of the gospel by a true faith, all their sins are really forgiven them of God, etc."

Rev. G. M. Ophoff: Is it the contention of the Rev. van Weelden, then, that according to our Confession preaching is not preaching by Christ, but simply proclamation by men? Must we not maintain that preaching is only a means of grace because after all it is Christ through His Holy Spirit that makes it a means? I am very much afraid of confusing preaching with mere proclamation by men.

Rev. J. van Weelden: Does Christ ever preach without men?

Rev. H. Hoeksema: Of course not. But then we should say: Christ never preaches without the church. For the church is sent to preach, and can proclaim the gospel with authority. If we want an amendment, we must insert: "The preaching of the promise is an oath of God, according to which He infallibly leads the elect unto salvation."

Rev. R. Veldman: Historically the question is: what did the Christian Reformed Churches mean? We are repudiating what they say. And if they meant the general proclamation of the gospel, we should state it thus.

Rev. L. Doezema: The question is: what was the general term we used in all our writings in the past concerning this matter. I still distinguish between preaching, promise, and gospel. We distinguish in the sacraments between the thing signified and the thing itself. So, we can also distinguish between the thing preached and the preaching.

Here the report simply states: "The amendment carries." It is not quite clear from the report to what amendment the reference is. But this can undoubtedly be found in the Acts. To these, therefore, we will refer the reader.

A fourth objection from the collated material of Classis West deals with the term "elect" in the expression, "will infallibly lead all the elect to salvation through faith."

An amendment is made to alter this clause so that it reads: "will infallibly lead all the believers, that is, the elect, unto salvation".

Rev. H. Hoeksema: We must be careful here, and understand the implication of this amendment. The elect are all the chosen ones, whether they already believe or not. It also includes infants, that do not yet consciously believe. And therefore, in my opinion, we cannot have this amendment.

Rev. R. Veldman: I too object to this amendment, because it leaves faith outside of salvation. And the promise of salvation includes faith.

Rev. H. Hoeksema: There is another objection to this amendment, Mr. Chairman. We are in danger here of adopting the Second Point adopted by the Arminians in 1610. They certainly would not object to this statement. The believers, they say, are those whom God chose because He saw them to be believers.

Rev. J. Howerzyl: In this amendment we nevertheless touch upon the approach to the problem. To my mind the weakness of the Declaration is that an attempt is made to depart from the experiental life of the Christian. And this we should never do.

Rev. G. M. Ophoff: I have no need of this amendment. And I can also see the danger of it. Certainly, if we want to shut the door to Arminianism, we must define the meaning of election, and not simply say, "the believers, that is, the elect."

Rev. H. Hoeksema: It is a striking fact that all the quotations which are given from the Confessions to criticize the Declaration were also quoted in 1924 to prove the First Point of the three that were adopted by the Synod of Kalamazoo. These quotations were isolated from the rest of the Confessions. If you do that, it might almost look as if the Confessions teach common grace. We should never separate certain parts of the Confessions from the whole of them. Besides, in their isolation these passages from the Canons are certainly the weakest part of our Confessions. They are liable to more than one interpretation. They are ambiguous. And for that reason the Synod (of 1924) could use them for its purpose.

Rev. J. Howerzyl: Mr. Chairman, are parts of our Confessions not worthy of the status of confessions? If there is

a weakness or ambiguity in the Canons, should we not hand in a gravamen?

Rev. H.H.: It is certainly not my intention to hand in a gravamen. The Confessions are not something that we can change without the communion of the Reformed churches. And I am satisfied that as soon as these passages are not isolated, but explained in the light of the whole of our Confession, they cannot be quoted in support of the theory of common grace, as d d the Synod of 1924. In 1924, when the Christian Reformed Churches quoted these passages, they spoke of the preaching of the gospel as a well-meant offer of salvation on the part of God to all that hear the gospel. Now that well-meant offer of salvation on the part of God is certainly the promise. According to the Synod of 1924, therefore, the promise is for all that hear the gospel. This is what we combatted ever since 1924. We must not lose that again. We must maintain that the promise is for the elect, and not for all men or for those that hear the gospel. And to express this, we must not change the term "elect" into "believers." Then we weaken our position.

Rev. J. Howerzyl: I believe that it is God's intention in the promise to save only the elect, and that He promises salvation only to the elect. But in the Confessions, although they state this very plainly and also plainly state that there are a definite number of the elect, they nevertheless proceed from the viewpoint of the historical present situation, through which God's chosen are revealed as believers. But I can see the danger, and I would leave no opening for the Arminians.

Mr. J. Faber: We should not pass this amendment, because the wording of it is certainly dangerous. And Mr. Visser, who is one of the protestants against the Declaration, does not ask us to do so either.

Rev. M. Gritters: The Canons certainly are sufficient to close the door to the Arminians. I don't think that we can improve upon them. In Pella we have great difficulty because of the definition of the promise in Canons II, 5. There we find a good definition of the promise. Why must it be substituted or improved upon? Is that necessary? Canons II, 5 simply states that the promise of the gospel is that whosoever believeth in Christ shall have eternal life. The promise is just that, and no more. I am bound by it. The Reformed churches were bound by it for 400 years. Why is it necessary now to have something new? Canons I, A, 5-8, closes the door tight. We need nothing more.

Rev. J. Howerzyl: This amendment in its present formulation should be voted down. However, let us note point e of our protest from Oskaloosa. We call attention to the attempt to bring the supra view forward. There is a trend to shift the emphasis away from the experientially present. It is true that the supra view has always been allowed in the Reformed churches. But without a gravamen we may not bring this view forward as if it were the only Reformed conception.

Rev. G. M. Ophoff: The question of supra and infra has nothing to do with the Declaration of Principles. We deal here simply with the principle of the sovereign grace of God. I claim that the entire Declaration is experiential in the true sense of the word. The Confessions are experiential, no doubt. How then can the Declaration be anything else, seeing that it stands foursquare on the basis of those Confessions.

Rev. J. Howerzyl: I was not speaking of a trend in our churches, but in the Declaration. In the Declaration there is a shifting of the emphasis away from where it is placed in the Confessions.

Rev. G. M. Ophoff: The Rev. M. Gritters has a different conception of the promise from what appears in the Declaration. Let him define that definition, Mr. Chairman. And let him write it down and show us how it differs from that appearing in the Declaration of Principles.

Rev. M. Gritters: I have no different conception of my own, but am bound by the conception and definition of the promise that is found in Canons II, 5. That is my sole difficulty. Ultimately I run upon Canons II, 5. And there I find a definition of the promise of the gospel that differs from that in the Declaration.

Rev. L. Doezema: I don't like to change this definition of the promise. We are dealing solely with the question whether this is the teaching of our Protestant Reformed Churches, and whether it is the truth of our Confessions. My point is that this is our definition, but the definition in Canons II, 5 is also our definition. This document—I mean the Declaration,—loses sight of something. Perhaps in another definition we might bring out the fulness of the conception of the promise as it is in the Canons. In the Canons I find the promise in the form of a condition. The form therefore is conditional. In Canons II, 5, therefore, the promise of God comes in a conditional form.

Rev. G. M. Ophoff: The Rev. L. Doezema speaks as though we have another definition of the promise of God than is found in the Canons. In Canons II, 5 he finds the **if** idea. But I cannot find the conditional form of the promise in that part of the Canons. **If** does not appear in the whole article. The article states that whosoever believeth shall have eternal life. And that is no condition attached to the promise. Believers are the elect.

Rev. J. Howerzyl: The Rev. Ophoff states that essentially the elect are the believers. But would he insert I, D, 2 of the Declaration in the place of Canons II, 5.

Rev. L. Doezema: I did not say that there is an if-clause in Canons II, 5. What I did say is that we have a conditional sentence, a relative clause with a main clause following.

Thereupon the amendment is put to a vote, and fails to carry.

Objection 5 from the collated material of Classis West deals with Sioux Center's contention that the Declaration does not distinguish between promise, offer, and condition.

Rev. J. Howerzyl: I voted against the amendment to insert "believers" instead of "elect." But our protest from Oskaloosa has not been answered yet. What is the relation between I, D, 2 of the Declaration and Canons II, 5. May I not quote the definition of the promise as it is contained in Canons II, 5 anymore? Must I be considered a heretic if I quote it?

Rev. H. H.: There is no complete definition in Canons II, 5. Nor is it meant to be such. What is in Canons II, 5 is essentially the same as is in the Declaration, I, D, 2. Canons II, 5 merely states that whosoever believes in Christ will be saved. Notice that the reference here is to the future salvation of believers, and not to the whole of their salvation as they already received it in the present. That believers **will be saved** is the promise of God. But this is by no means a complete definition of the promise. For the promise of God includes the gift of faith. But here in Canons II, 5, faith is mentioned as a characteristic of those who receive the promise and who **will be saved.** If we want a complete definition of the promise of God, we must not appeal exclusively to Canons II, 5, but to the whole of our Confessions.

Rev. M. Gritters: I disagree with the Rev. Hoeksema. We have here one of the few instances in which our fathers gave us a definition of the promise. In Canons II, 5, in connection

with all the rest of our Confessions, we certainly have a definition of the promise of God.

Rev. R. Veldman: We can distinguish between a strict definition of the promise and its contents. The question is: does Canons II, 5 give us the contents, or a complete definition? In other words, do we have the whole content of the promise in Canons II, 5?

Rev. G. Vos: The Rev. M. Gritters says that we have here a definition. If he means by this a complete definition of the promise of God, I cannot agree. In Canons II, 5 I do not read one thing of the promise of the Holy Ghost, of which Scripture speaks so often. And the promise of the Holy Ghost is a very essential part of the promise of God. Let us not forget that the same fathers who gave us Canons II, 5 also speak in the Baptism Form of the promise that the Holy Ghost will dwell in us and apply unto us all the blessings of salvation. And therefore, it is not true that they mean to give an exhaustive description of the promise of God in Canons II, 5.

Rev. G. M. Ophoff: The question is repeatedly asked: what is the relation between the Declaration, I, D, 2 and Canons II, 5? And the suggestion is made that if the Declaration is adopted, you probably cannot maintain Canons II, 5 anymore. This, of course, is not true. In the Declaration I, D, 2 we say of the promise of the gospel that it is not a gracious offer of salvation on the part of God to all men, nor a conditional offer to all that are born in the historical dispensation of the covenant, that is, to all that are baptized, but an oath of God that He will infallibly lead all the elect unto salvation and eternal glory through faith. Now this certainly does not conflict with Canons II, 5. But I maintain that if you ask what is the essential characteristic of the promise of God, then you have to have I, D, 2 of the Declaration.

Rev. R. Veldman: It ought to be plain that if you believe that God leads His people to salvation **through faith,** then we certainly say that the promise is only for the believers. And if we say that, you also maintain that it is for the elect alone.

Rev. M. Gritters: I have followed and studied and taught the Confessions ever since I entered the ministry. And when Prof. Veenhof says that God promises His salvation to all the children that are born in the covenant, head for head, I can find plenty other ammunition from the Confessions to counteract this. But my question is: may I use this definition in Canons II, 5? And may I preach it?

Synod adjourns until Friday morning. After the Friday morning session was opened with devotional exercises—singing, reading of Scripture, and prayer—the discussion about the promise of God continued. At this point the Rev. H. Hoeksema gave a rather lengthy speech, in which he went through all the Confessions to explain what they teach concerning the promise of God.

Rev. H. Hoeksema: Mr. Chairman. As I said yesterday, to my conviction the definition of the promise, as found in the Declaration of Principles, is based on the entire Confessions, and not on any separate part or article of them. Besides, I also want to emphasize that this definition of the promise of God has nothing to do with the question of supra and infra. Whether one favors the supralapsarian or infralapsarian conception of the counsel of God, this definition of the promise of God still stands, because it is based foursquarely on the whole of our Confessions. To prove the truth of this statement I will quote from all our Confessions, which are admittedly infralapsarian, as I will point out in my discussion. For the sake of argument I will grant the infralapsarian view of the counsel of God, in order to explain that this definition is nevertheless the speech of the Confessions.

First of all, let us turn to Canons II, 5, which was in discussion yesterday. In the first place, I want to point out that the remark as if the clause "whosoever believeth" is a conditional clause is certainly not grammatically correct. We grant, of course, that Scripture is full of grammatically conditional sentences. But this does not mean that there are conditions of salvation or conditions which man must fulfill in order to receive the promise of God. And certainly there is no mention of conditions in the whole of our Confessions. Nor is there mention of a condition in Canons II, 5. The "whosoever" does not mean the same as "if." It is not a conditional sentence, but a general relative clause, and refers to the scope of those that will receive eternal life. The whosoever denotes the scope. And that scope of those that will receive eternal life is defined by those who believe: whosoever are included in those that believe will have eternal life. Thus the promise in Canons II, 5 is certainly not presented as conditional. In the second place, I wish to point out that this article in the Canons certainly does not mean to give a complete definition of the promise of God. For this it is too limited. It does not include all the contents of the promise. Neither the whole of the promise, nor the whole of salvation is denoted here. The Canons here state that whosoever believes in Christ shall have, or will have eternal life. And that eternal life in the future is certainly also a part of the promise. But it is not all of the promise. I can also say, on the basis of Scripture: Whosoever believeth in the Son **hath** eternal life. In that case faith is included in life and salvation. But here, in Canons II, 5, faith is excluded from the promise of salvation. For this reason, it ought to be very plain to us all that this cannot be a complete definition of the promise. For the promise also includes faith and the Holy Spirit and the subjective application of all the blessings of salvation. When this so-called definition of the promise in Canons II, 5 speaks of everlasting life, it refers to the future glory. Life in this article, everlasting life, is presented as being future in relation to faith. But, as has been pointed out, Scripture also speaks of everlasting life as already present, as a matter of the subjective possession of the believer. The believer is already raised with Christ and is already set in heavenly places with Christ. And this present salvation is also included in the promise. Hence, certainly it cannot be maintained that in Canons II, 5 we have a complete definition of the promise of God. As I said before, we must not isolate parts of the Confessions, and separate them from other parts. A definition must be based on the whole of the Confessions. In 1924 the Synod of Kalamazoo isolated this particular article in order to prove the theory of common grace from the Confessions, and made it a well-meant offer of salvation on the part of God to all that hear the gospel. In other words, according to that Synod there is grace in the preaching of the gospel to all that hear. And that example we certainly must not follow. And therefore, if we want to speak of the promise, we must refer to the whole of the Confessions.

Now, if we read all the passages of the Confessions that deal with this matter of the promise, you will find that it is much more than what is stated in Canons II, 5.

First of all, I refer you to Qu. 22 of the Heidelberg Catechism. There it is asked: "What is then necessary for a Christian to believe"? And the answer is: "All things promised us in the gospel, which the articles of our catholic undoubted christian faith briefly teach us." It is plain that the entire

contents of our faith are included in the promise of the gospel, according to this answer. And what those contents are is expressed in the Apostolic Creed, which speaks of God the Father and our creation, of God the Son and our redemption, of God the Holy Ghost and our sanctification. And this promise of the gospel, or this contents of our faith, is further explained in the succeeding Lord's Days of our Heidelberg Catechism as it interprets and expounds the various articles of the Apostles' Creed. That the Almighty Father Creator is my God and Father for Christ's sake, that He will provide me with all things necessary for soul and body, that He will even turn all evils that befall me to my advantage, is part of the contents of this promise. That Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, Who died and rose again, and is seated at the right hand of God, is my Redeemer and my Savior, my Prophet, Priest, and King, Who redeemed me body and soul from everlasting damnation and obtained for us the favor of God, righteousness, and eternal life—all this is included in the promise of the gospel. Moreover, included in that promise is the promise of the Holy Ghost, Who is given me in order that by a true faith He may make me partaker of Christ and all His benefits, so that I am and forever shall remain a living member of the church, so that I have the forgiveness of sins and the promise of the resurrection and everlasting life—all this is included in the promise of the gospel, according to the Heidelberg Catechism. Certainly, this is a much broader conception than that which is presented in Canons II, 5. In fact, in this article of the Canons, II, 5, only the very last element of the promise of the gospel as explained by the Heidelberg Catechism is mentioned, namely, everlasting life.

Next, I refer you to Questions 65, 66, 69, and 70 of the Heidelberg Catechism. In Qu. 65 we read: "Since then ye are made partakers of Christ and all his benefits by faith only, whence doth this faith proceed?" And the answer is: "From the Holy Ghost, who works faith in our hearts by the preaching of the gospel, and confirms it by the use of the sacraments." The Holy Ghost, therefore, is the author of faith. And that same Holy Ghost, as the author of faith, is included in the promise of the gospel. Now, the promise of the Holy Ghost and the promise of faith is surely only for the elect, and is surely unconditional. And in Qu. 66 we read: "What are the sacraments"? And the answer: "The sacraments are holy visible signs and seals, appointed of God for this end, that by the use thereof, he may the more fully declare and seal to us the promise of the gospel, namely, that he grants us freely the remission of sin, and life eternal, for the sake of that one sacrifice of Christ, accomplished on the cross." Notice, that according to this answer the promise of the gospel is sealed to **us.** That is, therefore, to the confessing believers. To no one else, but to the believers, and therefore, to the elect, is the promise of the gospel sealed. And here too the promise of the gospel is presented broader in scope than is the presentation of the promise in Canons II, 5. For here not only life eternal, but also the forgiveness of sins is mentioned as included in that promise. Here is proof again that in Canons II, 5 we cannot have a complete definition of the promise. In Qu. 69 and 70 still more elements of the promise are mentioned. There we read: "How art thou admonished and assured by holy baptism, that the one sacrifice of Christ upon the cross is of real advantage to thee"? And the answer. "Thus: That Christ appointed this external washing with water, adding thereto this promise, that I am as certainly washed by his blood and Spirit from all the pollution of my soul, that is, from all my sins, as I am washed externally with water, by which the filthiness of the body is commonly washed away." And in Qu. 70: "What is it to be washed with the blood and Spirit of Christ?" And the answer: "It is to receive of God the remission of sins, freely, for the sake of Christ's blood, which he shed for us by his sacrifice upon the cross; and to be renewed by the Holy Ghost, and sanctified to be members of Christ, that so we may more and more die unto sin, and lead holy and unblamable lives." All this, mark you, is included in the promise of the gospel, which is sealed to us by the sacraments. The promise, therefore, includes the washing away of sins by the blood and Spirit of Christ, according to Qu. 69. And this is further elucidated in the answer to Qu. 70 by saying that in baptism is sealed to us freely the remission of sins and the renewal, that is, the regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and sanctification to be members of Christ, so that we die unto sin and lead holy and unblamable lives. All this is included in the promise of the gospel, according to the Heidelberg Catechism. And therefore, this promise is much more inclusive and broader than the presentation of it in Canons II, 5. Once more, therefore, I claim that in the latter article of the Canons we have no complete definition of the promise.

Question 74 of the Heidelberg Catechism is also important in this connection. It speaks of infant baptism. And I will quote only the first part of the question and answer: "Are infants also to be baptized? Yes: for since they, as well as the adult, are included in the covenant and church of God; and since redemption from sin by the blood of Christ, and the Holy Ghost, the author of faith, is promised to them no less than to the adult; they must therefore by baptism, as a sign of the covenant, be also admitted into the christian church." Here too, notice that remission of sin by the blood of Christ is included in the promise. But what is more important is that according to this 74th question and answer the Holy Ghost is promised to them, to the children, and that the Holy Ghost is here presented as the author of faith. Now this is very important for the subject under discussion at present. We say in the Declaration that the promise is only for the elect, and is unconditional. Now you know that it is the conception of Heyns and also of the Liberated that the promise is for all the children that are baptized, head for head and soul for soul. But that this is not the teaching of the Heidelberg Catechism ought to be very plain from this question on infant baptism. For in the first place, according to this answer the Holy Ghost is promised to the infants no less than to the adult. And certainly, the promise of the Holy Ghost cannot depend on any condition which we must fulfill. The Holy Ghost must operate within us before we are able to fulfill any conditions whatsoever. Besides, this Holy Ghost is promised to the infants. And infants certainly are not able to fulfill any conditions whatsoever. Besides, this answer stresses the fact that the Holy Ghost is promised to the infants as the author of faith, which means, of course, that God promises to the infants that He certainly will work faith in their hearts. Hence, it stands to reason that the promise cannot be conditioned upon faith, because faith is included in the promise. To say that God promises faith to those that believe is nonsense. And it is equally nonsense to state that God promises faith to those that will not reject the promise of faith. From all this it follows that according to the 74th answer of the Heidelberg Catechism, the promise is unconditional and is meant for the elect alone. But again, I wish to state that the promise here appears as having a much broader scope than the presentation of the promise in Canons II, 5.

Now let us turn to Lord's Day XXVIII. This Lord's Day deals with the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. In the answer to question 75 we read: "That Christ has commanded me and

all believers, to eat of this broken bread, and to drink of this cup, in remembrance of him, adding these promises: first, that his body was offered and broken on the cross for me, and his blood shed for me, as certainly as I see with my eyes, the bread of the Lord broken for me, and the cup communicated to me; and further, that he feeds and nourishes my soul to everlasting life, with his crucified body and shed blood, as assuredly as I receive from the hands of the minister, and taste with my mouth the bread and cup of the Lord, as certain signs of the body and blood of Christ." Also in this answer it is evident that the promise is only for the believers, that is, therefore, for the elect. This is evident from the very first clause in this answer, "Christ has commanded me and all believers," and also from the personal pronoun "me" in the rest of the answer. Further, it is evident from this answer that the promise includes all the blessings implied in the atonement of Christ. The body of Christ was broken for me, and His blood shed for me. Such is the promise. Further, it is included in the promise that God will strengthen and nourish my soul to everlasting life. This is also further explained in Ques. and Answer 76 where we read: "What is it then to eat the crucified body, and drink the shed blood of Christ?" And the answer: "It is not only to embrace with a believing heart all the sufferings and death of Christ, and thereby to obtain the pardon of sin, and life eternal; but also, besides that, to become more and more united to his sacred body, by the Holy Ghost, who dwells both in Christ and in us." Here too the pardon of sin, life eternal, the Holy Ghost, and union with Christ is included in the promise of God. And again I state that the promise here includes much more than the presentation of the promise in Canons II, 5. And also in Question and Answer 84, the question about the preaching of the gospel as a key of the kingdom of heaven, the forgiveness of sins for the sake of Christ's merits is implied in the promise of the gospel. That this promise is stated here as meant only for the believers does not mean that faith is a condition to receive the promise. For as we have said repeatedly, according to our Confessions the Holy Ghost and faith are included in the promise itself.

Nor do we meet with any different conception of the promise of the gospel in the Netherland or Belgic Confession. In Article XXII we read: "We believe that, to attain the true knowledge of this great mystery, the Holy Ghost kindleth in our hearts an upright faith, which embraces Jesus Christ, with all his merits, appropriates him, and seeks nothing more besides him." If we read this in connection with the rest of our Confessions, it is evident that the Holy Ghost, the author of faith, is included in the promise. He, the Holy Ghost, "kindleth in our hearts an upright faith, which embraces Jesus Christ, with all his merits." And once more I wish to state that it is impossible and it is nonsense to maintain that the Holy Ghost so operates in our hearts that we receive the saving faith **on condition** of faith. The gift of faith, and therefore the promise, cannot be conditioned by faith on our part. Besides, in the same article it is stated literally that faith is nothing but a means or instrument, and therefore, certainly not a condition. For in this article we read: "However, to speak more clearly, we do not mean, that faith itself justifies us, for it is only an instrument with which we embrace Christ our Righteousness. But Jesus Christ, imputing to us all his merits, and so many holy works which he has done for us and in our stead, is our Righteousness. And faith is an instrument that keeps us in communion with him in all his benefits, which, when become ours are more than sufficient to acquit us of our sins". Faith, therefore, is not a condition, but an instrument whereby we embrace Christ and stand in communion with Him.

In Article XXXIII of the same Confession we are told that God seals to us His promises through the means of the sacraments. "We believe, that our gracious God, on account of our weakness and infirmities hath ordained the sacraments for us, thereby to seal unto us his promises, and to be pledges of the good will and grace of God toward us, and also to nourish and strengthen our faith; which he hath joined to the Word of the gospel, the better to present to our senses, both that which he signifies to us by his Word, and that which he works inwardly in our hearts, thereby assuring and confirming us in the salvation which he imparts to us. For they are visible signs and seals of an inward and invisible thing, by means whereof God worketh in us by the power of the Holy Ghost." These promises are further, as to their contents, described in Article XXXIV, which speaks of Holy Baptism. I will not quote the whole article, for it is rather lengthy. But as to the contents of the promise of God it informs us that it includes that "we are received into the church of God, and separated from all other people and strange religions, that we may wholly belong to him, whose ensign and banner we bear." It includes further the promise that God will "forever be our gracious God and Father." Further, it implies the washing away of our sins through the blood and Spirit of Christ: "so doth the blood of Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost, internally sprinkle the soul, cleanse it from its sins, and regenerate us from children of wrath, unto children of God." It therefore includes the gift of grace that is called regeneration, and the assurance of adoption unto sons of God. Further, the contents of the promise of God in this article is described as follows: "the gifts and invisible grace; washing, cleansing and purging our souls of all filth and unrighteousness; renewing our hearts, and filling them with all comfort; giving unto us a true assurance of his fatherly goodness; putting on us the new man, and putting off the old man with all his deeds." And as to the baptism of infants, the article states: "And indeed Christ shed his blood no less for the washing of the children of the faithful, than for adult persons; and therefore they ought to receive the sign and sacrament of that, which Christ hath done for them." Now, mark you well, that the Reformed Confessions, over against all Arminians, maintain the doctrine of particular atonement. Christ did not die for all men, but only for the elect. Nor are all the children that are born in the historical dispensation of the covenant elect children, as we well know from Scripture and experience. It follows, therefore, when we read in this article that "Christ shed his blood no less for the washing of the children of the faithful than for the adult persons," not all the children of the faithful are meant, but only the elect children. For Christ shed His blood only for the elect, according to all the Reformed Confessions. And since the sacrament of baptism is one of the seals of the promise, it follows too that the promise is not for all, but for the elect only. The same truth is expressed in Article XXXV, which speaks of the Holy Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ. There we read: "We believe and confess, that our Savior Jesus Christ did ordain and institute the sacrament of the holy supper, to nourish and support those whom he hath already regenerated, and incorporated into his family, which is his Church." That the promise of God is not for all, but only for the elect, is plainly stated here, because the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is ordained for those whom He hath already regenerated. And according to the same article, this life of regeneration is peculiar only to God's elect. And as to the contents of the promise which is sealed in the supper of the Lord, we read: "Now, as it is certain and beyond all doubt, that Jesus Christ hath not enjoined to us the use of his sacraments in vain, so he works in us all that he

represents to us by these holy signs, though the manner surpasses our understanding, and cannot be comprehended by us, as the operations of the Holy Ghost are hidden and incomprehensible. In the meantime we err not, when we say, that what is eaten and drunk by us is the proper and natural body, and the proper blood of Christ. But the manner of our partaking of the same, is not by the mouth, but by the spirit through faith. Thus then, though Christ always sits at the right hand of his Father in the heavens, yet doth he not therefore cease to make us partakers of himself by faith. This feast is a spiritual table, at which Christ communicates himself with all his benefits to us, and gives us there to enjoy both himself, and the merits of his sufferings and death, nourishing, strengthening and comforting our poor comfortless souls by the eating of his flesh, quickening and refreshing them by the drinking of his blood.'" This then is the contents of the promise of the gospel. It includes the application of all the merits of Christ to us, the nourishing and strengthening and comforting of our souls, and the quickening and refreshing of them. Moreover, that the promise of the gospel, as signified and sealed in the sacrament, is not received by all that partake of the sacraments in the outward sense of the word is also evident from the rest of this article. For there we read: "Further, though the sacraments are connected with the thing signified, nevertheless both are not received by all men: the ungodly indeed receives the sacrament to his condemnation, but he doth not receive the truth of the sacrament". He therefore receives the outward sign, but certainly not the thing signified.—Just as in the preaching of the gospel the ungodly may hear with the natural, external ear the promise of God, but he receives it to his condemnation. He certainly does not receive the promise of the Holy Ghost. Nor is that promise of the Holy Ghost meant for him. It is only for the elect.

Now let us turn to the Canons of Dordrecht. In I, 6 and 7, we read: Article 6, "That some receive the gift of faith from God, and others do not receive it, proceeds from God's eternal decree, 'For known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world", Acts 15:18. "Who worketh all things after the counsel of his will," Eph. 1:11. According to which decree, he graciously softens the hearts of the elect, however obstinate, and inclines them to believe, while he leaves the non-elect in his just judgment to their own wickedness and obduracy. And herein is especially displayed the profound, the merciful, and at the same time the righteous discrimination between men, equally involved in ruin; or that decree of election and reprobation, revealed in the Word of God, which though men of perverse, impure and unstable minds wrest to their own destruction, yet to holy and pious souls affords unspeakable consolation." Let me call your attention to the fact that I am quoting here from the Canons of Dordrecht, that are admittedly infralapsarian. For it speaks of "the righteous discrimination between men, equally involved in ruin." This is infra. But I want to call your attention to the fact that it does not affect whatsoever the presentation of the promise of God as it is in the Declaration of Principles. Supra and infra have nothing to do with the question. It is a gift of God according to His own decree, and flowing from His decree, that He bestows faith upon some. It is also according to the same decree that He does not bestow that same gift of faith upon others. It is not Reformed to present the matter as if the promise were conditioned by faith. For in the first place, as has been said repeatedly, faith is included in the promise. And that promise of faith God bestows only upon the elect. And if we say that the rest do not receive the promise because they reject it in unbelief, we certainly speak the truth; but we do not speak all the truth. For we must add that they cannot believe, because they are not of Christ's sheep. And the ultimate cause of their unbelief, although the approximate cause is in their own sin, is nevertheless in the fact that God, to speak in infralapsarian language, passed them by, according to His decree, with the gift of faith. And in Article 7 we read: "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." Also here, let me point out, the infralapsarian presentation of the counsel of God is very plainly expressed. God chose His elect from the human race "which had fallen through their own fault, from their primitive state of rectitude, into sin and destruction." That is pure infralapsarian language. And to it we have no objection whatsoever as far as the Declaration of Principles is concerned. For even that infralapsarian language expresses very plainly that the promise is an oath of God for the elect only, and unconditional. That ought to be very plain from the rest of this article, which says: "This elect number, though by nature neither better nor more deserving than others, but with them involved in one common misery (note again the infralapsarian terminology) God hath decreed to give to Christ, to be saved by him, and effectually to call and draw them to his communion by his Word and Spirit, to bestow upon them true faith, justification and sanctification; and having powerfully preserved them in the fellowship of his Son, finally, to glorify them for the demonstration of his mercy, and for the praise of his glorious grace." All this is the contents of the promise of God: effectual calling, the drawing to the communion of Christ by His Word and Spirit, true faith, justification, sanctification, preservation, and glorification—all is contained in the promise of God. You say that this refers to the counsel of God. And I admit it. But that does not make any difference. For what God decrees He also performs. The promise in the decree is the same as the promise in its execution. If the promise in the decree is absolutely only founded upon God's own sovereign will, so is the promise in its execution. What God decrees He also fulfills. And He fulfills it in the very manner that He has decreed it.

O yes, the Arminians also speak of election. And to be sure, only the elect are saved. But the Arminians speak of a conditional election. And therefore they can also speak of a conditional promise. Our fathers refuted that whole doctrine of a conditional election in Canons I, B, 2, 3. It is well that we understand this. There we read that the true doctrine concerning election and rejection having been explained, our fathers reject the errors of those: "Who teach: That there are various kinds of election of God unto eternal life: the one general and indefinite, the other particular and definite; and that the latter in turn is either incomplete, revocable, non-decisive and conditional, or complete, irrevocable, decisive and absolute. Likewise: that there is one election unto faith, and another unto salvation, so that election can be unto justifying faith, without being a decisive election unto salvation." It is not difficult to understand what this means. The Arminians taught that in last instance, salvation is after all dependent on the will of man, and that therefore also election is itself contingent upon that free will of the sinner. By complete, irrevocable, decisive and absolute election the Arminians meant election unto final salvation, which is always dependent upon the will of man to

persevere unto salvation. There, however, is also a revocable and incomplete election, which is not decisive, as, for instance, the election unto justifying faith. When God in His eternal counsel has foreseen that a man will believe, He chose him unto that justifying faith. But even that faith depends for its continuance upon man's own will in last instance. And therefore it is possible that God chose a man unto justifying faith without choosing him unto final salvation. That is the meaning of this article. Of similar conditions article 3 speaks, in which the Arminians 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." O yes, faith is a condition of salvation. And even the Arminians will not deny that faith is a gift of God. But do not forget that the question whether God will bestow that gift upon anyone does not in last instance depend solely upon God's sovereign election, but upon man's own will. Whether a man will receive the gift of faith from God is conditioned by the question whether he will use the light of nature aright. These conditions remain conditions throughout the whole way of salvation, according to Arminianism. Faith and sanctification and perseverance are all conditions which man must fulfill in order to reach final salvation. Man, according to the Arminians is always first. Whether man shall enjoy any part of his salvation and shall finally perservere depends on the question whether he will receive faith to persevere. Now, I am well aware that none of us believe in such conditions. And none of us will teach that faith is a prerequisite which man must fulfill. But it is striking that in spite of the fact that the fathers of Dordrecht were well acquainted with the term **condition,** they nevertheless carefully avoided it in their confessions. And it certainly is safe for us to follow their example, and not speak of conditions at all. At any rate, the promise of God is for the elect alone, and is strictly unconditional. That we must maintain.

Let me quote once more from the Canons, and this time from Canons II, 5-8. To II, 5 we already called your attention. And I will not repeat what I said in that connection. In Article 6 it is emphasized that the sin of impenitence and unbelief is not owing to any insufficiency in the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross, but is wholly imputed to the unbelievers themselves. The sin of unbelief is not God's, but man's. God is never the Author of sin. But this does not mean that the unbelever is capable of faith without the grace of God. For in Article 7 we read: "But as many as truly believe, and are delivered and saved from sin and destruction through the death of Christ, are indebted for this benefit solely to the grace of God, given them in Christ from everlasting, and not to any merit of their own". And is Article 8 we read: "For this was the sovereign counsel, and most gracious will and purpose of God the Father, that the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of his Son should extend to all the elect, for bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith, thereby to bring them infallibly to salvation: that is, it was the will of God, that Christ by the blood of the cross, whereby he confirmed the new covenant, should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation, and language, all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation, and given to him by the Father; that he should confer upon them faith, which together with all the other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, he purchased for them by his death; should purge them from all sin, both original and actual, whether committed before or after believing; and having faithfully preserved them even to the end, should at last bring them free from every spot and blemish to the enjoyment of glory in his own presence forever." Now, once more I want to emphasize that the Confessions, and especially the Canons, are infralapsarian. And I am very willing to subscribe to this infralapsarian presentation of the truth, although I am personally convinced that the supralapsarian conception of the counsel of God is certainly more Scriptural. Infra is supposed to be softer than supra. At any rate, it presents the historical view of God's counsel, while supra emphasizes the ideal order in the counsel of God, as Scripture does very often. Now in article 8, which we just quoted, we certainly have a complete presentation of the promise of God as it is in the decree of the Most High, and as it is actually executed in time. When in article 5 of the same chapter of the Canons we read that "the promise of the gospel is, that whosoever believeth in Christ crucified, shall not perish, but have everlasting life," we may find in article 8 what is the exact scope of this "whosoever believeth." That scope is limited to the elect alone. For them alone, according to this article, Christ died. To them alone the saving efficacy of His death extends. Upon them alone He bestows the gift of justifying faith. They alone are redeemed and given all the blessings of salvation. Upon them alone He confers the gifts of justifying faith, together with all the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Them alone He purges from all sin, both original and actual. Them alone He preserves even to the end. Them alone He leads unto final glory infallibly. That is the promise of God in all its fulness. And therefore, I say once more: we must not base a definition of the promise upon one article of the Confessions, but upon the whole of the Three Forms of Unity.

Now let me turn once more to the Baptism Form. The doctrinal part of the Baptism Form deals with the promise of God, as sealed in the sacrament of Baptism. This we all admit. But certainly in that doctrinal part of the Baptism Form we have a much fuller description of the promise of the gospel than in Canons II, 5. What, according to that doctrinal part of the Baptism Form, the second part, is the contents of the promise? This: that God the Father makes an eternal covenant of grace with us, adopts us for His children and heirs, will provide us with every good thing, and avert all evil or turn it to our profit. All this God the Father **seals** to us. This is the same as saying that He swears by an oath that He will surely fulfill the promise unto those to whom He promises these things. Will God fail to fulfill His promise? Can unbelief prevent Him from fulfilling it? You answer with me: of course not! If that were the case, He would never fulfill it. He fulfills His promise unconditionally. This is evident all the more because this Form speaks of the sacrament of baptism as applied to infants, who certainly cannot fulfill conditions. With us, that is, the believing church and their spiritual seed, God establishes His eternal covenant; and He shall never, never break it. The promise is sure. Besides, the promise consists in this, that the Son sealeth unto us that He washes us in His blood from all our sins, that He incorporates us into the fellowship of His death and resurrection, so that we are freed from all our sins, and accounted righteous before God. That is the sure promise. And that promise will surely be fulfilled. But it is fulfilled only in the elect. And it does not mean anyone else than the elect. Again, when we read here that in baptism the Son sealeth unto us, what is meant by this personal pronoun **us** is the church as it confesses these things, the believing church and their spiritual seed. No one else can possibly be meant by

the Baptim Form. Lastly, what according to the Baptism Form is the contents of the promise? This: that the Holy Ghost assures us that He will dwell in us and sanctify us to be members of Christ, that He will apply unto us all that we have in Christ, the washing away of our sins and the daily renewing of our lives, till we shall finally be presented without spot or wrinkle among the assembly of the elect in life eternal. Again I ask you: can the Holy Ghost be conditioned? Can the work of the Holy Ghost be conditioned upon the work of man? Or can the Holy Ghost be prevented from realizing the promise by our unbelief? Then we could never be saved. But this is not the case. When the Holy Ghost assures us of these things, He will surely fulfill them. And He will fulfill them unconditionally. But He will fulfill them only in the elect. The **us** of the Baptism Form also here refers to the believing church and their spiritual seed, and to no one else. And therefore, I maintain that the language concerning the promise that is found in the Declaration of Principles certainly is based foursquarely on our Confessions.

It has been alleged by some that this teaching concerning the promise that is presented in the Declaration of Principles is something new in our churches. But that this is not the case may be plain from a quotation out of the pamphlet, "The Gospel," published by our Sunday School 12 or 15 years ago, when Prof. Heyns was still living. And I quote: "Very frequently the Bible speaks of the promise. Sometimes it refers to it in the plural to express the riches of its implications; more often in the singular to denote its unity and identity, but always it is the same promise. It is the promise that is given to Abel, Enoch and Noah, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For, having mentioned these saints of the old dispensation, and having spoken of their life and death or translation by faith, the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews tells us: 'These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth', vs. 13. And having reviewed the life and battle of faith of many more of the great cloud of witnesses, and including them all in his view the author of the Hebrews finally states: 'And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise,' vs. 39. It is evident from these passages that all through the old dispensation there was a promise, given unto the saints, which they embraced and believed, by which they lived and died, for the which they were willing to be strangers and pilgrims in the earth, suffer hunger and exile and imprisonment, endured cruelty and mockeries and scourgings, were slain with the sword and sawn asunder, wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, afflicted, destitute, and tormented. And in the greatness of their faith and endurance and the severity of their sufferings we may see reflected the beauty and riches of the promise they possessed and saw afar off. Galatians 3 is a classic chapter on this subject of the promise. It emphasizes that the promises were made to Abraham and his seed, and that this seed of Abraham is centrally and essentially Christ, vs. 16. It is plain that Christ, the seed, who is the fulfillment of the promise, is at the same time also the chief recipient of the promise. It states that the law which came 430 years later than the promise to Abraham, could not possibly make the latter of none effect, vs. 17; and that God gave the inheritance to Abraham by promise, vs. 18. It reaches the conclusion that if we are Christ's, then are we Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise, vs. 29.

(to be continued)

H. H.

OUR DOCTRINE

The Hexaemeron or Creation-Week

(10)

THE CREATION OF MAN (3)

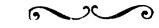
We concluded our discussion of the origin of the soul in our previous article with the remark that Rev. Hoeksema offers us another solution of this problem, and promised to quote in this article from his book: In The Midst of Death. This quotation we may read on pages 155-156, and is as follows: "All these objections would seem to suggest that the distinction of the human being in body and soul cannot serve as a basis for the explanation of the propagation of original corruption. It does not offer us the proper working hypothesis. The reason for this must, perhaps, be found in the fact that it is not clearly defined what is meant by "soul". In Scripture, too, the word for soul has different connotations. Sometimes it is used for the whole man; in other passages it is properly translated by life; while again in other parts of the Bible the meaning of the term closely approximates that of spirit. It would seem expedient, then to proceed from a little different point of view, and choose another distinction between person and nature. The whole living nature of man is propagated through generation, conception, and birth. But this propagation of the human nature takes place under the operation of an act of providence whereby that nature becomes a *personal* nature. This distinction and explanation has this in its favor, that it is in accord with what we confess concernng the incarnation. Also in the incarnation of the Son of God the whole human nature, we believe, is conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary and born from her. But the Son of God assumed an impersonal human nature: the Person also in this case came from God, is, in fact, the very second Person of the Holy Trinity Himself. If, then, the human nature is become corrupt in paradise, and the whole human nature in each individual child that is born comes from the parents through conception and birth, we can conceive of the possibility that a "corrupt stock produces a corrupt offspring," and that, as the Catechism expresses it: "our nature is become so corrupt, that we are all conceived and born in sin."—end of quote.

Created in the Image of God.

First, we would present to our readers a short historical review of this concept. We read in Gen. 1:26:

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." As far as the distinction is concerned between "image" and "likeness" some have declared that the one word refers to the body whereas the other refers to the soul of man. Augustine held that the "image" referred to the intellectual, and the "likeness" referred to the moral faculties of the soul. Others, as the Roman Catholics, maintained that the "image" was a designation of the natural gifts of man, whereas the "likeness" was a description of that which was supernaturally added to man.

Professor Berkhof, in his "Reformed Dogmatics", gives us the following historical review of this concept which we wish to quote, pages 206-208.



BERKHOF'S HISTORICAL REVIEW

"1. The Reformed Conception. The Reformed Churches, following in the footsteps of Calvin, have a far more comprehensive conception of the image of God than either the Lutherans or the Roman Catholics. But even they do not all agree as to its exact contents. Dabney, for instance, holds that it does not consist in anything absolutely essential to man's nature, for then the loss of it would have resulted in the destruction of man's nature; but merely in *some accidents*. McPherson, on the other hand, asserts that it belongs to the essential nature of man, and says that "Protestant theology would have escaped much confusion and many needless and unconvincing doctrinal refinements, if it had not encumbered itself with the idea that it was bound to define sin as the loss of the image, or of something belonging to the image. If the image were lost man would cease to be man. These two, then, would seem to be hopelessly at variance. Other differences are also in evidence in Reformed theology. Some would limit the image to the moral qualities of righteousness and holiness with which man was created, while others would include the whole moral and rational nature of man, and still others would also add the body. Calvin says that the proper seat of the image of God is in the soul, though some rays of its glory also shine in the body. He finds that the image consisted especially in that original integrity of man's nature, lost by sn, which reveals itself in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. At the same time he adds further "that the image of God extends to everything in which the nature of man surpasses that of all other species of animals. This broader conception of the image of God became the prevalent one in Reformed theology. Thus Witsius says: "The image of God consisted *antecendenter,* in man's spiritual and immortal nature; *formaliter,* in his holiness; *consequenter,* in his dominion." A very similar opinion is expressed by Turretin. To sum up it may be said that the image consists: (a) In the soul or spirit of man, that is, in the qualities of simplicity, spirituality, invisibility, and immortality. (b) In the psychical powers or faculties of man as a rational and moral being, namely, the intellect and the will with their functions. (c) In the intellectual and moral integrity of man's nature, revealing itself in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10. (d) In the body, not as a material substance, but as the fit organ of the soul, sharing its immortality; and as the instrument through which man can exercise dominion over the lower creation. (e) In man's dominion over the earth. In opposition to the Socinians, some Reformed scholars went too far in the opposite direction, when they regarded this dominion as something that did not belong to the image at all but was the result of a special disposal of God. In connection with the question, whether the image of God belongs to the very essence of man, Reformed theology does not hesitate to say that it *constitutes* the essence of man. It distinguishes, however, between those elements in the image of God which man cannot lose without ceasing to be man, consisting in the essential qualities and powers of the human soul; and those elements which man can lose and still remain man, namely, the good ethical qualities of the soul and its powers. The image of God in this restricted sense is identical with what is called original righteousness. It is the moral perfection of the image, which could be and was, lost by sin.

2. The Lutheran Conception. The prevailing Lutheran conception of the image of God differs materially from that of the Reformed. Luther himself sometimes spoke as if he had a broad conception of it, but in reality he had a restricted view of it. While there were during the seventeenth century, and there are even now, some Lutheran theologians who have a broader conception of the image of God, the great majority of them restrict it to the spiritual qualities with which man was originally endowed, that is, what is called original righteousness. In doing this they do not sufficiently recognize the essential nature of man as distinct from that of the angels on the one hand, and from that of the animals on the other hand. In the possession of this image men are like the angels, who also possess it; and in comparison with what the two have in common, their difference is of little importance. Man lost the image of God entirely through sin,

and what now distinguishes him from the animals has very little religious or theological significance. The great difference between the two lay in the image of God, and this man has lost entirely. In view of this it is also natural that the Lutherans should adopt traducianism, and thus teach that the soul of man originates like that of the animal, that is, by procreation. It also accounts for the fact that the Lutherans hardly recognizes the moral unity of the human race, but emphasize strongly its physical unity and the exclusively physical propagation of sin. Barth comes closer to the Lutherans than to the Reformed position when he seeks the image of God in "a point of contact" between God and man, a certain conformity with God, and then says that this was not only ruined but even annihilated by sin.

3. The Roman Catholic View. Roman Catholics do not altogether agree in their conception of the image of God. We limit ourselves here to a statement of the prevailing view among them. They hold that God at creation endowed man with certain natural gifts, such as the spirituality of the soul, the freedom of the will, and the immortality of the body. Spirituality, freedom, and immortality, are *natural endowments,* and as such constitute the *natural image of* God. Moreover, God "attempered" (adjusted) the natural powers of man to one another, placing the lower in due subordination to the higher. The harmony thus established is called *justitia*-natural righteousness. But even so there remained in man a natural tendency of the lower appetites and passions to rebel against the authority of the higher powers of reason and conscience. This tendency, called concupiscence, is not itself sin, but becomes sin when it is consented to by the will and passes into voluntary action. In order to enable man to hold his lower nature in check, God added to the *dona naturalia* certain *dona supernaturalia.* These included the *donum superadditum* of original righteousness (the supernatural likeness to God), which was added as a foreign gift to the original constitution of man, either immediately at the time of creation, or at some later point as a reward for the proper use of the natural powers. These supernatural gifts, including the *donum superadditum* of original righteousness, were lost by sin, but their loss did not disrupt the essential nature of man.

4. Other Views of the Image of God. According to the Socinians and some of the earlier Arminians the image of God consists in man's dominion over the lower creation, and in this only. Anabaptists maintained that the first man, as a finite and earthly creature, was not yet the image of God, but could become this only by regeneration. Pelagians, most of the Arminians, and Rationalists all, with little variation, find the image of God only in the free personality of man, in his rational character, his ethico-religious disposition, and his destiny to live in communion with God."—end of quote.

Let us first attend to the Roman Catholic view. Roman Catholicism views the image of God in Adam, not as belonging to his essence (according to Rome, therefore, man is not essentially the image of God) but as added to Adam, a gift which they call "donum superadditum," i.e., an added gift. Man, then, is a complete being without this image. He can lose it and remain man, and, what is more, a good man. Man consists, without this image, of a lower and a higher existence. The lower part of his existence is the matorial and the higher form of his existence is the spiritual. It is his calling to pursue after that which is spiritual, to live according to the spiritual aspect of his existence. However, he finds it extremely difficult to do so because he is hindered by the lower, the material aspect of his being. To aid him now in that struggle to live according to the spiritual aspect of his existence, God gave him the added gift of His image, also called original righteousness. This added gift of original righteousness is as a gold chain which has been added to and is adapted to his nature and which aids him in his struggle against the flesh. When man fell he lost this image, this added gift of original righteousness. This view, we should and do understand, is surely a serious heresy. It is nothing else than Pelagianism. Mind you, man simply lost his added gift, the added gift of original righteousness. This means, in other words, that he did not become essentially and radically corrupt. All he lost was the added help to aid him in his struggle against the flesh. This, we say, is a serious error. Scripture knows nothing of such a presentation. We are simply told that God created man in His own image and after His own likeness. Hence, man was created in that image. This image was, therefore, not merely an incidental, something added to what Adam originally was. The image was not something given to Adam after he had been created by the Almighty. He had it from the very beginning. Besides, this is simply Pelagianism, the denial of the truth that man became wholly corrupt. And it is well that we emphasize this today because of the teaching of the Christian Reformed Churches. They teach, do they not, that the sinner, without regeneration, without the renewal of the heart, can please God, can, in fact, accept the proffered salvation which is graciously extended to him even as it is extended to all who come under the preaching of the gospel.

We also wish to say a few words about the distinction: image of God in the broader and narrower sense.

Prof. Berkhof also mentions this distinction when he writes, page 207: "In connection with the question, whether the image of God belongs to the very essence of man, Reformed theology does not hesitate to say that it constitutes the essence of man. It distinguishes, however, between those elements in the image of God which man cannot lose without ceasing to be man, consisting in the essential qualities and powers of the human soul; and those elements which man can lose and still remain man, namely, the good ethical qualities of the soul and its powers. The image of God in this restricted sense is identical with what is called original righteousness. It is the moral perfection of the image, which could be, and was lost, lost by sin." It must be granted that this distinction has been rather generally accepted as belonging to Reformed doctrine. What is meant by this distinction? The image of God in the broader or wider sense refers, then, to man's rationality and morality and immortality. And the image of God in the narrower sense refers to his true knowledge of God, his righteousness and holiness. The former implies all that distinguishes man from the lower animals, whereas the latter is his original state of righteousness and holiness. The latter man lost through the fall whereas the former he retained. In a wider sense man still retains this image of God. However, he no longer possesses his original righteousness. What must be our judgment of this distinction? First, this distinction does not appear in our Confessions. Lord's Day 3 simply informs us that our nature is become so corrupt that we are all conceived and born in sin, and also that we are incapable of doing any good and inclined to all wickedness except we are regenerated by the Spirit of God. In Art. 14 of our Confession of Faith we read: "But being in honor, he understood it not, neither knew his excellency, but wilfully subjected himself to sin, and consequently to death, and the curse, giving ear to the words of the devil. For the commandment of life, which he had received, he transgressed; and by sin separated himself from God, who was his true life, having corrupted his whole nature; whereby he made himself liable to corporal and spiritual death. And being thus become wicked, perverse, and corrupt in all his ways, he hath lost all his excellent gifts, which he had received from God, and only retained a few remains thereof, which, however, are sufficient to leave man without excuse; for all the light which is in us is changed into darkness, as the Scriptures teach us, saying: The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not: where St. John calleth men darkness." And the same thought is expressed in the Canons of Dordrecht, III and IV, Art. 1: "Man was originally formed after the image of God. His understanding was adorned with a true and saving knowledge of his Creator, and of spiritual things; his heart and will were upright; all his affections pure; and the whole man was holy; but revolting from God by the instigation of the devil, and abusing the freedom of his own will, he forfeited these excellent gifts; and on the contrary entailed on himself blindness of mind, horrible darkness, vanity and perverseness of judgment, became wicked, rebellious, and obdurate in heart and will, and impure in his affections." Here we read that man was originally formed after the image of God, that his understanding was adorned with a true and saving knowledge of his Creator, and of spiritual things, etc., and also that he simply lost or forfeited these excellent gifts and entailed on himself horrible darkness, vanity and perverseness of judgment, etc. Secondly, we believe that this is a dangerous distinction. To be sure, as long as one maintains that the image of God in the narrower sense was completely lost very little harm will result and can occur. But the trouble is that words and terms have meanings. And it is not merely a question how I may interpret a certain term, but also how a certain term can be interpreted. Using words and terms which permit erroneous interpretations is like playing with fire. This, we firmly believe, also applies to the late discussion in our churches about "conditions." And the fact remains that when we speak of the image of God in a wider and narrower sense, that man retained the former and lost the latter, we are speaking of a certain retaining of the image of God. The result has been that today they speak of a retention of the image of God by man, also in the narrower sense, so that man has not become wholly corrupt but has retained remnants of his original righteousness whereby he is enabled to do things which are favorable in the sight of God. Hence, we reject the distinction which is often made today with respect to the concept: image of God in man, the distinction namely of the image in the broader and narrower sense. How, then, should we conceive of this image of God in man? This question we will attempt to answer in our following article.

H. Veldman

Lord, what shall earth and ashes do?
We would adore our Maker too;
From sin and dust to thee we cry,
The Great, the Holy, and the High!

THROUGH THE AGES

The Arminian or Remonstrant Struggle

The last two articles (6 and 7) of the Contra-Remonstration.

VI. That those thus enlightened, regenerated and renewed through this same power of the Holy Spirit by which they are initially converted, without any intermediation on their part are constantly sustained and kept in such a manner that, although they be encumbered by numerous weaknesses of the flesh so long as they are in this life and sometimes fall into grievous sins, the Spirit of sanctification prevails in them nevertheless, so that they cannot ever wholly or finally lose the true faith and adoption of children of God once imparted unto them.

Dat degenen, die alzoo verlicht, wedergeboren en vernieuwd geworden zijn, door diezelfde kracht des Heiligen Geestes, waardoor ze aanvankelijk bekeerd zijn zonder eenige toedoen hunnerzijds, ook gestadiglijk alzoo worden onderhouden en bewaard, dat alhoewel hen de zwakheden des vleesches aanhangen, zoo lang zij in dit leven zijn, en ze zomstijds vallen in zware zonden, nochtans de geest der heiligmaking in hen de overhand behoudt, zoodat zij het, hun eens geschonken ware geloof en de aaneming tot kinderen Gods nimmermeer geheel en al, noch ook ten einde toe kunnen verliezen.

VII. That evenso the true believers do not take from this doctrine a cause for carelessly following the evil lusts of their flesh, seeing that it is impossible that those who by a true faith have been planted into Christ should not bring forth fruits of gratitude. The very opposite takes place. The more they hold themselves persuaded and understand that God works in them both to will and to do according to His good pleasure, the more they work out with fear and trembling their salvation, seeing that they know that this is the only means whereby it pleases God to make them to stand and to lead them unto salvation. For which purpose He also in His Word employs various exhortations and threats. For He does that not to cause them to dispair or to make them to doubt their own salvation but to awaken in them a childlike fear, doing so with a view to the weaknesses of their flesh, whereby they of necessity would perish should the Lord through His unmerited grace not make them to stand, for also that they watch and pray and are prepared to strive, *that* they have not of themselves but only of the Holy Ghost who by a particular grace prepared them thereto and thus mightily sustain them.

Dat evenwel de ware geloovigen uit deze leer geen oorzaak nemen van zorgeloos de booze lusten van hun vleesch te volgen, dewijl "het onmogelijk is, dat degenen, die Christus door een waar geloof zijn ingeplant, niet zouden voortbrengen vruchten der dankbaarheid." Juist het tegendeel geschied. Hoe meer ze zich verzekerd houden en verstaan, dat God in hen werkt beide het willen en het volbrengen naar zijn welbehagen, des te meer werken ze in vreezen en beven hunne zaligheid uit, dewijl ze weten, dat dit het eenige middel is, waardoor het God belieft hen staande te houden en ter zaligheid te brengen; waartoe Hij ook in zijn Woord allerlei vermaningen en bedreigingen gebruikt. Want dat doet Hij niet om hen te doen wanhopen of te doen twijfelen aan hunne zaligheid, maar om een kinderlijke vreeze in hen te werwekken, en Hij doet dit uit aanmerking van de zwakheid huns vleesches, waardoor ze noodzakelijk zouden moeten vergaan, ten ware dat de Heere ze door zijne onverdiende genade staande hield, want ook dat ze waken en bidden en ten strijde bereid zijn, dat hebben ze niet van zich zelven maar alleen van den Heiligen Geest, die hen door een bijzonder genade daartoe bereidt en alzoo krachtelijk staande houdt.

These are the 7 articles of the Calvinists against the Remonstrants. It is known as "The Contra-Remonstration," and it includes besides these 7 articles an introduction and conclusion. The latter reads:

"This Noble, Potent and Mandating Lords is in brief what we insist is being taught in our churches. What the Remonstrants add to it to make it appear as hateful as possible is but a mass of consequences and slanderings that the carnal mind, which is enmity against God, deduces from it. However, he who holds that God was not resolved to damn anyone but for his sins; that He does not move anyone to sin and that also they who, dead in sin, cannot otherwise but sin, yet sin voluntarily—will not be offended by this doctrine. If there be

in our churches ministers who—even as Doctor Martin Luther did —- go somewhat higher with respect to God's counsel regarding the salvation of man than is set forth above, about this there thus far has never been any disharmony or strife in our churches, seeing that regarding the foundation there is complete agreement among them. We all teach, certainly, that faith and godliness are fruits of election and not—as the meaning of the Remonstrants seems to be—the ground and condition for election. If these (the Remonstrants—O) but truly admit that God alone works faith and steadfastness in us, then they need not controvert with us, seeing that God certainly cannot foresee more good in man than He Himself purposed to work in him as His elect! If on the contrary they mean that faith is called God's gifts only in the sense that God supplies the power to be able to believe but that it then depends on the arbitrariness of man either to regard this gift or not to regard and utilize it and that also the progess and perseverance is of man—such a sentiment we cannot admit seeing it militates against God's glory and our only comfort.

"If in fine the Remonstrants request that they be tolerated, we would have your noble Lords consider whether already they have not been tolerated above measure. Whether they are willing to tolerate their fellow brethren, who do not agree with their sentiment, that already has come to attention in some places where they predominate! The almighty God is our witness that we eagerly tolerate everything that is tolerable in God's church and seek nothing but quiet and peace in the church for the prosperity of our beloved fatherland, no matter how they make us out for a contentious people unwilling to submit to the government. The Lord will one day judge whether we have supplied the material for such slandering. But this cannot be tolerated in the church that in the meetings for public worship they preach in the morning thus and in the afternoon the reverse."

"Dit is, Edele, Mogende, Gabiedende Heeren, kortelijk hetgeen wij volhouden, dat in onze kerken geleerd wordt. Wat de Remonstranten er bij doen om deze leer het hatelijkst voortestellen, het zijn anders niet dan valsche consequencies en lasteringen, die 't vernuft des vleesches, dat vijandschap is tegen God, uit deze leer trekt. Die echter aanmerkt, dat God niet voorgenomen heeft, iemand te verdoemen dan om de zonde; dat hij niemand tot zonde beweegt, en dat ook zij, die—in zonden dood—niet anders kunnen dan zondigen, toch vrijwillig zondigen, die zal zich aan deze leer niet stooten. En als er in onze kerken eenige leeraars zijn, die—even als Doctor Lutherus deed—wat hooger gaan in 't aanmerken van Gods raad aangaande der menschen zaligheid als hierboven is verhaald, daarover is tot noch toe nooit eenige oneenigheid of strijd in onze kerken geweest, aangezien zij in 't fundament met elkaar overeen komen; allen toch leeren wij, dat het geloof en de godzaligheid vruchten zijn der verkiezing, en niet—zooals der Remonstranten meening schijnt te wezen—de gronden en voorwaarden voor de verkiezing. Als deze slechts waarlijk toestemmen, dat God alleen het geloof en de volstandigheid in ons werkt, dan behoeven ze geen strijd met ons te voeren, aangezien God toch niet meer goeds in den mensch heeft kunnen voorzien, dan hij zelf voorgenomen had in hem, als zijn uitverkorene, te werken! In dien zij daarintegen meenen, dat het geloof God's gave genoemd wordt alleen in dien zin, dat God kracht geeft om te kunnen gelooven, doch dat het dan aan 's menschen willekeur hangt om die gave al of niet waar te nemen en te gebruiken en ook dat de voortgang en volharding eensdeels van den mensch komt, zoo kunnen wij zulk een gevoelen niet toestemmen, aangezien dit strijdt tegen Gods eere en onzen eenigen troost.

Als ten slotte de Remonstranten verzoeken, gedult te worden, daarop geven wij uwe Edelmogenden te bedenken, of ze niet reeds meer dan genoeg zijn gedult geworden. Of zij hun medebroeders, die met hun gevoelen niet instemmen, willen dulden, dat heeft men alreeds in zommige plaatsen, waar zij de overhand hebben, bespeurd! De almachtige God is onze getuige, dat wij gaarne alles dulden wat duldbaar in Gods kerk is en anders niet dan rust en vrede zoeken in de kerk om de welvaart van ons lieve vaderland, hoe men ons ook voor twistgierige en tegen de Overheid wederspannige menschen scheldt. De Heere zal eens oordeelen, of wij voor zulke lastering stof geleverd hebben.

Doch dit kan niet in de kerk geduld worden, dat voor den middag zus geleerd wordt en des nademiddags andersom."

Having now the Contra-Remonstration before us in its entirety, let us offer our comment.

Certainly the Contra-Remonstration of the Calvinists is a noble document despite the fact that there are weaknesses in it. The theme of its 7 contra-articles is that God is God and none else and that accordingly His predestination—election and reprobation—and saving grace are sovereign. And this doctrine it successfully champions and defends in opposition to the lying theories of the Remonstrants. All the complaints and requests that it voices and directs to the rulers in the state are just. The spirit that pervades the document throughout is thorougly christian; it is humble, contrite, sincere and respectful. Not once did the author and the signatories of this writing forget that it was their government that they were addressing. Yet in stating their complaints and in exposing the theories of their opponents they did not mince words. On the contrary, their sentences bespeak a firmness of spirit born of the conviction that the doctrine championed is the truth and nothing but the truth.

We must understand the purpose of the Contra-Remonstration of the Calvinists. To know this purpose we must get before us the one element of truth so distasteful to the Arminians.

In opposition to the Arminians the Calvinists—Supralapsarians and Infralapsarians alike—held to the following.

1. God in Christ has chosen some men unto everlasting life and past by the rest to be afflicted for their sins *without any regard to faith and unbelief*. (To the thought of the phrase in Italics all subscribed, that is, all Calvinists.
2. Christ died only for the elect.
3. Grace is all-sufficient.
4. Grace is irresistable.
5. The saints persevere to the end because, being the object of a sovereign election, they cannot fall from grace.

It is apparent that what we have here in the total of these propositions is a thought-structure reposing upon a single unnifying idea or conception, which is that the sole cause, necessity and fountain of the salvation of the elect is the will and counsel of God; and that the primary cause of the damnation of the reprobated is this same divine will.

It is this idea to which the Arminians were so bitterly opposed as is evident from their Remonstration. To this conception and accordingly to the entire dogmatic of the Calvinists they had serious objections. So they said. We are interested in these objections? What were they? They were the same complaints that are always being advanced against the conceptions of things of the Calvinists. The Arminians said this:

I. The Calvinist's system is contrary to the evidence and general tenor of Scripture. This they proved or rather thought they proved—
a. by appealing to those declarations of Scripture, in which, in speaking of the atonement, or the death of Christ, terms of the widest possible import are used— such as *all, all the world, all mankind, all the world, etc.*

The Arminians refused to take notice of the limitations that these terms receive from the context in which they appear.

b. by appealing to those passages which place in direct contrast Adam, and the extent of the effects of the fall, with Christ, and the extent of the effects of His death.

I shall have to break off here to continue this discourse in the article to follow.

G. M. Ophoff

IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory of the Protestant Reformed Church of Orange City, Iowa, expresses sincere sympathy for our brother Elder A. Wassenaar and family in the death of his mother,

Mrs. P. Wassenaar

May the God of all grace comfort them with His Holy Spirit.

The Consistory,
W. Hofman, Pres.
M. De Jager, Clerk

Attention: Consistories

The Board of the RFPA decided at their last board meeting to send THE STANDARD BEARER to all the young men of our demoniation who are in the Armed Forces. Will you please forward their names and addresses to Mr. John Bouwman, 1350 Giddings Ave., S.E., Grand Rapids 6, Mich. Also PLEASE KEEP US INFORMED OF CHANGES OF ADDRESSES.

THE BOARD

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Protevangel as the Unifying Idea of all the Scriptures

The Protevangel is the promise of the Gospel as first proclaimed and this by the very voice of Christ. Let us get this Gospel before us:

"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

The importance of this promise must be perceived. It is verily the embryo, the seed, so to speak, of all the promises thereafter spoken through the centuries of the formation of the Canon of the Scriptures, which is to say that the latter are but the development, unfolding, of the Gospel contained in the former.

Students of Scripture rightly speak of a history of revelation. But what is this "history of revelation" but the history of the unfolding and development of the Gospel of the protevangel—an unfolding of this Gospel in and through the discourses of Israel's divinely inspired prophets. There is therefore but one promise essentially. Yet the Bible speaks of promises. But this cannot mean that the "promises" hold forth a Gospel that differs from the Gospel of the Protevangel or that is not as to its substance contained in it. What is meant is simply that the salvation that the protevangel holds forth is that many-sided and includes a variety of riches—riches of His grace—so wonderful that, if it was to be fully comprehended by God's believing people more and always more light had to be shed upon it. And this light was not withheld. It was given in all the promises thereafter spoken.

Now in shedding this needed light, in unfolding the gospel of the protevangel, the Lord availed Himself of definite vehicles of thought.

The question is now: what was the character of these vehicles? Through the ages of the Old Dispensation this character was typical-symbolical. That is to say, through the ages of the Old Covenant the Lord shed the required light through the vehicle of a typical-symbolical language, typical-symbolical institutions such as the sacrifices, and third typical-symbolical mighty works of His such as the deluge and the deliverance of the people of Israel from Egyptian bondage.

Now the line of thought here presented is in full accord with the answer to the 19th question of the Heidelberg catechism. The question reads: "From whence knowest thou this?" and the answer: "From the Holy Gospel, which God himself first revealed in paradise; and afterwards published by the patriarchs and prophets, and represented by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law; and lastly has fulfilled it by His only begotten Son."

As was just stated, God shed this required light also through mighty works of His. It means that also the history of the people of Israel is typical-symbolical. To deny this is to deny the unique character of Israel's history; it is to place this history in the category of ordinary history. Also by Israel's history the required light was shed.

We must now concentrate on this history, this typical, prophetical history of the people of Israel. Examining this history we discover that it divides in a number of parts or epochs or dispensations of grace. We discover further that each part is complete by itself and that it constitutes in contradistinction to each of the other parts or epochs a complete type of the salvation held forth by the protevangel. We discover finally that in each succeeding picture type of the series, the features of this salvation stand out in always bolder relief. Herein each succeeding type differs from the one immediately preceding.

The first picture is that epoch of sacred history that begins with the fall of man into sin and that ends with Noah and his family leaving the ark after the deluge and his being blessed by the Lord God.

Let us get the events of this epoch before us.

The first man Adam left the hand of God his Maker a sinless man. For in His own image God created him. But Adam subjected himself to sin. He thereby corrupted his whole nature and became perverse in all His ways potentially as to himself and actually in his generations. Then God brought in His Gospel, "I will set enmity. . . ."

This divine declaration raises questions.

Just who in the final instance is the serpent? Who is his seed? And who is the seed of the woman? And what is the nature of the enmity that the Lord will set between them? The head of the serpent will be crushed by the seed of the woman; but the serpent will crush his heel. What is the meaning of these mysterious words?

The protevangel itself does not supply the answers. Hence if there had not been any subsequent revelations of God, these questions would forever have remained unanswered. The Lord must shed light on His Gospel if it was to be understood. And this light was also shed through the centuries.

Immediately the two parties appeared and soon thereafter the seeds of each. There was Adam and Eve and Abel as opposed by Cain. And there was enmity between the two and they strove the one with the other, the seed of the serpent, who was Cain, and the righteous Abel, the seed of the woman. The strife culminated in the slaying of Abel by Cain. This was the first crushing of the heel of the woman by the serpent. But Abel was not destroyed; for, in the figurative language of the protevangel, only his heel was crushed and not his head. For he has fought the warfare of God by God's mercy. Hence he will rise again in Christ unto everlasting life.

Abel was followed by Seth and the holy line of patriarchs. Cain was supported by the serpent brood of which he was the progenitor. And the holy warfare continued. But the "sons of God" and the seed of the serpent amalgamated. And soon the wickedness of man was great upon the earth as a result. Finally all that remained of the church was the eight souls that entered the ark. It was a small remnant indeed. And it was exposed to the fury of the world that every day and every moment of the day was threatening to overwhelm and destroy it. The plight of the church was hopeless. But the Lord brought deliverance. He sent the flood; by its water He destroyed that wicked race corrupting the earth, and thereby separated His church from it, and He brought forth the righteous Noah from the ark an heir of the new earth and world.

That the event was typical-prophetical is plain from the Scriptures at II Peter 3:19-21: "By which He also went and preached to the spirits in prison; which sometimes were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is eight souls, were saved by the water. The like figure, whereunto, even baptism doth now save us. . . ."

Let us take notice of the expression, "A like figure. . ." It is equivalent to the statement, "The water of the flood and the salvation that God worked through this water was a figure, a type, and so likewise baptism.

And what is the speech of these figures? It is this: as by the water of the flood the church in the days of Noah was separated from that wicked ante-deluvian humanity and as the body is cleansed of its filth and thus separated from it by the natural water of the rite of baptism, so are Gods people separated, from sin and its pollution by the blood of Christ as symbolized both by the water of the flood and the water of baptism—and for Christ's sake clothed with perfection and glory.

By the flood the head of the serpent was again crushed typically and prophetically.

Thus through the work of the flood in connection with the verbal revelations to Noah a great new light was shed upon the promise of the protevangel. Through this work of God the gospel concealed in the protevangel underwent a marked development.

G. M. Ophoff

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Matthew 5:17-20

In this article we plan to make a beginning of our exposition of this very beautiful and instructive passage recorded here in this fifth Chapter of Matthew. We plan not only to study these verses written above this article, namely the verses 17-20, but it is our intention to try to give a popularly written exposition of all the verses from verse 17 till the end of the Chapter in subsequent contributions.

Since these verses 17-20 contain the foundation, the principal viewpoint of all the teachings of this section. we will call attention to this first.

The verses literally read as follows: *"Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."*

These very clear and lucid words of Jesus were uttered by Him when he sat on a mountain slope in Galilee of the nations, and was teaching His desciples and the multitudes that came unto Him. These words are an integral part of what is known as "the Sermon on the Mount." As such they are quite well known to the average Bible-reader. And a not too detailed exposition of them should prove beneficial and interesting.

Let us attend to the text then.

In these words Jesus utters a word of warning to the church of His day as to the purpose of His coming into the flesh as the Savior of His people. We must

never have the mistaken and dangerous notion that Jesus came into the world to make the law of none effect. When Jesus here speaks of the "law" or even of the "law and the prophets" he has reference to all that is written in the Old Testament Scriptures concerning the law of God in our lives, be it the moral, ceremonial or civil law, and as this is to be to the salvation of the elect.

The question arises: was there then occasion in the coming of Jesus for jumping at the erroneous and harmful conclusion, that He came to disannul the law? For why does Jesus warn the people in His day against this error?

We are of the conviction that the error of assuming that Jesus came to destroy the law and the prophets is not forthcoming out of Jesus' work itself. There was nothing in Jesus' work *as such* to make this assumption; it is wholly to be explained out of the tremendous sinful inclination of human nature, that, as soon as liberty is proclaimed, this liberty is used for an occasion to the flesh to serve the flesh. Surely Jesus came to bring liberty to the captives, but this does not mean that they are no longer under the *royal law* of liberty. Christ does not lift out of the land where the law is of effect, into that where the law is disannuled, but he leads us from being under the curse and guilt of the law to that of our being under grace and the blessing of the law. For grace does not disannul the law but it establishes it. And the warning af Jesus presupposes this tremendous sinful inclination of the flesh which wars against the Spirit and wills to always and again take us captive. With this in mind Jesus utters the warning: *think not that I am come to destroy the law!*

Our Savior here touches upon the crux of the question of salvation by grace; He places His finger upon the very debated question between the believing Christains and Jewry, between Romans and the Reformation. The error of those who are without grace is always either that of making salvation dependent on works of law as the Pharisees did, or that of the Antinomians who wish to sin that grace may abound. Now Jesus does not place the truth of His work of salvation *between* these two errors. The truth does not lie somewhere between Legalism and Antinomism. But the truth is that salvation is of grace and grace *establishes* the law. This is not a position somewhere between Legalism and Antinomism, but it is *wholly different.* It is being a new creature! It means that we have a new commandment in our heart, which is at once the old commandment.

And our thoughts are therefore led by Jesus to the implications of this new commandment as He teaches and lays it down in our lives as the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, so that we walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. Rom. 8:1, 2.

Such is the viewpoint and scope of the warning of Jesus to His disciples and to us in this 17th verse when He raises His warning finger saying: Think not. . . !

Forsooth the very opposite is the truth of the matter in Jesus. Jesus came to fulfill the law and the prophets. That is the purpose, the Divine intent of His coming. All righteousness must be fulfilled: the just demands of the law must be fulfilled in us. Matt. 3:15; Romans 8:4. It is true the law is weak through the flesh and cannot possibly bring us to fulfill the same; as law it can only bring out the sinfulness of sin. Rom. 7:7-13. But what the law could not do, since it was weak through sin, God has done in the sending of His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, to condemn sin in the flesh, and so to fulfill all righteousness. Says Jesus, standing in the likeness of sinful flesh: I am come to *fulfill* the law. In so speaking He employs a term in the Greek which means: to make the measure full. Jesus will put the last drop in the measure of all righteousness in all of His redeemed saints. There shall be nothing lacking; no spot or wrinkle or any such thing will there be in any of the saints. All shall be filled with the knowledge of God and of His holy law. I have come to fulfill the law. Let there be no misunderstanding. And he who hears and keeps these words shall be likened unto a wise man who builds his house upon a rock.

All this Jesus speaks with truthfulness and certainty. He says: *verily* I say unto thee. It is most sure and truthful that He is come to fulfill the law and the prophets. Besides it is spoken with the greatest authority: I say unto thee! Jesus speaks here as the faithful witness, the Amen, beginning of the creation of God. Rev. 3:14. Were not the people and multitudes astonished at His doctrine, since He taught them as one having authority and not as the Scribes? Matth. 7:28, 29.

He came to fulfill all righteousness in His suffering and in His death and resurrection; to fulfill all righteousness He ascended on high to give His holy Spirit unto His people and to lead them into all the truth. He shall fulfill all righteousness as God in the flesh even to the uttermost end of the earth. Then heaven and earth shall pass away with a fervent heat and the very elements shall burn. But when this comes to pass then all the law and the prophets shall be fulfilled, and righteousness shall be the very foundation of the new heaven and the new earth! Not one jot or iota shall fall from the law. The *jot* is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet and the *iota* designates the minutest distinction between two of the

Hebrew alphabet characters. Not the minutest detail in the law shall be forgotten. Trifles make for perfection, and perfection is no trifle. God is pleased in the perfection of the righteousness of the Kingdom in which the law receives its own; the last drop is placed in the container of the cup handed to Jesus. And all is finished, all comes to pass. Then the curtain falls on history, the heavens are rolled together as a Scroll, and as a vesture they shall be changed; but to the Son it shall then be said: Thy throne O God is forever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy Kingdom!

No one shall then think that Jesus came to destroy the law!

All shall then know beyond the shadow of a doubt that righteousness is the pillar of Christ's Kingdom.

Such is the import and the solemnity of these words of Jesus when He raises a warning finger and speaks truth and veracity on earth.

For let no one think that this word of Jesus does not have meaning for his life. Let every preacher and teacher beware. Says Jesus: "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of heaven."

These are words worthy of reflection. They are cheering words for the righteous and are words calling to repentance those who do not take the law of God seriously into the last jot and tittle in the new walk in righteousness and thankfulness.

We notice in this part of the text, that false teaching is preceded by a lack of concern about *walking according* to God's commandments. It is: *do* and teach, and conversely *loose* and teach accordingly.

Then too we ought to notice that evidently there are *least* of the commandments. All the precepts are not equally great and important as we work out our salvation with fear and trembling. There are least of the precepts of the gospel too. This does not militate against the rule that the law is one, or that all the commandments are summed up in the Great Commandment: Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God with all thy heart and mind and soul and strength! There are the details, the working out of salvation in the finest corners of our existence in our relationship with men.

But even here we are not to be sluggish. We are not to be careless and profane. All of life is under the tension of the law in our life of walking in santification. This does not make this rule of Jesus a heavy burden, a hard yoke for the meek, the poor in spirit. It gives life and zest to our existence. It gives a reward of joy in the things that are least. It means that in the keeping of the commandments we have the assuring promise and the testimony in our hearts that we are the children of God. We are called great in the Kingdom. Our cup overflows with fulness of joys and blessedness.

Such zest and joy is not the portion of the Scribes and Pharisees in their legalism; nor can the Antinomian enjoy this. This is the peace and blessing upon those that walk according to the new rule, (at once the old rule) in Christ and upon the Israel of God. And it means entering into the Kingdom now by faith and presently when the heavens are rolled away to enter into the joys and happiness of the Kingdom of our Lord and His Christ, whose Throne stands in justice forever, in the perfection of the love of God revealed in the law and the prophets fulfilled!

G. Lubbers

IN HIS FEAR

Looking To The Future

II

The Teacher Problem

Before proceeding with the specific treatment of the problems of our own school movement, I have two more introductory remarks which I must make.

The first one is this. If you would take the trouble to check the past, you would discover that some 20 or 25 years ago these same problems were faced by the existent Christian School movement. At that time our Editor-in-Chief wrote a series of articles on the subject, "The Christian School Movement, Why a Failure?" And although his answer to the question of the above-mentioned subject was different, he was not the only one who realized that there was something wrong. His series of articles was occasioned by an address by R. B. Kuiper, then president of Calvin College, (now professor at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia), to the Michigan Christian Teacher's Institute, an address that was reported by the Grand Rapids Press under the caption: "Kuiper Points to New Peril; Says Christian Schools Are Facing Moral and Financial Crisis." (See: *Standard Bearer,* VIII, p. 76, ff.) And in the third article of that same series of editorials reference is made to an address delivered by Dr. Herman Kuiper before the Educational Con-

vention of the National Union of Christian Schools, 1930, on the subject: "How Should We Seek to Guarantee for the Future the Distinctive Character of our Christian Schools?"

It is not my purpose to go into detail regarding this series of articles that was written in 1932. But they hold a lesson for us, as does the history since that time. And the lesson is this. Unless we positively and vigorously face the problems which are before our own school movement, and unless we arrive at their proper solution—a solution incidentally which history proves was never reached by the existing Christian Schools—our own school movement is doomed to failure likewise. And I venture to predict that it will meet with failure more quickly and ignominiously.

And that brings me to my second remark. It is this. I want to emphasize that this series of articles has a positive purpose. It is not aimed at the destruction of our own school movement. I love the cause that is represented by that movement with all my heart. Nor is it aimed at the discouragement of those who are actively engaged in the mountain of work connected with that movement. Rather it is aimed at the upbuilding and solid establishment of our own school movement. I would consider it, as you well know from my previous series, a great calamity if ever our people should foresake the principle that all our education, primary and secondary, must be positively Christian, i.e., distinctively Reformed, i.e., Protestant Reformed.

Undoubtedly one of the most pressing problems facing our schools is the teacher problem, as we choose to call it. For the sake of convenience and clarity I will divide the problem into its various phases, and attempt to offer some suggestions toward solution after treating the entire problem.

As to Procuring Teachers

The above sub-title expresses a problem which every school board has faced to a greater or lesser extent. One need only recall the numerous public calls for help which have issued from the various school boards to verify this fact. In years gone by our school in Redlands repeatedly was in almost desperate straits because of this very difficulty, so desperate that they were on the verge of a forced closing of their school doors. And the story was much the same for the other schools. Personally I can recall the day when the mere question of the *number* of teachers was a very weighty one for the school in Grand Rapids. And Hope and Edgerton have had the same experience.

Now, it is a well-known fact that this teacher-shortage is nation-wide at the present time, not only as regards the Christian Schools, but also as regards the public schools. There is a very dangerous and acute lack of teachers. But the problem is made more acute for our own school movement by several factors. In the first place, there is the obvious fact that our boards are severely limited in their search for teachers. Ignoring for the moment any other requirements, it is clear that the teachers in our schools must be obtained within the bounds of our own denomination. And we are small in numbers. And proportionately as our denomination as such is small in numbers, so also is the number of available teachers small. Furthermore, although I have no statistics before me on which to base a comparison, I am reasonably certain that the number of teachers in proportion to the size of our denomination is also small. This already puts our schools under a severe handicap. In the second place, while it is true to an extent that the need of teachers declines as the size of the school declines, so that our smaller schools need but two or three teachers while the larger school may need a dozen, nevertheless our smaller schools labor under a more severe handicap in a way. Not being able to find teachers out of their own midst, they have been forced to look elsewhere, particularly to Grand Rapids, and in some cases to other congregations, for teachers. And it is sometimes difficult to persuade these teachers to take up their residence elsewhere, and especially to do so permanently. In the third place, and in close connection with the above, this whole problem becomes more acute according as our school movement grows. Time was when there was no school in Grand Rapids, and when the other schools could more easily draw on the supply of teachers there. Redlands, for example, more than once allured a Grand Rapids teacher. Now, however, there is a school in Grand Rapids which employs more teachers than all the other schools combined. And as the number of schools increases, the demand for teachers increases. And unless the supply of teachers increases, the tension between supply and demand is going to create an increasingly difficult problem for our school boards.

You may object perhaps, in a *laissez faire* attitude, that up to now none of our schools have been forced to close because of this situation, and that therefore the above picture is rather pessimistically painted. I answer that such an attitude is detrimental to the welfare of any school, and that if a school board would assume the same attitude it would indeed result in the closing of school doors. The results of this teacher shortage are quite self-evident. Let me mention a few of them.

In the first place, as far as the school boards themselves are concerned, it is evident that they are forced to devote far too much of their time and efforts mere-

ly to the matter of procuring enough teachers each year. The simply fact which every school board faces is that a school must have teachers. That is an immediate problem. If there are no teachers, the school cannot be opened in September. The result is that every year, beginning shortly after New Year's the board, either as a whole or through a sub-committee, must wrestle with this problem. Can they engage the same teachers for the coming year? If not, what other teachers are there, whom they might possibly contact? And, if they are contacted, are they willing to enter a contract? Sometimes a board may meet with one disappointment after another. And the result is that much time and effort are wasted only on this matter. The school board is not at fault. The matter is immediate and pressing. But all this means that the board cannot devote the time and effort that it should to other problems, and that it cannot give its attention to more permanent and valuable projects.

A second result which is inevitable is that the teacher standard is lowered. Often, merely in order to get a sufficient *number* of teachers, the school board is forced to overlook more important matters, concerning the qualifications of the teachers which it engages. This situation is also quite common in the schools throughout our country today, but is nevertheless more pressing according as the field from which teachers may be obtained for our own schools is limited. Our schools cannot be too insistent that their teachers have completed the standard four-year course for teachers, or they will find themselves teacher-less. They must sometimes be satisfied with very poorly and incompletely trained teachers, therefore. They are forced at times to overlook the fact that a woman teacher is married and has a home and family to care for besides her full-time task of teaching. And apart from this, they must be satisfied at times with teachers who show very little positive ability to teach, who have very little initiative, who even have little heart for truly Reformed education, who might be more interested in a salary than in their profession. But teachers are a necessity. Hence, the requirements must be reduced to a minimum. Do not misunderstand. This is not meant to disparage either the school boards or the teachers. I simply mean to point out the facts, while at the same time realizing the unselfish efforts of school boards and the unstinted devotion of the majority of our teachers. Nevertheless, the facts are there, and they make for a situation that is far from ideal.

Thirdly, and in close connection with the above, there is a very real danger that our teachers themselves hasten to meet the minimum educational requirements, in order to become actively engaged in teaching as soon as possible. Partly this may be due to pressure from the school boards, who approach prospective teachers with an urgent appeal to help them out. Partly too this may be due to a misconceived zeal for and devotion to the cause of our own educational movement. And partly these prospective teachers may be forced by their financial circumstances to go out and earn some money in order to continue their education at a later date, with the result that not infrequently their education is never completed. Again, I do not mean to deny that circumstances often force our teachers to take this path. And I can well see that under these circumstances it is often a good thing that we have teachers who are willing to forego a complete education in order to help out our schools. But the fact remains that from the over-all point of view this situation is good for neither the teachers nor the school as a whole, nor for the individual pupil. And this is a fact which we must face.

A fourth result is that due to this shortage of teachers our schools are forced to resort to over-crowding of classes. If the ideal class consists of, say, 20 to 30 pupils, it stands to reason that it is not salutary either for the teacher or the class or the individual pupil to put one teacher in charge of 40 or 50 pupils, and that too, in the case of the smaller schools, pupils from 4 or 5 different grades. No teacher can do justice to such a task.

These then are a few of the very obvious results of this teacher shortage. We dare not close our eyes to them. If we do, we stand in danger of allowing the emergency situation become the normal situation. And to live in a constant emergency is dangerous, to say the least.

I have no doubt that our school boards are aware of these matters, to a degree at least, and that their eyes are open to the results which we have ennumerated. I trust too that anyone who is a teacher at heart will be aware just how detrimental these things are for a school. And our parents should be aware of it. If they are, they will realize at once that the factors mentioned above spell out but one result for *their children*, the children for whose training they themselves are ultimately responsible. And that result is: *inadequate*, *inefficient*, and *insufficient education*.

The problem is indeed a serious one. And while it is but one phase of the whole "teacher problem," it already raises the question: what can we do?

H. C. H.