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MEDITATION

Remember The Rock

"Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today and forever."

—Heb. 13:7, 8.

Again we stand at the threshold of a new year. A thousand doubts and a thousand fears beset us at every side. It was thus in former occasions, it is so now, only worse than ever before. Things are getting more unstable, loose, insecure as we continue our pathway to eternity.

And so we have need of guidance, security, establishing: we have need of the Rock of Ages, and that is Jesus Christ.

Some of us have a difficulty every morning of the New Year. It is the custom to proceed to the ordination of the newly chosen office bearers at the occasion when the church gathers to celebrate the incoming of a New Year. And so there are two main themes before the preacher's consideration: the theme of the office and the office bearer; and the theme of the New Year. I do not think that there are many texts in Holy Writ that combine both themes. At least, I have not found many. But the above is one of them. They are beautifully combined in that text. I have written above this meditation: REMEMBER THE ROCK. And under that theme we see both themes adequately covered.

In the connection the writer to the Hebrews guides the church unto bold speech, the speech, namely, that says: The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me! That is indeed a bold speech. And it is so more to-day than in the day this writer penned the lines.

There is a great danger what man may do unto me, and no mistake.

Horrible things are being threatened by man unto man. Man's inhumanity unto man is proverbial in our days. And, remember, it is only the beginning of sorrows. Things will become such that man will seek death, rather than live the instinctive urge of self-preservation. And I can well believe it. We need the Rock.

And what is the God-employed means unto such exalted resolution where you defy all that man may possibly do unto you? It is this: Remember them which have the rule over you! And follow their faith. You will not fail to note the end of their conversation. It will inspire you to follow their example.

And what is behind both them that have the rule over you, as well as behind the conversation of such? This: the Rock, Jesus Christ.

It teaches us that office bearers ought to display something of the Rock.

So that haply the church may take courage and follow. And that they may be able to say with the office bearers: The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what man may do unto me!

Oh yes, they should have something of the Rock. And the only available material of this Rock which lies within their and our reach is the Word which they speak unto us. The living Word of God, such as it is spoken in our hearts by the Spirit of the exalted Lord, is able to make me walk with confidence from the Old into the New Year.

Yes, we will do so smiling.

We have met the Rock.

And shall remember Him!

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Remember the Rock!

He continually reveals Himself to us. And you will be reminded of this Rock this very morning. You will see the emphasizing of those that have the rule over you: the ministers, the elders and the deacons.

At other times you have taken them so much for granted. That is not good, brethren. Perhaps you have done worse. Perhaps you have not only taken them for granted, but you may even have maltreated them. It has become proverbial: a minister (and also the elder and the deacon) is the rubbing post. Many they are, sometimes, who seem to vent their spleen against the office bearer. They better look out. We will kick them out of office, if they will not behave! Who did never hear such and worse sentiments?

That is very bad. This ought not to be done. I do not say that all have done it. There are always some who appreciate the consistory. And you never have any trouble with them. They heard the admonition; they see the unspeakable gift of the consistory (I mean, of course God's gift to His people, and that gift is the consistory); and they live their appreciation. Although their number grows smaller as we proceed to eternity. It, too, is a sign of the times.

Remember the Rock!

And the Rock visibly reveals Himself in the office bearers.

Attend to this: every New Year the Lord reminds you that He is your Rock, and therefore He gives you new office bearers.

Remember them!

They speak to you of the Rock!

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Who are they?

Not just anybody. Oh no, they are a very special sort of people. That sort is so special that every man who appears on the nomination, and who knows the import of the office bearer, is also very much afraid. And they are always inclined to say with Moses: Send Thou, O God, whom Thou shouldest send, but do not send me!

Yes, they are a very special kind of people. God has set them apart. God has called them. First, by giving them special talents and gifts. And these gifts and talents are such that the congregation, filled with the Holy Ghost, recognizes them. Then they meet at the annual meeting and say: O Triune God! wilt Thou be so good and kind as to continue Thy wondrous gift of the Rock! Give us the continuous line of office bearers. And then they vote. And there are your office bearers. Remember them. God gave them to you. You asked for them: and there they are.

They are the men that have the rule over you. In the Dutch they are called "voorgangeren", that is, scouts, guides. Yes, you find the word "guides" in some of your references. And it is correct. And yet they not only guide, scout, but they have indeed the rule over you also. They guide, and their guidance is with the purpose that you should follow after. They

scout the way, and call out unto you: There are the pathways to heaven! Walk in the old, tested pathways to heaven, and it shall be well with you.

Remember them!

They are a very important class of men.

How so? Well, they lead you to heaven. That is their charge from God. God says to every minister, elder and deacon: See that thou bring all these souls to heaven! If they stray; admonish them. If they fall behind: return unto them and bring them back! If they run ahead: recall them to obedience and lowly conduct! If they weep, comfort them! In short: take care of them; take good care of them: they are Mine own peculiar possession!

So if they shall come at your door, do not cast the door in their face. Do not growl at them. Do not contradict them. Instead, welcome them with open arms. Make them feel that you are so glad they came. Treat them as you would Jesus Christ when He came knocking at your door. In a sense, that is exactly what happens when they come a-knocking at your door: Jesus visits you at such times. He made them; He gave them; He charged them; and He will demand your soul at their hands.

Remember them that have the rule over you!

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Remember the Rock!

And therefore remember the men that have the rule over you!

But I have heard of false teachers, of bad ministers, of crooked and weak elders; of harsh and cruel, unsympathetic deacons. Yes, there are such. But you may safely know which are which. Listen to the text: "Who have spoken unto you the Word of God!"

There you have the unfailing testing stone. The true minister speaks unto you the Word of God! And so do the elders and deacons. And if they do, follow them. Give yourselves to them.

Follow their faith.

Their faith is their life such as it is lived by the grace of God.

Yes, yes, I say it with a groan in my inmost heart: those poor men are also sinners. And there is no one in the congregation who knows this better than the true minister, the true elder, and the true deacon. Shall I tell you something at this juncture, something that comes from my inmost heart? Yes, and I am persuaded that when other ministers, elders and deacons read this, it will evoke an answering echo in their hearts. It is this: I cannot understand that there is one, solitary minister, elder or deacon left. Why did they not run away from the office long ago? If they all did, I could easily understand it. We are so very sinful ourselves too.

Remember them. They partake somewhat of the Rock. Therefore they stay and do not run away. They cannot, even if they would.

And they will tell you all this. Oh yes, they will tell you this, and much more. A true minister, elder, and deacon will cover every step he takes with Holy Scripture. He knows his strength. His strength as office bearer is exactly in that Word of his God.

Remember them. Pray for them. They have so much need of your love and prayer. Respect them; tell your children to respect them. Do not berate them in the presence of your children. Breed respect for their office bearers for God's sake.

Remember the Rock!

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Remember your guides, and give yourselves to their rule.

Follow their faith.

What is faith? It is the Word of God transposed into living. You shall know them by their fruits. Follow them. Their faith is worthy of it. Its origin is God Triune. You shall fare well by it. The walk of faith carries its own reward. You shall be blessed by it.

What am I saying? Must we blindly follow our leaders? Oh no, for I continue to read my text: "considering the end of their conversation."

A man's conversation is his walk such as he lives it from the heart. For out of it are the issues of life. Watch your office bearers. Consider their walk. And consider the outcome, the destiny of their walk. The text uses the word "end", and that is the purpose of all their walk of faith. What are they always and forever pointing at? It is this: The Rock from which they themselves are hewn. A true minister sees to it that no one makes an idol of him: he points always to Christ as the end of our conversation. The true office bearer sees to it that the church that is placed in his charge walk toward God, seek God, live to His honor and praises.

Remember them!

Such remembering creates a ray of light in their difficult task. Oh, how they will appreciate such conduct.

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And what is the ground for this admonition? It is this: Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever!

The ground is the Rock of our salvation.

In other words: it is the eternal, unchangeable love of God for you. That is the ground of this admonition to remember those that have the rule over you.

And do not stray from that pathway of loving remembrance when you note that they are as sinful as

you are. Remember so much the more. They need your prayer. Pray for them. Do so often. Bear with their weaknesses.

For behind it all — what do I say? — under it all is the Rock, and the Rock was Christ.

It is Jesus Christ in the text. The ground is in a Name.

The ground is in Jesus. He is the Saviour of His own. He gave Himself to prove the love of God.

The ground is also Christ. But though I hear two Names, it is the one love of God. Christ is Jesus in His office. He is the only Prophet, Priest, and King. He did all the work that was required from you. He is the only real office bearer. And if you want to go still deeper, you may say without fear of contradiction that God Triune is the only Office Bearer. Christ Jesus is of God.

At this juncture I must ask this foolish question: Can you trust yourselves to Him and His rule which comes to you through His Word in the true office bearers? And the answer is: Yes, for He never changed.

He is the same yesterday. And that refers to the Cross. There He showed exactly what He is and who He is. Look strongly on the Cross, and you will know the Jesus Christ of yesterday.

He is the same to-day. Look at your office bearers. They are His spokesman. They speak His word of unspeakable love to you. They bring the Cross of yesterday in your homes, your schools, your churches. They impregnate your whole atmosphere with the Christ of yesterday. Oh yes, He is the same to-day.

He is the same forever.

What shall I say, what shall I say?

I would have to speak of immutability. And that is His unchanging love. I know so little, so very little of it. It lies beyond the scope of my senses. And still, I can spiritually sense a little of it.

He loves me to-day. I know it, for He loved me on the Cross. And tells me to-day by His office bearers. And He shall love me forever. He promised it, and His promise is good. His name is True and Faithful.

And so I stare into this terrible New Year. I can hear the thunder of the nations. I hear the grumbling, the roaring of thunder in the offing.

And still I can stare into the New Year. I need not be afraid.

For our Christ Jesus is the same. He will be the same when the elements will melt with fervent heat; when the oceans will roar in their waves and the swellings thereof.

Immutable Covenant Jehovah is His name!

Oh, remember the Rock!

G. Vos.

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EDITORIALS**The Stocking Is Finished**

Under the caption "De Kous Is Af" (The Stocking is Finished), Dr. Schilder published an article in *De Reformatie* of Nov. 17, 1951, on which he certainly must expect a reply in the *Standard Bearer*, and which I certainly cannot afford to pass up without comment.

The main thrust of the article, as I understand it, is that the relationship between the Gereformeerde Kerken (Art. 31) in the Netherlands and our churches is finally and definitely severed, and that, on their part, at least, no further attempts will be made at correspondence. And the blame for this situation is placed, of course, entirely on us, the Protestant Reformed Churches. As the reader will expect, the immediate occasion for the writing of this article by Dr. Schilder is the passing of the Declaration of Principles by our last Synod.

I will not take the trouble to quote and to translate the entire article. This is not necessary, and it would take too much space in our paper. But we will reflect on a few items, and at the same time review the history of our correspondence with the Liberated Churches in the Netherlands. And the readers may judge where the blame lies. Dr. Schilder writes that the stocking is finished. But I would say that the knitting of the stocking was a complete failure, and that the failure must be blamed not on our churches, but on the churches in the Netherlands. Instead of knitting a stocking, we tangled up the whole business. And the best that can be done is to unravel that tangle and start from the beginning, that is, if the Liberated Churches in the Netherlands still desire correspondence with us. And in spite of the history we made in the last couple of years, I still think that a certain form of correspondence between our churches is desirable, and that not only for us, — in fact, not in the first place for us, — but also, and in the first place, for the Liberated Churches in the Netherlands. For although Dr. Schilder writes that I have entangled myself in a network, — I suppose he means: of confused doctrines; and again, I suppose he refers to the Declaration of Principles, — I maintain, and I am ready to prove it, that we as Prot. Ref. Churches maintain the purest form of Reformed truth, and that moreover that purest form of Reformed truth, as principally expressed in our Confessions, is declared in the Declaration of Principles.

Dr. Schilder writes that he has clearly shown that the Declaration was not necessary, that it is not the

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correct interpretation of the Confessions, and that it is based on misunderstanding. And he writes also that before long he will publish what he has written about the Declaration in pamphlet or book form, so that everyone may buy it. I promise him that I will pay attention to that pamphlet or book, whatever it is. And he can expect my answer. I would be willing to give him some advice in regard to its contents, but I suppose that would be too late.

As to the rest of the article, I will begin my reflections by referring to the paragraph in which Dr. Schilder writes about the conferences we had when the brother was here in 1947 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He writes (and I translate): "And when after a very broad and patient final conference colleague Hoeksema himself made a motion to put a period after the theological discussions, declaring (after we were heard, also in rebuttal): that is reformed, then we returned cheerfully to the Netherlands. We thought: good, there are still people that have a feeling for the divine prohibition, to help with pleasure to extend the number of denominations."

And now Dr. Schilder writes about that conference, it is well that we obtain a complete picture of the discussions that were carried on in those meetings. The first of these conferences was held on Oct. 16. The second lasted three days, from Nov. 4 to Nov. 6. At the first of these conferences I was able to be present only part of the time, due to my sickness. The second conference I attended from the beginning to end.

Now in those conferences I presented thirteen very definite propositions on the subject of the covenant and the promise. And these propositions I will now quote. Here they follow.

I. The idea of the covenant is not:

- a. The promise.
- b. A contract.
- c. The way of salvation.
- d. An alliance between two parties against a third.

II. But it is the communion of friendship between God and His people in Christ Jesus.

- a. The highest revelation of God's own life as the Triune God. God is one in Being and three in Persons.
- b. Proof:
 - 1) Scripture speaks of an eternal covenant.
 - 2) The tabernacle and temple are the dwelling place of God with men.
 - 3) Abraham is called the friend of God.
 - 4) Enoch and Noah walked with God.
 - 5) Texts as Ps. 25:14, II Cor. 6:16-18, etc.

6) The end of all things is: the tabernacle of God with men. Rev. 21:3.

7) The center of this communion of friendship between God and His people is the incarnation.

III. This was the idea of the covenant in paradise. No covenant of works.

IV. God alone establishes His covenant and maintains it. He does this on the basis of the merits of Christ and through the grace of the Holy Spirit. Unconditional.

V. The fruit of the establishment of God's covenant with us is that we love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, with all our powers, forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and holy life.

VI. The promise of the covenant God realizes only in the elect even as it is meant for them alone. Rom. 9:6-8, 15; Heb. 6:16-18.

VII. The dispensation of the covenant runs in the line of the generations of believers.

- a. In that line the promise is administered by the church to all without distinction. All are baptized, instructed in the way of the covenant, come under the preaching, and are subject to the discipline of the church. All therefore confront the responsibility to love the Lord their God, to forsake the world, etc.
- b. The reprobate, however, violate the covenant of God, as Esau, and thereby aggravate their judgment.
- c. The elect, however, in whom God realizes His promise are saved and by grace come to stand in the world as of the party of the living God.

VIII. The elect children of the covenant are usually regenerated from infancy:

- a. The promise of God is fulfilled in them.
- b. God places them from infancy in the sphere of the preaching.
- c. Experience plainly teaches this.

IX. The meaning of "sanctified in Christ" in the first question of the baptism form is subjective:

- a. That is the only meaning of the phrase in the Bible.
- b. It stands over against "conceived and born in sin".
- c. This interpretation is historically correct.

X. No separation can be made in the first part of the Baptism Form between the work of the Father and the Son, on the one hand, and that of the Spirit, on the other.

- a. The Father seals unto us that He establishes an eternal covenant of grace with us.
- b. The Son that He washes us in His blood from all our sins.
- c. The Holy Spirit assures us that He will apply unto us that which we have in Christ.
- d. All this is applicable only to the elect.

XI. The thanksgiving in the Form also has in view only the elect.

- a. The forgiveness of sin.
- b. Membership in Christ.
- c. Adoption unto children.

XII. Children of the promise in Rom. 9 means the elect seed of the covenant.

XIII. What is usually called the covenant of redemption or the counsel of peace has no ground in Scripture, but is the covenant between Triune God and Christ as the Mediator, or the Servant of Jehovah.

Although it was far beyond my power at the time, yet I managed to discuss these propositions for approximately four hours in both conferences.

And now I will quote what I wrote in the *Standard Bearer* concerning these propositions, and especially concerning the reply by Dr. Schilder at the time. About the first conference, that of Oct. 16, I wrote as follows:

"In the afternoon Dr. Schilder replied to these propositions, but my strength was still too limited to attend the afternoon session.

"According to reports, however, he seems to have emphasized that our differences were not a question of churches but of theologians. For the rest it was largely a matter of terminology and emphasis."

On the second conference, that of Nov. 4 to 6, I wrote as follows:

"The first day of this conference Dr. Schilder spoke. He elaborated on his view of the covenant, especially emphasizing the covenant as a historical institution. He explained his idea of the parties in the covenant, elaborated especially on his conception of the conditions in the covenant, on the relation between promise and demand, and rejected the view of the late Prof. Heyns in as far as he proposes a subjective covenant grace for all the children of the covenant. Dr. Schilder spoke freely, and I am sorry that he did not briefly summarize his view in the form of definite propositions."

And again, in the same conference, I proposed my second set of propositions, propositions 8 and 13 above. And concerning this I wrote as follows.

"The afternoon of the same day, that is, the 5th of November, and the forenoon of the next day was occupied by Dr. Schilder's reply to those propositions.

"On the whole, we had very interesting and instructive meetings.

"The differences between the Liberated Churches and us, as they were brought out in the discussion, concerned especially the following points:

"1. First of all, the definition of the covenant. According to us the idea of the covenant is essentially that of friendship and fellowship between God and His people in Christ; the Liberated Churches, although they do not define the covenant, nevertheless, lay all emphasis on promise and demand.

"2. In our view the promise of the covenant is for the elect only; according to the Liberated Churches the promise is for all that are born in the covenant line, although this must not be understood in the Arminian sense, since also they emphasize the truth that God Himself must fulfill all the conditions of the covenant.

"3. The Liberated Churches speak of parties in the covenant, although they admit that in the real sense man cannot be a party over against God; we prefer to speak with the Baptism Form of parts rather than of parties."

Now Dr. Schilder, in the paragraph which I quoted and translated above, once more states that at the close of his reply I must have said: "That is Reformed." I have called his attention to this error before, and now I will repeat it emphatically, and hope that Dr. Schilder will take note of it that I did not say: "That is Reformed," but that I said, "He is Reformed." (The difference is plain to all that can read. If I said, "That is Reformed," I would have subscribed emphatically to all that friend Schilder said at the conference, and that meant that I would have subscribed to the Heynsian idea of the covenant, which in my conviction is far from Reformed. But we must remember, in the first place, that we had a very friendly discussion with Dr. Schilder, although we agreed to differ. In the second place, we were undoubtedly all somewhat under the influence of Schilder's charming personality, and in his entire talk he emphasized repeatedly that our differences were no differences of principle, but rather of terminology. Besides, at the time I received the impression that Dr. Schilder himself did not entirely agree with the Liberated view of the covenant. I cannot definitely state why I received that impression, and I am sorry that Dr. Schilder did not leave something black on white in the form of definite propositions which we could criticize today. I remember that during the conference one of our ministers approached me and said, "When you speak, we all know what you mean; but when Schilder speaks, I don't know what exactly he is driving at." I remember, too,

the sharp remark which the Rev. G. Vos made during that same conference, virtually accusing Dr. Schilder of Arminianism. And certainly, the Rev. Ophoff was not satisfied, and wanted to ask Dr. Schilder some very pointed questions, for which, however, he was too late, because the meeting had adjourned when he came in. And therefore, friend Schilder must never write again that I said at the end of his reply: "That is Reformed." For I never did. But I do remember that I said, "He is Reformed," understanding that statement in a general sense, and certainly not in the specific sense in which we as Protestant Reformed Churches, since 1924, are Reformed. That I do not regard the Liberated conception of the covenant Reformed, Dr. Schilder knows very well. And he was aware of that even before he came to this country in 1947. For immediately after the war, as soon as we could have correspondence together, I wrote friend Schilder a long letter, stating in unambiguous terms what I thought of his stand, and asking him how it were possible that he could so have changed that he now adopted the Heynsian view of the covenant, and that, in a speech at the conference at the Hague, where the *Acte der Vrijmaking* was signed, he could make a plea for union with the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken, which before the war he always considered as walking in the way of disobedience.

Now in the main those thirteen propositions which I defended at our conferences certainly represented the doctrine as had always been maintained in our Protestant Reformed Churches, especially over against Heynsianism. How then could Dr. Schilder when he returned to the Netherlands, advise his people everywhere, when they immigrated to this country or to Canada to join the Protestant Ref. Churches? Surely, we desired correspondence. But correspondence does not necessarily mean an organic union. The differences between us were rather fundamental, although Dr. Schilder called them differences in terminology. Of this we were not convinced. But, as I said, Dr. Schilder advised his people to join the Protestant Reformed Churches when they came to America, although we stood in no relation as sister churches as yet, and therefore could not receive attestations from them, or they from us. The result was that when we labored in Canada among the immigrants, we did not at once organize them into Prot. Ref. Churches, but first thoroughly instructed them, so that they knew the differences in doctrine between their churches and ours. Only when they were sufficiently indoctrinated and understood our position, and agreed with our truth, did we organize them into churches in our communion. And, even after those churches were organized, like Hamilton and Chatham,

we did not receive membership papers from any Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, and did not receive prospective members into the communion of our churches until they had first been instructed in regard to the truth as taught in our Prot. Ref. Churches. Naturally, this caused trouble. For evidently in the Old Country the people had received the impression that when they came to America, they would be received without question and without condition as members of the Protestant Reformed Churches. That they labored under such an impression certainly was not our fault, but was the fault of Dr. Schilder, who, according to reports, had advised all the people of the Liberated Churches to join the Prot. Ref. Churches in America. But once more the differences in regard to the doctrine of the covenant and of the promise were too great and too fundamental to permit members from the Liberated Churches into our communion. Hence, we demanded that they promise to submit to our instruction, and in the meantime not to agitate against our doctrine. This was honest and fair to all concerned. We did not excommunicate any brethren and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ and bar them from the table of communion. But we wanted to preserve the Reformed truth in its purest form, the truth as we have always maintained it in our Prot. Ref. Churches. The result is, first, the sad history of Hamilton, and now the even worse history of Chatham. Certainly, that the stocking was not knitted and properly finished was not our fault.

Nor was it our fault that the stocking of correspondence was not properly knitted officially, but became one entangled mess. Let me relate the history.

In the early part of 1948 (I forget the date) the Comm. of Correspondence of the Prot. Ref. Churches addressed a letter to the deputies for correspondence of the Liberated Churches in the Netherlands, suggesting correspondence between the two churches. This letter was originally composed by the Rev. J. de Jong. I received that letter in California, where I was still recuperating from my attack of thrombosis. I did not agree with the contents of the letter, but I signed it on condition that the Rev. G. M. Ophoff, the third party of the committee, would also be willing to sign it. The latter, however, at first was not willing at all, because he too did not agree with the contents of the letter. But under repeated pressure he signed his name to the document, and so it was sent to the deputies for correspondence in the Old Country. However, when the work of the committee for correspondence was reported at the Synod of 1948, the latter condemned that letter, and decided to rewrite it and to send a different letter to the same deputies for correspondence in the Netherlands, and to their Synod

that was to be held at Amersfoort the same summer. I write this because not the letter from the deputies of correspondence, but the letter from the Synod of our churches is therefore the only official document which the Synod of Amersfoort could consider. In that letter of our Synod we did not ask for complete correspondence, but we asked that the matter concerning correspondence would be thoroughly discussed before correspondence was finally established.

The Synod of the Reformed Churches (Art. 31) convened that same year at Amersfoort, acted upon our request, and decided: 1) To empower the deputies for correspondence with foreign churches to get into contact with the Prot. Ref. Churches, in order to prepare the relation of correspondence between these churches. 2) That the deputies for correspondence with foreign churches would have to serve the following synod with advice. And 3) that in the meantime, the ministers of the Protestant Reformed Churches may be admitted to the pulpits of the Reformed Church (Art. 31) of the Netherlands, to speak an edifying word. Several delegates of the Synod voted against this proposal of the committee of pre-advice, and at least 7 or 8 of them requested that their negative vote be recorded in the minutes. Among the latter were such well-known figures as the Rev D. van Dijk, Prof. Holwerda, and the Rev. van Raalte of Neede. To my mind, it certainly was not very wise of the Synod to open the pulpits of the Reformed Churches (Art. 31) of the Netherlands for our ministers before the relation of complete correspondence was established.

But what happened further? For more than a year we never heard anything from the deputies for correspondence with foreign churches of the Netherlands. In fact, officially we did not hear of them until November, 1949. That was a mistake. Those deputies should have sought contact with our Committee of Correspondence as soon as possible, so that at least we could report something officially to our Synod of 1949. But, as I said, we never heard of them. That the Synod opened their pulpits for our ministers was the first wrong stitch in the stocking. That the deputies for foreign correspondence did not get into contact with our Committee for Correspondence was the second wrong stitch. And the whole thing became one entangled mass when in the meantime, in August 1949, the letter written by Prof. Holwerda to the immigrants in Canada was brought to our attention.

That letter revealed: 1) That instead of transacting ecclesiastical business in an ecclesiastical way, and therefore, instead of contacting officially our Committee of Correspondence, the Committee for Foreign Correspondence in the Netherlands decided to trans-

act the business of the churches unofficially by meeting behind the back of the Committee for Correspondence of our churches with the Revs. de Jong and Kok. 2) That the fears of those that had objections against correspondence with our churches, such as van Dijk, van Raalte, Holwerda, and others, were mysteriously allayed. 3) That the impression was created that no definite interpretation of the Confessions was maintained and binding in the Prot. Ref. Churches. 4) That the impression was made that there was ample room for the covenant view of the Liberated in our Prot. Ref. Churches, and that therefore the immigrants could make free propaganda for the Liberated view in our churches. 5) That only on that basis the immigrants were advised to join the Protestant Reformed Churches, but at the same time that, if the conception of such men as the Revs. Hoeksema and Ophoff were maintained in the Prot. Ref. Churches, they should never join.

This was not knitting a stocking, surely not the stocking of ecclesiastical correspondence, but was working on a hopeless and tangled mass.

On our part, in the light of all this history, and especially in the light of our experience with the Liberated in Canada, the Mission Committee felt the need of a definite statement which might be used by them and by our missionaries as the basis for the organization of our churches. That need was filled by the Declaration. And that Declaration was passed by our last Synod.

Let not Dr. Schilder therefore say that the stocking is finished. It must be entirely unravelled, until we come to the first false stitch, and then start knitting anew.

To one more item I must needs call the attention of our readers. In the same article Dr. Schilder publishes a letter of a certain J. Land, who lives at 706 Alexander St., Grand Rapids, Michigan. In this letter Mr. Land blames our Consistory for censuring the brethren H. R. de Bolster and H. de Raad.

Personally I am very sorry that this matter concerning the censure of de Bolster and de Raad was given publication without first consulting our Consistory. For this publication savors of the sin of condemning any man rashly or unheard, the sin against the ninth commandment. And Dr. Schilder especially should know better than that. I am sorry that this matter is published, not because the action of our Consistory cannot stand the light, but because the brethren de Bolster and de Raad certainly sinned grievously and became the proper objects of censure. I am very sorry that this matter must be published, because personally I was rather attached to these young students and did everything I could for them.

Besides, I never had any trouble with them in class, and they always behaved very well.

Then all of a sudden I heard from the Rev. Hanco that they had sent a protest against the Declaration to the Consistory. I stood aghast. For to me personally, or in school, they had never objected to the doctrine that I taught, nor to the contents of the Declaration. And they had plenty opportunity to acquaint themselves with the Declaration, because in my young people's catechism class I devoted a whole year to the discussion of that document. But they never attended. Now, mark you, in the abstract they had the perfect right to protest against the Declaration at our Synod, for they were members of our church. Nevertheless, I considered it rather impudent for two young men that were after all only visitors for three months at a time in our country, to put their nose into the official business of our churches. I called them to my home, and talked to them personally. They asked me whether I would not explain the Declaration once more in our classroom in school in the presence of all the students. I answered them that I would not take time for that in school, but that I would meet with all the students in the presence of the Rev. Ophoff and Hanco in my home, and then offer a free discussion on the subject. This meeting was held. I expounded to them the truth as it always had been maintained in our churches, and they had nothing to say. Nevertheless, they insisted on their protest.

In the meantime, of course, the Consistory treated the matter. And also the Consistory did not object to their protesting against the Declaration of Principles. For they too considered that it was their perfect right. But they did object to the Liberated doctrine which they defended in their protest openly. Mr. J. Land states in his letter that the brethren de Bolster and de Raad proved the truth of their protest on Scriptural grounds. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Yet even so, the Consistory did not censure them because they harbored Liberated doctrines, but they demanded of them the promise that they would not make agitation in the congregation for their views. And this they refused.

At a meeting of our Consistory at which I was personally present and presided, the two brethren appeared. I once more entered carefully into the contents of their protest, and proved to them that it certainly was not Reformed truth. And again the two brethren had nothing to say, and did not defend themselves with one word. But when I asked them again whether they would promise not to agitate for their views in the congregation, they refused once more. And what is worse, they both stated personally that if the Consistory would censure them for this, they

would make propaganda for the Liberated view in all our churches. In other words, they would try to create a schism in the Prot. Ref. Churches. Then they were censured, not on the basis of their doctrine or of their views, but because they meant to agitate for the Liberated views not only in our church but also in all the other churches of the Prot. Ref. communion. Thereupon they separated from our churches. In other words, these two brethren broke their solemn oath before God and the churches that in case of misdemeanor they would submit themselves to the government of the church and to church discipline. They could, of course, have appealed their case to the Classis. And the Classis certainly would have done justice to them. They could have appealed to the Synod. But instead of taking that proper ecclesiastical way they acted as revolutionaries and rebels and broke their vow. Once more I talked to them. They approached me, and told me that they were sorry that they had separated and would like to confess their sin. I informed them that that would certainly be possible, but that seeing that their sin was public before the whole congregation (for they had already assembled in a separate group on the sabbath) they would also have to make public confession. After that I never saw them again.

Such is the case of the two Henks. And once more I state here that I am very sorry that I was compelled to reveal this case because of the letter in the Reformatie.

In conclusion, I want to emphasize once more that the stocking is not finished. And if Dr. Schilder feels that because of the stand of our churches as revealed in the Declaration of Principles he does not want to unravel the tangle and start knitting anew, it suits me. Nevertheless, I want to state in that case that I am disappointed in him, and for the rest say, "Vale, Amice Schilder."

H. H.

IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies' Aid of the Doon Protestant Reformed Church, mourns the loss of one of its faithful members

Mrs. Leonard Smit

who died December 4th.

May the God of all Grace comfort her husband and all other relatives.

Rev. H. C. Hoeksema, Pres.
Mrs. H. Kuiper, Sec'y.

The Synod of 1951

The Rev. Hoeksema concluded his quotation from his pamphlet "The Gospel" as follows:

"Now, it is important, that we clearly understand the nature of a promise. It is by no means the same as an offer. Also in the latter the person that makes the offer declares his willingness to do something for or bestow something upon the person to whom the offer is made, but for its realization the offer is contingent upon the willingness of the second party, upon his consent to the offer. But a promise is different. It is a declaration, written or verbal, which binds the person that makes it to do or to forbear to do the very things promised. It is an engagement regardless of any corresponding duty or obligation on the part of the person to whom the thing is promised. A promise, therefore, implies the declaration of a certain good together with the positive assurance that this good shall be bestowed upon or performed in behalf of the person to whom the promise is made. This certainty of the promise is, as regards the promise in Scripture, emphasized by the fact, that it is God Who makes the promise. God conceived the promise; He it is that realizes the thing promised; He declares the promise. Which implies, in the first place, that the promise cannot be contingent, for God is God, and His work certainly cannot be contingent upon the will of the creature. And, secondly, this signifies that the promise is as faithful and true as God is unchangeable. He will surely realize the promise. When He binds Himself to do or to bestow anything, He is bound by Himself and all His divine attributes to realize the promise unto them to whom it is made, for He cannot deny Himself. And this idea of the promise necessarily implies that it is made to a definite party. An offer, that is contingent upon the acceptance and consent of the second party, may be general; a promise that binds the promising party and that is certain of realization requires a definite second party. And thus it is in Scripture. For, the promise is centrally made to Christ, and through Him to the seed of Abraham, to the children of the promise, to those that are called heirs and co-heirs of the promise. And that this is certainly the idea of the promise is clearly expressed in Scripture. For, we read in Hebrews 6: 13, 14, and 17: 'For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, saying: Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. . . . Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath.' To the heirs of the promise the promise is certain, because it is rooted in the immutable counsel of the Most High."

Thus far the rather lengthy speech by the Rev. H. Hoeksema. And now the discussion again continued.

Rev. R. Veldman: The Rev. H. Hoeksema said in his speech that he knows that none of us believe in conditions in the Arminian sense of the word. Nevertheless, I would like to know whether there are any that disagree with his presentation of the promise as expounded from the Confessions. Some here are certainly suspected of such disagreement. And I would like to ask if there are any here who think that the Rev. H. Hoeksema ever taught anything different from what he said in his speech.

Rev. J. Howerzyl: I do not know if I am suspected, but if I am, then I certainly cannot sit here at Synod. I have never been examined by my consistory as to any suspicion in regard

to these matters. And therefore I believe that this remark by the Rev. R. Veldman must be censured.

Rev. H. Hoeksema: I am very sorry that this element has been injected into our discussion. Intentionally I said that I did not suspect any of our men of any Arminian tendencies in regard to the promise of the gospel. It is true that recently we have had a history, and there has been much discussion. But I do not believe that any one of us wants to interpret our Confessions with regard to the promise of God in a different way from that which I have expressed here. I believe that all of the brethren, unless the contrary is expressed by themselves, or plainly shown, certainly agree with the Confessions as I explained them with respect to the promise of the gospel.

Rev. R. Veldman: I should not have said that, perhaps, because my remarks could have been construed in the wrong way. I am sorry that I brought it up at this time. The wrong parties might be suspected.

Rev. J. Howerzyl: I fully agree with the Rev. H. Hoeksema, and if anything, when he spoke, we experienced the beauty of the Confessions. If anything was proved, it was proved today that no Arminian can ever get a finger behind the Confessions. But that just exactly brings me to the overture of Oskaloosa. It is evident that the Confessions are sufficient, also with respect to the promise. I am afraid the definition in the Declaration falls into the same error, namely, of attempting to construe a complete definition of the promise.

Rev. G. M. Ophoff: It is here a question of interpretation of the Confessions. If the interpretation is not correct, let us say so. But if it is, let us maintain it. Is it not our duty to confess the truth and oppose all error by our Confessions?

Rev. J. Howerzyl: I would certainly underscore all that was said this morning by Rev. H. Hoeksema. And in case we are presented with a concrete error in our churches, I would be willing to apply the Confessions to that error. But I am not aware of such an error. This Declaration is not necessary. And the Confessions are still sufficient.

Rev. R. Veldman: Will someone please point to the place in the Confessions, and show by them that they do not fall completely under this definition of the promise as presented in the Declaration? What is inadequate in D, 2 of the Declaration?

Rev. H. H.: The motion on the floor is, Mr. Chairman, to express that this is the truth of the Confessions.

Rev. J. Howerzyl: Does that mean that we bind ourselves to this definition, and that we may have no other definition?

Rev. G. Vos: When we adopt this motion, we decide that this definition is confessionally correct.

Rev. J. van Weelden: We all agree with what the Rev. H. Hoeksema said in regard to the promise as presented in the Confessions. And I am glad that all suspicion has been removed. Nevertheless, I would like to point out another element in regard to the promise. It is interesting to notice the references in the margin to Question 22 of the Heidelberg Catechism. They refer us to John 20:31; Matt. 28: 19, 20. In both these passages the element of faith is strongly stressed. The promise in John 20:31 is that we may have life through the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And this promise of life can be attained only through faith in Christ. And in Matt. 28: 19, 20 it is the preaching of the gospel to all nations that is emphasized. It seems to me that in a definition of the promise we certainly must have these elements of the gospel and the preaching of the gospel and faith in the gospel represented.

Rev. R. Veldman: If the Rev. van Weelden wants what he presents in the Declaration, let him make a definite amend-

ment. Then we can discuss it. We certainly cannot include his whole speech there.

Rev. G. Vos: It seems to me that the objections presented by the Rev. van Weelden do not apply to the definition of the promise we have in the Declaration. That definition clearly states that God leads His elect infallibly unto salvation **through faith**. That phrase **through faith** in the definition takes care of his objections.

Rev. J. van Weelden: I make an amendment to add: The preaching of the gospel is not a gracious offer of salvation on the part of God to all men, but the official declaration of the oath of God that He will infallibly lead all His elect unto salvation through faith.

Rev. M. Gritters: I always believed what the Rev. H. Hoeksema said in his speech. But that does not change the question. It does not give an answer to my question as to what would happen if I would preach thus: "If you truly come to me, I will forgive you." (Quoted from the *Standard Bearer*). That is Reformed language, and I do not want to lose that term whosoever in Canons II, 5. Many words have a dangerous connotation that simply cannot be avoided. Thus, for instance, it is with the term **providence**. This also can be explained as meaning that God foresees things. When I was ordained, I had to swear that I would preach repentance and faith. Now I do not want to fall into the error of the Liberated that the promise is for all. But there is the other danger of falling into carelessness, and of preaching in such a way that men become careless and profane. Take the "whosoever" out, and we will lose the preaching of repentance. I believe that just because God is sovereign, therefore there must be conditions, that is, in the covenant there are stages and steps. I still maintain my stand that in Canons II, 5 we have a definition of the promise. I want to keep that "whosoever".

The Synod adjourned for dinner. And after dinner the discussion continued as follows.

Rev. J. van Weelden: Since in I, B we changed "promise" to "preaching", we should also do so in D, 2. That is more correct historically. When we are speaking of the promise, you may leave out the phrase "conditional offer". But when speaking of the preaching of the gospel, that phrase does not even fit. Preaching is broader than the promise.

Rev. G. M. Ophoff: This definition can of course be criticized. The Rev. van Weelden says that we must replace **promise by preaching**. What is characteristic of the promise according to him, is not characteristic of the preaching. But this is not correct. For preaching is far more than a mere proclamation or declaration. It is speaking by God through Christ in the heart of the elect. But why should we eliminate the clause "conditional offer"? If the promise is unconditional, as we all agree it is, how then can the preaching be conditional? How can the preaching of an unconditional promise be conditional?

Rev. R. Veldman: To be consistent, we should retain the term **preaching**, which we inserted in I, B, also in D, 2.

Rev. G. Vos: The question now is whether it is not historically true that D, 2 contains what we always maintained over against the Chr. Ref. Churches 25 years ago. I maintain that principally we always said that same thing as we now declare in D, 2.

Rev. H. H.: I do not know what to say anymore. And this discussion certainly tends to make me discouraged. I am amazed that one thing can be substituted for another, the preaching for the promise. We already said that the preaching of the gospel is not a gracious offer. But now we are talk-

about the promise. If you want to give a definition of the preaching now, I certainly cannot and will not subscribe to the definition in the amendment that is on the floor now. For the preaching of the gospel is not only the official declaration of the oath of God that He will infallibly lead all the elect unto salvation through faith. But it is also a savor of death unto death for the reprobate. If we want to have a complete definition of the preaching, that certainly must not be omitted or forgotten. I am amazed too about the evident ignorance of what took place in 1924. I do not think that we understand 1924. Then it was exactly the question of the promise. The Chr. Ref. Churches claimed that the promise was conditional in the well-meaning offer on the part of God to all that hear the gospel. And that was applied to the covenant. It was the Heynsian view that was adopted in 1924. And therefore, I not only cannot agree with this definition, but I am also opposed to substituting it for the definition of the promise in the Declaration. This definition is substituting a cow for a horse.

Rev. J. van Weelden: Technically the thrust of the First Point is that the preaching of the gospel is a well-meaning offer. Is it not logical then in opposition to that First Point that we maintain that the preaching is not an offer? Then we use the same terminology and are historically correct.

Mr. John Faber: Point I, B we have already adopted, and that will stand. But here we are discussing what has always been called "het puntje van het eerste punt". And that "puntje van het eerste punt" is certainly that the gospel is a well-meaning offer of salvation on the part of God to all that hear the gospel. In other words, the question at that time was: What grace do the reprobate receive in the preaching of the gospel? Do they receive the grace of the promise? That was the question. And that is still the question. We must not change this definition as it occurs in the Declaration. And no one has yet attempted to prove that the original definition is incorrect. And if it is correct, and Confessional, why should we substitute something else?

Rev. L. Doezeema: Historically it is nevertheless true that we never said that the promise was not "a conditional offer". What we said was that it was not "a well-meant offer". We can surely speak of a conditional promise in the covenant in the good sense of the word. When God gave His promise to Abraham, the promise that He would be his God, He added: "Walk before me, and be thou perfect." This latter was a condition which Abraham must fulfill in the covenant of God. And therefore I maintain that we may speak of a conditional promise.

Rev. H. Hoeksema: This is not on the motion or on the amendment presented by the Rev. van Weelden, and therefore it is out of order. Nevertheless, I must state, and I am willing to prove it, if necessary, that it is not true that when God says to Abraham, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect," this is a condition of the promise or a condition of the covenant, as the Rev. L. Doezeema states. As I say, it is out of order. But if necessary, Mr. Chairman, I will prove this.

Rev. J. Howerzyl: I am not satisfied with the substitute motion, and will not vote for it. Nevertheless, I think that to be consistent, we should retain the term **preaching** in both I, B and D, 2. In D, 2, as it stands, we have not enough, and to my mind limit the scope of the promise.

Rev. G. M. Ophoff: The Rev. J. Howerzyl says that D, 2 does not contain enough, and that we limit the scope of the promise too much. But, in the first place, let me point out that in D, 2, you have in substance all that the Confessions say about this point concerning the promise. If this is not true, let it be pointed out. In the definition the two poles are

election and faith. And hence, in this definition you have all that is between election and faith. The promise is therefore not narrowed down or presented in a too limited sense, but is presented exactly as broad as it should be in the light of our Confessions.

The motion is now put to a vote, and the amendment fails by a vote of 10 to 6.

Rev. L. Doezeema: I make a substitute motion that Synod express that there is nothing objectionable to point I of the Declaration as far as we have treated it.

Another substitute motion is made that Synod express that there is nothing objectionable in point I of the Declaration as amended on the floor of the Synod.

The Synod took a recess of twenty minutes.

After recess the discussion on the substitute motion was continued as follows.

Rev. H. H.: I can see some light in this motion. But it is a purely negative motion. And I don't think that Synod should pass negative motions. I therefore amend the motion to add: "because it is the truth as expressed in our Confessions."

Rev. J. Howerzyl: Dose not this amendment bring us back to the original motion? As I understand it, a substitute motion is an amendment which strikes out all that is contained in the original motion. But in this amendment you have the original motion brought back in. I do not think that this is in order.

Rev. M. Gritter: I like to know whether what is stated in point I of the Declaration is exclusive? Are there no other things that I may say and preach as the truth?

Rev. J. Howerzyl: My question still is: what is the difference between the original motion and this substitute? The substitute simply declares that point I is according to the Confessions, while the original really states the same thing, that is, it says that this is all you may say.

Mr. John Faber: To say that a certain statement is the truth certainly does not exclude other statements of the truth. We simply declare here that this truth concerning the promise is the truth as expressed in the Confessions. Other truths are not in question just now.

Rev. L. Doezeema: This amendment goes back to the original motion, and that is exactly what I tried to avoid. It is true that the original motion is negative. But I think we ought to remain negative, and avoid all danger of making new expressions.

Rev. G. M. Ophoff: The simple question is whether this statement in the amendment is true or not. Is point I of the Declaration the truth as expressed in our Confessions? Then there certainly can be no objection but there is everything in favor of adopting it, because then we express a ground for its adoption. And that's what we should have.

Rev. J. van Weelden: I have recorded my vote against the matter of the oath. How then is it possible for me to vote for this substitute with that amendment?

Rev. M. Gritters: Am I correct when I say that we do not mean to state here that this is a binding truth, and that we may say no more about the promise?

Rev. H. H.: Probably the Rev. Gritters still refers to Canons II, 5. If he preaches a promise of the gospel according to Canons II, 5 and excludes all the rest of the Canons and of our Confessions, he is in danger of going in the wrong direction. There certainly is danger if in the preaching we isolate Canons II, 5. But if it is the intention of the Rev. Gritters to ask

whether he may preach the text quoted in Canons II, 5, the answer is: Of course, he may preach this, but then in the light of the rest of the Confessions he must certainly explain that believers are the elect. If he does this, I'm sure that no one will ever trouble him.

Rev. G. Vos: In the first place, I want to state that as I see it, the motion by the Rev. Doezeema, although negative, and although therefore the amendment should be added as a ground for the motion, is nevertheless very strong. To say that there is nothing objectionable in point I means in effect that it is the truth and nothing but the truth. And of course, implies that it is the truth as expressed in our Confessions. In the second place, I want to point out that the Declaration is concerned only with the truth concerning the promise. Of course there are other truths with which the Synod is at present not concerned. The doctrine of the Trinity is an important truth, but is not stated in the Declaration. Does it mean that it is not considered to be a truth by us, just because it is not included in the Declaration? We do not say that the Declaration expresses all the truth about all things, but only the truth concerning the promise.

The amendment is now put to a vote, and is carried by a vote of 9 to 7. After that the motion plus the amendment is put to a vote, and is carried by a vote of 10 to 6.

After this the discussion of point II of the Declaration begins. This point, without the proofs from the Confessions, reads as follows.

"They teach on the basis of the same Confessions:

"A. That election, which is the unconditional and unchangeable decree of God to redeem in Christ a certain number of persons, is the sole cause and fountain of all our salvation, whence flow all the gifts of grace, including faith.

"B. That Christ died only for the elect and that the saving efficacy of the death of Christ extends to them only.

"C. That faith is not a prerequisite or condition unto salvation, but a gift of God, and a God-given instrument whereby we appropriate the salvation in Christ."

Rev. H. H.: I make the same motion in regard to point II which I made in respect to point I, namely, that we adopt this point on the basis of the fact that it is the truth as expressed in our Confessions.

This was the end of the session of Friday, Sept. 28. And the Synod continued its sessions on Monday, Oct. 1. After opening with devotional exercises, the discussion continued as follows.

Rev. L. Doezeema: I request Synod to tell me why it wants to make such a statement at this time. What is the reason why this statement must be made?

Rev. G. Vos: Did you ask this question about point I or about point II?

Rev. R. Veldman: I would like to ask the Rev. L. Doezeema why he asks this question at this particular time.

Rev. G. M. Ophoff: The answer to the Rev. Doezeema's question is very simple. If he refers to the motion that is on the floor, I would say that it is a better expression than the negative motion we adopted last week about point I.

Rev. L. Doezeema: It is not clear to me at all why the Declaration was made. What is the reason? And why is it necessary? The motion that is now on the floor is the same as the Declaration as I see it. And Synod must always give reasons and explain why it does something. I would like to have a written answer to my question.

Rev. G. M. Ophoff: This is being beside the point. And it does not concern the motion on the floor. The point now is whether this is the truth of the Confessions. About this question the Synod must now decide, and about **nothing** else.

Rev. L. Doezeema: I want an answer from Synod, not from an individual. I ask for the reason why Synod at this time wants to make such a statement.

Rev. G. Vos: The reason for this motion is because in the offering is the possible adoption of the Declaration of Principles. And before we adopt it, we must determine whether the Declaration is in harmony with the Confession or not.

Rev. H. H.: If the Rev. Doezeema wants an answer to the question why the Synod adopted this Declaration or wants to adopt it now, he can find the answer in the Acts of Synod, 1950. There it is black on white. If the Rev. Doezeema wants a written answer, it is all in the Acta. And therefore, the request of the Rev. Doezeema is at this time out of order.

Rev. G. M. Ophoff: It is evident that the Rev. Doezeema is once more talking about the legality of the Declaration. On this matter the Synod has already decided in June. And therefore, it is certainly out of order.

Rev. L. Doezeema: Mr. Chairman, I want my request recorded, and Synod's answer to my request also recorded.

Rev. G. Vos: We will record your request, but Synod will give you no answer to be recorded. I could say as an answer, because it does not at present belong to the business of Synod, the answer to your request has certainly been given in the Acta of Synod, 1950.

Rev. J. Howerzyl: I can very well see a purpose in this question. The Synod is postponing declaring the Declaration until it has been tested by the Confessions. It does not want to adopt the Declaration until the truth of it has been tested. Very well. But I can see that the motion on the floor settles the question, while the Rev. L. Doezeema's motion of last Friday, which was a negative one, does not. That is why he asks Synod why it wants to declare this at this time.

Mr. J. Faber: The Rev. L. Doezeema can ask the man who made the motion why he did it, and he can undoubtedly answer the question. But he cannot ask the Synod as a body for the reason of this motion.

Rev. G. Vos: The Rev. Doezeema is out of order. He can rise to the point of order, and ask the chair to put the matter to a vote.

Rev. L. Doezeema: I request that.

Rev. G. Vos: I declare that this request is out of order.

Rev. Doezeema: What is order? Is it not to discuss the business that is before Synod? I asked you to do what Bellflower and Classis West suggest and requested the Synod to do, that is, declare that the Declaration is illegal.

Rev. G. M. Ophoff: Must we again discuss that? The majority vote of the Synod decided upon the legality of the Declaration. We cannot go back to that now.

Rev. M. Gritters: The Rev. L. Doezeema's request is a civil one, and it should be answered by Synod.

Rev. G. Vos: The Synod of 1950 drew up a Declaration, and submitted it to the churches to see if there were any objections. The only possible objections would have to be of a church political or of a confessional nature. We are testing the Declaration according to the Confessions. And last week the

Rev. Doezeema himself made the motion that there was nothing objectionable in the Declaration.

Rev. H. H.: Anything that is declared out of order does not go into the minutes. If it does, then the ground for it being declared out of order must also be stated. Otherwise it is sneaked in.

Rev. J. Howerzyl: I make a motion that Synod table further discussion of the contents till the necessity of the Declaration is decided.

Rev. G. M. Ophoff: Logically the question is always first whether the matter discussed is the truth. Thus it is with the Declaration. We are now determining or attempting to determine whether or not the Declaration is the truth according to the Confessions. If it is not the truth, that naturally ends the whole thing. Then we do not have to discuss the question concerning the necessity of the Declaration.

Rev. J. Howerzyl: I feel the way the Rev. Doezeema does. We are assured that this is a purely academic discussion. But again and again it becomes evident that Synod decided in such a way that its decisions go beyond the academic. Last week through an amendment we were brought back to the original motion as to its essence. It is not true, as the Rev. Ophoff says, that my motion reasons backwards. First we decide whether we need a Declaration at all, and then whether this Declaration fits our needs. If it does not, it is not necessary to discuss the contents of the Declaration.

Rev. G. M. Ophoff: The question before the Synod is whether this Declaration is according to the Confessions. That surely must be decided first. And that is the chief question. Suppose we concluded that we did not need the Declaration. Nevertheless, if it is the truth according to the Confessions, we could never discard it.

Rev. J. Howerzyl: The point is that if Synod finds no need for the Declaration then it has no reason anymore to discuss it, even if it is the truth.

Rev. H. H.: This motion, Mr. Chairman, is also out of order. Last week we definitely decided to treat the Declaration *seriatim*. That motion was passed. Now I ask: how can you possibly table a motion that has already been passed. The only thing that can possibly be done in a case like this is that we rescind that decision. And that requires a two-thirds majority and the motion must be made by one who voted in favor of that motion.

Rev. L. Doezeema: The motion was last week to treat the Declaration *seriatim*. That is something else than adopting it. If this motion is adopted, we declare something. And that is what I try to avoid.

Rev. M. Gritters: Is a motion to table ever out of order?

Rev. G. Vos: No. But to my mind, a motion to table in order to find out the necessity is out of order.

Rev. R. Veldman: I can see where we could have treated the necessity of the Declaration first. But you certainly cannot table a thing in order to do the very opposite.

Rev. H. H.: In the first place, we never said that this is the Confessions, but the expression of the Confessions. In the second place, this is all out of order. I begin to feel once more that the whole motivation of this interruption is that some of us are afraid to go into the contents of the Declaration. Why? I'd like to know what is the reason. Do they themselves feel their own weakness? Are they afraid of our arguments? Last week we decided that we should go into the material to determine whether it is in harmony with the Confessions. I claim, Mr. Chairman, that this whole discussion is in conflict with that decision.

Rev. G. Vos: We must not judge motives. There is the possibility that this is not their motive.

Rev. J. Howerzyl: My objection has become sufficiently plain. It is not what is stated in the Declaration to which I object. But I rather object to what is not stated. That is what makes me afraid. The motion of last Friday, for example, definitely stated that this is the truth expressed in the Confessions. That, to my mind, is declaring something very definite.

The motion is declared out of order by the chairman, and the ruling of the chair is challenged.

Rev. G. Vos: I declared that motion out of order to table. My ruling has been challenged. We will now vote, to see whether the body thinks that I was wrong in declaring the motion out of order.

The motion to sustain the ruling of the chair is defeated by a vote of 8 to 8. Then the motion to table is put to a vote, and this too fails, due to another tie vote of 8 to 8.

The discussion now continues, and an overture of the Consistory of Pella is read, touching the second point. This is a very lengthy document, and it is impossible for me to quote it in this report in full. The reader can find it in the Acta undoubtedly, when the Acta appear. I will therefore briefly summarize this overture of Pella, and state the main objections to the Declaration which it offers. Those objections are: 1) That it sets a wrong precedent, namely, that without any occasion a Declaration of Principles is adopted by Synod. 2) The second objection is that the Declaration would pass judgment upon the Liberated before we have heard them. 3) The third objection is that the Declaration makes no study whatever of the term "conditions", yet promptly condemns any and all use of that term as anti-confessional. Under this head many quotations are made from Reformed theologians in favor of the term *conditions*. 4) The fourth objection to the Declaration is that it expresses itself in re the promise and salvation, but leaves out of consideration entirely the pedagogical aspect or approach of salvation. On all these grounds the Consistory of Pella through Classis West requests Synod not to adopt the Declaration of Principles.

(to be continued)

H. H.



IN MEMORIAM

Since the Lord has bereaved the five sons and two daughters of the C. N. Kunz family in the recent death of their mother,

Magdalena Kunz

both the Ladies Society and the Men's Society herewith wish to extend to them their heartfelt sympathy.

May the God of all grace keep their hearts and minds in Christ Jesus with His indispensable and certain comfort.

Mrs. Peter Koole, Secretary

Mr. James Stouten, Vice-Secretary

As To Books

QUESTIONS CHILDREN ASK, by Dena Korfker. Published by Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Price \$1.95.

This is a book designed to be read by children or by parents to their children. In story form it treats various subjects as an answer to questions which children are supposed to ask and to which Miss Korfker gives the answer. In five parts, each with several subdivisions, questions are answered about the sky, the people that live in the world, "things" (electricity, airplanes, etc.), the Bible, and Jesus.

I find this a very interesting and instructive book. Miss Korfker has the knack of telling interesting stories about many subjects, some of them difficult, from a biblical viewpoint. Usually, though not always, she succeeds rather well in reaching the level of the children for whom the book is written.

On p. 22 there is an unhappy slip of the pen: "When God made the world, He saw to it that things would take care of themselves."

On p. 66 I find the Arminian presentation of election: "Then God chose all those who believed in Jesus to be His special people."

With these corrections, I heartily recommend the book.

H. H.



BEDTIME STORIES FOR BOYS AND GIRLS, compiled by Theodore W. Engstrom. Published by Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich.. Price \$1.95.

This is a book of stories written by several different authors. It is a mixture of good and bad, which I certainly would not recommend for reading by or to our Reformed boys and girls. Many of these stories have an Arminian application. Besides some of them strike a sickly note of false piety, unnatural and unhealthy for boys and girls.

H.H.



ISAIAH in Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures. Zondervan Publ. House, Grand Rapids, Mich. Price \$4.95.

This extensive volume on the prophecy of Isaiah was prepared in German by Dr. Naegelsbach and translated into English by Dr. Lowrie with the aid of Dr. Moore.

All the good we said about the other volumes of Lange's Commentary which we reviewed thus far applies also to this volume on Isaiah. Its exegesis is thorough and sound and the work stands on a high level of scholarship. Besides, we are glad to say that Dr. Naegelsbach takes a position in regard to prophecy opposed to that of the higher critics, witness his strong argument in favor of the genuineness of

chs. 40-66 as being of Isaiah as the author. Cf. pp. 12-25.

Heartily recommended.

H. H.

PAULUS EN DE ANTIEKE CULTUURWERELD, Dr. G. J. D. Aalders. Uitgever J. H. Kok, Kampen, Nederland, Prijs f.6.90.

De schrijver van dit boek is rector van het Christelijk Lyceum te Arnhem en classicus van beroep. Het boek teekent ons verschillende zijden van de cultuurwereld van Paulus' dagen en daarvoor en bedoelt licht te werpen op het leven en den arbeid van den apostel temidden van die wereld van zijn tijd. Het geeft ons eerst een beschrijving van de Joodsche diaspora en haar invloed, daarna van de heidensche godsdienst en het bijgeloof dier dagen, heeft verder een hoofdstuk over de wijsbegeerte van de antieke wereld, om te besluiten met een korte beschrijving van Paulus en de literatuur.

Aan de lezers, die belang hebben om iets meer te weten van de antieke cultuurwereld, bevelen we dit boek gaarne aan. Ofchoon de behandelde stof nu juist niet bevattelijk kan geacht worden voor ons Hollandsch lezend publiek, zullen de meer belezenen met profijt kennis kunnen nemen van dit boek.

Ik waardeer de poging van den schrijver om Paulus' speech op den Areopagus te verdedigen. Of hij daarin geslaagd is, is een andere vraag. Het is m.i. niet onmogelijk om aan te nemen, dat de Heilige Geest deze rede met haar vruchteloze uitkomst heeft vermeld, om ons te leeren, dat elke poging om zich aan te passen bij de heidensche wijsbegeerte vruchteloos is.

Het hoofdstuk over "Paulus en de literatuur" is tamelijk onbeduidend.

H.H.

EXODUS, door Dr. H. Gispen. Uitgever J. H. Kok, n.v. Kampen, Nederland. Prijs f.4.50.

Deze commentaar behoort tot de serie "Korte Verklaring der Heilige Schrift". Wij kunnen haar van harte bij ons Gereformeerde volk aanbevelen. De taal is eenvoudig en de stijl helder.

In betrekking tot het vraagstuk betreffende den juisten datum van de uittocht uit Egypte, neemt Dr. Gispen het standpunt in, dat deze plaats had, niet gedurende de negentiende dynastie (1321-1205 v. Chr.) maar gedurende de actiende (1580-1321 v. Chr.), en hij stelt de uittocht in het jaar 1445 v. Chr. Of dit juist is, beoordeel ik niet. Dr. Gispen voert tamelijk gewichtige argumenten aan. De lezer oordeele zelf.

Hartelijk aanbevolen.

H.H.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Protevangel as the Unifying Idea of all the Scriptures

As was stated, the protevangel is the promise of the Gospel as first proclaimed and this by the very voice of Christ.

Let us again 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 (crush, *demolish* in the Hebrew text) thy head and thou shalt crush his heel."

As was stated, the importance of this promise must be perceived. It is verily the embryo, the thought-seed, so to speak, of all the promises, revelations, thereafter spoken and made 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.

There is indeed such a thing as a "history of revelation". But, as was remarked, what is this "history of revelation" but the history of the development, unfolding of the Gospel of the protevangel. There is therefore but one promise, Gospel, essentially.

As a result of this work of God, we have all the answers to the question that the protevangel raises and all along through the ages of the Old Covenant must have been raising,—questions such as these: just who in the final instance is the serpent? Who is his seed? And who is the seed of the woman indicated by the pronoun "He" in the sentence, "He shall crush thy head"? What does it mean that the Lord will set enmity between the two seeds? How is this to be accomplished and what is the character of this enmity? 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?

As was remarked, the protevangel itself does not supply the answers, so that, if there had not been any subsequent revelations, no unfolding of the promise of the protevangel, these questions would forever have remained unanswered. But the promise of the protevangel did unfold. The needed revelations were given. In a word, all the above-stated questions have been answered.

The serpent in the final instance is Satan. The seed of the serpent is the reprobated portion of fallen humanity, the world that lieth in darkness, that anti-christian power in the world of which Satan is the prince.

The seed of the woman is the church of the elect as headed by Christ judicially and organically. He is *the seed*.

Between the two seeds God will put enmity. This in part He will accomplish by bringing the seed of the woman into being, a holy seed consecrated unto God in active, sustained and perpetual opposition to Satan and sin and all that is of sin. Thus the warfare as waged by this seed will be holy. The weapons employed will be spiritual and include the girt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the sandals of the Gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.

And so, too, will Satan and his seed, under the impulse of hatred of God and of Christ, be making war against the seed of the woman perpetually and this in the attempt to destroy it utterly. This, too, will be of God just as well. For He will set enmity. Eventually Satan will lay hold on Christ, *the seed*, and will crucify Him. But the wound, however deadly, will not be fatal. In the figurative language of the protevangel, it will be but the wounding of the heel of the Holy Seed, Christ. For Satan and the coalition of evil powers through which he operates are in themselves less than nothing at all. Satan is but a rod in God's hand and as such the agent through whom God will be smiting, crushing His Son, the Christ of God, for the sins of His seed the total of which He laid upon Him. And through the whole terrible ordeal Christ will not open His mouth but be silent. Wherefore God will also raise Him up from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the highest Heavens and with Him His people for whom He shed His blood.

What it will mean for Satan and his brood is that through that evil work of theirs they will seal their doom. That hour will be his judgment and the judgment of the world, meaning that God will sentence them to everlasting desolation. And so at the appearing of Christ Satan will be cast into the bottomless pit and the wicked will be destroyed and this in final fulfilment of the prophecy of the protevangel, "And He — *the seed* — shall crush thy head." And simultaneously the seed of the woman — God's redeemed people will appear with Christ in glory on the new earth where God's tabernacle will be with them. Then will the protevangel as to all the promises concealed in it have gone into final and complete fulfilment.

So have all the questions raised by the mysterious language of the protevangel been answered. For the full light has been shed and shines in our hearts. How evident that there is but one promise essentially, one Word of God. How evident, too, that when this promise was first published it was but a bud of truth,

so to speak, a Word of God that, if it was to serve God's believing people as a source of full comfort and joy, a Word by which they could live and die in a perfect happiness, it had to be made to unfold. This was done by God's shedding always more light upon it through subsequent revelation. And this revelation includes the words which God spake by His own mouth and by the mouth of His prophets. It includes the speaking of God through all his marvelous works, the wonders of His grace such as the flood and the deliverance of the people of Israel from their bondage in Egypt. It includes finally the speaking of God through all the symbolical-typical institutions of the Old Testament such as the sacrifices by blood.

In these articles we are occupied with sketching this unfolding process of the protevangel as effected through the speaking of God as recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures. We will follow this process through the Scriptures of the Old Testament Bible to the event of the fulfilment of the promise of the protevangel by the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, in the fulness of time.

This unfolding process of the protevangel, being as it was, a process in sacred history and a process effected by this history, divides into epochs or dispensations of grace.

The first epoch set in, we may say, with the fall of man into sin and ended with the flood. We saw how that through the events included in this epoch the idea of the protevangel clarified remarkably.

The sacred narrator is next occupied with the descendants of the three sons of Noah, men who constitute the new humanity. The time in which the writer now introduces us is one of great activity. Cities are being built one after the other, and each a kingdom. An empire was being founded there in the land of Shinar in the Euphrates valley. Here the men of the new race could dwell securely. Some of the leaders of this movement are mentioned by name. There was Nimrod. A mighty man in the earth was Nimrod. The wild beasts were multiplying as fast as this new humanity. And they were a menace. Nimrod made war against them with such telling effect that men surnamed him "the mighty hunter before the Lord". More is related of Nimrod. He was a founder of kingdoms, and his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar (Gen. 10: 10). Then there was Assur another builder of cities including Nineveh.

The evident purpose was to keep the new humanity intact. And what made the achievement of this purpose rather easy was that the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. Being able to understand one another, men could live and work and play

together. But would there eventually be room in this commonwealth for God's believing people? Certainly not. Here then was a situation that bode only evil for the church.

How the dread of being scattered over the earth filled men's souls, how determined the leaders were to hold the race together is evident from their tower building. "Go to," they said one to the other, "let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly." In the words of the text, they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And again they said, one to another, "Go to, let us build a city and a tower, whose top may reach to heaven; and let us make a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." This is the language of fear and dread but also of defiance of God, and of his will as revealed to Noah the father of this race and thus universally known—the will of God to the effect they be "fruitful, multiply and replenish the earth." It is evident from this whole striving that God was not in all thoughts of these men. And therefore they were afraid. And unwilling to put their confidence in God, yet wanting to feel secure they went to founding kingdoms and to forming a coalition of kingdoms in opposition to God and in defiance of His will.

But the purpose was not achieved. God saw to that. Quoting the text, "The Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men had builded. And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do."

And what had these people not imagined to do? What fate awaited the church, should their undertaking be permitted to succeed. She would have against her the whole world as united under one political head. So the undertaking might not be permitted to succeed. Said the Lord, "Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of the whole earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of the whole earth."

The blow that the Lord here dealt the serpent—Nimrod and his empire, the beast of the book of the Revelation—resulted in a wound from which Satan's world has not recovered to this day. This is altogether understandable. The confusion of tongues drove a linguistic wedge between the great clans of the human family already inwardly divided by sin so that as men continued to multiply on the face of the

earth the clans of the human race expanded, each in its own place, into nations hateful of one another. The result has been perpetual war between coalition of nations. The problem is how to rid the world of war. For that problem there is but one solution, namely that the nations foresake their abominations and, in the words of the Psalmist, "kiss the Son", the resurrected Christ exalted at God's right hand, the Potentate of potentates. But men will not repent. The world continues to put its confidence in its Nimrods and their empire building. It is still coalition of nations against coalition of nations. But this, too, is of God. But the Scriptures say that the wound of the beast will eventually heal. The reference is to a mighty anti-Christian empire including all the nations of the earth. Its appearance will necessarily spell the cessation of war between the nations for a season. It will be the Babylon of Nimrod revived and expanded to a world-dominion. But though outwardly united, it will still be inwardly divided, a babylon of confusion. Hence it will not endure. For it will be Satan's world. And the world and all that is of the world passeth away. But the kingdom of Christ—the city that God builds on the ground of Christ's atonement—abideth forever.

As a result of the confusion of tongues, the human race there in the plain of Shinar was seized by a strange restiveness, and soon it was on the move. Whole families one after the other were quitting the plain and heading for the unknown—pressing ever deeper into the unknown, but finally coming to rest in the places of the earth appointed them of God. The record of these migratory movements is contained in the 10th chapter of the book of Genesis.

In Ur of the Chaldees, situated in Nimrod's empire in the Euphrates valley, dwelt Terah with his three sons, Abram, Nahor and Haran. There came a time when Terah, too, and his family could be seen on the move westward in the direction of the Euphrates river. Included in the caravan was Terah and Abram and Lot the son of Haran and Sarai the daughter of Haran and the wife of Abram. They had set out on a long journey. For their destination was the land of Canaan. What had caused Terah to cut loose from his moorings in Babel and set out on this venture? Not love for adventure or the desire for better conditions of life or any such carnal motive. The Lord had spoken to one of the sons of this family, namely Abram: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land that I will shew thee" (Acts 7:3). The writer of the Hebrews says that Abram obeyed *not knowing whither he went*, (11:8). As Abram's face was set toward Canaan, it is not plain just how the statement in italics is to be under-

stood. Perhaps it means that Abraham had no exact knowledge of the location of Canaan; or the thought conveyed may be that Abram knew nothing about the land, not even whether it was inhabited. But the meaning may be that the Lord to put Abram's faith to a test did not reveal to him that the destination was Canaan until he had resolved by God's mercy to heed the call and had made all the necessary preparations for the journey.

Doubtless the call had come to Abram alone. Terah went with Abram. Doubtless the thought of allowing this son to pass out of his life was too painful to him.

Instead of pressing on to Canaan, the pilgrims temporarily settled in Haran. They were still in the land of their nativity. For Haran lay east of the Euphrates. In this place Terah died. It may be that the passing of Terah at this time is the answer to the question why they had come to rest in Haran. Perhaps the journey was proving too much for Terah.

After the death of his father, Abram resumes the journey with Sarai his wife and his nephew Lot. For the Lord had bound His call on Abram's heart and it continued to reverberate in his soul. The full content of God's communication to Abram as it had come to him in Ur and therefore was not perhaps repeated in Haran, reads: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blest."

Taking Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew and all the substance that the both of them had gathered in Haran, and the souls that they had gotten in his place, Abram departed and came into the land of Canaan. Passing through the land he came to Shechem. Here the Lord appears unto him again and said: "Unto thy seed I will give this land."

After Lot was separated from him, the Lord repeated His promise even with great emphasis: "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward and southward and eastward and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it and to thy seed forever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it to thee."

(to be continued)

G. M. Ophoff

SION'S ZANGEN

Niet Ons, O Heere! Niet Ons

(PSALM 115; TWEEDE DEEL)

Het is meer dan een jaar geleden, dat we voor de laatste maal schreven onder bovenstaanden titel. Dat was in het nummer van September 15, 1950. Waarom wij deze serie onderbraken, lag in het feit, dat er zoo-veel geschreven werd over de Verklaring van Beginselen. En sinds er gedurende de laatste maanden niet veel meer geschreven wordt dienaangaande, zullen we maar weer beginnen, en trachten om deze lange serie ten einde te brengen. We zijn begonnen met deze serie in het nummer van den 15den September, 1939, dus dat is zoowat 12 jaren geleden. Indien de Heere ons het leven geeft, zou ik gaarne den geheelen psalmbundel willen bestrijken in deze korte meditatie's.

Ter zake dan.

In het nummer van September 15, 1950 schreven we over dezen psalm, en daarvan het eerste vers. In dat vers beluisterden we een klassieke gedachte van Gods Woord, een gedachte die vaak door Gods volk aangehaald wordt. In dat vers vindt de nederigheid van Gods volk uiting. Zij is eigenlijk hetzelfde als die uitroep van den tollenaar: O God, wees mij zondaar genadig! Iemand, die tot God zegt: Niet ons, O Heere, niet ons, maar Uwen naam geef eer! die heeft het abc van den waren godsdienst geleerd.

Uit de verdere verzen van dezen psalm zien we, dat de dichter moeite heeft met de heidenen. En hij heeft zich warm gemaakt voor de eere Gods. Het is om der heidenen will, dat hij den Heere bad om toch Zijn heiligen Naam eer te geven. Hij vroeg dat met het oog op de heidenen. Hij is bang, dat anders die godvergetenen zullen zeggen: Waar is nu hun God? Ziet ge, dat deden die heidenen niet toen God wondere dingen deed bij de Schelfzee, of toen Hij de eerste wereld verdelgde en Noach met zijn acht zielen behield. Daarom bidt deze man, dat God toch Zijn naam eere mocht geven. Hij wil niet dat de heidenen zullen triumfeeren, en zijn God bespotten.

O, hoe vaak hebben de heidenen dat niet gedaan! Hoe vaak hebben die heidenen niet in spot gezegd tegen Gods volk: Welnu, waar is Uw God? Luistert naar de goddeloozen ten dage van Petrus: "Waar is de belofte Zijner toekomst? want van dien dag dat de vaders ontslapen zijn, blijven alle dingen alzoo gelijk van het begin der schepping." II Pet. 3:4.

O, de goddelooze heidenen van eerdere dagen, en de goddeloozen van onzen dag zouden toch zoo gaarne

willen, dat het waar was, dat er werkelijk geen God ware. Maar het is zooals onze oude catechesatie boekjes het zeiden: dit is meer een wenschen dan een werkelijk gelooven dat er geen God is. Er zijn eigenlijk geen praktische atheïsten. God liet Zich immers nooit onbetuigd. Het getuigenis Gods is ontzaglijk, rijk, overweldigend. Ziet waar ge wilt, luistert bij dag en bij nacht, en ge zult de wondere sprake Gods hooren. O ja, God zij geloofd, Hij heeft Zijnen Naam eere gegeven. Dat is een commentaar op alle werken Gods in de natuur en in de historie.

En alle goddeloos roepen van die goddeloozen is zoo ijdel. Het hielp niet. God bleef, en Hij zal blijven tot in der eeuwigheid. Dat zegt de dichter met andere woorden. Hij zegt: Onze God is toch in den hemel, Hij doet al wat Hem behaagt. Let op dat "onze" God. Let op dat bezittelijke voornaamwoord "onze". Daar zit meer dan bezitting in. Als een man met groote blijdschap zegt: dat is mijn vrouw, dan zit daar meer in dan bezitting. Dan zit daar liefde in. En zoo is het ook hier. Ik heb eens een leeraar hooren zeggen: Hoe zoudt ge gevoelen, als men U nu eens absoluut bewijzen kon, dat er geen God is? Zoudt ge dan blijde zijn, of zoudt ge er over treuren? Indien het eerste, dan toont dat duidelijk, dat ge nog niet bekeerd zijt; doch indien het laatste, dan bewijst ge dat de liefde Gods in Uw harte woont. 't Kan best waar zijn. In elk geval, een ware Christen heeft God lief. Hij kan het zonder Hem niet maken. En het "onze God" van mijn tekst vindt een blijde echo in zijn hart.

En Hij doet al wat Hem behaagt.

Daar zit veel in. Dat is ongeveer hetzelfde als te zeggen, dat Hij de Almachtige is. Hij kan alles. En toch moet ge er een beperking bij stellen, evenals we in den tekst lezen. God kan alles, ja, doch alleen wat Hem behaagt. Bij voorbeeld, Hij kan niet liegen. Een man vroeg mij eens jaren geleden, of God een wiel beide naar rechts en naar links kan doen draaien. Dat was een goddelooze man. Dat kunt ge wel uit zijn vraag bemerken. Ik ben dien man het antwoord toen schuldig gebleven, want ik wist het niet. Maar ik weet het nu wel. Neen, dat kan God niet, want het is een leugen in de physica. Net zoo min als bij God ooit zwart wit kan zijn, zoo kan Hij ook niet een wiel doen draaien beide naar rechts en naar links. God doet en Hij kan doen al wat Hem behaagt. En wat Hem behaagt is schoon en liefelijk. Alles wat Hij doet in tijd en eeuwigheid is goed. 't Is goed al wat Zijn hand beval; het staat op recht en waarheid pal, als op onwrikbare steunpilaren.

Dat kunt ge heel goed zien in de schepping. Het behaagde den Heere om de wereld te scheppen. En Hij deed het. Ziet nu rondom U, zelfs nu, nadat de vloek Gods gekomen is, En het zal U verbazen hoe

heerlijk Zijn werken zijn in de natuur. Ziet rondom U, boven U, beneden U in de afgronden, en ge zult zingen van de groote werken Gods. Wat Hem behaagde om te doen heeft Hij goed gedaan.

Dat kunt ge nog beter zien in de herschepping. Ten minste, als ge oogen hebt om te zien. En dan bedoel ik geestelijke oogen. Dan zult ge langzamerhand een kasteel zien rijzen voor U bewonderend oog. Dan zult ge het paleis van Zijne gunstbewijzen zien rijzen. De Heilige Geest heeft er van gezongen in David. Toen alles in duigen lag vanwege de zonde des duivels en van Adam, toen is God weer aan 't werk gegaan, en toen kwam er uit de ruine van de eerste schepping een wereld te voorschijn die ons doet zingen tot in der eeuwigheid. Het behaagde den Heere om te herscheppen. En dan zou ik moeten spreken van Jezus Christus, en van degenen die Hem geschonken zijn. Doch het bestek gedooft dat niet. Als maar vastaan mag, dat God alles gedaan heeft, nu nog doet, en doen zal, al wat Hem behaagt. Niemand kan tot Hem zeggen: Wat doet Gij? De gedachte is al te dwaas. Hij is God, de levende God. En Zijn doen is enkel majesteit.

En de goden der heidenen?

Ja, zij hebben ook goden. Eigenlijk kan geen mensch zonder een god. Luistert naar den dichter: "Hunlieder afgoden zijn zilver en goud, het werk van 's menschen handen." Och arme, wat onbeschrijflijke armoede, maar ook verregaande dwaasheid. Afgoden zijn on-goden, dat is, geen goden. Enkel ijdelheid. Het is het ledige, datgene wat niet is. Als het niet zoo tragisch was zou men uitbarsten in een schaterlach. Maar het is ook diep bedroevend.

Een afgod is datgene wat de mensch zichzelf formeert. God die waarlijk God is wil hij niet. Die zit hem in den weg, want Die censureert hem geduriglijk. God is lastig voor een ieder die goddeloos, vuil en krom is. En dat zijn de heidenen. Zij zijn een volk, dat God een scheidbrief gegeven heeft. Ze hebben gezegd, ze zeggen, en ze zullen steeds tot God zeggen: Wijk van ons, want wij willen niet dat Gij Koning over ons zoudt zijn. Of: wijk van ons, want aan de kennis Uwer wegen hebben we geen lust.

Maar het zit in het wezen van den mensch, dat hij een God diene. En zoodra hij van den waren God afviel, maakte hij zich een anderen god. Doch nu schrijven we het heerlijke woord met een kleine letter. Een afgod is geen God. Een afgod is een onding. Maar hij gevoelt in zijn wezen, dat hij iets of iemand moet eeren, loven, prijzen, toezingen, liefhebben, en dienen. En zoo maakt hij zijn eigen god.

De tekst zegt, dat die afgoden van goud en zilver gemaakt zijn. Wel, daar zit een historische smaak aan die woorden. In de dagen van den dichter deed

men dat. Men bouwde een pop van goud, zilver, steen, hout, ivoor, of iets dergelijks. En als die pop klaar was, boog men er zich voor ter neder, en gaf het ding Goddelijke eer. En God werd toornig in den hemel. God mag het niet zien, dat Zijn eer gegeven wordt aan de gegoten beelden.

Maar nu moet ge niet zeggen, dat zulks niet meer geschiedt. Want dan hebt ge het mis. Er was eens een profeet die tot Israel ziede: Uwe afgoden zijn gelijk Uwe steden. Men behoeft geen gegoten beeld te maken om een afgod te hebben. Ge kunt van elk schepsel wel een afgod maken, en dat geschiedt ook. Elk mensch die niet God dient, dient de afgoden. Het is misschien zijn vrouw, of zijn kind, zijn vaderland, of de deugd als zoodanig, maar een afgod heeft hij altijd. Hij kan niet zonder een afgod.

En dan hooren we een beschrijving van het bespottelijke der afgoderij. Het is om over te weenen.

Ze hebben een mond, maar spreken niet; oogen hebben ze, maar zien niet, ooren hebben zij, maar hooren niet, zij hebben een neus, maar zij rieken niet; hunne handen hebben zij, maar tasten niet, hunne voeten, maar gaan niet, zij geven geen geluid door hunne keel.

Dat is een treurige beschrijving van de verre-gaande dwaasheid van alle afgoderij. Zoo was het met hen die letterlijk van die poppen maakten, maar dat is ook zoo vandaag met allen die afgoden maken van het bloote schepsel. Alle die afgoden hebben dit gemeen, dat ze geen Goddelijke actie kunnen voortbrengen. Dat zit in deze beschrijving. Ze zijn ten eenenmale ijdel. Ze kunnen niet verlossen zoo we in nood zijn; ze kunnen niet dienen om den honger te bevredigen van het hart dat liefhebben wil. Er is geen actie der afgoden.

Maar het is vreeselijker dan dat. Niet alleen dat de afgoden geen actie kunnen geven, zij maken ons het voorwerp van Gods rechtvaardigen toorn. God heeft het alles gezien. En Hij is zeer toornig geworden. En die toorn wordt straks geopenbaard in de hel, in den tweeden dood. O ja, er is reeds nu een beginsel van dien toorn, en hij wordt geopenbaard van den hemel. Waarom denkt gij dat er oorlog en allerlei ellende op aarde zijn? Omdat het menschedom zich bezondigde in de afgoderij, van eeuw tot eeuw. En het werd steeds erger.

En nu komt er een vreeselijk vers. "Dat die ze maken hun gelijk worden, en al wie op hen vertrouwt."

Dat is de hel.

Als wij gelijk worden aan onze afgoden, dan worden wij ook der ijdelheid overgegeven. En dat is de hel. In de hel is onzen naam verdelgd, uitgeroeid. In de hel is geen pure actie meer. In de hel is er slechts één ding: passief lijden! Dat is juist het tegenover-

gestelde van wat de uitverkorenen zullen doen. Zij zullen God dienen dag en nacht en tot in der eeuwigheid. In de hel is de verstijving, de verstolling, het einde van de ijdelheid. In de hemel is de tinteling van leven, van eeuwig leven, van ongekend genieten. Want zij zullen God zien, dienen, vreezen, liefhebben, verheerlijken.

Daarom komt er nu dan ook een aanprijzen van de roeping voor Israel, en voor de kerk aller eeuwen. We zullen wel doen om goed te luisteren naar den Heiligen Geest.

"Israel, vertrouw gij op den Heere, Hij is hunne hulp en hun schild."

Israel, dat is, de vorst Gods, de man die met God worstelde en Hem overmocht met weenen en bidden en smeeken. Dat is de vader der patriarchen. Dat is de type van Christus, en dat is het schoone voorbeeld voor alle kinderen Gods van onze eeuwen. Israel is de Nieuw-Testamentische Kerk. Israel zijt gij, mijn broeder en zuster.

Vertrouwt gij op den Heere!

De Heere is Jehovah die Zich zoo schoon aan U geopenbaard heeft. Hij is Jezus Christus aan het kruis, dragende en wegdragende Uwe zondeschuld. Hij is het die verlossing zond! Hij is het inbegrip van alles wat goed, schoon en lieflijk is. Hij is onze God. En dien God moeten wij eeren.

Maar aangezien we daartoe geheel en al onbekwaam zijn, zijn we O zoo blijde, dat er aan toegevoegd wordt: "Hij is hunne hulp en hun schild."

Het zou er treurig bij staan, indien we niet anders hadden dan die mooie vermaning: Vertrouwt toch op den Heere! Want dan konden we niet doen dan schreien. En zelfs dat kunnen we niet zonder de hulpe van den zuchtenden Geest van Christus.

Hij is hunne hulp. Dat zal eeuwig waar zijn.

Hij is hunne hulp. Ja, laten we daar eens wat van mogen zeggen. Hij is hunne hulp, doordat Hij intrek neemt in hunne harten. Daar maakt Hij hun hart een heiligdom om te wonen. Door Zijn Heiligen Geest wederbaart Hij Israel, en dat wil zeggen, dat Hij hun het leven van Jezus Christus geeft in het diepst van hun bestaan. Dat is hetzelfde als te zeggen, dat Hij hen van dood levend maakt. En dat nieuwe leven voedt Hij en bekrachtigt Hij door Woord en Geest.

En Hij is ook hun schild. Want alles hier op aarde is hun tegen. Maar Zijn sterke hand beschermt de vromen en redt hun zielen van den dood. Hij zal hen nimmer om doen komen in duren tijd en hongersnood.

En zoo komen de vermaningen. Zoekt Mijn aangezicht. En dan zegt Israel: Ik zoek Uw aangezicht, O Heere!

En zoo gaan ze voort van kracht tot kracht!

G. Vos.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Matthew 5:21-26

In our previous article we stated that it is our intention to write a brief exposition of this entire section in Matthew 5 from verse 17 till 48. In our former article we attempted to show the implication of Jesus' warning to us not to have the foolish notion that he is come to destroy the law and the prophets. For such is indeed not the case. He is not come to destroy but to fulfil the law and the prophets. Only when all righteousness has been perfectly fulfilled and all the saints shall be perfect, without spot or blemish or any such thing will God cause the heavens and the earth to pass away.

This is a truth that should spur us on as children of God to greater zeal in a walk in righteousness, to be the light of the world, a city set on an hill-top, a light on the candle-stick to enlighten all that are in the house. To be salt that indeed has not lost its savor it means that in gratitude we keep the Second Commandment, which is like unto the First and Great Commandment, namely, that we love our neighbor as ourselves.

In the remaining verses of this Chapter Jesus points out very concretely how we can be the salt of the earth, how in all the relationships of men it is possible to be, light in the Lord, in the darkness of sin and death.

Shall we be this light of the world, letting our light shine before men, then it is of importance that we keep even the least Commandment of the Savior. But this again is impossible unless we are deeply aware, with a Spirit-enlightened mind and heart, of the implication of the law of God, that it is holy, and that the commandment, the precepts of the Gospel are holy, righteous and good. This commandment of Christ is not satisfied with the literal externalism, but it casts its light and makes its demands upon the entire heart and mind and soul and strength of man. From the heart are the issues of life. And it is this heart that is demanded.

Because this central and all-controlling element of the law was not taught to the people by the Pharisees and Scribes in His day, He forcibly places the dictum of the law over against this horrible perversion of the sacred law of God. He will teach the law not as corrupted by the Scribes and Pharisees but as it was intended by God when given through Moses on the Tables of Stone.

Wherefore Jesus says in verses 21 and 22: Ye have

heard (it said by the teachers, G.L.) that it was said unto the ancients (by Moses): Thou shalt not kill; but *I say* unto you that you must not limit this commandment to the literal deed of slaughter, but must apply this to the very thoughts and intents of the heart! Thus we would briefly paraphrase this terse statement of Jesus in our text. For our Lord does not look at each commandment by itself, but he views the law as it is briefly summed up in the one Great Commandment to Israel. It asks no less than perfection. Jesus does not forget the Tenth Commandment while He instructs us in the meaning of the Sixth Commandment. The Commandment "Thou shalt not covet" stresses that not the least thought *ever rise in our heart* against any of the commandments of God.

Such is the intent and abiding significance of the Law in general and of the Sixth Commandment in particular.

But the Jews made the Law of God of none effect by their evil and perverse teaching. They did not see the one Great Commandment and the Second like unto it, but they had greater and lesser and least commandments. It was all catalogued. Theirs was a casuistic interpretation of the law in which the very heart had been lifted out of it. And now Jesus will very strikingly bring this to light in His exposition of the Sixth Commandment.

Let us try to see this.

On the surface it would seem that Jesus Himself brings in a casuistic interpretation of the Law. Does He not say: "But I say unto you that He that is angry with his brother shall be held to the judgment, and he that says to his brother, Blamed bonehead! shall be held to the Sanhedrin; and whosoever says, blamed fool! shall be held for the Gehenna of the fire?" Is this not again putting things in different categories and departments? Is this not a little more advanced casuistry over that of the Jews? They simply said that it was good Orthodox Teaching that the murderer should be held to the judgment, that is, should be tried in court. But Jesus goes a bit farther. He says: If one is angry with his brother he shall be tried in court and if he says: Blamed bonehead! then he must be tried before the Sanhedrin, the seventy elders in Jerusalem, and if he said: Blamed fool! then he would be cast into the Gehenna of fire. Is this not more casuistry?!

We think not!

We are of the conviction that Jesus is here merely satirizing the entire Jewish approach to the law by showing its absurdity when you would try to apply it, as the Jews attempted to do. It is true the Jews never came to the problems that Jesus here presents, because

they simply stated that the actual deed of murder is murder and not the hatred and anger of the heart. But as soon as the Law is taken seriously then such would be the construction to which the Jews would have to come. Now by thus satirizing this whole untenable and evil position Jesus lifts the vail upon the nameless blindness of these leaders of the blind. Jesus does not mean to teach three degrees of murder and three degrees of higher courts, but wishes to show that the law must be applied in such a way also in the Sixth Commandment that it is a question of the whole heart and mind and soul and strength!

The very thought of revenge and hatred is already murder. This murder is rooted in hatred of the brother, and reveals itself in the evil epithets that are hurled at each other. The poison of asps is under our lips, and our feet are then swift to shed blood and the way of peace is not known; the course of our birth is set on fire of hell! And most of the murdering is done with the tongue, with the evil tongue. The air is then soon pierced with the shrill cries of "Blamed bonehead", "blamed fool!" And another man has been murdered in his soul, he has been cruelly hurt! Ah, life is so full of this. No wonder that men felt of this Rabbi of Nazareth that He taught with authority and not as the Scribes. He placed His finger on the very sore spot of life; the knife of the law cuts into the very boil of this awful sin when it is in His hand!

But now there are also a great many more sins to confess; sin becomes indeed very sinful. And in the light of this law we learned to see the greatness of our sins; for from the law is the knowledge of sin if only it is preached as it was by Jesus on this mountain slope in Galilee of the nations. Ah, when man does not want to see himself as he is, then he externalizes the law so that he may soothe his conscience. He then holds down the truth in unrighteousness by doing that by which he becomes without excuse before God.

But this is not the case with those who seek God's altar; who come as the penitent. Their flesh may rebel, but when they draw near to God, near to the altar with their sin-offering and thank-offering, then they will remember whether their brother has something against them or not. No they have not pursued them with a knife in hand, but they have said something to him or about him out of sheer meanness; they have not spoken the truth in his defense, and it has caused the brother grief and sorrow. They may attempt to gloss it over, but it will not really be blotted from memory, even though they think to have succeeded quite well; time has a way of erasing these impressions, but the Lord brings it to our attention very orderly and concisely when we approach His altar. Then

the law of God teaches the greatness of our misery. That altar too teaches us forgiveness, and the art of being forgiven.

How true to life Jesus pictures this. It must have been the experience of many a saint in the Old Testament Dispensation, that at the Altar many sins came to his mind which otherwise remained hidden in his sub-consciousness. Who of us has not experienced the impossibility of praying when unconfessed sins keep haunting us in our souls. No peace and rest are then forthcoming.

It is not very ceremonious to be already at the altar the service having begun, and then to leave the gift at the altar and be reconciled to the brother and then come to offer the gift. But it affords great peace nonetheless! Do not think that you will experience the forgiveness of sins, my dear reader, if you do not confess your faults to the brother whom you have offended. For the brother offended is not the judge; God is the Judge, the Lord will avenge His people when He judges the world according to this Gospel!

In warning us that we should be reconciled with our brother whom we have offended, Jesus employs the figure of an adversary at law. This man has been defrauded. He brings the matter to court. Now we should not let it come that far. We should be well-disposed with our brother soon. We should settle the matter with him out of court voluntarily. Otherwise we shall be cast into prison until the debt is paid. The law cannot grant the grace of acquittal of debt.

Now the point of Jesus' teaching is evident. If we do not agree with the brother offended quickly now in life this matter becomes one of hardening, of becoming morally and spiritually calloused, and we fall into the hands of the living God; He will cast into the Gehenna of fire. We shall never come out thence till we have paid the last farthing. But this is not possible for us; there none can fulfil all righteousness in hell!

Jesus here confronts us with the precept of loving God above all and our neighbor as ourselves, having a righteousness that is indeed righteousness. At the same time He very really accompanies this precept of the Gospel with the confrontation with the law! Let there be no mistake about this. No, we are not asked to fulfil the law by works of law, for Jesus speaks to us beside the Altar. It is the righteousness of faith by which the Law is established. But even so there is here a warning finger of threatening and warning, that we may not and cannot forget with impunity. Think not while at the Altar that Jesus is come to destroy the law and the prophets! God is not mocked!

We are here reminded of the beautiful question and answer of the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 44,

Qu. 115, "Why will God then have the ten commandments so strictly preached, since no man in this life can keep them?" And the answer is as follows: "First that all our lifetime we may learn more and more to know our sinful nature, and thus become the more earnest in seeking the remission of sin, and righteousness in Christ; likewise that we constantly endeavor and pray to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, that we may become more and more conformable to the image of God, till we arrive at the perfection proposed to us in the life to come."

G. Lubbers



PERISCOPE

Knowing that our people are always interested in reactions to such books, we are copying two recent reviews on Rev. Hoeksema's latest book "Baptized Into Christ."

The first review is by Rev. J. K. Van Baalen, well-known to all of us that are at all acquainted with the history up to and including 1924, now minister of the Christian Reformed Church of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. He writes in *The Banner* of November 2, as follows:

"Baptized Into Christ", by the Rev. H. Hoeksema.

"This is Volume VI in an Exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism, and it covers Lord's Days 25, 26, 27.

"The book contains much that is good. The sovereignty of God is stressed as it is too little in today's religious literature in America. But it also has some weak points. Its chief fault is that (as in the controversy about common grace) we are promised in advance an improvement upon the great Dutch theologians, but we are sorely disappointed. Then it was 'the organic development of evil.' Now we are told that 'In the more recent Dutch theologians one finds a glimmer of deeper and richer notion of the covenant.' The author, who is deadly afraid of all signs of bilateralism in the covenant (throughout it has to be God alone, and one-sided or unilateral) finally comes to the chapter, 'The Idea of the Covenant.' We read on eagerly, looking for that further development of the 'glimmerings' of Kuyper and Bavinck. We are told that the essence of the covenant is unilateral in its origin in God, and becomes bilateral when God causes man to enter into fellowship with him. At any rate, we are not told how fellowship can remain one-sided.

"There are other errors in this book. An unwar-

ranted conclusion is drawn from the First Helvetic Confession because (p. 89) '*Erwählt*' is translated *re-generated* instead of *elect*. The author recognizes only an unconditional promise of the gospel, to the elect. His morbid fear of Arminianism causes him to deny the promise of salvation upon the condition of (even a God-given) faith, p. 114. On page 140 we are told that the standard Reformed view of the covenant of works is 'pure fiction.' That standard view is that 'Do this and thou shalt live' meant a living beyond the life Adam already had, that is, eternal life. Without any ground or proof we are treated to the 'pure fiction' that these words meant Adam would have continued to live on the earth. Again, the opponents of Rev. Hoeksema are pushed into a corner in which they refuse to dwell. Thus we are told on page 35 that *always* 'the altar call' is 'a hawking of Jesus in its worst form, a burlesque caricature of the preaching of the apostles.' While on page 139 the Reformed are reminded that "The covenant between God and man can never be a pact . . . with mutual stipulations, condition, and promises." Which, of course, no Reformed theologian has ever claimed for either the covenant of works or of grace.

"The worst feature of the book is that an unscriptural, one-sided view of God leads to an unsatisfactory presentation of the gospel. On the concluding page it is correctly stated that 'the sign and seal of the covenant is a savor of life for the children of the promise, it is at the same time a savor of death unto death to the reprobate.' 'We must watch, therefore.' But watch unto what? Unto a being moved with compassion, as was Paul, and a 'persuading men'? No: we must watch because 'it is our calling to walk as spiritual children of the covenant.' The author does not preach to believers and unbelievers, but to the elect who show signs of regeneration. He takes his point of departure in the hidden things of God. That is neither supralapsarianism nor Calvinism. It is known as hyper-calvinism."

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The second review appears in the November, *Calvin Forum*, and is written by Rev. Alexander De Jong, pastor of Boston Square Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

He writes as follows:

"Doctrinal Preaching. Baptized Into Christ, by Herman Hoeksema. . . .

"If the reader is interested in the Heidelberg Catechism, he should obtain this book. This volume constitutes the sixth in Hoeksema's exposition of the Catechism. It covers the material contained in Lord's Days 25, 26 and 27. As theologian and pastor the

author proves himself an able expositor of this Reformed confession.

"Hoeksema is a careful workman. He operates deftly with many distinctions necessary in Reformed thinking. The opening chapter deals with the means of grace. After carefully detailing the four main usages of the concept grace, he gives the following definition of the means of grace. 'When we speak of means of grace, we refer to grace in the fourth or subjective sense of the word. It is through means that the Holy Spirit works faith in our hearts, effects within us the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and bestows upon us all the blessing of salvation.' (p. 21). No doubt, if God's people would make more prayerful and diligent use of the means, their commitment of faith would be more relevant and meaningful today.

"There is an exceptionally worthwhile chapter on 'Preaching as a Means of Grace.' As many today carelessly disregard and discredit the office of the ministry this chapter gains cogency. 'Today everybody preaches, except those perhaps, whose specific calling it is.' (page 28.) 'Preaching is the authoritative proclamation of the gospel by the Church in the service of the Word through Christ.' (p. 29.) As such the following elements are involved: 1) being sent; 2) the proclamation of the whole Word of God; 3) by the church; 4) it is the service of the Word of God through Christ, for only Christ through the Spirit can make preaching of the Word powerful and efficacious as a means of grace. With free lance preaching gaining ascendancy, it is well to reemphasize the Biblical basis of preaching.

"The authoritative character of true preaching lies in the theme of all preaching. This theme is Jesus Christ as the revelation of the God of our salvation. Joined with this emphasis is a chapter on 'Preaching in the Covenant.' It is worth reading twice over. As the same Word of Christ is brought to all, it becomes evident that it is a savor of life unto life unto God's chosen, and a savor of death unto death unto all others.

"There is much valuable confessional material on the idea of the covenant. In Hoeksema's discussion the view of the late Prof. Heynis, Professor at Calvin Seminary, is thoroughly criticized. Hoeksema is insistent upon making the distinction between the covenant as a means to an end and as an end in itself. At all costs he wants nothing to do with the covenant as a means to an end. This point is labored to wearisome lengths.

"Certain questions refuse to be silenced when reading Hoeksema's understanding of the covenant idea. How does he fit Esau and Judas into the covenant? What happens to history? Is not the covenant in the

process of realization? Is not the covenant in a certain sense a method of the administration of God's grace? Hoeksema apparently leaves no room for the distinction, historically maintained in Reformed circles and certainly not Scripturally unwarranted, between the covenant as an external and internal relationship? Though this distinction must be employed with care, and though it does not answer all the problems, it does appear to point up the limits within which we must confine our understanding of the covenant. One can not escape the impression that Hoeksema wants to do the impossible. That is, he wants to harmonize for mere mortals the secret and revealed will of God. No one can bring together election and the historical realization of the covenant. Certainly not by restricting the covenant idea as exclusively an end in itself.

"One regrets that the author sets up straw men in his discussion. This becomes apparent in his fulminations against the idea of the covenant of works. In connection with the covenant of works Reformed thinkers have always operated carefully with the distinction between the principle of justice and the principle of grace, especially in understanding the probationary command. Hoeksema summarily dismisses the distinction with this statement. 'But I object that God cannot deny Himself, and that even by grace He cannot so condescend to man that the latter becomes a party next to Him, even though the relation is presented as one between a very great party and a very small party.' (p. 139.) The reader is very unconvinced. Furthermore, no one who understands the covenant of works thinks of man as setting up his relatively autonomous stipulations as Hoeksema would have his readers believe.

"Despite such questions, we would heartily recommend reading this book, as well as the preceding volumes. Hoeksema is Reformed, and demonstrates himself an able writer. We hope that God will spare the brother and give him strength to complete his work on the Heidelberg Catechism. Meanwhile we look forward to the next volume."

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Since book-reviews are, to an extent at least, privileged we shall refrain from making even the most obvious comments.

J. Howerzyl.



CLASSIS EAST—will meet in regular session D.V., Wednesday, Jan. 9 at 9 A.M., in the First Prot. Ref. Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

D. Jonker, *Stated Clerk*