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MEDITATION

Het Pad des Rechtvaardigen een Schijnend Licht

“Maar het pad des rechtvaardigen is gelijk een schijnend licht, voortgaande en lichtende tot den vollen dag toe. De weg der goddeloozen is als donkerheid, zij weten niet waarover zij struikelen zullen.”—Spr. 4:18, 19.

Aan het begin van het teksthofdstuk beluisteren we de stem van een vader die zijn kinderen vermaant te wandelen in de wegen des Heeren. Het kan best zijn, dat Salomo, de schrijver van dit spreukenboek, a'zoo zijn eigen kinderen vermaand heeft. Vooral als we stilstaan bij vers drie en vier, waar we lezen: “Want ik was mijns vaders zoon, teeder én een eenige voor het aangezicht mijner moeder. Hij nu leerde mij, en zeide tot mij: Uw hart houde mijne woorden vast; onderhoud mijne geboden en leef.” Dit is allereerst zeker van toepassing op David die Salomo vermaande en onderwees. En in de tweede plaats, is het dan ook van toepassing op Salomo die op zijn beurt de kinderen die de Heere hem gaf onderwees in de woorden Gods. En toch mogen we daar niet blijven staan. Dit hoofdstuk maakt deel uit van de Codsopenbaring. Salomo is een van de Bijbelschrijvers, en a's zoodanig, een man Gods die door den Heiligen Geest gedreven zijnde, het Woord Gods gesproken heeft tot onderwijzing van Gods kerk van alle eeuwen. En zoo is Salomo's stem de stem van God, en zoo zijn die kinderen van Salomo de kinderen van God die door dit Woord en door alle Woord van Cod onderwezen worden tot het houden van Gods geboden en tot het verkrijgen van de wijsheid Gods die vooral in dit boek zoo hoog aangeprezen wordt.

In het onmiddellijke verband merken we op, dat onze tekst een tegenstelling vormt met de verzen die voorafgaan, alswel, dat het eerste gedeelte van den

tekst een tegenstelling vormt met het tweede gedeelte. In de voorafgaande woorden beluisteren we den goeden raad van onzen Vader in de hemelen die ons waarschuwt tegen den boozen weg der goddeloozen. En die waarschuwing komt tot ons in sterk sprekende woorden: Verwerp dien, ga er niet door, wijk er van, en ga voorbij! Er zit drang in deze woorden. En de Heere gaf ook de reden aan voor Zijne waarschuwing: want zij die op den goddeloozen weg wandelen kunnen niet slapen zoo ze geen kwaad gedaan hebben. En: zij zijn het soort menschen die brood der goddeloosheid eten, en zij drinken wijn van enkel geweld. Daartegenover nu, schildert onze tekst het pad van de rechtvaardigen. En die schildering is schitterend, aantrekkelijk, lieflijk als het licht. En daartegenover wordt ook het pad van de goddeloozen geteekend, en dan in zeer sombere trekken: hun pad is enkel donkerheid. Ze weten niet waarover ze struikelen zullen.

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Ge hebt al weer bemerkt, dat onze tekst vol zit van beeldspraak. Zoo hooren we van den weg en het pad, van een licht, van schijnen, van den vollen dag, van donkerheid en van struikelen. Altemaal beeldspraak, genomen uit onze tegenwoordige wereld en vanuit ons alledaagsche leven, om ons door die beeldspraak een hemelsche boodschap te geven. Nu is het tamelijk duidelijk wat de weg of het pad des menschen beteekent. Dat is zijn leven, zooals hij het vanuit zijn hart leeft. Want vanuit het hart zijn de uitgangen des levens. Zie vers 23. Ons leven is niet allereerst ons woord en onze daad. Achter de woorden en de daden ligt het diepe hart. En het hangt af van dat hart wat het karakter onzer daden is. Ge kunt niet de lieflijke klank van een woord des menschen vertrouwen. Achter die lieflijke klanken kan een vloekend en hatelijk hart zich schuil houden. En daarom, ons pad is ons leven zooals we dat leven vanuit het

hart. En de Heere noemt dat leven een weg of een pad, omdat er voortgang, richting en bestemming in ons leven zit. Er zit voortgang in ons leven. We zijn reizigers. Nooit kunnen we ook maar voor één seconde stilstaan. We loopen vanuit het verleden tot in de toekomst. Van zuigeling gaan we voort tot kind, tot jongeling, tot man en tot grijsaard. Stilstaan kunnen we niet. We worden voortgezweept door den tijd. En ge kunt nog minder terugtreden. Voort, immer voort. En we verbazen ons vaak erover hoe snel het gaat.

De jaren vliegen gelijk een schaduw voort. Maar er zit ook richting in ons pad. Er daar zit iets vreeselijks of ook iets zeer lieflijks in. Gij allen weet, dat de wegen en de paden hier op aarde een zekere richting hebben. Als men naar den weg, naar den goeden weg naar een zekere stad vraagt, dan noemt onze gids ons een zekeren weg, en zegt: bewandel dien weg, en ge zult die of die stad bereiken. En zoo is het met den mensch. Er zit richting in zijn weg of pad. Dat is nooit anders. Dat is verschrikkelijk als we goddeloos zijn, want ons pad zal het toonen. De goddeloozen wandelen op een goddeloos pad. Maar de rechtvaardige toont ook de richting van zijn weg. Zijn weg is Jezus Christus. En dat is zeer lieflijk. En, eindelijk, er zit ook bestemming in de idee van den weg of het pad. Er komt een einde aan den weg. Licht en donkerheid zijn ook beelden die hier een hemelsche boodschap hebben. Licht is een sprekend beeld. Natuurlijk licht behoeven we om hier op aarde te leven, en de draagster van dat natuurlijk licht is de zon. En donkerheid in natuurlijken zin is de ontstentenis van het licht der zon. Dat is de nacht. Redelijk, psychologisch is het licht beeld van weten, kennen, en donkerheid is de onkunde, domheid en krankzinnigheid. Doch hier wordt het bedoeld in den geestelijken zin, en dan is licht het beeld van God. God is een licht en er is gansch gene duisternis in Hem. Zoo kunnen we ook verstaan, dat Jezus zich noemt het Licht der wereld, want in Hem woont de volheid der Godheid lichamelijk. En als God door Christus' Woord en Geest in ons woont, dan worden wij geheeten het licht der wereld. Matth. 5:14. Daar zegt Jezus tot Zijn jongeren: Gij zijt het licht der wereld. En Paulus zegt: eertijds waart gij duisternis, doch nu zijt gij licht in den Heere. En de inhoud van het geestelijke licht is alle deugd. God is een Licht, en dat beteekent dat Hij het volle deugdenbeeld is. Alles wat deugdelijk en goed is is God. Hij is het inbegrip van alle deugden, als daar zijn: goedheid, almacht, wijsheid, leven, liefde, eeuwigheid, onbegrijpelijkheid, oneindigheid, onafhankelijkheid, lieflijkheid, lankmoedigheid, goedertierenheid, en wat er meer deugdelijks zij in het Goddelijke Wezen. En dat

licht is geopenbaard in de schepping, doch veel meer in de herschepping. Toen een nare duisternis van zonde, dood en vloek over het eertijds zonnig tafereel van het eerste Paradijs gleed, toen heeft God die vreeselijke duisternis verbroken en is in het aangezicht van Zijn geliefden Zoon voor ons gaan staan, en dat is het Golgotha. Dus nu zult ge wel eenigzins zien wat de weg des rechtvaardigen en het pad der goddeloozen is. De rechtvaardigen zijn dat volk wien het mocht gebeuren, dat God naar recht hen niet wilde schuldig keuren. Het is het volk, dat voorwerpelijk rechtvaardig is in den Heere Jezus Christus, omdat Hij hunne zonde betaalde in den eeuwigen dood, en door Zijne lieflijke gehoorzaamheid een eeuwige gerechtigheid voor hen verwierf. Zoo zijn ze in het gericht vrijgesproken en getooid met de gerechtigheid van Christus. En onderwerpelijk zijn ze rechtvaardig, omdat de Heere God door den Geest van Christus en door de werking van Zijn Woord hen wedergeboren heeft doen worden, waardoor ze een beginsel van Zijne gerechtigheid deelachtig werden. In beginsel zijn Gods volk ook onderwerpelijk rechtvaardig. En dat is geschied door het geloof. De weg der goddeloozen is echter donkerheid. En zooals licht deugd beduidt, zoo beduidt de donkerheid alle ondeugd. En de goddeloozen zijn de ellendige schepsels die zonder God en zonder hoop in de wereld ronddwalen. En ze zijn diep te beklagen.

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Het karakter van den weg of het pad is ten overstaan van de rechtvaardigen, dat dit pad schijnt. Dat zegt de tekst. Ziet ge, hun pad is licht, en dat is, zoo zagen we, dat het vol van deugd is. Het pad der rechtvaardigen is vol van goedheid en lieflijkheid. Gods deugden schitteren op het pad van Gods volk. Aan hunne vruchten zult ge ze kennen. Hun pad is de weerkaatsing van het lieflijke Woord en van den lieflijken Geest van Christus. Ze richten hunne wegen naar dat Woord, en ze zingen: Uw Woord is mij een lamp voor mijnen voet, mijn pad ten licht om 't donker op te klaren. Overal op dat pad vragen ze: Wat wilt Gij, Heere, wat we doen zullen? En zij zoeken in Gods Woord naar 't antwoord. En dat antwoord blijft niet uit. Dat Woord bestrijkt hun gansche leven. Ook is dat pad voortgaande en schijnende. Gods Woord is een voortgaande kracht in het leven van den rechtvaardige. Het ontdekt de zonde aan hem. En het doet dat steeds meer. Ge zingt ervan: Ze gaan van kracht tot kracht steeds voort! Er is opgang in het leven van het volk Gods. Er is geestelijke groei in de planten met Christus. Het karakter van den weg der rechtvaardigen is, dat ge nooit of nimmer tevreden zijt met Uzelven. Ge wilt steeds voort op het

pad naar den hemel heen. Het licht ontdekt de zonde en doet U haten en vlieden de kwade paden. En positief doet dat licht op Uw pad U het goede kennen en minnen. Daar jaagt ge dat goede na, en ervaart, dat al dat goede van God in den Heere Jezus Christus medicijn is voor Uw gansche leven.

Hoe geheel anders is het karakter van het pad der goddeloozen. Omdat hun pad duisternis is, struikelen ze dan ook gedurig. Ze kunnen niet wandelen in den goeden zin van 't woord. Er is een gedurig vallen bij den goddelooze. Want hij is zonder de gids van het licht. Zijn hart is duister, dat is, vuil en zondig. Zijn verstand is duister en zoo bedenkt hij het vuile en het zondige. Zijn wil is duisternis en zoo begeert hij steeds het vuile en het zondige. Dat karakteriseert zijn gansche leven. En als nu God Zich niet onbetuigd laat, dan struikelt hij gedurig over God en Goddelijke zaken. En hoemeer God spreekt, hoe meer hij struikelt. En roept hij het uit tegen God: Wijk van mij, o God, ik heb geen lust aan de kennis Uwer wegen! Komt God dan vlak bij hem in het aangezicht van Zijn Zoon Jezus Christus, dan gilt hij het uit: Kruist Hem! kruist Hem! En hij nagelt Hem aan het kruis van Golgotha. Dat is het struikelende pad der goddeloozen. Leest het verband van mijn tekst en ge zult het lezen: ze slapen niet zoo ze geen kwaad gedaan hebben. Ze eten het brood der goddeloosheid en ze drinken wijn van enkel geweld. En als dat volk in aanraking komt met Jezus, dan is Hij hen een rots der ergernis. En aan het Woord Gods stooten ze zich, waartoe ze ook gezet zijn. Vreeselijk!

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En wat is het einde van den weg der rechtvaardigen en van het pad der goddeloozen? Wel, het einde van het pad der goddeloozen is vreeselijk. Ze weten niet waarover ze struikelen zullen. Dat zegt mijn tekst. Maar wij weten het door Gods genade wel. Eigenlijk en wezenlijk struikelen de goddeloozen over God. Ziet ge, toen God den mensch schiep, schiep Hij hem met een wet. En die wet zegt tot den mensch: Gij zult God lief hebben boven alles en uwen naaste als Uzelven. Maar nu is het hart des menschen zóó duister en donker, dat is, zóó goddeloos, dat hij in arren moede het uitschreeuwt: Ik wil U niet liefhebben. Ik haat U. En hij doodt zijn naaste. Jezus zeide, dat die zijn broeder haat een doodslager is. Welnu, Gods Woord zegt ons, dat we allen van nature God haten en elkander haten. Dus de struikeling is over God en Zijn Wet en Zijn Woord en Zijn Zoon Jezus Christus. En dat is vreeselijk. Daar wacht niet anders dan een onbeschrijfelijke smart, als God

komen zal in den oordeelsdag om te straffen. Dan zal hij dezulken vervloeken met een eeuwige vervloeking. Die zich ergeren aan Jezus, die struikelen over de Rots der eeuwen, die zullen door diezelfde Rots verpletterd worden. Dat leert ons Gods Woord op duizend bladzijden.

Maar die door Gods genade op den weg van het licht mogen wandelen, en dat is Jezus, die gaan naar den vollen dag toe. Dat zegt de tekst van hen wier pad een schijnend licht is. Die gaan voort, al schijnende, tot den vollen dag toe. De uitdrukking van den tekst: *schijnend licht* wordt in de Schrift op andere plaatsen gebezigd voor het opgaan van de zon. Zoo, b.v., in II Sam. 23:3, 4. Daar lezen we: "Daar zal zijn een Heerscher over de menschen, een Rechtvaardige, een Heerscher in de vreeze Gods; en Hij zal zijn gelijk het licht des morgens, wanneer de zon opgaat." Welnu, dat wordt hier gebezigd van den rechtvaardige. Is het niet schoon en lieflijk? De toekomst van het volk Gods staat in het teeken van het volle zonlicht. En de beteekenis is daarom zeer duidelijk. Het gaat met de rechtvaardigen naar den vollen dag van den nieuwe hemel en de nieuwe aarde, naar het nieuwe Jeruzalem. En daar zal het steeds licht zijn. Daar behoeft men het licht van de zon en van de maan niet, want God is daar het Licht en het Lam is de kaars. Daar zal het volmaakte kennen en lieven en loven van God zijn tot in alle eeuwigheid. Van dat volk zoudt ge volmakelijk kunnen zingen: Zij wand'len, Heer, in 't licht van 't Goddelijk aanschijn voort! Dat is hier nog slechts in beginsel. Doch als we gekomen zijn tot den vollen dag toe, dan zullen de schaduwen der donkerheid dat volk niet meer benauwen. Want daar zal zijn de volmaakte wandel in 't licht dat van Zijn aanzicht straalt. En hun gezang zal dan ten hoogsten toppunt stijgen.

G. Vos.

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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

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EDITORIALS

To Be or Not To Be

That, in my conviction, is the question that confronts our Protestant Reformed Churches today.

Shall we remain Protestant Reformed which, to me, is the same as Reformed; or shall we open our church doors to the Liberated and their doctrine which, as I am more and more convinced, is not Reformed at all?

This is a very serious question.

It is also a very real question.

I agree with Dr. De Bondt, who, in *de Bazuin* of March 21, 1952, quoted the following from a brochure which he wrote and which the late Dr. Schilder attacked:

"Within the scope of the Confession there were always different views possible . . . But thoughts like these: that the regenerated can fall away; that all that are baptized are believers; that God grants unto all the baptized the forgiveness of sins, have never been Reformed, and were in no single age expressed by any Reformed Church in her Confession, or deemed tolerable."

I do not know who teach the first mentioned error; I can guess to whom he refers in the second; but I am sure that the Liberated teach the error (and others) that God grants the forgiveness of sins to all the baptized, head for head, and soul for soul.

To be or not to be!

I can also put it this way: who among us still cares, after more than twenty-five years of history, to maintain the pure Protestant Reformed truth, and who do not?

This, too, is a very real and up-to-date question.

Because of this very concretely real question, I now intend to continue my discussion of the attack on the Declaration by the late Dr. Schilder. At first I was intending to discontinue the discussion of the article printed and translated by the Rev. Kok in *Concordia* and so heartily and strongly recommended by brother Kok.

I thought that, seeing brother Schilder is now, as we believe, in heaven, and he can no longer reply to my criticism of his views (even if he would, which I do not believe), it were better to refrain from writing about and against him and his erroneous view of the promise of God.

But this now appears impossible.

For this *Concordia* is to blame.

For, first of all, my reply to the contents of the

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article translated by the Rev. Kok, for which I still hold that brother responsible, and which is far from Reformed or Scriptural, is not finished.

Secondly, again in *Concordia*, in a letter written by the son of the Rev. Kok, and published by the latter, mention is made of "the slight differences" between us and the Liberated, in spite of the fact that I have repeatedly shown that these differences are fundamental.

And, thirdly, in the same *Concordia*, I find an announcement of a brochure which the late Dr. Schilder wrote against the *Declaration of Principles* adopted by our last synod, and by writing which, according to the Rev. Kok, he greatly honored our churches.

Through the Rev. Kok our dead brother still speaketh.

All this I call insidious propaganda, which I cannot and will not and may not ignore.

In the meantime, I give the Rev. Kok a fair warning that he must refrain from continuing in this disorderly way of agitating against the *Declaration of Principles*, which is now officially adopted by our churches, thus keeping our churches in constant turmoil and attempting to corrupt them by the Liberated errors.

My ground for the above statement is art. 31 of the Church Order. There we read:

"If anyone complains that he has been wronged by the decision of minor assemblies, he shall have the right to appeal to a major ecclesiastical assembly, and whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote shall be considered settled and binding, unless it be proved to conflict with the Word of God or with the articles of the church order, as long as they are not changed by a general synod."

Now, our last synod decided to declare that the *Declaration of Principles* is the expression of our Reformed Confessions, and that it should be used as an instrument or basis for the missionary and the mission committee for the organisation of prospective churches.

Now, although the Declaration is not a fourth form, binding as such upon our ministers or other officebearers, so that they could be disciplined on the basis of it, nevertheless, the *decision* of synod to declare the Declaration the expression of the Confessions, and to use it as an instrument for the organisation of churches, that *decision* is settled and binding upon all our churches, and upon all our officebearers, unless it can be proved from the Word of God or from the church order that it is in error.

It is settled and binding also for the Rev. Kok.

He may, of course, protest in the regular ecclesiastical way. He must, in that case, prove that the

Declaration is not in harmony with the Confessions, or that any article of the Church Order has been violated by adopting it.

He may not agitate against it by insidious propaganda.

He may not hide behind the philosophy of the late Dr. Schilder.

He must walk the orderly way of consistory, classis and synod.

Moreover, he himself is member of the mission committee, and how can he possibly function as such, and, at the same time, agitate in such an unruly manner against the Declaration.

Moreover, he must be careful, when he does protest, that he does not bring old arguments, that have already been thrashed out. He must come with something new.

May this serve him as a brotherly warning, as it is intended.

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I have read the brochure of the late Dr. Schilder.

It was sent to me from the Netherlands. I know not whether or not it is the same as that which was announced in *Concordia*.

It contains nothing new. A reproduction it is of the articles that were written by the author in *De Reformatie*.

But the rereading of it convinced me more deeply than ever of two facts:

1. That the position taken in that brochure is unreformed.

2. That the author is either very superficially acquainted with our Confessions, or hated to work with them.

This I hope to show in the future.

But once more the question between us and the liberated is not one of "slight differences".

For us it is question of to be or not to be.

H. H.



IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies' Society of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church herewith expresses its sympathy with our fellow-member, Mrs. Harry Zwak, in the loss of her

FATHER

May the God of all grace and comfort console her heart in the knowledge that "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord!"

The Hudsonville P. R. Ladies' Society:

Rev. G. Vos, President;

Mrs. P. Lubbers, Secretary.

Question Hour

The following is a literal record of a question hour held at the spring meeting of the Eastern Ladies' League, in which the undersigned was called upon to answer the questions.

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Dear Sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ:

I am sorry I cannot be present with you in the body. But I was asked to go to Redlands, California, and preach there a few Sundays; and the invitation I accepted, with the consent of the Board of the Theological School, of course, and of my Consistory. So I expect to think about you in the train to California. Nevertheless, I will try to answer your questions. First I thought of typing them out and having somebody else read them to you in the meeting; but after all I thought it would be nice to put questions and answers on my wire recorder, so that even though you cannot see me, you can nevertheless hear my voice. So this I now proceed to do. And I wish you God's richest blessing in your meeting.

The first question is from Luke 16:9, and reads as follows: "Please explain the making of friends with the mammon of unrighteousness, when Scripture calls us to be separate. Also the last part of this text we would like explained."

Here is the answer. In Luke 16:1-9 we have the parable of the unjust steward. It contains many difficult elements, but I will try to answer the question as simply as possible. Verses 10-13 of the same chapter tells us that the parable has to do with mammon. It contains a warning not to serve mammon. But it also contains an admonition to make friends of mammon with regard to the eternal tabernacles of the true riches. It is evident too that the Lord in this parable also holds before us the wisdom of the world as an example in a certain way. Even as the children of the world are wise in their way, so the children of light must be wise in their way. Even as the children of the world strive after their end, and know how, so the children of light must strive after their end, and also know how. The children of the world lay up earthly treasures: they want the world and nothing else. The children of light seek after heavenly treasures through the grace of God. The steward in the parable is certainly worldly wise, although wicked, and so are the friends of the steward. Here, then, is illustrated the principle of the wisdom of this world. They have their mind concentrated upon the end they have in view, that is, earth-

ly riches; and they employ every available means to secure that end. So the children of light should concentrate all their attention and all their efforts upon their own purpose; and that end is the heavenly treasure, the true riches. They must therefore not serve God and mammon. But serving God only, and concentrating all their attention upon His service, they must seek the treasure that is in heaven. And to this end they should employ every means available, even what is called the unrighteous mammon. All things, money, wealth, position, honor, name, fame, house and home—everything in the world must be used unto that end. Then you use mammon for your purpose, and instead of serving him as a god you make friends of him, to walk in all godliness, self-denial, holiness, righteousness, love and mercy. And these friends will belong to your heavenly treasure; and when the things of the world fail you, they shall await you in eternal dwellings in heaven where you have laid up your treasure. As the world seeks its own, so the children of light must seek their own with all their might. That, in brief, is to my mind the meaning of the parable of the unjust steward.

The second question is: "Why was Esau born first?"

Here is the answer: We can give the answer very succinctly by stating that in his birth Esau took the place of the elect and of the birthright and the covenant blessing, not indeed to give Esau a chance to obtain that blessing, as many have it; nor indeed because the example of Esau shows that there is a certain common grace even in the covenant of God; but in order that he might reveal himself and make himself manifest as wicked and profane, and God might be justified. That this is true is evident from all Scripture. For Esau was exactly the reprobate. In Rom. 9:13 we read: "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." And just what this hatred of God in His good pleasure means, you may read in Malachi 1:2-4: "Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: Yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the Lord of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the Lord hath indignation forever." Such, therefore, was the counsel of God. And although Esau certainly was responsible for his sin, and trampled under foot the covenant of God, and showed himself as profane, nevertheless God through him executed His counsel of reprobation, and he placed Esau in the position of the elect by his first birth, in order that

he might make himself manifest and profane and wicked, and God would be justified when He judgeth.

Here is another question: "In Job 12:6 we read, 'The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure; into whose hand God bringeth abundantly.' Does this text refer also to life insurance?"

Here is my answer. Personally I cannot see in what way this passage of Scripture has reference to life insurance. In chapter 12 Job is speaking. And in verse 6 he evidently complains, as is so often the case with the saints in Scripture, that the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer. It is the same note that is heard in Psalm 73, as well as in other passages of Holy Writ. According to the outward appearances of things in the world, it almost seems not only that there is common grace, but that God is more gracious to the wicked than to the righteous; for they indeed have abundance. But in reality this is, of course, not true. And when Asaph enters into the sanctuary and notices the end of the wicked, he obtains an entirely different slant on the things of this world which the wicked possess. They are slippery places on which God places them, and on which He hurls them down into destruction. That is also the background of the text in Job 12:6. And therefore I can not see what connection this passage of Scripture can possibly have with the question of life insurance.

Another question is the following: "How can we explain Paul's desire as found in Acts 26:29 and Romans 9:3 in the light of predestination?"

My answer is as follows: In Acts 26:29 we read: "And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." And in Rom. 9:3 we find the well-known words: "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." My answer follows. It is very striking that the last text is found in the very chapter in which Paul emphasizes very strongly the truth of predestination, both election and reprobation. And he approaches this truth in a spiritual-psychological way. And now I will quote from my radio lecture of a few years ago on this very subject: "First of all, let us note that the apostle's attitude in approaching the tremendous subject of God's absolute sovereignty in election and reprobation is intended by the Word of God as an example for us. When as children of God we approach this subject, and speak of God's sovereign predestination, it is but proper that our attitude should be deeply spiritual. It may not be, it could not possibly be the attitude of pride and self-exaltation. For if it pleased God to ordain us unto salvation in distinction

from others, it certainly is no cause for us to boast in self. One who really understands the truth of this point will humble himself deeply before God. Let no flesh glory in His presence. And this also implies that one cannot very well speak of the subject of God's sovereign rejection of the reprobate, who in time are our fellow men, our kinsmen according to the flesh, without feeling to an extent the same heaviness, the same continual sorrow for them, which the apostle here so emphatically declares to feel in his heart. No cold-blooded rejoicing in the damnation of our fellow men may characterize our contemplation of God's sovereign dealings with men. The fact that God's predestinating purpose divides our race, makes separation between men of the same flesh and blood, always remains a matter of suffering as long as we are in this present time. And this leads me to another remark. From the viewpoint of our flesh, of our earthly, natural life and relationships, it is not so strange, barring some theological objections, to hear the apostle declare that he could wish to be accursed from Christ for his kinsmen according to the flesh. Without wishing to place ourselves on a par with the apostle, we may safely say that in a degree we can often repeat these words after him. Just imagine a parent who experiences the grief of seeing one or more of his children walk the way of sin and destruction. Just imagine a pastor who in the course of years becomes attached to his flock and earnestly desires their salvation, but who beholds that many of them are not the objects of God's electing love. And what is true of our own flesh and blood in the narrower sense of the word and of the church of Christ in the world in general, can be applied to mankind as a whole. Out of the one blood God has made the whole of the human race. And they are according to the flesh all our brethren. And we can understand a little at least of the attitude of the apostle when he speaks of the great heaviness that burdens his soul, and says that he could wish to be accursed from Christ for his kinsmen according to the flesh. And in as far as we could wish in our present flesh and blood, we could indeed desire all men to be saved."

But this, of course, is not God's purpose. And therefore our flesh must be put into subjection, even when it is our own flesh and blood. We must be willing to suffer for Christ's and for God's sake also in this respect. Such is my answer to this question.

Another question is the following: "How can we justify the situation prevalent in our churches, namely: It is five minutes to twelve on God's clock. And the fields are white for the harvest. The cry is that the laborers are few. But we have men wanting to

work in God's kingdom, and no work for them there is in our church."

My answer is as follows. The question refers to Matt. 9:37, 38 and Luke 10:2. In the former passage we read: "Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest." And in Luke 10:2, "Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest."

Now, in the first place, I would answer that we must be careful in saying that it is five minutes to twelve. I know that we are living in the time of the end. But this does not mean that we can determine what time it is on God's world clock. Many things in the world indeed point to the fact that in our day we are emphatically living in what are called often "eschatological times", times that point to the near coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the clouds of heaven. In that sense I can agree with the expression that it is five minutes to twelve. But nevertheless, we must not forget that all through this dispensation, from the time of the exaltation of Christ unto the time of His second coming, we are living in the last age. The end is always near, and therefore we must be sober and watch unto prayer. That is our calling.

In the second place, we must also be careful in applying the words of Jesus, which He spoke in the days of His flesh, at random to our present time. At that time the Lord indeed meant to say, and actually said, that there were great multitudes trying to press into the kingdom of heaven. And in that sense the harvest was great and ripe to be gathered in. But the labourers, that is, the preachers, were few. Whether this can be applied at random to our present day is another question. Always, of course, the church must preach, whether men hear or whether they forbear. But it cannot always be said at any age that there are multitudes trying to press their way into the kingdom of heaven. And it seems to me that in our day this is exactly not the case.

And finally, we must not overlook the fact that the Lord admonishes His disciples to pray that God may send labourers into His vineyard to reap the harvest. And we read in Luke 10 that the Lord Himself, looking at the ripe harvest, sent seventy disciples into all the land of Canaan, to preach the kingdom of heaven in every city and village.

And as far as our churches are concerned, I am confident that in the Lord's own time He will use the

laborers that are ready to preach, to send them whithersoever He pleases. Let us therefore pray that the Lord may use our churches and the laborers whom we prepare, that He may send them and prepare for them a place of labor. That is my prayer. And that should be the prayer of our churches. And this also means that we certainly should never forget to pray for our Theological School. That is my answer.

Here is a rather interesting question, that should at least be interesting for our ladies. The question is this: "Please explain II Tim. 2:15, 'Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing.'"

Here is my answer. In the first place, the reference is not second Timothy, but first Timothy 2:15. In the second place, it is important that we take the last part of the same text in connection with the first part, which was quoted. That last part reads as follows: "if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety." This is important because it shows that not childbearing as such is a means of grace or unto salvation. For then it would apply also to the unbelieving women in the world. But that, of course, is not the case. We are saved by faith. And also the women in the church are not saved by childbearing or through childbearing, as the original expression is, but through the means of faith which God implants in our hearts. In the context of this passage the apostle Paul is speaking of the fact that the women must be silent in the churches, and that it is not their calling to teach or to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. And he says: "For Adam was first formed, and then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." And then follows: "Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety." The meaning therefore is this, that childbearing belongs to the main calling of the woman. For she must bring forth the seed of the church. In the Old Testament the believing women brought forth their seed in the hope of the Messiah. In this sense Mary, the mother of Christ, is the most blessed among women, because she was privileged to bear and to bring forth *the* Seed of the covenant, Christ Himself. But also in the new dispensation the women are saved in childbearing, because their calling is to bring forth the seed of the elect church, of the body of Christ. And in the way of fulfilling this calling through faith the woman is saved. In other words, just as it is always the calling of the Christian to walk in a new and holy life, and just as they cannot be saved who walk in ways of iniquity, so also the woman, when she fulfills her calling to bring forth the seed of the church, and that too, in faith and hope

and charity and holiness with sobriety, shall be saved in that way.

—:—

After this the speaker was insulted by being cut off. He spoke *in absentia*, over a recorder.)

Why?

—:—

The next question read as follows: "In our Form for the Administration of Baptism we read, 'when they shall arrive to years of discretion'. Just what does this mean?"

The answer is as follows. The expression occurs in the third question addressed to parents when they present their children for baptism. It reads as follows: "Whether you promise and intend to see these children, when come to the years of discretion, instructed and brought up in the aforesaid doctrine, or help or cause them to be instructed therein, to the utmost of your power?" Now the question is: what is meant by the years of discretion? And the answer is, of course: as soon as the children can receive instruction. This instruction is begun in the home, and can be started at a very early age. This instruction is continued by the church in catechism and in preaching, as well as in our schools, which should be Protestant Reformed schools wherever it is possible to organize such institutions. For in baptism we promise that when our children shall come to the years of discretion, we will instruct them and bring them up in the doctrine of our churches. But by the years of discretion I would understand all the years of instruction from their earliest infancy to the time when they are able to make confession of their faith in the church. This does not mean that after that the instruction is finished, for we ever grow in the knowledge and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. But I may nevertheless declare that the expression "years of discretion" refers particularly to that age.

Here is a question about conscience: "Why are some of God's people's consciences stronger than others? What is the difference between the conscience of the godly and of the ungodly?"

The answer you find in part in I Cor. 10:27-30: "If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof: Conscience, I say, not thine own, but

of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience? For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?" On the basis of this passage I would answer that question as follows: a strong conscience is certainly not a conscience that can allow everything, as if a man with a strong conscience could walk in the world and in sin; but rather it is a conscience clearly instructed and guided by the Word of God, and that therefore stands in true Christian liberty, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, so that we can partake of the things of this world with thanksgiving. And a weak conscience is the conscience of the Christian that is not so enlightened and instructed to the things that are called *adiaphora*, indifferent things, things concerning meat and drink, and smoking, and other things. If a man with such a weak conscience, for instance, is in a company and a glass of wine is offered him, it is certainly sin for him to take that glass of wine: not because it is sin in itself, but because his own conscience would make it sin for him before God. And therefore he must abstain until his conscience is further instructed and enlightened. This, according to Scripture, is the difference between a weak and a strong conscience of a Christian.

As to the wicked, they also have a conscience, as well as the righteous. Of this we read in Rom. 2:14, 15: "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another." This is also taught in our Canons of Dordrecht, III, IV, 4, where we read of the natural light by which the wicked discern the difference between good and evil. It is not so, therefore, that the wicked have no conscience. But in distinction from the Christian they over-ride their conscience, and commit iniquity nevertheless. Although they have natural light, and although they have the work of the law written in their hearts, so that they can discern the difference between good and evil, they nevertheless love the darkness rather than the light, commit iniquity, and so become inexcusable before God.

And now I have three questions that are very closely related. The first is this: "Is it right for us as a Protestant Reformed League of Ladies' Societies to take a collection at our meeting for the Chowpatta Mission?" A very similar question is this: "What is the Chowpatta Mission, and should we support it?" And the next question is evidently related to the former two: "Does God ever convert anyone through means of a so-called mission, outside of the church,

where consequently the sacraments can never be administered, or does God only call His people through the church institute?"

My answer is as follows. In the first place, I must confess that I am not acquainted with what is called the Chowpatta Mission, although I can conjecture what is meant by it. Nor did I investigate that particular mission, because I did not deem it necessary to speak on that concrete mission particularly. I rather answer the question by referring to some general principles on which all mission must be based. And I'm sure that in the light of these principles, that is, in the light of the Word of God, the ladies themselves will be able to answer the particular questions, and to act accordingly.

In the first place, then, I would emphasize that all mission is preaching of the Word of God. And that preaching must always be based upon the Holy Scriptures. In this light already much of the mission work that is carried on today is to be condemned, because it does not preach the Word of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In the second place, however, it is also essential that all mission work should proceed from the church, for the simple reason that a missionary must be *sent*, as the very word implies. That sending of the missionary can be done and is done only by God through our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gathers His church. The missionary, therefore, must be sent and called by God Himself. And that sending and calling does not take place immediately, as was the case with the apostles, but in our day functions only through the church institute. That this sending is essential is evident from all Scripture. We read in Rom. 10:14, 15: "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things?" This is also evident from Acts 13:2, 3, where we read: "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Paul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." It was, therefore, the church of Antioch who was instructed by the Holy Ghost to send Paul and Barnabas to preach unto the Gentiles. Besides, the Lord Himself sent His apostles, and during His ministry on earth He sent also the seventy disciples two by two to preach the kingdom of heaven. And, not only so, but He instructed His disciples to pray that God might send laborers into the harvest. The sending, there-

fore, is very essential. This is also evident from the Form for the Ordination of Missionaries used in our churches. In the first place, it is emphasized in this Form that the missionaries as well as the ministers have the authority to preach the gospel, to administer the sacraments, to govern the church, and to maintain Christian discipline according to the Word of God. For we read: "And although from the difference of labor no difference is resulting concerning office, authority, or dignity, since all possess the same mission, the same office and the same authority, yet notwithstanding this, it is necessary that some labor in the congregation already established, while others are called and sent to preach the Gospel to those without, in order to bring them to Christ. And let each man abide in that calling wherein he was called by the Church of God and consequently by God himself and whereunto each has received gifts, until it pleases the Lord to lead him along a lawful way to a different field of labor." And again, in the same Form: "And besides all this it is evident that the work of missions is the task of the Church since the Lord Jesus himself calls his Church the salt of the earth." From all this it is very evident that a preacher must be sent, and that the sending can take place only through the church institute.

Now, if the Chowpatta Mission and the missionaries that labor there are sent by the church and preach the truth of the Word of God and administer the sacraments and exercise Christian discipline according to the Word of God, I have no objection to advise the league to support that mission. If not, I cannot advise them such. But I leave the matter itself concerning the particular mission involved to the ladies themselves. They are no children. And they can judge themselves in the light of the principles of the Word of God in which I have tried to instruct them.

The next question is a rather heavy one. It is this: "Please explain the hardening of Pharaoh's heart by God and Pharaoh's guilt before God in the light of this hardening."

I would answer that question as follows. First of all, it must be clearly understood that in the hardening of Pharaoh's heart and in the hardening of any man's heart God, and not man, is first. Otherwise we destroy the whole problem. That this is true in the case of Pharaoh is evident for Exodus 4:21, where we read: "And the Lord said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go." The point is that Scripture speaks of God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart even before

Moses returns into Egypt to speak the Word of God to Pharaoh. This is also evident from Romans 9:17, 18: "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." And to quote no more, that this is true not only in the case of Pharaoh, but in all the acts of God by which He hardens man, is evident also from John 12:39, 40: "Therefore they could not believe because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them." God is sovereign. And in the hardening of the reprobate He is certainly first. Nevertheless, God hardens the heart of Pharaoh and of man in general, not as a stock and block, but as a rational-moral creature. Let us remember the following: first of all, that man as the object of God's hardening is already dead in sin and misery. He is incapable of doing any good, incapable also of hearing the Word of God in a saving sense and heeding it. In the second place, remember too that the Word of God came to Pharaoh and comes to all men that hear the gospel with the calling to repent and believe. This call came to Pharaoh in the form of the Word of God, "Let my people go." And Pharaoh refused. This Word of God was repeated many a time and was accompanied by mighty powers and wonders on the part of God. Sometimes it seemed as if Pharaoh would be softened and was inclined to obey the Word of God and let the people go. But whenever the plague was lifted, Pharaoh strengthened himself and hardened himself over against the Word of God. The same is true with all men that hear the Word of God and do not receive grace to heed it and to obey the gospel. For faith is a gift of grace, and no man can hear the gospel in a saving sense unless God first instills into his heart that saving faith. And therefore, Pharaoh was hardened not as a stock and block, but as a rational, moral creature. He heard the Word of God. That Word of God was powerfully pressed upon his conscience by all the mighty wonders which Moses in the name of God performed in the land of Egypt. But through that same Word of God the Lord hardened him, and Pharaoh hardened his own heart over against that Word. This is also true of all men that do not receive grace and hear the gospel of Christ. God is that first cause of his hardening, but man is nevertheless the responsible and moral agent that assumes an attitude of rebellion over against the Word of God and thus hardens himself. Thus we can explain how God hardens the heart of Pharaoh and

hardens the heart of any man, and yet so, that he becomes guilty before God and God judges him.

Here is an interesting question: "Were all the animals in the ark of life-size?" The questioner evidently conceives of the possibility that God by a wonder of His power so diminished the size of the animals that they could all have a place in the ark. Just as in the time of the war letters were filmed and greatly diminished in size, in order afterward to be enlarged again, so my questioner evidently conceives of the possibility that this was done with the animals before the flood. How otherwise, such is the presupposition in the question, can we understand that all the animals could possibly live in the ark, together with the food and all they needed. My answer is, in the first place, that this is indeed an ingenious supposition, and I would by no means rule out this possibility. Another possibility is that all the animals were in the ark in life-size but that we conceive of them as not having developed into so many species as there are today. It is possible that before the flood there were only very few species, that later after the flood, developed into the different kinds of animals as we know them today. But frankly, whether the one or the other is true, I cannot state positively. For the problem is there, and I cannot solve it. I think that it was a wonder.

Here is a question of a practical nature: "What is our stand toward the Boy and Girl Scout movement, and why? And how about membership in the Y.M.C.A. or Y.W.C.A.?"

As to the stand toward the Boy and Girl Scout movement, I would say that we cannot possibly join such a movement. It is certainly not Christian, but through and through humanistic. The pledge, for instance, to perform a good deed at least once a day, and if possible, more, is certainly not based on Scripture, but on humanistic philosophy. Man is by himself incapable of doing any good, and inclined to all evil. He certainly cannot perform any good deed before God, unless we should believe in the theory of common grace. On the other hand, the Christian does not attempt to perform one or more good deeds a day, but has by grace an inner delight in all the commandments of God. And good works are only those that proceed out of a true faith, are done according to the law of God, and to the glory of the Most High, in gratitude of heart. The same may be said about movements like the Y.M.C.A. and the Y.W.C.A., although no doubt it is possible to acquire a limited membership, in order to gain access to their gymnasium and swimming pool, etc. These ecumenical movements, although at the beginning characterized by a certain orthodoxy, have gradually deteriorated and have come under the influence of humanism and

moderism. That this is true is evident from a single quotation of an article written by one of the Y.M.C.A. secretaries, from which I quote the following: "Although I call the attention to the imperfections of the thinking of Jesus, it is far from my purpose to maintain that the Christian movement has made a mistake by giving him the place of a leader. I believe that the human race produced not a single figure that by his character and doctrine had more right to symbolize the ethical and spiritual aspirations of humanity. Jesus was not so entirely unique as we formerly presupposed. It can no longer be maintained that in Jesus we have a complete and perfect revelation of all the conceivable ethical and religious truths." That the term *Christian* in Y.M.C.A., means very little is very evident from quotations like these. And therefore, we cannot support movements like the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. from a principal point of view.

Here is another practical question for the ladies: "Proverbs 31:10-31. Just how must this be applied to today's Christian mother?"

I would answer that in Proverbs 31 we have the picture of an ideal woman, not only of a mother, but also of a Christian wife,—an ideal that can be followed in any age. It is the picture of a virtuous woman, of a woman that fears the Lord. We read of her that the heart of her husband safely trusts her, that she will always do him good, that she labors diligently from morning till night for her household; That she even provides not only for her family, but also for the poor and needy. Besides, she is a woman of strength and honor, and she openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness. Her children rise up and call her blessed, and her husband also praiseth her. Such, according to Prov. 31, is a wife and mother that feareth the Lord. It stands to reason that this picture cannot be applied to modern conditions in all its details. Besides, the realization of that ideal not only requires a woman that fears the Lord, but evidently also a strong woman, strong in body and mind. And therefore, I would say that the principle of this ideal is after all expressed in vs. 31, which tells us that she is a woman that fears the Lord. And the fear of the Lord is the principle, the beginning, of all wisdom, also for a Christian wife and mother.

The following is a question concerning an article in the Apostles' Creed: "If we believe from the Bible that Jesus suffered the torments of hell before He died, why does the Apostles' Creed read, 'He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell?'"

This question I have recently attempted to answer

in one of my radio sermons on the Apostles' Creed. Undoubtedly the questioner can receive a copy of that sermon. In brief, however, I would answer that it cannot be determined with certainty just what the fathers meant by the expression, "He descended into hell;" that the descension into hell has been variously interpreted by Lutherans and Roman Catholics, as well as by others; and that, although it is evident from the article in the Apostles' Creed that it refers the descension of Christ into hell to the time after His death and probably before His resurrection, the Reformed churches have always interpreted this expression spiritually, as meaning that Christ suffered the torments of hell before His death, on the cross, and especially when He cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Well, I think I have room on the wire for just one more question, and then also my time will undoubtedly be up. And besides, I finish the questions with this last one. The question reads: "This question concerns what our attitude must be toward the state or government. How must we explain Rom. 13:2, when we also read of the many revolts of the Israelites against their oppressors, such as those under the leadership of Gideon, Samson, and others?"

My answer is this, that according to Scripture we must always be in subjection to the government, but that this subjection does not mean that we may ever obey men more than God. When the government requires of us to do something against the precepts of our God, we must refuse and suffer the consequences. As far as the attitude of Israel is concerned, this was not really an attitude of revolt, but rather an attitude of obedience to the Lord, Who called upon them to liberate themselves from their oppressors after they had turned from their wicked way.

And now, ladies, I have no more room. I just have space and time yet to say, Goodbye. I enjoyed myself very much, and I hope that you did the same.

Your pastor,
H. Hoeksema

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IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies' Society of the Oaklawn Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sincere sympathy to one of its members, Mrs. R. Rhoda, in the departure of her mother

MRS. R. POST

on Saturday, May 10, 1952.

It remains our abiding comfort to know that the Lord does all things for good unto them that love Him.

The Ladies' Society:

Mrs. G. Vanden Berg, Vice-Pres.
Mrs. B. Zandstra, Sec'y.

IN HIS FEAR

Looking To The Future

Chapter 2

THE TEACHER PROBLEM (SUGGESTIONS TOWARDS SOLUTION)

At the conclusion of our previous article we promised to continue our discussion on the subject of solving the problem of obtaining teachers qualified to teach in our Protestant Reformed schools by suggesting certain stop-gap or emergency measures which should be taken as long as we lack the regular facilities to train our own teachers.

To this task we now address ourselves.

We may seem to be repeating some of our former material. This is only due to the fact that in these suggestions toward solution we follow up on our delineation of the problem which we made a few articles previously.

In the first place, then, we want to emphasize that our schools should insist on engaging teachers who are confessing members of one of our Protestant Reformed churches. Some time ago we called this one of the necessary qualifications of a Protestant Reformed teacher. It follows then that this is one of the measures that must needs be taken in obtaining Protestant Reformed teachers. Someone might object that this is not an emergency measure. And I concede that there is truth in that contention: this must also be a permanent rule for our schools. But my point is now that all the more while we have no teacher-training facilities our schools must insist on this point. The reason is plain. One who is only a baptized member has not committed himself publicly and personally as to doctrine and walk to the truth as it is maintained in and by the Protestant Reformed Churches. He is duty bound to do so. He may very well do so also in the future. But the possibility, and also the probability in a certain percentage of cases, remains that he will manifest himself not to be Protestant Reformed. Now certainly, we cannot and may not commit our children and our schools to the trust of one who as yet does not say that he confesses the doctrine that is taught in the Protestant Reformed Churches. But we must be as certain as possible that the teachers whom we engage are Protestant Reformed.

It may be objected, however, that even then we cannot be sure that we commit our children to the instruction of Protestant Reformed teachers. And for this objection there is also ground. We all know of cases

in which a person has made confession of faith in a Protestant Reformed church, and has therefore confessed to believe "the doctrine which is taught here, in this Christian church", and who have sooner or later, contrary to their public confession, left us. Not only that, but examples can be cited of such people, now ex-Protestant Reformed, who at one time taught in our Protestant Reformed schools, who did so even shortly before they left our communion. Of such people it is certainly true that they went out from us, but they were not of us. They never were really Protestant Reformed, even though they sometimes try to maintain that they still are Protestant Reformed though they are affiliated with another church. Nor were they at heart ever Protestant Reformed teachers. And it is too bad both for our schools and for the children who were committed to their instruction and who now can see them affiliated elsewhere, unfaithful to the truth, that such people were ever teachers in our schools. I say it is too bad. But it is unavoidable. Neither the consistories who accepted their confession, nor the school boards who engaged them as teachers can search the hearts of men. And hence, they cannot foresee who will and who will not be faithful to his confession. In other words, no absolute certainty can be attained by us in this matter.

All this, however, does not change the fact that we must be as certain as possible.

And therefore the first rule to which our schools must adhere in engaging teachers is this: *Every teacher in a Protestant Reformed school must be a member in full communion in a Protestant Ref. Church.*

In the second place, we must insist upon it, that all our teachers be committed in principle and practice to the ideal of Protestant Reformed education.

About this there can be no quarrel.

If we are to have Protestant Reformed schools, they must be Protestant Reformed indeed! There is absolutely no sense in establishing separate schools, only to have them stand in the line of the traditional Christian school. Let us never forget that. Exactly therein lies the greatest pit-fall to the whole movement. We have been used to the traditional line of Christian instruction, have long been accustomed to the line of "the school with the Bible", instead of *the school founded on Scripture* one hundred percent. Let us not deceive ourselves: it is difficult to get out of that rut. The path of least resistance, when we have established separate schools, is to remain principally in that old rut. That is inevitably the death of our Protestant Reformed schools, no matter then whether we have separate organizations and buildings.

Hence, we ourselves, but necessarily also our teachers must be committed to the *principle* of Protestant

Reformed education. I cannot conceive, of course, of a Protestant Reformed person who can be *principally* opposed to Protestant Reformed education. Of such a person who claims to be *principally* opposed to our own schools I can only draw one conclusion: he is not Protestant Reformed. Anyone who understands and maintains the truth as taught in our churches, and that in distinction from all other churches, must necessarily insist that our children be instructed and brought up in that truth, also as that truth has undeniable significance for the so-called secular spheres of life.

The school boards, therefore, who are responsible in this matter, must make very sure, therefore, that the teachers whom they engage are adherents to the principle of Protestant Reformed education. They must investigate on that score. Let them examine the teachers. Let them determine that the teachers whom they engage are not men and women who would as soon teach in one of the other Christian schools or even perhaps, in a public school. And let them place this matter above all others; any teacher who will not commit himself to the principle of Protestant Reformed education must be avoided like the plague! Unless we are willing to insist on this, we may as well close the doors of our schools and go back.

But in the case of teachers it is just as important that they be *practically* committed to the ideal of Protestant Reformed education. It is entirely possible, of course, that for certain practical reasons one cannot and does not for a time favor Protestant Reformed education under certain circumstances. That may be readily conceded. And we must not be quick to condemn such people. They need instruction, help, and encouragement. But such people must not be teachers, in a position of leadership. The halt and the lame and the doubtful and fearful must not be in the lead. And therefore our teachers must be men or women who actively and wholeheartedly back up the movement, who are fired with zeal by the vision of this beautiful and essentially practicable ideal.

Rule Two, therefore is this: *We must insist that every teacher in our Protestant Reformed schools is principally and practically committed to the ideal of Protestant Reformed education.*

That is probably as much as can be said, as far as hard and fast rules are concerned in this respect.

But several suggestions may be made yet.

In the first place, let the school boards by means of frequent committees of school-visitation maintain a close watch on the instruction that is given, not so much from the formal viewpoint—I doubt that there are many board members who are capable of this,—but from the viewpoint of the question whether the instruction is positively Protestant Reformed. This

must be done not in an attitude of suspicion, but of confidence and helpfulness, and because after all the board is responsible above the teacher. Our teachers, I am convinced, have a difficult task, since they are opening a new field. They themselves must take this task seriously, and be open to suggestions, criticism, encouragement, and help from the board.

In the second place, let the teachers individually address themselves very seriously and earnestly, by way of hard study and honest self-examination, to the task of founding their instruction on our Protestant Reformed truth. This has been lacking in their formal education. It is a lack which, for the time being, because of the lack of our own facilities and the lack of our own text-books, they will have to make up for individually and privately.

In the third place, I believe it can be of great benefit that our teachers, wherever possible, address themselves to this task collectively. Let study-clubs be organized among the teachers of one or more schools. Such groups can together devote an evening a week, for example, to one subject or one phase of a subject, with a view to distinctively Protestant Reformed instruction. I do not believe that a school board can make such a thing compulsory. But I do believe that a good Protestant Reformed teacher will approve the idea, support it, and profit from it. And I believe that our boards should encourage such activities, suggest them where necessary, and support them wholeheartedly. Much can be done in this way. In fact, there is a certain benefit connected with this type of thing which is often missing in formal education, the benefit namely, that the teachers themselves do the research and are actively engaged in trying to apply the truth of Scripture to every phase of education. For the benefit of the smaller schools, where the location and the number of teachers makes it impossible to organize a study club, worthwhile material might even be published in some form.

My fourth suggestion is one of which more lengthy consideration may perhaps, be given. It is that our teachers organize nationally into a federation, and that a rather lengthy teachers' institute or convention be held at least annually. This too, if properly conducted, could be highly beneficial.

In closing our discussion on this subject, I would make two remarks.

First of all, let me repeat that we must not rest until we have provided adequate teacher-training facilities for our schools.

And secondly, with a view to the foregoing, as well as with a view to what can be done meanwhile, let's all put our shoulder to the wheel!

H. C. Hoeksema

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Philippians 2:1-4

I.

There is really nothing so painful under the sun as to see brethren and sisters in the Lord live in disunity of mind and soul; it is the pain of the breaking of the harmony of the music of the love of Christ in the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace. Conversely it is also true, that nothing gives such joy as to see that brethren dwell together in the unity of brotherhood. It is like the precious ointment wherewith Aaron and his sons were anointed; it is like the dew of Mount Hermon upon the top of Mount Zion.

From out of the depths of the Apostolic heart of Paul, that has only concern for the spiritual well-being of the Church, we hear the earnest precept of the Gospel: Only walk worthily of the Gospel in your citizenship walk of the heavenly kingdom on earth! Then shall the enemy be met in the gate; we shall then be without fear striving together for the faith of the Gospel. Then shall the bulwarks of Zion be strong and her palaces beautiful with the grace of God.

For the church is really beautiful by grace and by grace alone. It is given us out of grace to believe in Jesus Christ, preached to us in the Holy Gospel; it is equally by grace that we may suffer for the sake of Christ in the midst of this world. In this, believers share a common heritage in the Lord.

Should not such a church be one in every fibre of her being and heart? And does not the love of Christ constrain her to this walk in the unity of one common aim and purpose in life? Is not the love of Christ manifest in this, that He humbled Himself before God and was exalted by Him as a reward? You understand this Mystery of godliness that is great, you assert? Well, then, you will also have the necessary point of appeal given in the Scripture passage that we wish to consider with one another in this and the next essay.

What is this passage?

It reads as follows: "*If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like minded (that ye mind the same thing), having the same love, being of one accord, (harmony of your soul) of one mind (minding the one thing). Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his*

own things, but every man also on the things of others."

It seems to us, that it is of the utmost importance for the correct understanding of this Scripture passage to bear in mind, that Paul is here speaking of *likemindedness in the Lord*. It should be remembered, that there is a *caricature likemindedness* also in the world of unbelief now, and that there shall be such *likemindedness* in the greatest possible measure presently in the world of Antichrist. There too is a *likemindedness in purpose*. It will be the unification of all the vain imaginations of men, who rise up against the Lord and His anointed Son. These the Lord will have in derision; He will laugh at them from His holy pavilion. Nevertheless among these evil men there is unity of purpose. Pilate and Herod become friends in one day when they have a common Foe, Jesus of Nazareth. Such is not the *likemindedness* in my text here. This is the *likemindedness* not of those who are "put under the feet of Jesus". Psalm 110:1: I Cor. 15:25. On the contrary it is the unity of purpose of those, who, by the grace of God, learn to pray: Rule us so by thy Word and Spirit, that we may submit ourselves more and more to thee . . . till the full perfection of thy kingdom take place, wherein thou shalt be all and all. Ques. 122, Heid. Cat. It is, then, most emphatically a *likemindedness in the Lord*.

That such is the *likemindedness* and unity of purpose here spoken of is evident from three matters that we here let pass in review.

In the first place, it should be remembered that Paul is writing this letter to the saints that are in Christ Jesus at Philippi. He is writing to those who are by faith in the Lord.

In the second place, it should be noticed that this Christ Jesus is emphatically the *Lord*, who has received *the Name* which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in all the universe. In this Lord and His dominion, by His Word and Spirit we are *likeminded*, and must become more and more so. Wherefore Paul writes in chapter 4:2: "I beseech Euodias and I beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord."

Thirdly, we should emphatically notice, that all of the incentives unto the *likemindedness* here spoken of are in the Lord as the risen Savior, who was exceedingly highly exalted because He humbled Himself so deeply. Listen: if there then be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit if any bowels and mercy . . . This is all in Christ our risen Lord.

A *likemindedness* in the Lord then.

Upon a bit closer scrutiny of the text we notice the

following elements elucidating upon this likemindedness.

It is a likemindedness that is rooted in and constantly flows from our "*having the same love*".

What is this love? Why is it the prerequisite of likemindedness in the exclusive Christian sense?

Love in the Holy Scriptures must never be confused with personal likes, natural adaptedness. It must not be confused with natural enthusiasm. For love in the Holy Scriptures is the bond of spiritual perfection. It is the perfection wrought by the Holy Spirit in our hearts so that we are perfect image-bearers of God, perfectly keeping all of His Commandments. He who loves, keeps the commandments of God. For this very reason it is very easy to evaluate our deeds in the light of this law of love to determine whether ours is a life of love. This is not a matter left to personal subjective-rationalistic judgment. It is entirely a matter that is measured by the standard of the Word of the Gospel as the Rule of faith. (*Regula Fidei*). Here we do not measure ourselves by ourselves; man is not his own law. Here we are measured by the law of love in our heart and conscience. It is the Rule given from above: a Royal law it is.

Notice first of all, that the Scriptures teach that God is love. Scripture does not lift the lid on all that happens in the inter-trinitarian life of God. Even in this love-life God is incomprehensible. However, we confess that God is love. God is the rule of His own life; He measures up to this perfectly as Father, Son and Spirit.

God *reveals* His love, the inner and real nature of this love always in the Cross. Herein we always see love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son a propitiation for our sins. Having loved us He loved us unto the end. He loved us so that He sheds abroad His love in our hearts by His Word and Spirit, assuring us of all His loving-kindness so that we may cry, Abba, Father. For He hath quickened us when we were yet sinners. And why? Because of His great love wherewith He loved us.

And this love in our hearts is such in its very nature that we will love the brother, whom we see. It rejoices in his joy, sorrows in his sorrow, rejoices in the truth, beareth all things, hopeth all things and endureth all things. Such love never fails. It never puts to shame.

Now this is the love of which Paul speaks in our text.

There are two fine touches here that we should observe.

In the first place we should notice, that Paul does

not employ a finite verb here. He says: *having* this love. It is the participle. The thought is that since *we are having* this love in our hearts this likemindedness must needs follow. It is like water that makes one wet, fire that burns, food that nourishes. So *having* this love, likemindedness must needs follow as good fruit from the gift of love.

Then too we should notice that Paul also says: *having the same love*. Each word is important here and must be weighed. The same love as who? It seems but natural to here think of the same love that all of God's people have had shed abroad in their hearts throughout the ages. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. It is the same love wherever it is manifested. Time cannot effect it. It is also the same in every child of God, in every believer in Christ Jesus. And this means that in the church at Philippi every believer has the same love, it is of the same kind and nature. Love must be measured in all, in that it lays down its soul for the brother. Love always rejoices in the truth, believeth all things, hopeth and endureth all things. No one can parade his own patent of love. There is no counterfeit. All have the same, real, genuine love, which the Holy Spirit sheds abroad in our hearts.

Only from this love does like-mindedness proceed.

Does this preclude likemindedness in doctrine? Nay, this is a likemindedness rooted in faith in the self-same doctrine. For it is not a walk worthy of the approval of men, but it is a walk that is worthy of the Gospel of Christ. And then this is all doctrine, instruction, reproof, correction in righteousness as instructed by pure words, in sound doctrine.

If love were a matter of subjective opinion then we could discard doctrine in likemindedness. Then we could play out love and pure doctrine as antipodes. We then could speak of pure doctrine as an obstacle toward likemindedness. But now this is different. For pure doctrine is the Royal law of the King. It is the Rule of faith that is energized by love.

When we all mind the "same thing" then certainly this means, that we place our necks under the yoke of our Lord and Christ. This yoke is always the same. Pure doctrine does not change. It is always the plumb-line of Christian conduct. Always it tells us to love even as we are loved by God in Christ. In this love of God to us we are to love one another with pure hearts. Thus we are instructed in purity of doctrine.

It is thus a matter of unity in doctrine and life. In that order. Never can there be a unity in *life* (zoöee) where there is no unity in Christian teaching in the fundamentals of the Christian religion in godliness. It is true that where strife is there some-

times purity of doctrine is maintained. And it is sometimes maintained simply from the motive of strife. But this malady in God's church should not tempt us to the greater catastrophe of relinquishing purity of doctrine in the cause (sic) of love. For likemindedness is in the Lord. And the Lord also is Lord of pure doctrine.

—to be continued.
G. C. Lubbers

PERISCOPE

HERESY IN CANDIDATES

Under the above title a contribution to the *Southern Presbyterian Journal* was recently published. We quote it to indicate to what lengths unbelief has gone in some pulpits.

"An editorial by Dr. Robinson in (the *Southern Presbyterian Journal*—J.H.) in the January 30, 1952 issue makes reference to an action of Pittsburg Presbytery (Presbyterian Church in U.S.A.—the "Northern Presbyterian Church"—J.H.) concerning a special meeting for the examination of ministerial candidates. Your information is correct except that licensure was involved rather than ordination. As a member of the committee on examination of candidates I was present at the meeting held last spring in Sewickly, a suburb of Pittsburg.

"You may be interested to know that at least three of the nine young men from two of our theological seminaries, Princeton and Western, were guilty of heretical statements. They happened to be Western men, and I must say I was much more impressed by the theological papers read by the young men from Princeton. In answer to a question which I raised about the virgin birth of Christ, one young man said that the doctrine was not important, but that since it was in the New Testament he would accept it.

"As is indicated in your editorial, a second young man refused to express his belief in the doctrine of eternal punishment. But by far the most blatant case of heresy occurred in connection with the examination of the last of these nine candidates. He had already read in his paper that the Bible is subject to error on account of its being written by man. When examined orally on the floor of Presbytery he made the bald statement that Mark and Luke are the only dependable books in the New Testament.

"I made a motion that we vote for these candidates individually so that we could conscientiously approve several of them. After the motion was defeated the vote was taken that all nine be licensed to preach the Gospel—by a standing vote only five of us were opposed, while fifty voted affirmatively. Dr. Fowler, pastor of the Knoxville Presbyterian Church, declared that he would appeal to the Synod. Unfortunately many other commitments prevented him from bringing this serious matter to the attention of the Synod within the required number of days.

"I cannot tell you how dismayed I was by this clear-cut evidence of compromise with some of the most fundamental doctrines of our Christian faith. It brought vividly to my mind many similar experiences when I was one of a minority group opposing liberalism in the Presbytery of Brooklyn-Nassau. Let me assure you that you can feel perfectly free to make use of this information, should you desire to do so. May God's richest blessing attend the effort that you and others are making in the Southern Presbyterian Church to preserve 'the faith once delivered unto the saints!'"

This letter was signed by the Rev. Luther P. Fincke pastor of the Point Breeze Presbyterian Church.

Certainly history is bearing out and justifying the actions of Dr. Machen and his group who were expelled from this same Presbyterian Church for allegedly making propaganda and rebelling against the "instituted authority" but in reality for defending the faith of the fathers.

How anyone can remain, soul-sick though he may be, in such a communion is a conundrum to me.

NOT PEACE BUT A SWORD

Under the above title from a different issue of the same magazine we quote that which was written by one of the editors, Dr. L. Nelson Bell.

One of the hardest facts Christians are called upon to face is that a faithful Christian witness brings division, not unity. As long as Satan continues to wield his malignant influence in this world he will resist and try to pervert the preaching of the Gospel.

To all of us come the grave temptation to try to make Christianity and Christian truth popular with the world. This is a spiritual impossibility. There is constant conflict between light and darkness, between the Christian witness and the lies of the evil one. To argue otherwise is not only to fool ourselves but also to be utterly unrealistic.

"Christ did not come into this world to give us a

Pollyanna-like gospel of sweetness and light. He came that we might have a Gospel of God's redemption from the works and the power of the Devil. This is a *conflict* and the more faithfully this conflict is waged the more certain that we will sense the opposition and see how evil is the working of the 'father of lies.'

"Popularity is a pleasant experience, but it can be a desperately dangerous one. When all men speak well of us we are standing on the edge of an abyss. When our preaching brings only pats on the back it is not the preaching of God's righteous judgment on sin or of the fact that only Christ can free men from its penalty and guilt. When our preaching and our personal witness fails to bring a division among those who hear and who are spectators to this grim struggle, it is high time that we examine our own hearts and our message.

"On the other hand, while a faithful ministry must bring division it is nevertheless a ministry of power; not the power of personality or mind but of the Holy Spirit. Where the Holy Spirit is working there comes first a conviction of sin followed by repentance and faith in the Redeemer. This is a crisis in one's personal life and a renunciation of Satan and his works. This *must* cause a conflict because it entails transition from one camp to another, between which there is a bitter and relentless warfare.

"The inescapable result is that the Christian becomes, or should become, a marked individual in his business, in his profession, in his home, and those who do not know the Lord, at best look on him as a peculiar person and often view him with open antagonism. Our Lord never intended His followers to remain in obscurity. We are 'light' and we are 'salt'. He expects us to be living epistles. But our position *costs* and if it does not cost it is high time that we examine our faith and our way of life.

"We cannot stand beneath the cross of Christ on Sunday and fly the ensign of the Devil in our business, among our professional associates and before those of our own households the rest of the week.

"We cannot take up our cross and follow Him and at the same time walk in the ways of Satan. If our life does not show by personal example, by our renunciation of the world, a willingness to be different, even peculiar in the eyes of the unsaved, then we are not paying the price involved in becoming a Christian.

"So far as this world is concerned our Lord did not come to send peace but a sword; not accord with, but separation from the world.

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, said the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing: and I will receive you, and will be a Father

unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

"If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

"You may choose the way of peace but it may be the way of death; for a follower of and witness for Christ it is not peace but a sword."

With what is written here we can all agree especially in our age of worldliness and world-conformity.

J. Howerzyl.



CONTRIBUTIONS

GOD'S PROMISES

Dear Editor of the *Standard Bearer*:-

Please permit space for the following in the *Standard Bearer*, thanking you in advance.

Again and again we may hear the remark "We have nothing against the 'Contents' of 'The Declaration', but we only say that there is no need for it". Then again "The Three Forms of Unity are sufficient".

Now we confess that everyone has a right to his own opinion; and as soon as we discontinue to express our opinions on a given subject, that then all advancement, or firmer establishment of any and all truths is forever nil. Be that as it may, *in its place*, it does however make a lot of difference just what is meant when such statements are made, or what we wish to convey to others, when we do so. Now to me it seems that if there is no objection to the 'contents' of the 'Declaration', that then also all other objections certainly must be of minor, or no value, which to me seems self-evident.

However, when the claim is made: "that the Three Forms of Unity are sufficient," then I cannot help but feel that this statement implies also that there can be no logical reason why we as churches formulated, and have adopted the 'Declaration of Principles'. Some seem to be of the opinion that this then closes the door for any further development of the truths of Gods Word. Or that it bars others from joining with us into our communion and fellowship. Or that the proclamation of the Gospel is somewhat curtailed, etc. Taking all these statements just at face value, then they might be quite acceptable, and no doubt, often make or leave an impression upon the minds of the

people in general that Synod had done something here for which no good reason can be advanced not only, but that it may do untold hurt in the future for us as churches. And when presented as such, then the matter becomes rather a sorrowful happen-chance, which only can be lamented, that ever anything as such has taken place.

After all has been said, then I firmly believe (and that is my opinion) that if we will but carefully retrace our steps, to take careful note of *all* that has taken place in the recent past, as well as other things which if properly evaluated in the present, and future welfare of our churches, then I believe that several very good reasons can be advanced and substantiated that the 'Declaration' is not only very timely but will prove to be a monument of value for the future, as well as the present. It doesn't change the *status quo* of our confessions, bars *no one* any more *now* than our confessions have done, does not diminish, but rather, adds to the distinctiveness of our doctrines as we as churches confess to believe them, whereby we are distinguished from all other Denominations who also base their beliefs upon the "Three Forms of Unity" as we, and many others do, and still disagree with one-another, so much so that we can not dwell under the same roof-of-fellowship. Many of them also bear the name "Reformed". I believe that off-hand I can name about a dozen of them, *and each of them interprets the same confessions differently*. It may be true that some of these Churches attach no binding powers to their confessions; but I'll wager a guess that the number is very few. Some believe in general and common grace; or permit lodge members to affiliate with them or believe in presupposed regeneration; or are as Arminian as the Methodist. And so we could go on, but lest we think that other churches *do not attach binding powers* to their doctrines, I'll advise such an one to attempt to preach *our* doctrine in that so-called Reformed (?) church once, and I can assure him that he shall very soon find that he is thrown out. No, they may not bind your conscience, nor preaching, but will soon give you a lease on life, but not *within their bosom*.

And of other churches attach binding values to their doctrines, claiming that sovereignty in their own domain; is it taboo for us as churches to do the same as they do? I do not disrespect any denomination for being faithful to their doctrines. That is the way it should be. That does not say though that I agree with him. And let me add here that we must not for a moment imagine that the Liberated brethren do not attach a high value to their concept about God's Promise in infant baptism. And if we think that their concept isn't binding within the bosom of their

own churches, then I honestly can find no reason why they should in any way differ with us at all, for then there can be no objection to accepting our concept with which they feel constrained to differ sufficiently to refuse fellowshiping or uniting with us. Look at it as we will, anything other than that just doesn't make for good sense, nor logic. That does not say that in time we as churches may not be able to iron out our differences. I see that possibility, even with the 'Declaration', as well as without it.

Thus (as I see it) it is obvious that we as churches only have done what we should have done years ago. Had we done so, then the Mission Committee would have been able to present to the Liberated brethren a clear-cut definition of our accepted confessions: major and minor. It can be denied, but not gainsaid that the doctrine contained in the 'Declaration' has always been our accepted doctrine, and has always been considered *binding* for each and everyone of us as members (and then why should it not be so to others who wish to join with us?) which is only proper and consistent that it be so. To allow anything short of just that would be equal to dispensing with the sovereignty in our own domain, which finally would be the equivalent to a mad bull in one's china closet.

In our present question which we as churches were called upon to consider more carefully, we cannot escape the fact, that in *essence* there is no difference at all in the question of today, and that of 1924. Both strike at the self-same fundamental, *the Promise*. And all we do in that 'Declaration', is to reiterate, and/or confirm that fact, but only this time at the very deepest seat of our emotional being our heart—our darling baby, and whether God's promises are *seriously promised* unto that child at baptism. Truly, a very sensitive question indeed. In 1924 the question was rather general in its scope, whereas now it seems to be very *particular* in its application. I believe that it can only be very beneficial to become very personal here and permit you as reader to enter the very recesses of my heart, as to what *only comfort* in life and in death, my *only* hope, even for the dead loved ones of which one is a baby son. If God's promises are not the Yea and Amen in Jesus Christ from all eternity to all eternity, then I as parent can never have, nor entertain an ounce of hope for that infant. Even though it never has been baptized, makes no difference to the fact as such, in such a case, God's works are eternal! And, "God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent; hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"—Num. 23:19. That is our only hope. Add Rom. 8:33 to that: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of

of God's elect. . . .?" And so we could go on and on, for the Bible is full to the brim from cover to cover declaring unto His elect the secrets of His love, and the blessedness of their salvation in and through our beloved Savior, and all by His sovereign grace, and no other. Herein have I hope: that God's mercies fail not. He alone is faithful, and shall also perform it. And the nearer I come to the full realization of that, my eternal joy, the more beautiful this truth becomes to me.

I thank God for this our recent controversy, for we need a sock on the ear, and I mean *everyone* of us. We were caught off-guard, in our sleepy hollow of self-complacency, and were far enough removed from our keen observations of the 20's that it knocked us from our feet, and we blundered plenty to our own shame. May God set us on our feet once more and remain with us, is my prayer.

Yours in Christ;

H. A. Van Putten



Thy providence, great God, we praise;
How good and great are all thy ways!
Thy bounty crowns our passing years,
And dissipates our anxious fears.

Thy promise stands for ever fast,
While sun, and moon, and earth shall last;
The laws of seasons shall endure
Till time and stars are known no more.

Summer and winter, cold and heat,
And night and day in order meet;
Seed-time and harvest, each succeed,
To prove thy love—supply our need.

When years are past, and seasons o'er,
We still shall prove thy cov'nant sure;
And in the shining realms above.
Adore thy goodness and thy love.



O! may thy hand be with us still,
Our guide and guardian be;
To keep us safe from ev'ry ill,
Till death shall set us free.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Manna of the Desert Period

How sad they imagined their plight to be is indicated by their weeping. But they were not starving they were well-nourished men, strong and vigorous and in the best of health. For the manna, to which they were restricted, was a perfect food. Thus what they cried for is not nourishment, they had that, but the pleasures of the table, sensuous enjoyment, for they cried for leeks and onions and cucumbers and melons and garlic and above all for flesh; in a word, they cried for the fleshpots of Egypt. These men were carnal and wicked not because at the time they could have relished some flesh. Though the manna, as an article of diet was a perfect food, and though, as restricted to this bread of God, they were in the best of health, they nevertheless rose up in rebellion against God, because for a short time, while on the way to Canaan—the promised land of their abode—they had to do without flesh, without the ordinary pleasures of the table. It shows that the god of these men was their belly. It shows that for these men the only and supreme good was not God, and life with God in Canaan, but Egypt's fleshpots, the pleasures of this earthy. What cared these men about Canaan! They preferred the bondage of Egypt, if only they could have their melons and flesh. Thus rightly considered, their wailing for melons and flesh was a rejection of the heavenly, of the heavenly Christ and of Christ's heavenly Father, and a reaching out for, a lusting after, the things below. These men were carnal and wicked indeed. Yet, as is always the case with such men, they refused to face the truth about themselves. They admitted not that they were wailing for Egypt and its pleasures. But they insisted that they were in dire need and that they were angry with God because, so they said, he was letting them starve, while the fact of the matter is that they were angry with God because he had taken them away from the fleshpots of Egypt. It was leeks and garlic that they wanted, the husks of this world, not that manna, not the Christ of God, not Christ's God, and the heavenly pleasure of His heaven. Had they been allowed to act upon their impulses, they would have returned to Egypt at that very juncture, instead of pressing on with God's people to Canaan.

God heard and answered the prayer of those weeping Israelites. For that is what their wailing for

flesh was—a prayer. Said the Lord to Moses, "Say unto the people, "Sanctify yourselves against tomorrow, and ye shall eat flesh; for ye have wept in the ears of the Lord, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? For it was well with us in Egypt: therefore the Lord will give you flesh and ye will eat." The Lord's manner of speech bode only evil for those wailing Israelites. He was angry with them. In his anger he will answer their prayer.

The Lord's anger can be understood. These men were sobbing out their heart for flesh, for the earthly. The Lord will answer their prayer, but to their own hurt and destruction. "Ye shall eat," said the Lord to them, "not one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days, but a whole month, until it come out of your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you: because that ye have despised the Lord which is among you, and have wept before him saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt?"

So the Lord ceased sending the manna for a whole month and simultaneously brought them quails from the sea in great abundance. And the people, instead of repenting for their great sin, instead of prostrating themselves before the Lord in true contrition of heart, hardened themselves. For they stood up all that day, and all that night, and all the next day, and they gathered the quails. And they spread them abroad for themselves round about the camp. But while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague. The plague began to riot among them immediately. It may have continued but a few days; but it took a great deal of lives. And those that died not of the plague were smitten with nausea accompanied by excessive vomiting. This seems to be the thought conveyed by the language, "Ye shall eat even a whole month, until it come out of your nostrils, and it be loathsome to you." Yet they were restricted to that diet of flesh a whole month, there being during that time nothing else for them to eat.

To have in prayer our affections set not upon Christ and His God and the heavenly but upon the earthly, to seek in prayer this earth, in a word, to be seated in prayer not about the table of the Lord but about the fleshpots of Egypt—this, I say, is a dangerous practice that might prove fatal. God might answer that prayer but to our own hurt and eternal doom, if we repent not.

And we should not fail to observe that we deal here with a divine visitation of the first magnitude. The people did not die because the flesh of the quail

was poisonous, and thus unfit for human consumption. The plague was worked immediately by God. The evidence of this is that the plague began to riot in the mortal frames of those lusting Israelites, ere the flesh was chewed by them and thus ere they had opportunity to eat of the flesh of the quail and to swallow any of the juices. So did the Lord provide those men with the unmistakable evidence that the plague was of Him. And through His waiting with smiting them until the flesh was between their teeth, He established before their consciousness a certain connection between their lusting and the plague.

The plague must have done its work speedily, so that soon there were few tents that housed not a corpse. The people were panic stricken and cried to Moses to pray for them. With the encampment suddenly and swiftly being converted into a morgue, the living, in their consternation, would cast the bit of flesh that each had appropriated far from them, resolved not to eat it, lest they be over taken by a like fate. But the Lord had said, ye shall eat. And so they did, for it was all the food they had for the whole month.

The plague was doubly deserved. For even before the wind had dropped the quails about the camp, the Lord, by the mouth of Moses had set forth their great sin and commanded them to repent. Said he to them, "Ye have wept in the ears of the Lord, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? For it was well with us in Egypt." Hearing, those men should have considered. They should have been afraid and besought the Lord's mercy and pardon. Instead, they hardened their hearts, and continued to demand flesh. And sighting the quails, they stood up and without any compunction of conscience, went forth to gather and so persisted in showing their contempt for the manna, for Christ, and the heavenly, and were therefore over thrown.

G. M. Ophoff



The law of God is just,
A strict and holy way;
And he, that would escape the curse,
Must all the law obey.

But does the curse still rest
Upon my guilty head?—
No—Jesus—let his name be blest!
Hath borne it in my stead.

Arminianism and Justification By Faith

Arminianism is a subtle heresy. Let us see how true this is by attending to its teachings regarding justification by faith. My quotation is from the "Elements of Divinity" by Thomas N. Ralston, D.D., an avowed Arminian, who wrote in the latter part of the 17th century. From this work we quote the following from chapter XXXI:

"Justification—False Theories Refuted—Justification by Works Alone, and by Faith and Works United, Considered.

"Justification by *works alone* may be understood in several different senses. 1. It may mean justification by perfect obedience to the original law of God. This as we have always shown, is absolutely impossible to a fallen sinner. The condition of the first covenant being 'do this, (in your own person,) and live,' and 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them,' it will hence follow that, as the apostle declares that all have sinned, and all the world are guilty before God, to be justified by works of perfect obedience to the first covenant, or original law of God, is absolutely impossible.

"2. Justification by *works alone* may mean a perfect conformity to that moral code or law given to the Jews in their own Scriptures, and to the Gentiles by the influence of the Holy Spirit given unto them, to 'show the work of the law written in their hearts.'

"This is substantially the same law that was given to Adam, and, in reference to its subject matter, is identical with the covenant of works, which is still in force, not as a principle of justification, but as a rule of life, by which to estimate the moral standing of men, and exhibit the magnitude of his delinquencies in the sight of God; for, as the apostle says, 'By the law is the knowledge of sin.' In reference to this law, it was that the Jews, in St. Paul's day, set up a claim to justification by works.

"The great argument in the epistle to the Romans is to show the utter impracticability of this scheme of justification.

3. Justification by *works alone* may be understood as implying justification by *works* of evangelical obedience under the Gospel, or those works which proceed from faith, and are performed by the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

"The grand argument in support of this scheme has been founded upon the language of St. James, who, it is contended, expressly teaches justification by works;... We reserve the refutation of this and every other scheme of justification by works, till we

come to examine the doctrine of justification by faith only; since the establishment of the latter will disprove the former. They cannot stand together.

"4. The fourth scheme of justification to be considered, is that which teaches that we are justified by faith and works taken together.

Closely allied to this notion is the doctrine of the Roman Catholics on the subject of satisfaction, penance, etc. They not only hold that works are essential to the complete remission of sin, but they teach that they are meritorious. They confound justification with sanctification, and contend that we must be inherently righteous before we can be just in the sight of God; and this inherent righteousness, according to them, is derived from the merit of good works.

"But the full refutation of all these variant schemes of justification by faith and works united, we trust will be sufficiently apparent in the discussion of the scheme of justification by faith only." Thus far Ralston.

We see from this excerpt how this Arminian divine insists that justification is by faith only and not by works.

In the sequel he devotes a whole chapter to the refutation of the false views cited above and to answering objections to the true doctrine. And in another chapter he illustrates and proves with the Scriptures that justification is by faith only.

Yet despite Ralston's insistence that justification is by faith only, he is still an Arminian also regarding this truth. Let us bring this out by quoting some more from his book. He writes: "That we may perceive clearly the force of the Scripture proof *that we are justified by faith only*, we will first define the sense in which we understand that doctrine.

"On this subject, we first quote the clear and forcible language of Mr. Wesley. In his sermon on 'Justification by faith,' he speaks thus: 'Surely the difficulty of assenting to the proposition that *faith is the only condition of justification*,' (Italics—O) must arise from not understanding it. We mean thereby thus much, that it is the only thing without which no one is justified—the only thing that is immediately, indispensably, absolutely requisite in order to pardon... For supposing a sinner of any kind or degree, *in a full sense of his total ungodliness, of his utter inability to think, speak, or do good, and his absolute meetness for hell fire* (Italics—O), suppose, I say, this sinner, helpless and hopeless, casts himself wholly on the mercy of God in Christ, *which indeed he cannot do but by the grace of God* (Ital.-O) who can doubt that he is forgiven in that moment?" Let us pause here for a remark or two. Let us take

notice of the statement in Italics that begins with the phrase: "in full sense of his total ungodliness," etc. Would it be possible to state in clearer and more forceful language that man apart from the grace of God is totally depraved? And then this other teaching contained in the above lines, namely that the sinner cannot wholly cast himself on the mercy of God except by the grace of God. Can it be possible that we here quote an Arminian? Well, we do. Take also notice of the italicized expression, "Faith is the only condition of justification." So then, you see, according to this teacher, faith is the *condition*, mark you, a condition—here the condition to justification. This precisely stamps him an Arminian. And this precisely is his Arminianism.

The teacher whom we quote continues:

"By faith as a *condition* of justification, we are not to understand that it is absolutely, and in every sense, the cause of justification. Far from it. The love or grace of God is the originally moving cause. The *efficient* cause is the Holy Spirit, 'who takes all the things of Jesus and shows them unto us.' The *meritorious* cause is the death of Christ. The *instrumental* cause, on God's part, is the word of God; but the *conditional cause, on our part is faith.*' (Ital.-O).

Let us take notice. "By faith as a *condition* of justification, we are not to understand—says our author—that it is absolutely, and in every sense, the cause of justification," no, not in every sense, but only in a certain sense, our author means to say. But in what sense *is* faith the cause of justification, according to our author? In the sense that it is the determining cause. This is the meaning that Ralston (and with him all Arminians) attaches to the term *condition*. And rightly so, for this is the proper meaning of the term.

So when Ralston (and all Arminians) says that faith is the condition of or to justification, he means thereby that faith, that is, man's choice, determination to believe is the determining, the sovereignly determining cause of justification. For, according to our author, though faith and the power to believe may be said to be God's gifts in man, the determination to believe is man's, so that man determines whether or not he shall believe and be justified. That this is our author's conception, that this is what he and all Arminians mean when they say that faith is the condition to or for justification, I shall prove by quotations from Ralston's work to appear in another article. But it is already plain from the following from his pen. He writes:

"As we have seen, justification by works, which implies perfect conformity to the first covenant, is to us impossible: Christ has satisfied for our breach

of the first covenant, by suffering 'for us,' and we are now placed under the covenant of grace. To become personally righteous under the covenant, we must comply with its conditions."

Mark you, we must comply, says our author with its conditions,—comply, he should have added, out of our selves. For that is what he means. Why does he not say what he means? It just goes to show what a subtle heresy Arminianism really is.

Our author continues:

"God who graciously placed us under the covenant, has a right to prescribe the *condition* upon which we shall be accepted under it. This, we have shown, is faith. By the satisfaction of Christ we are not to understand that men are absolutely and unconditionally freed from the demands of the covenant of works. They are only unconditionally freed so far as to be placed under the new covenant. Those of whom *conditions* are required, can only be delivered from the curse of the law by complying with the condition of faith; Hence, Christ is said to be 'the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.' When we believe, faith is imputed unto us for evangelical righteousness. It derives its efficacy from the appointment of God; and had the wisdom of God prescribed love to God, to anything else, as condition of pardon, instead of faith, it is very clear that love to God, or whatever else had been prescribed, would then have sustained the same relation to our justification that faith now sustains." So far our author.

The Arminian has use for the term *condition* or rather for such expressions as "God saves men on the condition that they believe," and "faith is a condition for or to justification." For, according to his theology, as I have just pointed out, the *choice, determination* to believe is out of man. Man sovereignly determines his own destiny. Such is the conception. But such is not our conception. Hence, we have no need for the above-cited expressions.

We can say all we want to say and may say by such expressions as: God saves, justifies men through faith, in the way of faith. Without faith justification is impossible. Faith is indispensable to justification. If a man believes not, he perishes, etc., and we should not make a condition of this "if".

G. M. Ophoff



Christ is my everlasting all,
To him I look, on him I call;
He ev'ry want will well supply,
In time, and thro' eternity.

The Lord Repenteth . . .

"And the Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people." Exodus 32:14.

This Scripture can be understood only in its content.

God's people had corrupted themselves. They had turned quickly aside out of the way which the Lord had commanded them. They had made them a molten calf, and worshipped it, and sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people: now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation."

Does this saying of God have reference also to the Israel according to the election? Clearly it does. For in this saying Moses and the whole nation appear side by side. "That I may consume them," says the Lord, "and make of thee—Moses—a great nation." But the Lord cannot destroy His elect. But how then can He say—even as much as say—that He would do just that.

Fact is that the Lord said no such thing. For clearly implied in the saying is the clause: 'except thou Moses intercede for the people,' so that the complete thought conveyed is this: "Now therefore let me alone, that I may consume them," 'which I will actually do, except thou, Moses, intercede for them,' in other words: 'pray thou, O Moses, for my people and in the way of and in response to thy intercession I will spare and forgive my people.' And Moses did intercede for the people. For so the Lord had determined. And as interceder Moses was God's creation and as such His gift to His people. The prayer that he prayed was put into his heart by the Lord. Let us attend to the words of this prayer:

"Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.

"For remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swearest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have

spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it forever."

How in view of all this could the Lord destroy His people or even say that He would destroy them? He could not. And therefore the "Lord repented of the evil which he said (not 'thought' as our English version has it) to do unto his people."

The Lord repented. This must be rightly understood. Man's repentance contains in it three elements: 1) remorse, 2) change of heart and mind and plans, 3) grief.

A man does this or that thing. It grieves him, for he sees that it was a mistake. And he wishes that he could undo the thing. This certainly is not God's repentance. For He makes no mistakes. All that He determines to do and actually does is the expression of perfect wisdom. But God does repent not as a man but as God, which means that definite phenomena and even considerations grieve Him. The wickedness of man grieves him. The wickedness of the ante-deluvian race of men grieved Him, wherefore He also destroyed it from the face of the earth. And so also what He said he would do to his people—consume them—in case Moses had not prayed for the people, grieved Him, that is, the thought of His destroying His people—the Israel according to the election—was thoroughly repulsive to Him. And the reason? That people He loves in Christ—so loves that He wounded the Christ—His only begotten—for the transgressions of this people and bruised Him for their iniquities.

And so it is plain that the Scripture statement, "And the Lord repented of the evil which He said to do unto his people," does not mean that the Lord changed His mind, underwent a change of heart, as prevailed upon by Moses, and that therefore He did not do what He in His anger said He would do, was intending to do.

For as we have seen the Lord had not said that he was about to destroy His people.

It is plain from Moses' prayer that he was fully aware that the Lord could not possibly destroy the nation, and therefore he also must have prayed in the confidence that his intercession would avail. But he seems to have been praying for the whole nation as unaware that it contained a reprobated seed doomed to extinction.

As appears from the sequel, he had also this difficulty, namely how, seeing there was no real atonement, God could spare and forgive, He being righteous and holy God.

G. M. Ophoff