

THE STANDARD

Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

VOLUME XXVIII

MAY 1, 1952 — GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

NUMBER 15

MEDITATION

The Coming of the King

"I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left. And they answered and said unto Him, Where, Lord? And He said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together."—Luke 17:34-37.

It happened one day, during the sojourn of the Lord Jesus on earth, that the Pharisees asked of Him when the Kingdom of God should come. To them He made answer and said: The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation, that is, with outward show! There is a rebuke in these words. Observation, outward show was all that these poor souls could muster in their so-called religion. Inwardly they were full of corruption and wickedness.

And then the Lord pointed out to them, that in a certain sense the Kingdom of God was already come, for it was in their very midst. Certainly the King of that Kingdom stood before them, and many of the citizens of that Kingdom likewise walked about the earth at that time, even as at all times. There always were people of God on the earth. And it was always the life of the Kingdom of God which dwelled in their hearts which made the distinction between them and the children of the devil.

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But the Pharisees were blind, even as the majority of mankind in every age.

Later the Lord explained about the coming, the final coming of that Kingdom of God. And He said: For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part un-

der heaven, so shall also the Son of Man be in His day! When Christ Jesus returns on the clouds of heaven, His coming shall be sudden, like a bolt of lightning.

And then He gives them the facts of history, types of His coming: that is, the flood in the days of Noah and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in the days of Lot. In those days there was no more time left for conversion. It was the end. You either were in the ark and safe, or you were without and drowned. Or, as in the case of Sodom, you escaped from that hell on earth, or you burned. And if, as in the case of Lot's wife, you seemed to escape, the avenging righteousness caught you just without the gate, and you turned into a pillar of salt. Is it for that reason that Jesus said: Remember Lot's wife?

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Well, I like to tell you of the coming of that Christ in His day. He shall come as the King of the Kingdom of God, and I would like to say a few words on how He shall find the human race; and how He shall separate them; and what shall be the main characteristic in that race of men.

First then the question: How shall he find the human race?

There are some who say that He will find the whole world in a dreadful chaos. His day shall be a day of great upheavals and revolutions, they say. I do not believe it. Holy Scripture does not teach that. To the very contrary. You will remember that Jesus compared His coming to the days of Noah and of Lot. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise also as in the days of Lot: they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.

Therefore, you see that those days were very normal. The usual things shall be done when that awful lightning shall strike and men shall see the sign of the Son of Man in the heavens. It will be a complete surprise.

That same picture you find in the specific words of our meditation at this time. You will recall the text.

So you see that life in its normalcy is presented here. The picture is rather complete. We see the usual three spheres of life: the social home life—two in the bed; the industrial life: two grinding together; and the agricultural life: two are in the field. Life went on as usual.

Yes, things shall be very orderly in that wonderful and also dreadful day. The world in all its usual activities shall show a rather orderly picture to the eye of Jesus when He comes. All according as your station in life shall be, you will eat, drink, marry or be given in marriage, you shall buy or sell, you shall build or plant, you will calmly live your usual life.

Note, further, that all those things shall be done together, that is, the child of God and the child of the devil shall live together. And they shall do things together. Two men are in one bed, two women in one mill, two men in one field. And that is correct. Humanity is one organism. You cannot sever yourselves from man. We are of one blood and of one flesh. And our ways intermingle. Paul would say: you cannot go out of this world. No, the Bible certainly does not teach the life of the monastery and the cloister. They are monstrosities. And have led to dreadful and abnormal horrors.

No, they shall be together. The children of God and the children of the devil shall work together in one shop, factory, home and field. All the activities of mankind are common to both peoples. *That* is not their difference.

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What then?

Oh, but when Jesus comes, that seeming unity shall be rudely dissipated. He will make a terrible and absolute separation. They shall fall apart into the most marked distinction. Christ Jesus shall see and penetrate all the dwellers of the earth. And He shall see two diametrically opposed principles of life and conduct in the hearts of man, of all men. And according to these life-principles the human race shall be infallibly split in sunder.

These principles are two, no more. By the one group He will find and recognize the love of God.

In passing we may state that this is always the

case at any moment in the history of the world. It is not always manifest, but it is nevertheless the real truth. You are either a child of God, and then you love Him; or you are a child of the devil, and then you hate Him. There is no neutrality; there are no three ways; there is just the way to the right and the way to the left, and that is all. This separation is an absolute separation. The difference between these two peoples is as the difference between night and day, up or down, white or black, sin or righteousness, heaven or hell, God or the devil. There is no middle way.

That I speak the truth is evidenced by the text: The one shall be taken and the other left.

A very nice word is used in the original Greek for the word "taken". It means to take to one's self, to fold in one's bosom, therefore. It shows the eagerness with which Christ shall take His disciples to His bosom. It shall interpret the longsuffering of God. He shall have waited long for this wonderful moment when He shall come in Christ, His Son, to fold His people to His bosom and let them rest in His heart of love for evermore.

The other word is terrible. It sounds rather weak in our translation. It means literally to send away from one. It is elsewhere called to reject, or to cast away. Oh, yes, He shall also take the others, but it shall be to cast them from Him into outer darkness where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

And you will do well to remember that all this is highest wisdom and no capriciousness. The deepest ground for this taking and leaving is the goodpleasure of God. It pleased Him to elect His people and to make them vessels of His love, so that they might be to His eternal praises and glory forever and ever. And it also pleased Him to reprobate others unto everlasting shame and darkness. They are reserved unto darkness forever. And then in this way that they are not co-ordinate but subordinate. The latter serves the former. Rejection serves election. Such is Holy Scripture. It is no dry dogma which man found out and taught. It certainly is contrary to the mind of man to so teach and preach. No, but God has proclaimed on a thousand pages of the Bible that such is the case: the one shall be taken and the other left.

Yes, some will say: that is correct; but some are taken because they believed and the others are left because they would not believe! And I would say: Amen! But I would like to ask a very simple question: Where did they obtain faith in the blessed Lord? And then your own Bible will provide the answer: "For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God!" There is the

answer. You find it in Eph. 2:8. No, some people receive faith and others do not. And if you ask why? then God answers: it so pleased Me! And who shall answer against God?

And those that are left, because of the black principle in their heart: it is the principle of sin and corruption. Oh, yes, the others also had that principle of corruption and sin in their heart by nature, but God redeemed them. Christ died for them and the Holy Ghost sanctified them and made them ready for their place in the highest heavens.

Oh, believe me, the Lord God has everything planned and He will execute it in all justice and righteousness and, yes, also in all goodness. There shall not be devil or man that will be able to accuse God for one moment when He takes the one and leaves the other. They will all admit: it is Divinely right!

And I assure you that if you are honest with yourself, you will see the justice of God's doings even now. It is clearly revealed.

You see, God has told us from time immemorial that man is wicked and perverse. And God has proved it. In the fulness of time, He sent His sweetest possession into the wicked world. And that is Jesus. And, remember, in this Jesus of Nazareth, the living God Himself is revealed. Jesus is God, revealed in the flesh and come into the likeness of the flesh. Well, for 33 years this revelation of the living God walked among the children of men. And His conduct is above reproach: He certainly acted the Godhead. He healed the sick; He raised the dead; and He preached the way of the Kingdom of Heaven.

And what did man do?

This: They took Him, spit upon Him, scourged Him, and nailed Him to the accursed tree. No, no, do not say that those wicked Jews did this: you and I did this. It shows how and what we are through sin that dwells in our heart and mind and soul and all our affections. We are wicked from our youth and grow more wicked as the days of the years of our life pass on. And the proof is the Cross of Jesus. As He fared in Jerusalem, so He has fared everywhere. What will you do with Jesus? We will trample Him underfoot and we will despise Him and His God and His law and promises. There is no room for Jesus in the heart of natural man. That heart is filled with everything but Jesus.

And no wonder! Jesus is the Light of the world. He discovers all the darkness, all the evil of our hearts. So He did to the Pharisees, and so He does today to all men that read and hear His Word. Jesus is bothersome to the natural heart. So bothersome that He must be cast away, and crucified.

Yes, God has proved His judgment. Man is wicked from his youth and he is worthy of damnation that is eternal.

But some He saves and shall save. And that salvation is of the Lord exclusively. Christ's name is Saviour. Strange, that most men never gave it a thought. They say: He is my Saviour, but they save themselves. No, no, but God in Christ is the Saviour, the complete Saviour! He it is that loved His sheep from all eternity that sent His Son into the world so that He might take upon Himself all the guilt of His sheep and deliver them from the wrath to come; He it is that sent His Holy Ghost into the heart of all those that are chosen and through that Spirit they cry Abba Father! And He it is that shall quicken our mortal bodies in the day of His coming and place us with Him in everlasting bliss. He is the complete Saviour. The text says: The one shall be taken. Yes, and as it is in the last day so it was the first day: If you are loved of God: you are taken, you are taken in His arms and He leads you home. That is the Word of God.

But the others are left. And they carry within them the ground of their rejection.

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Read the text: Where the body is thither will the eagles be gathered together. And if you will look up the same message in Matthew 24:28, you will see that the word "carcase" is used. The Lord made this answer because of a question of His disciples. They asked Him where this ingathering of God's people and this rejection of the wicked should take place. So the Lord gives in these words a characterization of the state of things at the end of the world. Things shall be so utterly corrupt, and the number of God's people shall be so very small, that He likens the whole human race to a dead body, a carcase that will be devoured by the eagles, that is, the vultures.

How true a sign! Do you not see it right around you, wherever you are? The world is simply filled with this violence, that is, primarily violence to God Triune, Who is the Blessed forever!

Yes, the point of view of the parable in the text is this: it is the coming of the Messiah in retribution, avenging on the spiritually dead carcase of His enemies. The body of the dead carcase is rotten humanity and the eagles are the vultures, His messengers of eternal doom!

G. Vos.

THE STANDARD BEARER

Semi-monthly, except monthly in July and August

Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association
Box 124, Station C., Grand Rapids 6, Michigan

EDITOR — Rev. Herman Hoeksema

Communications relative to contents should be addressed to Rev. H. Hoeksema, 1139 Franklin St., S. E., Grand Rapids 7, Michigan.

All matter relative to subscription should be addressed to Mr. J. Bouwman, 1350 Giddings Ave., S. E., Grand Rapids 7, Michigan. Announcements and Obituaries must be mailed to the above address and will be published at a fee of \$1.00 for each notice.

Renewals:— Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order.

Subscription Price: \$3.00 per year

Entered as Second Class mail at Grand Rapids, Michigan

C O N T E N T S**MEDITATION—**

- The Coming of the King 337
Rev. G. Vos

EDITORIALS—

- A "Teacher's" Impressions 340
Rev. H. Veldman

OUR DOCTRINE—

- The Hexaemeron or Creation Week 343
Rev. H. Veldman

SION'S ZANGEN—

- De Lofzang der Liefde 347
Rev. G. Vos

IN HIS FEAR—

- Looking to the Future 349
Rev. H. C. Hoeksema

FROM HOLY WRIT—

- Exposition of Matthew 5:9 351
Rev. G. C. Lubbers

THE DAY OF SHADOWS—

- Thou art the Man 353
Rev. G. M. Ophoff

- Wijsheid met hare Vruchten 357
Rev. G. Vos

CONTRIBUTIONS—

- Discord or Unity 359
Miss Dorothy De Vries—*Grand Rapids, Mich.*

EDITORIALS**A "Teacher's" Impressions**

We concluded our previous editorial with the observation that only our children can be disciplined. Only they can be corrected because only in them is something which can be corrected and disciplined. If a farmer knew that a particular acre would produce only weeds, he would not spend any time on it. This is also spiritually true. To be sure, all is not Israel that is called Israel, and also with respect to carnal Israel do we have a calling. The fact remains, however, that the church is not a mixed group, consisting of converted and unconverted, but the Church of the living God, with her elect children, and all things, also the carnal Israel, serve that Church of the living God. Hence, all instruction concerns primarily the elect, even as all the labor of a farmer concerns primarily the crop.

This is a truth of tremendously practical significance. First, this explains why we do and can build Christian schools. Now we know that our labour shall not be in vain as in the Lord. Now we know that our Christian instruction is not based on what the child may become in the future, but on what he is as according to election, as bought and redeemed by the precious blood of the Lamb of God, and as sanctified in Christ through the Spirit of the risen Lord. This means that our instruction does not rest on a possibility or a probability, but on an accomplished fact.

Secondly, this truth is practically of the greatest significance because it determines our approach to the children. In our opening and closing prayers we can call upon the Name of the Lord as upon our Father Who is also the Father of "these children," Who has not only redeemed us and forgiven us our sins, but Who has also redeemed "these children" and forgiven them their sins. Now we can and must speak to them of the eternal love of God wherewith He has loved us in Christ Jesus and revealed particularly in the cross of Calvary, of the work of Divine grace in our hearts and of our subsequent calling to walk as children of light in the midst of a world that lieth in darkness and knoweth not the living God. To be sure, this will evoke from carnal Israel an answer which reveals that they are not of the party of the living God and they must surely be admonished and warned according to the Word of God. But, this does not alter the fact that all our labours are primarily concerned with the chosen Israel of God.

Thirdly, this truth is tremendously important be-

cause it must also determine the content of our instruction. Then we will understand that our school is not a mission-field but an institution in which the "man of God" must be perfected in order that he may be thoroughly furnished unto the performance of every good work. We, of course, do not make people of God. Neither do we speculate on the question whether we have children of the Lord among us. But, we proceed from the certainty that we have God's children in our midst and that they must be prepared to assume their Divinely ordained and assigned place (in the midst of the world) when they shall have arrived to years of discretion.

A fifth and concluding observation which we would pass on to our readers (to these impressions others could undoubtedly be added) revolves about the question which we have repeatedly asked ourselves in connection with our ninth graders when they shall have completed their prescribed course of study: "What next?"

Permit me at this time to remind our readers of this pertinent and undeniable fact. It is exactly the theory of Common Grace and our fight against worldly-mindedness which constitutes the origin and beginning of our Protestant Reformed Churches. To be sure, the error of Arminianism was also involved, revolving about the question whether the promise is for all or only for the elect, and far be it from us to minimize this heresy of Arminianism. Nevertheless, from a practical point of view, it was the issue of worldly-mindedness which lay at the root and the heart of our conflict. Years before 1924 this spirit of broad-mindedness was already present and working in the church. And, it is because we held to the view that God's people are a distinctive people, with a distinctive calling, that we also today stand alone. It is this truth, together, of course, with the truth that the grace of God is sovereignly particular, which constitutes and must continue to constitute the very heart and fibre of our churches. It alone is our only right of existence; it alone is our sole hope and assurance of continued existence.

Our denial of the theory of Common Grace and the need of our own Christian school should be a self-evident fact. We need not dwell at length upon this conception of Common Grace. Briefly, it is that conception which would have us believe that concord, agreement, fellowship between the Church and the world is possible in all things earthly and civil. Speaking of a restraining operation of the grace of God and also of a positive operation of the Spirit of God upon the hearts of men, without renewing them, it would explain the good in the world of today, refers to God's fellowship with the world as rooted in God's

covenant with the world as established with Noah and his family, and therefore advocates our fellowship with that wicked world. Common Grace lauds Athens, declares of the children of darkness that they often put the children of God to shame, wipes out the lines of distinction and demarcation between the Church and the world, nullifies the antithesis, destroys our distinctiveness, defends and nurtures a worldly-mindedness which is indeed the death of the Church of God in the midst of the world.

Moreover, that this issue of Common Grace is inseparably connected with the origin and beginning of our churches is beyond dispute. One can never divorce the origin and continued existence of our churches from the denial of this theory of Common Grace.

How, then, is it possible to deny the necessity of our school system? The school, we understand, prepares our children exactly for their place in the midst of the world. Instruction within the church prepares the child to assume his place in the midst of the church, to partake of the means of grace: the preaching of the Word and the sacraments. But the school prepares that child for his place in the midst of the world. The school, therefore, prepares the child exactly for that sphere which is vitally connected with the conception of Common Grace. As Protestant Reformed Churches we firmly believe in the antithesis, our calling to walk everywhere as children of the light and from the principle of regeneration. And we certainly are of the conviction, are we not, that we must train and prepare our children exactly with a view to that antithetical calling. Must we, then, not have a school system of our own? Must we entrust our children, whom we must train to walk antithetically in the midst of the world, to those who would instruct them in the theory of Common Grace, in the conception that there is concord and agreement between light and darkness, the Church and the world, the heirs of the Kingdom and the citizens of this world?

Why do I write this? Because I am writing of my impressions. And this present school season has impressed me as never before with the necessity of our own Christian schools. O, do not say that we have a calling over against the present Christian school societies and schools. Then I would ask of you the question: if we have such a calling over against these Christian school societies, to gain them, if possible, for our conception, are we fulfilling that calling? In the meantime, what is becoming of our children? Time marches on, and "opportunity knocks only once." This is true particularly of our children in the sense that we have them only once. We cannot mend *these* things,

cannot do what has been left undone. Children cross our path only once, and each succeeding period in the life of a child is as a rapidly passing shadow. We go back; the past cannot be recalled. Indeed, how this truth has been impressed upon us in this school season! One can almost see the children grow and advance! Soon another school year will have been written into the records. Failing to teach them the things that should be taught them, we are guilty of a double error: we have taught them things that should have been withheld from them, and we have neglected to instruct them in the things which have been enjoined upon us.

Besides, what a wonderful opportunity we have in the school to instruct our children in the truths we hold dear! Do not misunderstand the undersigned. I am not a teacher. I realize this only too well. Nevertheless, the school is a wonderful opportunity to inculcate into our children our Protestant Reformed principles which are according to the Word of God. O, I do not refer primarily to the Bible instruction which the covenant child receives at a Christian school. Without in any sense minimizing it, Bible instruction does not constitute an essential part in Christian school instruction. This they also receive in the home and in the church. That which constitutes the essence of the instruction received at a Christian school is that which the child receives there in distinction from the home and the church. History is the record of the work of the Lord throughout the ages, and dates give us God's calendar in order that we may see His events in relation to each other. And in that work of the Lord the Church of the living God occupies the central place. All things revolve about that Church. Babylonia, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Macedonia, Greece, Rome must all serve, in their own way, the coming of of the Son of God and of Man into the flesh, and, in Him, the Church whom God has loved from before the foundation of the world. Mighty kingdoms of the world come and go, appear upon the stage of this world but a little while, and the Israel of God continues through the ages. All the above named powers of the world come into contact with the Church of the living God and the result is that they all perish and disappear from the stage of this world, but the people called by the Name of the living God cannot be destroyed. God gathers His Church and all things must serve that amazing and very wonderful work of the Lord. Christ came in the fulness of time, did He not? And this means that He, and the Church of God in Him, stands in the very center of history. Indeed, our children must receive such a training that they may be able to assume their proper place in the midst of the

world. And their calling is not to unite with the world and establish affinity with those who are not of the party of the living God, but to walk as the antithetic people of the Lord Who loved them and saved them. This, of course, applies to the entire course of study. Indeed, we repeat what we stated at the beginning of this paragraph. One thing, however, is plain: a school system of our own is imperative. The Rev. Heys has written very pertinently on this matter in the not too distant past.

This also explains the impression which this school season has left upon me. We now have two schools of our own in this vicinity. Presently another group of children will graduate from our school. We have instructed them to the best of our ability. But, then they will leave us. And the question asserts itself and forces itself upon us: What next? May we also in this respect not be found wanting?

I had intended the preceding paragraph to be my concluding observation. However, I wish to add a few words at this time to the idea of Christian discipline. Logically, these remarks should have been made when I discussed the subject of discipline. Discipline, permit me to remark, is something which demands the fullest cooperation of the parents. This, too, has impressed me. One is amazed at times at the lack of respect for authority on the part of the children. At times they appear astonished because talking and whispering are forbidden in the classroom. They are quick to question the policy and procedure as prescribed by the teacher and to come with suggestions of their own. They resent being admonished and, of course, are seldom in the wrong. To be sure, these phenomena are not exactly new. Nevertheless, I do not hesitate to say that respect for authority hardly characterizes the young generation of today. I am sure that the teacher must cope with this problem as never before. And therefore it is true that the fullest cooperation of the parents is imperative and absolutely necessary today as never before. That this lack of respect for authority should be so prevalent today need not surprise us. It is certainly the spirit of our age. It cannot be said that the world in which we today have a name and place fosters and encourages respect for authority. However, this is all the more reason why we as parents should be constantly on the alert. Let us not ignore the danger by adopting the attitude that children will be children and that things are different than a generation ago. Times may change, but Scripture's emphasis upon respect for those who are in authority remains the same. To ignore this implies that we court disaster.

These are but a few of the impressions which this school year have made upon me. Speaking now not in behalf of myself I would conclude with the plea that we constantly remember our teachers before the throne of God's grace. Their task is not easy. We, as parents, sometimes have our hands full with our own children. How strenuous, then, is the position of the teacher who must busy him- or herself with many children, every day, and children which are not his or her own! They need our prayers and our fullest cooperation. May God bless our schools!

H. Veldman



OUR DOCTRINE

The Hexaemeron or Creation-Week

(12)

THE CREATION OF MAN (6)

We concluded our previous article, in which we were discussing the theory of the covenant of works, with the statment that we had more objections against this theory. In that previous article we had remarked, firstly, that this theory is not Confessional, and, secondly, that it is not taught literally in the Word of God.

Our third objection against this conception is that it is not true that it is taught in the Word of God by implication. It is stated, e.g., that the penalty of death which the Lord announced to Adam implies the promise or eternal life, implies that had Adam remained obedient he would have lived and attained unto eternal life. In this connection our attention is called to various passages of the Word of God, such as Lev. 18:5 and Romans 5:15-19. In the first passage we read: "Ye shall therefore keep My statutes, and My judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the Lord." Must this text be understood as proclaiming a conditional promise of life, so that life will be bestowed upon us if and when and upon the condition of our believing? Mind you, this text is quoted in support of the theory of the covenant of works! But, is it true that we shall live *if and after* we do the Lord's commandments? But, how can this be? For, in the first place, the promise of eternal life as bestowed upon the sinner does not rest upon or is not conditioned in any sense of the word by his believing, but it rests solely upon the eternal love of God as revealed in Jesus Christ, our Lord. This

explains why the exhortation to believe and to walk in the commandments of the Lord can come unto the Church of the living God. And the child of God can experience the desire to walk in the commandments of the Lord, also consciously, only in and because of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Never does he receive the promise of eternal life and the assurance of that promise because of his faith but only because of the love of God in Christ Jesus, his Lord. How, therefore, is it possible that a text such as Lev. 18:5, which comes to redeemed Israel, can be quoted in support of a covenant of works established with Adam outside of the Lord Jesus Christ? And, secondly, why is it true that "which if a man do, he shall live therein"? Is it not true that the doing of God's commandments is life, this doing as such? Indeed, if a man do them he shall live in them. The doing of God's commandments itself is life, now and forever. And, therefore, doing the commandments of the Lord, he shall also live forever, inasmuch as he who does the Lord's commandments hath eternal life abiding in him and cannot perish even forevermore. Another passage which is quoted in support of the theory of the covenant of works is Romans 5:15-19, and we quote, "But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one, many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offenses unto justification. For if by one man's offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners. so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Hence, from the fact that because of the sin of the one man all men have died it is concluded that, had he remained obedient, he and all men would have attained unto eternal life. This reasoning is hardly logical. First, to say that Adam would have continued to live had he remained obedient is surely not the same as to teach that he would have attained unto *eternal* life. Eternal life in Scripture is not merely life, spiritual life, fellowship with God. Adam did not need to attain unto this; he already possessed it. Eternal life in Holy Writ is this spiritual fellowship and communion with God in eternal and heavenly perfection. This Adam did not possess.

And to say that he could have attained unto it in the way of obedience certainly cannot be based upon the mere supposition that the penalty of death implies the promise of this heavenly and eternal life. For, in the second place, to declare to a man, who has violated the law and therefore merited punishment, that he would have been given a great reward had he not transgressed is absurd. Would Adam earn something extra (eternal life, which he did not possess) simply by remaining obedient? This is nowhere taught in Scripture, and is certainly not implied in Romans 5:15 through 19. All men die because of the sin of one man. They all die because Adam is their head. That is Adam's place in Holy Writ, and in the counsel of the living God. *In sinning* he represents all men. To say that this implies that he could have therefore merited eternal and heavenly life for himself and all his posterity does not at all follow. Romans 5 surely does not establish this thought.

Fourthly, this idea of a covenant of works contradicts one of the most fundamental principles of Holy Writ. It is certainly a fundamental conception of Holy Writ that man can never merit anything before the Lord. This the exponents of "Common Grace" will acknowledge, but they hasten to add that God has graciously affixed to Adam's obedience the reward of eternal life. But where do we ever read in Scripture that man, in the way of obedience, can ever gain anything above that which he already possesses? To the contrary, we read in Luke 17:10: "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do." This text surely teaches us that even when we do all that is commanded of us we remain unprofitable servants. And, this lies in the nature of the case. Is not all that we have the Lord's? We read in Ps. 24:1-2: "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. For He hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods." Hence, all that we possess is the Lord's, our gold and silver and all our possessions. Besides, we ourselves are the Lord's, are creatures of His hand. We can therefore never present anything unto the Lord, give Him something. Besides, to serve and glorify the Lord is our obligation and duty. Having, therefore, done all that which was required of us we remain unprofitable servants, inasmuch as we did our duty and nothing more. To have done less would have involved us in shortcomings, in sin. This certainly also applies to Adam. In fact, it is not only true that this, generally speaking, applied to Adam, but never was a man more conscious of this fact than the father of the hu-

man race. He certainly was conscious, as no other man could be, of the fact that the Lord had created him. Indeed, how conscious Adam must have been of this fact! He was not born but created. No creature had as yet been born. Every creature, all things had been given existence through the word of God's mouth, the word of God's almighty power. Adam certainly stood before the Lord in all the consciousness of a creature, as the creature before his Creator as the vessel before the Potter, as the finite before the Infinite Lord. Besides, he was created in all righteousness and holiness, with the love of God in his heart and soul and mind. How great the Creator of heaven and earth must have appeared to the creature of His hand! The truth of Luke 17:10 certainly lived in Adam's soul! And the presentation that man can attain unto something extra in the way of obedience is surely a violation of this particular Word of God.

Finally, and surely not the least, the "covenant of works" is a denial of the Christ, the Mediator Divinely ordained from before the foundation of the world. On the one hand, what a pity, if Adam could have attained unto eternal and heavenly life and obtained it also for all his descendents, that this did not occur! I say: if Adam could have obtained this for himself and all his descendents. Indeed, if all that Christ does is to attain unto that which could also have been realized by Adam, then this entire vale of tears and sorrow and death is surely an accident, or, if you will, surely unnecessary and therefore eternally regrettable! A thing is surely unnecessary when something could have been realized without it! Had Adam remained standing and obedient to the Divine command, thus the reasoning runs, he and all his posterity would have attained unto eternal and heavenly glory. Why then, this vale of tears and sorrow and death? And let us by all means not overlook this tremendous consideration. This worldly sorrow and grief is not to be minimized. Man already has had almost six thousand years of unceasing misery and trouble. Sickness and death, agony of body and soul, wars and rumours of war, misery of every description has plagued and pursued mankind relentlessly throughout the ages. What a pity if all this could have been avoided and averted! However, this in itself is already inconceivable. There are no accidents or incidentals or unnecessary things with the Lord. He is the God of infinite understanding and wisdom! There is therefore a Divine reason, a Divine purpose for all things. His counsel, we read, shall stand and the Lord shall do all His good pleasure. His counsel shall always stand, and He is always doing His good pleasure. Supralapsarianism? The Word of God is certainly

not infralapsarian. The Lord makes no mistakes. The Lord never does half work. His work is never patch-work. Jehovah never retraces His steps and therefore does nothing unnecessarily. This very thought is repulsive, a reflection upon the Name of the alone and eternally blessed God. The wisdom of the Lord certainly implies that He has adapted the best means unto the best end. Surely, one can hardly believe that the everlasting Father, full of mercy and love and compassion, would permit an ages long night of misery and sorrow for the people whom He loves, if the same eternal glory could have been reached without all this sorrow and misery and agony and death. However, in connection with this theory of the covenant of works and the possibility for Adam to attain unto eternal and heavenly life there is another point worthy of consideration. It is declared that the father of the human race could have attained unto this heavenly perfection for himself and all his descendants. But, what room is there, then, in this presentation for the doctrine of election and reprobation? Adam is presented with the choice to obtain eternal life for himself and all his descendants? But how can this be? Then sin would never have entered into this world? And, the Lord elected and reprobated from before the foundation of the world? How must we harmonize these conflicting ideas? God presented Adam with this choice, did He not? And the Lord means what He says, does He not? This means that the Lord well-meaningly presents a possibility to Adam which is in irreconcilable conflict with His counsel of election and reprobation. This is impossible. Adam represents the human race *only in his fall*. And this is Adam's purpose in the Divine scheme of things. And this is not yet all! The theory of a covenant of works is a denial of the Christ. The exponents of an offer of salvation lay all emphasis, do they not, upon the well-meaning character of this offer. When God, therefore, revealed to Adam that it was possible for him to obtain eternal and heavenly life for himself and all his descendants in the way of perfect obedience, the Lord certainly meant this, did he not? But how is this possible? Do we not read in Ps. 2:6-9: "Yet have I set My king upon My holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee. Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." And, in Eph. 1:8-12 we read this amazing passage: "Wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Hav-

ing made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him: In Whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will: That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ." And, who is not acquainted with that glorious passage in Col. 1:15-20, and we again quote: "Who is the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature: For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church: Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." Christ is the Heir of the world, is He not, and this from before the foundation of the world. The Lord Jesus Christ is He through Whom we must receive everlasting life and glory. It is Christ, Who, according to the mystery of God's will, must gather together all things that are in heaven and that are upon the earth. Not Adam! Christ is He Who must build God's Church out of and upon the Divinely willed and effected ruins of sin and death and darkness. Indeed, nothing is an accident. All things occupy the place which the blessed God has ordained for them. We cannot and therefore may not say it differently. This truth, and this truth alone, gives the Church of the living God comfort in the midst of all the trials and sorrows of this present evil world and dispensation. To say that the possibility existed for Adam to attain unto eternal life in the way of obedience is the same as saying that the possibility existed that eternal life would not be realized for us in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence, the covenant of works denies this glorious truth, presents Christ as succeeding only after Adam failed.

Adam's relation to God was a covenant relation.

We need not at this time enter into a detailed discussion of the idea of the covenant. It was not too long ago that we devoted several articles to this subject which we view as the glorious heritage of our

Protestant Reformed Churches. We believe that the covenant is the relationship of living friendship between God and His elect people in Christ Jesus, which the Lord has eternally willed for them from before the foundation of the world, has established and founded it in the death and resurrection of the Lord, and which He realized by irresistible grace in the hearts of His elect people from generation to generation, usually in their infancy. However, we need not again enter into a detailed discussion of this fundamental truth. At this time we merely wish to emphasize our covenant conception as it is based upon the creation of Adam and the relation wherein he stood to the living God. To do so, however it is well to bear in mind the definition of the covenant as a relationship of living friendship. As has been stated previously, there are fundamentally but two possible conceptions of the covenant. According to the one conception the covenant is the end itself, whereas according to the other view the covenant is the means unto the end. Whether one views the covenant as identical with the promise or as the way of salvation or as an agreement or pact between God and man, the fact remains that all these various views consider the covenant as a means to an end, not the end itself. We, however, believe that the covenant is not merely something incidental, merely a means unto an end, but the end itself, a relationship of living friendship between God and His people. The fundamental idea of the covenant is that of friendship, the very essence of the salvation which the Lord has willed for His elect own in Christ Jesus.

Adam's relationship to God was surely such a covenant relationship. Mind you, Adam was created by God. He was created, Divinely placed in the relationship. God did not enter with Adam into any kind of an agreement or pact. Adam did not, for example, promise that he would serve the Lord with all his heart and mind and soul and strength, and God, in turn did not promise to bless Adam if he would remain faithful. We do not read in the Word of God that the father of the human race consented to be God's servant, that he voluntarily entered into this agreement which, then, was sovereign in the sense that it came wholly from the Lord. Adam was simply created the Lord's servant. He had no choice in the matter. This is and must be a self-evident truth. It is simply a fact that the father of the human race owed his existence solely to the Lord Who created Him. Besides, Adam was created in the image of God. He was created in true knowledge, righteousness and holiness. He was created so that he reflected the perfection of the living God in a creaturely way, was adapted to the service of the living God in distinction from every other living

creature about him. As he came forth from the hand of his Maker he stood with his face toward the living God, knew the Lord, was filled with the love of God, was simply created God's friend-servant in the midst of the world. Besides, how could the living God and His finite creature ever enter into a reciprocal agreement? Does man ever determine whether he can or should serve the living God? So we understand that when we say that the covenant is a relationship of living friendship between God and man that Adam was God's friend-servant, we certainly may base this conception upon the creation of Adam in the state of rectitude. The question of serving the Lord was never an issue with the first man. He served and loved the Lord his God spontaneously. And he did so because of his creation by the living God. Hence, this relationship of living friendship was indeed a fact in the state of rectitude, the fruit of God's creation of man. Adam did not enter into this friendship; he was created the friend-servant of Jehovah.

H. Veldman



As when the weary trav'ller gains
 The sight of some o'erlooking hill,
 His heart revives, if 'cross the plains
 He eyes his home, tho' distant still:

Thus, when the Christian pilgrim views,
 By faith, his mansion in the skies;
 The sight his fainting strength renews
 And wings his speed to reach the prize.

The thought of home his spirit cheers,
 No more he grieves for troubles past;
 Nor any future trial fears,
 So he may safe arrive at last.

'Tis there, he says, I am to dwell
 With Jesus, in the realms of day:
 There I shall bid my cares farewell,
 And he will wipe my tears away.

Jesus, on thee our hope depends.
 To lead us on to thine abode;
 Assur'd our home will make amends
 For all our toil while on the road.

SION'S ZANGEN

De Lofzang Der Liefde

(Psalm 116; Vierde Deel)

We zijn toegekomen aan het achtste vers van dezen lofzang der liefde. Toen we de laatste maal stilstonden bij dezen zang, beluisterden we den dichter die zijn ziel toezong: Keer weder tot uwe rust, want de Heere heeft aan u welgedaan!

Hij zal dit weldoen accentueeren: "Want Gij Heere, hebt mijne ziel gered van den dood, mijne oogen van tranen, mijnen voet van aanstoot."

Keer weder tot uwe rust, mijn ziel!

En hier is de eerste reden: De Heere redde zijn ziel van den dood. Wat een reden. En hoe persoonlijk! De zanger schrijft geen dissertatie aangaande de redding der ziel van den dood, neen, maar hij zal het God Persoonlijk toeroepen: Gij, Heere, hebt mijne ziel uit den dood gered!

Het is zeer benauwd geweest. We weten de bijzonderheden niet. Maar alreede in het derde vers hoorden we van den dood. Daar waren het immers de banden des doods die hem omvingen. En hier spreekt hij tot God en dankt Hem voor redding uit den dood.

De dood wenkt ieder uur! Plotseling komt die bode soms tot ons. Er zijn menschen die in slechts één oogenblik weggeraapt worden door den dood, vooral nu in het tijdperk der wereldgeschiedenis waar duizende uitvindingen wenken, en door het menschdom aangewend worden. De dood wenkt ieder uur.

Doch hier was het niet een plotseling gevaar van sterven. O neen. Het is overduidelijk, dat de zanger voor een betrekkelijk langen tijd in gevaar van zijn leven verkeerde. Hij kon het zien, ervaren, want immers hij zegt in het zesde vers, dat hij uitgeteerd was. Hij had de banden des doods al gevoeld.

Doch de Heere was ter elfder ure gekomen, en had hem verlost uit den dood.

Meer nog. De Heere had zijne oogen gered van tranen.

Tranen schreit men vanwege de smarten des doods die ons omvangen. De traan is gegeven om uiting te geven aan innerlijk verdriet en smart. En dat is goed. Het is goed als men uithuilen kan. Als de smart opgekropt wordt, dan wordt het erger.

Evenwel, het lieflijkst is als men zijn tranen gedroogd ziet, en als men weer mag glimlachen, en ademen na zooveel bang verdriet.

Driemaal lezen we in den Bijbel, dat God de tranen van onze oogen zal afwischen. Tweemaal in Jesaja, en eenmaal in de Openbaring van Johannes. God redt Zijn volk van de tranen die uitdrukking zijn van al de smarten die over ons kwamen.

En van Gods zijde is het de openbaring van de redding, de verlossing in Jezus Christus.

Deze zanger werd gered van tranen.

Ik moet hier denken aan de prijs die betaald werd voor dit afwischen der tranen. Ik lees in de Evangelien tweemaal, dat Jezus weende. In de profetie van Psalm 22 spreekt de Geest Gods van *de woorden Zijns brullens*. En in het onvergetelijke gedeelte van Hebreë 5, lees ik van "sterke roeping en tranen" die Hij geofferd heeft.

Gedenkt hieraan: Jezus weende om U en mij te redden van de tranen die anders eeuwiglijk zouden vloeien, vloeien. Ik sidder als ik lees: "en daar zal weening zijn en knersing der tanden."

"Mijnen voet van aanstoot."

Een aanstoot hebben is vreeselijk.

Er is een aanstoot die in één woord verschrikkelijk is. Men leest er keer op keer van in Gods Woord. Dat is de aanstoot aller aanstooten. Dat is de fundamenteele aanstoot. Ik heb het oog op alle plaatsen van Gods Woord waar de Heilige Geest gewaagt van den Steen des aanstoots, van de Rots der ergernis. Wie op dezen steen valt, die zal verpletterd worden; en op wien hij valt, dien zal hij vermorzelen.

Het is de Steen die tot een hoofd des hoeks geworden is van den Heere.

Jezus is de groote Aanstoot.

Simeon sprak ervan in zijne profetie.

Die Steen maakt de gedachten des harten openbaar. En als men geen genade ontvangt, dan is Jezus zulk eenen tot een aanstoot.

Waarom?

Omdat Jezus ons aanklaagt van zonde, gerechtigheid en oordeel. En Hij doet dat juist in Zijn Jezus-zijn. Nooit is Hij meerder de Steen des aanstoots geweest als toen Hij Zijn Jezus-zijn bewees, en ging hangen, naakt, bebloed, gehoond en bespot aan het vervloekte hout. Van God en alle menschen verlaten, en bestookt door de benden der hel. "Wat hitte doet Mij branden! O schriklijk uur!"

Want daar en toen bewees Hij hoe God toornet op onze zonden, op de zonden der uitverkorenen. Die vreeselijke kruis-episode (?), (eigenlijk onzin, want het was een eeuwigheid van toornen en branden), leeraart, dat we doemwaardig en vervloekelingen zijn van nature, kinderen des toorns, gelijk ook de anderen.

En zoo is Jezus de groote Aanstoot.

En die Aanstoot bedreigt ook Gods volk. De oordeelsdag zal openbaren hoe vaak ook wij ons geërgerd hebben aan dien Jezus. We lezen, dat Jezus profeteerde hoe alle Zijne discipelen aan Hem geërgerd zouden worden. Ik denk, dat Hij ook mij daarbij insloot. Ik heb me vaak aan Hem geërgerd. O, God, vergeef!

En hier hooren we hoe de zanger zich zag in het bange gevaar om zich te stooten aan Jezus, dat is, aan God.

Het staat er vreeselijk bij met ons als zondaren. Want we zijn altijd in gevaar om ons te ergeren aan het lieflijkste dat God ooit openbaarde. Laat God op U aankomen, en laat de genade uitblijven—en ge ergert U aan den op U toetredenden God. Zoo vuil en goddeloos zijn we van nature.

Doch God redde dezen man van aanstoot. In het Engelsch staat er: van te vallen. Wel, dat is eigenlijk hetzelfde. Want als ge U stoot aan God, dan gaat ge zekerlijk vallen. Daar zijn geen uitzonderingen op.

En nu komt er een jubelklank in zijn lied: "Ik zal wandelen voor het aangezicht des Heeren, in de landen der levenden."

Wat een grootheid van zegen ligt in deze woorden!

De Heere is Jehovah, de onveranderlijke Verbonds-God. Hij beminde dezen man van voor de grondlegging der wereld.

Onveranderlijk, zeide ik. Laat dat staan. Want Jehovah is de Ik zal zijn die Ik zijn zal. Hij verandert niet. De Heilige Geest zegt van Zich zelf en van den Vader en den Zoon, dat er geen schaduw van omkeering in God is.

Dat bewees Hij.

Want toen Zijn geliefde kerk onderdompelde in den eeuwigden dood, toen bleef Hij beminnen en liefhebben Zijne bruid.

Onveranderlijk, want Jehovah kwam in *anno creationis* 4000, en ging naar de hel toe voor die bruid.

En die Jehovah heeft een aangezicht. Eigenlijk had ik dat woord met een hoofdletter moeten schrijven want dat Aangezicht is Jezus. Aangezicht is openbaring. In dat Aangezicht zien we God, den Onzienlijke. We zien Gods deugden van liefde in Zijn Aangezicht, en dat is Jezus. Zeide Hij niet, dat Hij hier op aarde dien God verklaarde?

En voor dat Aangezicht van dien Jehovah wandelt deze man. Wandelen is het leven van den mensch vanuit zijn harte. Wandelen doet men van zijn geboorte tot zijn laatste snik. En de wandel van de geredden is voor het stralende Aangezicht van Jehovah.

Daarom gaan ze hier op aarde naar de kerk. Want vooral in de kerk zien ze het stralende Aangezicht van God. Ze hongeren naar dat Aangezicht. En ze zullen blijven hongeren naar dat Aangezicht, totdat vervuld wordt het Woord van God, hetwelk ze al zingende in de kerk beleden hebben: "Verzadigd met Zijn Goddelijk Beeld."

"In de landen der levenden." Daar zal deze man wandelen voor het Aangezicht van den onveranderlijken VerbondsJehovah.

We lezen vaak van het land der schaduwen des doods.

Dat is de hel.

Hier is sprake van het land, neen, de landen der levenden.

Dat is de hemel, daarboven bij God.

En dat er gesproken wordt in het meervoud komt hier vandaan, omdat er bij God altijd overvloed is. God is niet karig. De rivier Gods is vol waters. Hij is een overvloeiende Fontein aller goeden. Ik hoor van *rijken* zegen. God zet ons, door Jezus' redding, in de *ruimte*. Er zijn *landen* voor de levenden zoodat ze mogen wandelen naar hartelust. Er is niets bekrompens in God. Het is wel waar, dat we van onze zijde nauwelijks zalig worden. Maar niet van Gods zijde.

En soms wordt ons dat getoond.

Zoo ook hier. Hij ziet in de vergezichten des geloofs de landerijen waar ook Jesaja van sprak.

En er zijn kleine oogenblikken hier op aarde, dat we er iets van zien en smaken. Dan weidt onze ziel met een verwonderend oog.

En wat is de van God geordende weg waardoor we deze groote zaligheid benaderen?

Hier is hij: "Ik heb geloofd, daarom sprak ik, ik ben zeer bedrukt geweest."

Paulus heeft deze klanken gehoord, en ook verklaard. In het verband spreekt hij van het overgeven worden in den dood om Jezus' wil, doch ook, dat God ons door Jezus zal opwekken en met de gansche kerk daar zal stellen. En zoo zegt Paulus, dat hij en zijne helpers denzelfden geest des geloofs hebben die sprak in het Oude Testament, en dat is dezen psalm: Ik heb geloofd, en daarom sprak ik.

De zanger wil ons leeren, dat de ontboezeming van dezen psalm, dat dit loflied der liefde een vrucht is van het geloof, dat in zijn hart gewerkt was door den Heiligen Geest.

Gods volk gelooft, en daarom heeft die kerk nu al voor zestig eeuwen gesproken. En ze zullen blijven spreken totdat geen maan meer schijnt. En hun spreken is een beschrijving van de redding die principieel

in het hart plaatsvindt: ze zeggen bij den voortduur: we gaan wandelen voor het Aangezicht van Jehovah in de landen der levenden. Of, zooals Paulus het zeggen zou veel later: God gaat ons tezamen met de geheele kerk opwekken en voor Zich stellen in den hemel der hemelen.

“Ik ben zeer bedrukt geweest.”

We willen hier iets van zeggen in verband met wat volgt: “Ik zeide in mijn haasten: alle menschen zijn leugenaars.”

Ziet ge, David denkt terug aan de benauwdheid zijner ziel. Hij was zeer bedrukt geweest. Er was benauwdheid van binnen, en vervolging van buiten.

In dien toestand, in zijn *haasten*, hetwelk ook verstaald mag door *sidderen*, zeide hij: alle menschen zijn leugenaars, dat wil zeggen, ik kon mij in al mijn elende niet verlaten op den mensch die mij omringde. Want des menschen redding is ijdelheid. Het is als de man die zijn huis op den zandgrond bouwde. In de siddering zijner ziel, onder de slagen des Almachtigen, wendde hij zich niet tot den mensch, doch in zijn geloof wendde hij zich tot God die hem redde.

En daarom moet men wel onderscheiden hier.

In zekeren zin kan en mag men niet zeggen dat alle menschen leugenaars zijn. Want ik lees, dat er een volk is waarvan God zegt: “Zij zijn immers Mijn volk, kinderen die niet liegen zullen?”

Hoe moeten we dit verklaren?

David zegt in mijn lied der liefde, dat alle menschen leugenaars zijn, en Jesaja zegt door den Heiligen Geest, dat Gods volk een volk is, dat niet liegen zal.

Het antwoord is als volgt: alle menschen zijn leugenaars, dat wil zeggen, ze kunnen niet behouden, redden, verlossen hun broeder. Zoo zegt Habakkuk dat het veld *liegen* zal, d.w.z., dat het land teleurstelde.

Maar Gods volk is een volk, dat niet liegen zal, en dat ziet op het hoogheerlijke feit, dat zij de fundamentele leugen niet uitspreken. En wat is die oorspronkelijke en fundamentele leugen? Dit: Er is geen God! Jesaja ziet Gods volk zooals Johannes hen zag en zeide: Die uit God geboren is zondigt niet, want hij kan niet zondigen.

Maar onze zanger van dit lied der liefde had een fundament noodig, de Rots die van geen wankelen weet, en die Rots vond hij niet bij den mensch doch bij den onveranderlijken VerbondsJehovah.

En zoo krijgt God alléén de eer, en dat is goed!

G. Vos.

IN HIS FEAR

Looking To The Future

Chapter 2

THE TEACHER PROBLEM (SUGGESTIONS TOWARDS SOLUTION)

Thus far we have offered a few suggestions toward solution of those problems which are connected particularly with the procurement and maintenance of a teaching staff in our Protestant Reformed schools.

This, as we have said, is to a large extent a formal and administrative problem.

A far more important matter is that of seeing to it that the teaching staff which we procure and which we seek to maintain as permanently as possible *consists of qualified Protestant Reformed teachers*. Important it is, because if such teachers we do not have, then our entire movement for Protestant Reformed education fails: it is merely *outwardly* separatistic. And if the separation is *only outward*, consisting in separate societies, separate boards, separate buildings, separate administrations merely, then it had been better by far if we had never separated. Our aim must be: 100% Protestant Reformed instruction for Protestant Reformed children. From that goal we must never deviate. We may never rest until that goal is attained! Protestant Reformed teachers are one of the prime requisites in the attainment of that goal. For them, therefore, we must seek.

And a few suggestions toward solution of that aspect of the teacher-problem we now make.

As To Qualified Protestant Reformed Teachers

Again the reader must bear in mind that some of these suggestions will be impossible of fulfillment *at present* because of circumstances. There is a proverb that runs, “Beggars can’t be choosers.” And it applies in the present case in a way. We have a teacher-shortage. And because of that shortage we are beggars: we have to beg for teachers. And because we have to beg for teachers, we can’t always choose the kind of teachers we would like to have and should have. This is no evil reflection on our teachers: they are caught in the same net of circumstances. And in many cases we may be glad when we have teachers at all, and should be glad too. But the fact remains that because we are caught in this trap of a teacher-shortage, our teachers do not measure up al-

ways to the ideal. However, the point is this: the fact that we are enmeshed in this net of circumstances must not deter us from the ideal of obtaining *qualified teachers*. In time, if we do not keep before us the ideal in obtaining teachers, it is going to be detrimental to our schools and to our children, both from the educational and the spiritual viewpoint.

We therefore must follow a two-fold course. On the one hand, we must keep before us certain rules, principles, in this matter of procuring qualified teachers, as the ideal toward which we strive. And on the other hand, we must *strive* toward that ideal, that is, we must not wait for the ideal to happen merely, to come to us, but we must attain to the ideal. And in order to do so, we must apply the rules which we adopt as much as possible and practicable under the present circumstances and at the same time work toward overcoming the circumstances which make complete application of these rules impossible for the present.

And let me warn you: that means hard work for all involved.

The present matter also has two aspects, as we pointed out in our delineation of the problem. There is the formal, educational aspect: our teachers must be *teachers*. And there is the material aspect: our teachers must be *Protestant Reformed* teachers. The two are closely intertwined, but we may distinguish them in our treatment.

To the formal aspect we give our attention first. And we would suggest the following.

1. All other things being equal, preference should be given to the *fully trained teacher*. This means very definitely that if a school board is able to replace a partly-trained teacher by a fully-trained teacher, it should do so without compunction.

2. All other things being equal, preference should be given to a teacher with more teaching ability. This means that if a teacher of mediocre ability, either as to the subject matter as such or as to disciplinary ability, can be replaced by a teacher of higher ability, a school board should not hesitate to take the step. This, of course, will mean "the survival of the fittest" as far as the teachers are concerned. But let us face the facts, then, both as teachers and as school boards. The school is at stake, not the teacher merely. And no school should suffer because a school board is loathe,—for whatever may be the reason,—to discharge a mediocre teacher in favor of a better one.

3. Our schools should set high standards as to

what constitutes a fully-trained teacher. The trend is for the states to set increasingly high educational requirements for teachers. We should not be backward in this respect. From an educational viewpoint it is certainly a very detrimental policy to allow a high school graduate to teach primary school children, for example. The very minimum requirement should be a complete normal course. We should insist on nothing but the best also from an educational aspect.

4. All other things being equal, preference should be given to a *full-time* teacher. I know from experience the detriment of employing part-time teachers: for once upon a time I was a part-time teacher, teaching half-days for one semester. It does neither teacher nor school nor pupil much good, I can assure you, and should be allowed only in emergency. But there are also teachers who can be present full-time as far as school hours are concerned, but who are nevertheless part-time teachers for various reasons. There is the case of the teacher who has of his own volition all kinds of side-duties and side-projects to attend to, and who as a result can not give adequate time to his work as teacher outside of school hours. There is the case of the married woman teacher, who has a family to take care of besides a class. Now I grant that at times a school board may be forced to engage such a teacher, but that is not the ideal. And it should be avoided as much as possible. A teacher must be a teacher.

As to the material aspect of the problem of procuring qualified teachers for Protestant Reformed schools much may be said.

On the basis of what we have written in regard to the problem itself, we may point out the following.

First of all, the measures which we can and must take now toward the solution of this problem are only emergency, stop-gap measures.

We face here one of the major problems of our movement for Protestant Reformed education, as we have indicated. And the problem is far from solved, too.

And the reason is that logically we have put the cart before the horse. Logically you need Protestant Reformed teachers in order to establish a Protestant Reformed school. And that implies that you need Protestant Reformed training of teachers. Ideally, therefore, our teacher-training institution should have been established *first*, and our primary schools last. But what have we done? The history has been that we have established primary schools in several places, and to this date we have no facilities of our own for Protestant Reformed teacher-training.

This is what increases the problem of obtaining Protestant Reformed teachers immensely.

And this is what also necessitates being satisfied for the present with stop-gap measures. As long as we have no teacher-training facilities of our own, our educational system is not going to run smoothly. It will run, but with great difficulty. It will run like an engine that isn't hitting on all its cylinders.

And therefore, we should bear in mind, in the second place, that the *major solution* to this problem is *the establishment of our own teacher-training facilities*. This is not the time to fully discuss this subject: we believe that this is a problem all by itself, and hope to discuss it later in this series. But let us now understand that we may not and must not be satisfied as long as our teachers receive their training in Reformed or Christian Reformed or even outright worldly institutions. It may be granted that such institutions may train teachers. But it lies in the very nature of the case that such institutions cannot train *Protestant Reformed* teachers, that is, train them to be Protestant Reformed in their teaching. You don't get cookies at a hardware store. You don't get Protestant Reformed teachers from a non-Protestant Reformed college.

For the present, therefore, we are faced with a serious gap in our educational system. And that gap must be plugged.

I believe too that the gap can be plugged through diligent and consistent effort on the part of all concerned. To some suggestions along this line we hope to call attention next time.

But by all means, let us make up our minds not to be satisfied with stop-gap measures. We don't want a constant state of emergency.

H. C. Hoeksema

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NOTICE

The Consistory of the Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, Illinois herewith gives notice to our churches that the Synod will meet on Wednesday, June 4, 1952 at South Holland. The pre-Synodical Sermon will be delivered by the Rev. G. Vos, president of the Synod of 1951. The time of this service will 7:30 P.M., Tuesday, June 3rd.

John Van Baren, *Clerk*

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Matthew 5:9

In this essay we intend to call attention to the beautiful and well-known words: "*Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God.*"

Have you ever heard it said, dear reader, that we human mortals do not know who the elect of God are? I have. And generally this is a contention that comes from the lips of either the unlearned and weak in faith, or, what is worse, from the lips of him who knows neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.

Do not be led astray by the oft-repeated assertion, that we do not know who the elect are. For this statement is only true in a very relative sense. If those making this assertion mean, that we do not know with absolute and infallible certainty who are true believers in distinction from hypocrites, then this assertion, that we do not know who the elect are, is true. And, again, if what is meant, is that there are elect of God who are not yet brought to conscious faith and, therefore, do not yet manifest the life of grace, then too this assertion is true. It is, however, very relatively true, that we do not know who the elect are.

Let it be clearly understood, that there is a sense in which we do know who the elect of God are, and that, too, infallibly.

In the first place, God has certainly called His elect people out of darkness into His marvelous light *to declare His praises*. We do not need to live in doubt whether we are living with those who are the elect church, or whether we are in the midst of the world of unbelief. For the fruit of grace is the confession of God's Name in Jesus Christ, our Lord. A good tree bringeth forth good fruit and an evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit; a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, nor can an evil tree bring forth corrupt fruit. Says Jesus: by their fruits ye shall know them; by the fruits of confession and walk. Our fathers in the Canons of Dort speak of the infallible fruits of election. Compare Matthew 7:16-20 and Canons of Dort, Chapter I, Art. 12. Secondly, God has also given His word of assurance to the individual believer, that he has life eternal while believing; God testifies in the heart of each believer, so that this believer cries by the power of the Holy Spirit: Abba Father. His Spirit testifies with our spirit, that we are the sons of God.

Hence, we conclude that there is a sense in which we do know who the elect are, and that it is our busi-

ness to know from the fruits of election both as to ourselves and to others.

With this in mind our Scripture passage is at once enlightening and practical. This Scripture passage, too, is instruction unto godliness. For all Scripture is given by inspiration and is profitable to instruct, reproof, correction in righteousness, that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto every good work.

Let us give our sanctified attention to this passage.

Our text speaks of "peacemakers". Who are they?

In order to clearly understand, who the "peacemakers" are, it is first of all of importance to understand, the Scriptural teaching concerning the *making of peace* in this world. Certainly, if anything is clearly taught in Scripture, it is this, that the world of unbelieving men, who are haters of God, will never have peace, nor will they ever be able to make, to bring about peace in the true sense of the Word of God. And yet, in spite of this clear and well-known teaching of the Word of God, there is nothing that the world of unbelief speaks of so much as of the making of peace on earth. Yes, especially on the earth. The making of peace that reaches into the very heavens is a theme on which men of unbelief are silent in every language.

Why are they silent on the theme of peace also in the heavens? For the very obvious reason, that they do not understand the Word of the Cross. They do not understand that Christ is the Great Peacemaker and that His making of peace is indeed on earth, but that it is not at all limited to the earth. These unbelievers err knowing neither the Scriptures nor the power of God displayed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. They dream, for vain dreamers they are, of a reign of peace on earth apart from the Lord's Christ. And God has them in derision. The nations, indeed, imagine vain things.

This is the vain dream of Post-millennialism too. It looks at the history of the world as a process of gradually ascension from the lower to the higher state on society. Gradually mankind will outgrow and overcome its ills. Socially, politically, economically man will come to the higher state and condition of peace and harmony. There is still hope for man. Oh, the world will go through a "crisis" just as a very sick patient, but the fever will subside! gradually the patient will return to a state of normalcy. The Utopia of the "better world" will yet be reached. It looks very dark at the present moment, it is said, but there will dawn a better day.

This imaginary "peacemaking" is not that of the Scriptures, nor are these "peacemakers" those of Matthew 5:9.

The peacemaking of our text is that which is wrought in this world by the Wonder of Grace in Jesus Christ.

This is the peace that will be realized finally when the law of God shall be written perfectly in the heart of all the redeemed, and when the Tabernacle of God shall be with man. It is the peace that shall not only be realized on this earth, but it will be a peace of the new heaven and new earth, where righteousness shall dwell!

For we must bear the following in mind.

In the first place we must notice, that mankind is hopelessly lost and perishes under the wrath of God almighty; man as he is by nature can never "make peace" and establish righteousness on the earth. For let it not be forgotten that such is man's state as observed by God Himself, and as He has told us in His Word. For there is not that seeketh after God, there is none that understandeth, they have all gone backward and become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good and makes peace, no not one. Man is totally depraved in relationship to God. And, therefore, he is also totally corrupt in relation to his fellow-men, and nation rises against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there is no peace to the wicked, saith God. Their waters cast up mire and filth. They are full of restlessness and cannot sleep unless they sin. For their throat is an open sepulchre, with their tongue they use deceit, the poison of asps is under their lips, their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness, their feet are swift to shed blood, destruction and misery are in their ways, and the *way of peace they have not known*. There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Such is the picture of mankind. Such is the picture also of the citizens of the Kingdom, the elect, as they *are by nature*. Such is, indeed, the flesh of the elect; in this flesh there dwells no good for it is simply full of iniquity sold under sin. The elect, the believers, are in themselves never peacemakers. Nay, we are by nature the very opposite; we are those whose ways are full of destruction and misery!

This we must keep in mind. Only thus will we be able to see the implication of *Christ being our peace*.

But now God has thoughts of peace. He would make a peace that could from its very nature never enter into the heart of man. His peace is Wonder, it is the Mystery of godliness, that is great. Our fathers spoke of the "Vrede-Raad", the Counsel of Peace. They loved to speak of the eternal Counsel of God wherein He sovereignly determined to bring such a peace upon earth, that even the angels, who always behold His face, might rejoice at the prospect of

it as in its realization. Wherefore the angels sing at Christ's birth: Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth among the men of His good-pleasure.

According to this Counsel of Peace God works all things. (Eph. 1:11). Also according to this Counsel of Peace God sends His Son in the fulness of time, that He might be born from a woman and made under law. And that under law He might redeem us from the curse of the law, and that we might thus be brought to God. Such is the purpose of God in sending His Son. Thus He is our peace, having made peace for us in His perfect Sacrifice on the Cross.

In this peace we share as the elect of God legally being justified by faith. He hath sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, so that we are freely justified and have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And in the knowledge of the sweetness of this peace, whereby the "godless" are justified we understand the "Secret" of peacemaking. The secret is in forgiving even as we have been forgiven. It is the law of the Kingdom, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

We now are ready also to say who the "peacemakers" are in our text.

They certainly are not the "peacemakers" in the world who with diplomacy, with the mere natural ability to "get along" with men try to make this world a "better place to live." It is more than the natural slogan of "keep smiling". The peacemakers of this world never bring about anything lasting or real, because they have no foundation of righteousness to undergird them in their labors. The wounds of bitterness and strife can never be healed apart from the work of Christ on Calvary. Hence, all the peace of the unbelieving world is shallow sham. Such are not the peacemakers of my text, who are called "blessed".

But who are they then?

They are those who make peace with their "neighbors" because by faith they stand on the Gilbraltor Rock of Christ's work of having accomplished lasting peace with God in His death and resurrection.

Inwardly the peacemaker is strong in humility. He has tasted the humility of Jesus. He has learned that Jesus is meek and lowly of heart. He has found rest for his soul. It is a spiritual-psychological reality that the man who makes trouble does so because He is not at peace with God. Love is not at all or "not yet" perfected in him. The outward manifestation simply reveals the internal warfare of the lusts. He has not learned that the Spirit of God never incites to envy, but always gives more grace. But the peacemaker has learned that blessed truth. The Spirit gives more grace. And being led by this Spirit the

Peacemaker sows the peaceable fruit of righteousness. He is then not temptable of evil and does not tempt others. The Evil One does not take hold of him.

Behold, then the blessedness of such a one!

In his very nature it is written, not with ink, but with the Spirit of grace: sons of God. He reveals the Father's work among men. Image-bearer of God he is in an evil world. He is made like unto the image of Christ the First-born Son. He has the first-fruits of the full harvest. Presently he shall stand amidst the multitude of the sons of God, the great Family of the heavenly Father in eternal blessedness!

G. C. Lubbers

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THE DAY OF SHADOWS

Thou Art The Man

"Thou art the man". It was Nathan speaking. And the accusing finger of the prophet was pointed to David. A dreadful chain of sins in David's life had led to this moment. He had co-habited with Bathsheba, while her husband, Uriah, was away fighting Ammonites. When he had learned from the woman that she was with child, he added sin to sin in the attempt to prevent his adultery from becoming public. His first move was to command Joab to send him the Hittite. To conceal the real motive of the summons, he put to Uriah some questions bearing on the progress of the war and thereupon told him to go home. Having cohabited with his wife, it could be said of Uriah that he was the father of the child. But Uriah spent the night with David's servants in the palace. He did not go to his house. It was told David and on the following day he called Uriah to his table and made him drunk in the hope that by his desire as inflamed by the wine he would be driven into the arms of his wife. But the night found him on his bed with the servants of David. However strong the excitement produced by the wine, it could not break down his determination to avoid his wife. Then David took recourse to a new artifice that made murder his minister. He commanded Uriah to return to the battle and supplied him with a letter for Joab instructing the latter to place Uriah in the hottest of the battle and then to withdraw from him that he might be smitten and die. So it was done, and Uriah died in battle. Shortly thereafter David made Bathsheba his wife.

Nine or ten months or perhaps a year had gone by since all this had taken place. In the mean time the child that had been conceived in adultery was born apparently in honorable wedlock. David had seen to that. He had betimes disposed of Uriah and made Bathsheba his wife.

We gaze with horror and consternation upon this black spot in David's career. It shows to what depth it is possible for a saint to fall,—a saint I say. For despite his gross sinning, David was a believer still. For God's people do not fall from grace. Their seed abideth in them. No one, including themselves, surely can pluck them out of Christ's hand. So the Scriptures teach. But in this life they continue to lie in the midst of death, despite their essential goodness. In their flesh there dwells no good thing. And what they would that they do not; but what they hate, that they do. (Rom. 7:15).

Yet, however true this may be, David's gross sinning terrifies. For he was a saint and must even be classified with the most holiest of men. That the believers can allow themselves to be victimized by their depraved lusts to such extent! How the best of them should take to heart the warning of the Scriptures that they stand solely by grace. How they should watch and pray that they fall not, when they stand.

True, David had not pursued sin but had been surprised by it. He did not belong to the category of men of whom the prophets says that they assembled themselves by troops in harlot's houses; and that as fed horses in the morning every one of them neighed after his neighbor's wife (Jer. 5:8, 9). Being a saint, David did not, as do the wicked, walk and revel in sin, taking delight and satisfaction in it.

Yet, surely, David was far from being an innocent victim of his lusts. True, it must be supposed that his eyes had lighted on the woman as by chance and not by the direction of his will. But from this point on he did voluntarily pursue sin. He again looked on the woman now with eyes filled with adulteries. And setting his perverse thought-images before his mind's eye, he kept them there until, as overwhelmed by his inflamed lust he could not resist the temptation to give it expression.

The Scriptures teach us that God punishes sin with sin. Though the heathen knew God, they did not honor Him as God. And in punishment of their sin God gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts to dishonor their own bodies between themselves. Was David's deep fall a case of God's punishing sin with sin? The God-fearing Hezekiah, when healed and saved of God from the hands of the Assyrians, rendered not again according to the benefit

done to him; for his heart was lifted up. (II Chron. 32:24-26). Was David's heart lifted up and did God give him over to uncleanness through the lusts of his flesh in punishment of that sin? The Lord had taken him from deepest obscurity and set him on a throne, even making him the head of the heathen, so that a people which he knew not served him and strangers submitted themselves to him. (II Sam. 22:44). Militarily he had been wondrously successful. He had overthrown all the nations that for ages had been menacing the people of Israel from north to south. On the ruins of their kingdoms he had founded an empire as vast as any of the great kings of the East. Was as a result David's heart lifted up? That would not at all have been strange, seeing that he was but a sinful man. Some years previous, when he perceived that the Lord had established him king over Israel he took him more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem and this though he knew that he was doing the forbidden thing. (Deut. 17:17). And now he was leaving the conduct of the war with the Ammonites to Joab, while he tarried in Jerusalem indulging life's pleasures. That was wrong. His place was in the field with his soldiers. And then his summoning into his presence his neighbor's wife for purposes of adultery, while the neighbor was away risking his life on the battle field for the cause of God—what an atrocity! What it all reveals is that he had grown unspeakably arrogant and that in his pride he had given himself over to pampering his lusts.

Perhaps the worst feature of his vile doings was his attempt at inventing excuses for his sins instead of confessing them. Uriah was a Hittite. The race of men to which he belonged was one of the group of several Canaanite nations originally marked by the ban of God for destruction. "Thou shalt utterly destroy them." (Deut. 30:17). All the humans without distinction of sex and age had to be smitten with the sword. No covenant might be made with these peoples. No mercy might be shown them. Marriages with them had been strictly forbidden. And the reason given is "that they teach you not to do after their abominations". (Deut. 7:1-4).

So, Uriah was a Hittite under the curse of God. His union with Bathsheba was invalid and non-existent in the eyes of God. Any Jew could take her from him without clashing with the prohibition of God: "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

That such was David's reasoning is clearly suggested by the text. On learning that Uriah was a Hittite David, so the text reveals, sent messengers and took her in all likelihood that same evening. But David's reasoning here was false. From Uriah's head

the ban had been lifted. For he was a true Jew. He possessed the circumcision of the heart. His marriage was a sacred thing. And how devoted this converted heathen was to the cause of Israel's God! How great was his zeal! "The ark of God, and Israel, and Judah abide in tents," said he to David, "and my lord Joab, and the servants of my Lord are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into my house to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As thou livest and thy soul livest, I will not do this thing."

And then that other reasoning of David. "The sword devoureth one as well as another." In a word, Uriah's death was none of David's responsibility. It was simply chargeable to the fortunes of war.

Such were his reasonings. Yet he was far from going merrily on his way. For his reasonings were not convincing. How could they be! They were thoroughly fallacious. So his heart continued to condemn him. He walked in darkness and had no peace. The Lord was hiding his face. What agonies of mind and heart were now his portion! His bones waxed old through his roaring all the day long. For night and day the hand of the Lord was heavy upon him: his moisture was turned into the drought of summer. (Ps. 32:3, 4). Conscience told him that he had sinned. But he refused to be instructed. Conscience can err. That he could be guilty of the things whereof his heart accused him was a thought too debasing for words. Thus spake his sinful pride. And therefore he kept silence.

But in the person of Nathan the prophet *the Lord* now confronted him with his sin. Would he refuse to hear the Lord?

But how was Nathan to proceed with this fallen saint? In the spirit of meekness, to be sure. But what was to be the prophet's approach, his method of attack? In his present state David was a problem for the most tactful of shepherds. But he was not a problem for the Lord. He was not a problem for Nathan. For Nathan came to him with the Lord's Word.

Nathan had a dreadful task to perform. He had to hold before David his gross sins. He came to David with a terrible message from the Lord. And this message had to be communicated. But the prophet was undaunted. The secret of his courage was his awareness that he stood before God's face and that he spake God's Word. He did not begin his admonition by pointing his accusing finger directly at David. He would accuse but only after this fallen saint unawares had been made to accuse himself. So the prophet took recourse to the employment of legitimate guile. He posed as one who came to David to plead the

cause of a poor man outraged by his rich neighbor in the matter of a ewe-lamb. The facts in the sad case were there: the rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds. The poor man had but one little ewe lamb that he had bought and raised. The animal was dear to the man and his family. It had grown up together with him and his children. It did eat of his own morsel and drink of his own cup. It lay in his bosom and was to him as a daughter.

There came a wayfarer to the rich man, and lo! he spared to take of his own flocks and of his own herds but he took the poor man's lamb and dressed it for the wayfaring man. What an outrage!

Nathan had spoken in David's ear a parable in which he beheld an image of his own vile self but so disguised that he failed to perceive that the culprit was he. Imagining that the prophet dealt with fact and not with fiction, David as seized by a paroxysm of indignation, pronounced sentence of death upon the heartless offender and thereby condemned himself. "As the Lord liveth, the man that has done this thing shall surely die and he shall restore the lamb fourfold because he did this thing and had no pity." David was even more exacting than God. For the law went no farther than to demand that such an offender as that of Nathan's parable restore five oxen for an ox and four sheep for a sheep. Ex. 22:1. But David demanded that the man be put to death. Yet the man's sin was but a faint echo of the sins that David all along had been excusing in himself. The mote in the brother's eye had him worried and thoroughly provoked, but of the beams in his own eye he willed to take no notice. This is what sin has done to us. It has made hypocrites of us all. And so it was now Nathan's turn to speak. Knowing David to be a man of essential goodness with a strong sense of justice, a man genuinely hateful of all oppression and violence, and therefore ready to denounce sin also in his own life, if made to see his fault, the prophet had counted on this reaction. "And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man." These were shocking words—shocking to David. Doubtless he was visibly hurt. Doubtless his eyes were filled with reproach as they met those of the prophet. It was necessary for Nathan to explain. And so he did. Careful to preface his doleful message to the king with; "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel", the prophet continued: "I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; and I gave thee thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in

his sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.

"And now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.

"Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives from before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbor, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of the sun. For thou didst it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun."

He killed Uriah with the sword of the children of Ammon. That is what his heart had been telling him all along. But he heard it now out of the Lord's own mouth—heard that he despised the Lord's commandment: "Thou shalt not kill" and "thou shalt not commit adultery." Thus he did and this despite all that the Lord had done for him. It raised the terrifying question: why—why had he recompensed the Lord that evil for all His boundless love? How could he? Where lay the fault? There was but one answer. It lay solely with him. He was carnal, sold under sin. O, the amazing sinfulness of sin!

David in his carnality had sown to the flesh and in the remaining years of his life he would have to reap from the flesh corruption. The sword that by his murder of Uriah he had carried into his house would never depart from it. It would abide and sadden his life and fill his soul with anguish by its repeated killings in his own family to his dying day. Absalom would slay Amnon for the rape of Tamar. Then Absalom, as inflamed by ambition, would attempt to push David from the throne and plunge all Israel in a bloody civil war. For his treachery Adonijah would fall by the sword of Solomon.

There was still other evil that would rise up against him from his own house. Absalom would cohabit with his concubines on the roof of the palace in plain sight of all Israel and before the sun. So would the Lord bring into the open the kind of sin that David had committed in secret in order that all might know that his transgressions were being visited upon him by the Lord. All would be the Lord's doing. For so it is written. "Behold, I will raise up evil against thee. . . ." And again: "I will take thy wives before thy eyes. . . ." And finally: "I will do this thing before all Israel. . . ."

To the flesh David had sown murder and adultery, and it is murder and adultery that he must reap from the flesh. For when a man sows to the flesh he reaps just what he sows, as well as when he sows in the soil

of the ground. We see it in the case of David. He had sown to the flesh, in the interest of and as his sinful flesh had dictated, and he reaped from the flesh, the sinful flesh of Absalom and carnal Israel and his own wives exactly what he had sown. For God is not mocked.

Nathan had communicated his message. David had listened, silent and pensive. God had spoken to him from out of the sanctuary now by the objective voice of prophecy. He could argue with his conscience, maintaining that it erred. But would he dispute with God? Being at heart a saint, he had, and could have, but one reply: "I have sinned against the Lord."

Just those words. And that was all. He implored not the prophet that he might be spared from the results of his sin, the killings of that terrible sword. But one thought occupied his mind. He had sinned against the Lord. The confession was good fruit, truly worthy of repentance. The Lord had brought him under the conviction of sin. And so the prophet had still another message for him from the Lord. It was this: "The Lord hath also put away thy sin; thou shalt not die."

The word "also" has significance here. It points to David's confession. That was God's first work in him. The author of it was the Lord. Having done the former, the Lord did also the latter long before the confession had passed this penitent's lips. For take notice of the tense: "The Lord *hath* forgiven thee." Nathan knew; for God had told him. And therefore there was no need of the prophet adding: *if* thou truly repentest. For the Lord knows the heart. And He had instructed Nathan. And so the Lord still speaks to the contrite by His word as proclaimed by His prophets and applied to their hearts by Christ's Spirit: "I forgive thee." And here He puts the period. And so He cleansed David's heart from its evil conscience and gave him peace. With the burden of guilt lifted from his soul and as tasting the forgiveness of His God, David again sang from the hearts: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile."—Ps. 32:1 and 2.

G. M. Ophoff



Our God is good, and time shall prove
His mercies ever sure,
And while the ages onward move
His truth shall still endure.

Wijshheid met hare Vruchten

“Wie is wijs en verstandig onder U? Die be-wijze uit zijn goeden wandel zijne werken in zachtmoedige wijsheid. Maar indien gij bitteren nijd en twistgierigheid hebt in uw hart, zoo roemt en liegt niet tegen de waarheid. Deze is de wijsheid niet, die van boven afkomt, maar is aardsch, natuurlijk, duivelsch. Want waar nijd en twistgierigheid is, aldaar is verwarring en alle booze handel. Maar de wijsheid die van boven is, die is ten eerste zuiver, daarna vreedzaam, bescheiden, gezeggelijk, vol van barmhartigheid en van goede vruchten, niet partijdig oordeelende, en ongevijsd, en de vrucht der rechtvaardigheid wordt in vrede gezaaid, voor degenen die vrede maken.”—Jacobus 3:13-18.

Het verband van onze tekstwoorden vinden we in het eerste vers van dit hoofdstuk. Daar had Jacobus gezegd: “Zijt niet vele meesters, mijne broeders! wetende dat wij te meerder oordeel zullen ontvangen.” En dan volgt zijn verhandeling van de tong des menschen. Ja, die tong is een kostelijk werktuig voor een goeden meester, doch is tevens een vloek voor iemand die ten onrechte zich als meester opwerpt in het Koninkrijk Gods hier op aarde, zooals dat Koninkrijk aan het komen is in de kerk. Die tong wordt een toom genaamd en een roer, maar ook een vuur en een wild beest. Gebruikt ge Uw tong ten goede: wonderbaar; doch indien ge die tong ten kwade gebruikt is zij een vuur en een wild beest gelijk. En dan zijt ge geen goede meester, want dan handelt en wandelt ge niet naar de wijsheid Gods. Nu waren sommigen meesters en twistten met andere menschen. En de vraag komt op: wie is de wijze en de verstandige onder hen? En op die vraag geeft mijn tekst het antwoord.

De eerste vraag is: Wat is de valsche wijsheid? Om daar een antwoord op te vinden moeten we eerst vragen: wat is wijsheid? En dan is wijsheid, geheel algemeen genomen: de beste middelen gebruiken, en de beste wegen bewandelen tot het bereiken van het goede doel. En zoo zien we, dat de wijsheid absoluut noodig is om een goede meester te zijn. Om menschen te leiden heeft men wijsheid noodig, moet men altijd de beste middelen beramen en de beste wegen bewandelen ten einde het goede doel te bereiken, dat we ons gesteld hebben. Zelfs in de wereld waardeert men wijsheid. En als in de wereld iemand die zich als meester en als leider uitgaf, verkeerde en kromme wegen bewandelt, dan weigert men zulk een dwaas te volgen. Ge begrijpt, dat als we van wijsheid spreken in verband met de goddelooze wereld, we niet het Bijbelsche begrip van wijsheid op het oog hebben, doch de formeele wijsheid, zonder schoone en geestelijke inhoud. Nu is het duidelijk, dat degenen die zich opwierpen als meesters in het verband van mijn tekst,

zich uitgaven voor goede meesters. Het gaat in mijn tekst en in het verband over betrekkingen in de kerk van Christus. Deze brief is gericht aan de twaalf stammen die in de verstrooiing zijn, en daarin bedoelt Jacobus natuurlijk de gemeente van Jezus Christus, de Nieuw-Testamentische kerk. En het is ook duidelijk, dat er veel te wenschen overbleef in de gemeenten aan wien Jacobus schreef. Sommigen, niet de besten, schreeuwden het hardst. En Jacobus stelt hen allen op den proef: Wie is wijs en verstandig onder ulieden? En dan zal Jacobus zelf het antwoord geven door den Heiligen Geest die onfeilbaar in hem werkt. En dan zal hij den dwazen meester ten voeten uit schilderen voor het oog der gemeente. En dan zijn dit de zoogenaamde beste middelen die sommigen van hen gebruikten, en de zoogenaamde beste wegen die sommigen van hen bewandelden tot het bereiken van het goede doel: bitteren nijd, twistgierigheid, roemen niettemin, en liegen tegen de waarheid. De zoogenaamde wijsheid van sommigen dezer leiders is gewogen door Jacobus en te licht bevonden. Hij zal ons ook den aard toonen van deze wijsheid. Ze is drieërlei: aardsch, natuurlijk, duivelsch. Wel, we verwachtten het ook. We konden het aardsche, natuurlijke en het duivelsche al ruiken toen hij die wijsheid beschreef. Bittere nijd is die ondeugd waar we het oog werpen op de gaven die de broeders ontvingen. En dan zegt het booze hart: ik moest die dingen hebben en hij niet. En dan volgt daarop: twistgierigheid. Twistgierigheid is een leelijk ding. Het beteekent, dat men schik heeft om te twisten. Soms moeten we van elkander verschillen. Terwijl we hier op aarde zijn spreken we allen niet hetzelfde. Maar we verlangen er wel naar, en daarom hebben we nooit lust in strijden als zoodanig. Ja, we zullen strijden, door Gods genade, den goeden strijd des geloofs, en in dien strijd zijn we ook zalig, doch een ware Christen heeft geen schik in 't twisten als zoodanig. Doch de twisgierige wel. Er zijn menschen die schik hebben om met den broeder overhoop te liggen. En dat soort beschrijft Jacobus hier. En dan komt dat roemen. O, we hebben het allen wel al ondervonden. Misschien hebt ge het zelf wel gedaan. Er is getwist en gestreden, en dan gingen we naar huis, en dan moest een ieder het hooren: ik heb hem er flink van langs gegeven! Dat is de roem die Jacobus op het oog heeft. En wat noemt de Apostel al dit goddelooze gedoe? Dit: dan liegen we tegen de waarheid. En dat is vreeselijke zonde. Met andere woorden: we wisten heel goed dat we kwaad deden, en toch roemen? Dat is liegen tegen de waarheid zooals die sprak in het geweten, en die stem is Gods stem. Neen, dat is niet de wijsheid die van boven is. Zij is aardsch, d.w.z. laag, duister and vervloekt. De aar-

de is vervloekt, met alles wat op die aarde te voorschijn komt, ook die zoogenaamde wijsheid. Dan is zij ook natuurlijk, en dat ziet op het zondige vleesch, het gescheurde losgerukte vleesch dat in disharmonie leeft en zich openbaart tegenover God die het schiep. En eindelijk noemt de Heilige Geest deze wijsheid duivelsch, en dat doet de deur dicht. Deze wijsheid is de wijsheid die Satan gebruikte, en het resultaat is, dat hij verworpen werd. Hij bereikte het goede doel niet. Hij had het gemunt op den troon Gods, doch het einde van hem en zijn wijsheid is, dat hij terecht zal komen in de poel die brandt van vuur en sulfur. En zoo zal het gaan met hen die de aardse, natuurlijke en duivelsche wijsheid gebruiken als middelen tot het bereiken van hun doel.

Wat is dan de ware wijsheid? We komen uit een benevelde sfeer. Ik ben blij, dat ik klaar ben met dat eerste deel. We treden nu in een zonnige, lieflijke en helder klare atmosfeer van Gods genade. Daar zullen we hooren zingen van een wijsheid die van uit den hemel, die vanuit het hart Gods ons tegenschijnt. Jacobus gaat schrijven over de wijsheid die van boven is. Toont ons allereerst dat er ook goede meesters waren in de gemeenten waaraan hij schreef. Goddank, er zijn altijd van die goede meesters, van die goede leiders geweest, en in alle eeuwen. En voor hun bestwil en tot hunne onderwijzing schrijft hij. En dat niet alleen; hij schrijft Goddank ook voor U en voor mij. Welnu dan, laat ons aandachtig naar hem luisteren. De wijsheid, de goede wijsheid is allereerst van boven. Dat beteekent eenvoudig, dat die deugd van wijsheid een Goddelijke deugd is. God is de wijsheid Zelve. Zijn geheele Wezen is de wijsheid. God is Zijn deugden. En dan beteekent het in God, dat Hij altijd de beste middelen gebruikt en de beste wegen bewandelt om tot Zijn heerlijke doeleinden te komen. En het centrale einddoel van al Gods werk en doen is de verheerlijking van Zijn Naam. Daaraan wordt alles onderworpen. Hij schept en herschept, Hij leidt en stuurt en onderhoudt, Hij toort en bemint, Hij vloekt en zegent, met slechts één doel voor oogen, en dat is de glorie van Zijn naam. Dat kunt ge overal in Gods Woord lezen, doch vooral in het eerste hoofdstuk van Paulus' brief aan die van Efeze. Leest dat hoofdstuk eens met de vraag in 't hart: waarom heeft God alles gedaan? In de tweede plaats, de Goddelijke wijsheid is daarom dan ook Jezus Zelf. Hij wordt immers de wijsheid Gods en de kracht Gods geheeten in I Cor. 1? En dat is o zoo duidelijk. Het is vooral Jezus die als Gods middel en weg moet dienen tot het bereiken van Gods centrale doel van Zelf-verheerlijking. Daarom zegt Jezus: Ik ben de Weg, de Waarheid en het Leven. Dat is zelfs waar van de geschapene dingen.

Ook daarvan is Jezus de Goddelijke Wijsheid. Dat kunt ge lezen in dat zeer diepe deel der Colossenzen brief, hoofdstuk 1, de verzen 14-19. En bestudeer dan vooral het laatste gedeelte van het 16de vers, waar staat, dat alle dingen zijn door Jezus en tot Jezus geschapen. God deed alle dingen met het oog op Jezus als de centrale wijsheid van Zijn Goddelijken Raad. Leest ook Spreuken 8, waar ge zult hooren jubelen van die Wijsheid, waardoor God tot Zijn heerlijk en lieflijk doel komt, het doel namelijk, om straks een groote en lieflijke wereld te hebben staan voor Zijn aangezicht, een wereld van schoone schepselen, menschen en engelen die al maar zullen zingen tot lof en prijs van Hem die op den troon zit en het Lam. Leest het in Openbaringen, waar we gedurig die groote schare zien, zingende en lovende God. Nu dan, die wijsheid woont relatief ook in elk Christen. En dan kan die man het weten, want Jacobus zal haar beschrijven. Zij is eerst zuiver. Dat past, want God is de Zuivere bij uitnemendheid. Het beteekent, dat er geen valsche bestanddeelen in zijn. En dan vreedzaam. De wijsheid die van boven is heeft het op den vrede gemunt. God ook. Hij heeft vrede gemaakt in het bloed van Zijn lieven Zoon. Nu dan, als die deugd van wijsheid in U woont, dan zult gij het ook openbaren, want dan zult ge trachten om vrede te houden met een iegelijken mensch, zooveel in U is. Ge zult geen genot hebben in twist en krakeel, doch in het betrachten van de waarheid zult ge trachten om mensch aan mensch en mensch aan God te doen kleven. Ge zult vrede verkondigen in het bloed van Christus. Ook is ze gezeggelijk, een kostelijke karaktertrek van de Goddelijke wijsheid. Als men U aanraakt zult ge niet direct U schrap zetten, doch zult ge teederlijk, zacht U openbaren. Een gezeggelijk mensch wil luisteren, kan luisteren. En als men met goede argumenten komt, zal zulk een mensch zich dan ook geven. Dat is de gezeggelijkheid van de Goddelijke wijsheid. Met de waarheid kan men U dan gemakkelijk overwinnen, en zult ge verkeerde ideën laten varen. En in het algemeen is zij vol van barmhartigheid en goede vruchten. Let op die generale trekken. Vooral in het verband waar sprake was van hardigheid des harten die zich openbaarde in twisten en krakelingen, met het gevaar dat men elkander verwoesten zou. Daar tegenover kan de gemeente zich vergasten aan deze beschrijving van de wijsheid. Bovendien, zegt Jacobus, is zij niet partijdig oordeelende, en ongeveinsd. Het maakt geen verschil voor den wijze wie de waarheid verkondigt, wie de waarheid voorstaat: een wijs mensch voegt zich bij hen. Hij oordeelt niet partijdig. Die de waarheid, en dat is God, bemint, die is zijn vriend en metgezel. Ook weet ge altijd wat ge aan den wijze hebt. Hij

komt niet met uitwendig gelaat bij U. Een wijs mensch is oprecht en veinst niet. O, God gave ons die wijsheid.

En eindelijk nog de vruchten van beide de goddelooze wijsheid en van de Goddelijke wijsheid.

We zullen beginnen met de vruchten van de valsche wijsheid.

Doch eerst willen we U ergens anders bij bepalen. Wij zijn zaaiers. Daar kunnen we nimmer aan ontkomen. Dat blijkt hier ook. De tekst spreekt immers van zaad en van vrucht? Wie gij ook zijt die dit leest, mijzelf en alle menschen ingesloten: gij gebruikt of die goddelooze wijsheid en zult storm oogsten, of ge gebruikt de Goddelijke wijsheid en ge zult vrede oogsten. Wat zal het zijn?

Nu dan, wat is de vrucht op het leven der valsche wijsheid? En Jacobus zegt: verwarring en alle booze handel. Dat was te verwachten. De oorsprong van de aardse, natuurlijke en duivelsche wijsheid is niet van boven doch vanuit de hel komt zij ons toe. Nu weten we wat vrucht Satan had op zijn goddeloos werk: verwarring. Het had uit met de rechte lijnen en de rechte verhoudingen. Hij werd met zijn duivelen uit den hemel geworpen, en straks zal hij de verwarring der hel oogsten. En die hem volgen kunnen hetzelfde verwachten. Ontvangen er nu al een voorsmaak van. Waarom is er zooveel verwarring in het menschenleven vandaag? Wanwaar die vreeselijke verwarring in het leven der volken der aarde? Het is omdat ze de Satanische wijsheid betracht hebben in het menschenleven; en de Goddelijke Wijsheid, en dat is Jesus, hebben ze den rug toegekeerd. En het einde is alle booze handel. En de geschiedenis der wereld is een commentaar op deze woorden. Maar hoe anders is het met den Christen die de Goddelijke wijsheid mag gebruiken door Gods genade over hem? Luistert! En de vrucht der rechtvaardigheid wordt in vrede gezaaid voor degenen die vrede maken. Is het niet om van te zingen? Laat ons eens zien. Het zaad is de gerechtigheid. En dat is het goede te doen, te denken en te spreken. Dat doet God, dat deed Jezus, en door Geest en Woord doet Gods volk het ook. Dat is de heiligmaking. En zij zaaien de gerechtigheid in vrede. Dat wil zeggen, dat ze met God wandelen in hun heiligmaking. Er is harmonie tusschen hun hart en Gods hart. Door het bloed en door de genade van Jezus Christus. En al hun actie is vrede maken. Dat doet God, dat deed Christus aan Zijn kruis, en dat doet Gods volk alle de dagen huns levens door Gods genade. Wat onuitsprekelijke zaligheid!

G. Vos



CONTRIBUTIONS

DISCORD OR UNITY

The Synod has just passed the Declaration, and now again we hear that there will be protests against it in 1953. That could lead to separation or ruin.

It certainly is a bad thing that the combined consistories of 1927 did not adopt a declaration of principles at that time, before our first students became ministers. Now you see the result of that mistake.

The only thing that we as true members can do to save our beautiful Protestant Reformed truth, is to go back to the truth of 1925—not laying a new foundation, but reënforcing our first foundation, and fasten it on black and white, so that it will be legal. Then we can get somewhere and the great confusion would be over.

It would be the duty of every one of our ministers to preach the Protestant Reformed truth wherein they have been instructed in our school, and stand on the foundation on which we stood in 1925.

But how shall the church demand of their ministers to preach only that truth, if we have no declaration of that truth? The church must certainly have that on black and white, so that they can point out that truth to them. And they have no right to preach anything else, nor write, nor contradict this doctrine. Otherwise, we as Protestant Reformed Churches can not be bound together as one, nor prevent any one of our ministers from departing from that truth. For all our churches have been organized on that truth, and they should and must be able to keep it. Therefore, we should have a declaration of all the points of the doctrine of our confessions.

Yes, we have the Three Forms of Unity—so do the other churches. But they interpret them in their own way, as they please. And they all say, "This is the truth," or "This is the meaning of the confessions," even though they contradict each other.

Therefore, this brings us to another question. When we made confession of faith in our churches, we also answered "yes" on the first and second question that was asked of us, —if we have "resolved by the grace of God to adhere to this doctrine, to reject all heresies repugnant thereto, and to lead a new and godly life." Now if we do not have this doctrine of our Protestant Reformed truth on black and white, how shall we reject all heresies repugnant thereto? Because of the many wrong interpretations of the confessions and Scripture, we must have our declaration of it.



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THE STANDARD BEARER

Now, how shall I do my duty to fulfill my answer to the three questions that was asked of me, when I made confession of faith, if I have no right to perform it? Is it also not getting high time for the men to bow down before the living God (not before the women), and give the woman the right to perform her duty? For the woman is just as responsible before God as the man to fulfill her duty, since she answered "yes" on those three questions. And yet, she cannot vote, nor say 'yes' or 'no' to God in the things pertaining to the church and for the welfare of her own soul, and for the welfare of her children, in case of a widow, or if her husband is an unbeliever. And she cannot even choose those that shall be her overseers and pastors to teach her in the truth that is "taught here in this Christian church."

We are all responsible before the living God, what we vote for and what we do in the things pertaining to the church. Think of Ananias and his wife. Each was called apart to answer yes or no to God about what they had done about money matters, (or their budget) if they had been true to God in those things too. Ananias was not held responsible for his wife, but she also had to cast her vote and answer yes or no, for it concerned her own soul.

In Acts we read that when a congregational meeting was called, there came a multitude of people. And the Apostles would tell them what should be done, also in calling men to teach and work in the church. "And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit."—Acts 6:5.

That there also were women among those multitudes is clear from Acts 1:14, 15: "They all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren." And in Acts 5:14 we read: "And the believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." Don't you think that is the same multitude that chose Stephen and the other men, in Acts 6:2-4? Did the women also not receive the Holy Spirit, so that they were one with the men, in the Lord?

Those were real and beautiful congregational meetings which were also used to instruct the people in the truth. That would mean that all the members of our church, men and women should come to the congregational meeting. Whatever the consistory had, that they wanted to bring before the meeting, could be voted on by all, or be discussed, also the names of men for ministers, elders or deacons. Women also should vote.

But that does not mean at all, that women should have the right to rule. Nor that they should partake in any discussion, nor teach, or try to use any power over any man in the church. "Let all things be done decently and in order."

If I may have a little space again in the next S.B. I would like to say more about this, and some more proofs.

The men certainly do not gain anything at all by forbidding the women to vote.

We should all be of one accord, for there is no joy and love in division among ourselves, but only in unity through the Holy Spirit. That we be "likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind".—Phil. 2:2.

For, "There is neither Jew or Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."—Gal. 3:28.

"If ye know these things, happy are ye, if ye do them."—John 13:17.

Yours in the Lord,
Dorothy De Vries



Thou, O Christ, art all I want;
Boundless love in thee I find:
Raise the fallen, cheer the faint,
Heal the sick, and lead the blind.
Just and holy is thy name;
I am all unrighteousness,
Vile and full of sin I am;
Thou art full of truth and grace.



TEACHER WANTED—the 1st Protestant Reformed School of Redlands will be in need of a teacher for the lower grades one through four. Mail application to:

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Know that the Lord is God alone;
He made us and will keep,
For His we are, and not our own,
His people and His sheep.