

THE STANDARD

Bearer

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MEDITATION

Ascension Into the Hill of God

"The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof;
the world, and they that dwell therein." etc.

Psalm 24

We do not know at what occasion this song was composed. That is, we do know in general, but not in particular. It may fit several occasions. It may very well point to the ascension of the ark of the covenant into the hill of Zion at the time David fetched it from the house of Obed-edom. And again: it may refer us to one of the occasions when David returned from the battle with the selfsame ark after successfully slaying the enemies of the Lord. We do not know at what particular occasion this psalm was composed, but we do know that it refers to God's ascent of the hill Zion in the ark of His strength. Therefore Psalm 68 is of like contents. See especially verse 18 of that Psalm.

The first and second verses have troubled commentators no end. What seems to be the connection between them and the rest of the psalm? What has the creation of the world to do with ascent into the hill of the Lord?

Well, it seems to me that the connection is very lucid.

You have the parallel here which is found throughout in the Bible, between the earthly symbol and the spiritual reality.

You will all agree that the Gospel, the Kingdom of God, the realization of His eternal covenant is just this, that He exalts the things that are low, even in deepest hell, unto the heights of the new heavens and the new earth. Man, elect man, the church, is caught in the everlasting arms and carried to the hill of the Lord, that is, the heavenly city of the New Jerusalem.

And both earth and heaven, as well as brute creation, will partake of this exaltation of God's people.

Of this exaltation we find the symbol in what happened on the third day of creation week. On that day, the third, the Lord called the dry land out of the chaotic state of the earth which is described as *without form and void*. The whole earth was one great pool of mud, one great morass. And when the Lord called, the dry land appeared majestically above the churning waters of the great ocean. God *exalted* the earth. And he established her upon the floods; He founded the earth upon the seas: henceforth the earth is exalted.

And as such, the dividing of the waters and the dry land is a symbol, a picture, of the exaltation of the church and with her, the world, unto the dizzying heights of the new and eternal commonwealth that is called The New Jerusalem.

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Proof for this is II Cor. 4:6.

In that place we find another symbol of another spiritual counterpart. There we read that the calling of light out of darkness which happened on the first day of creation week, is the earthly counterpart of the spiritual boon which we often call: the effectual calling. Now read the verse as such: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

And in the psalm which we have for the object of our study at this time we find the exaltation of the world through Jesus Christ, first as it happened in creation, which is the symbol; and second, as it happened centrally when Jesus ascended to heaven. Delitzsch is wrong on two counts. He understands nothing of the symbolism of the first world; and he militates against the patristic effort to see in this psalm the ascension of our Lord to heaven. We have a pro-

found respect for Delitzsch's acumen as a Hebrew scholar but we are convinced of the meagreness, the futility of his theology.

After seeing the dry land majestically appear out of the churning waters, as the earthly will of Jehovah, whose it is by right of creation, we hear a question: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord: and who shall stand in His Holy place?" And in that question, we first of all proceed from the symbol to the type.

Of that type we read very often.

Essential in the type is, again, exaltation, the elevation of the earthly to the heavenly. Essential, as is proven when we study the altar: a mound of earth or stone, firstling of the hill of the Lord, Who raises the earthy to the heavenly through Jesus Christ the Lord.

The earth, this present world, is in darkness, ethical darkness: man has sinned and is henceforth in terrible obscurity, spiritually *without form and void*. And darkness is upon the face of the deep.

Now listen again to the question: Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His Holy place?

That question is answered somehow, because from the very dawn of history I see sinful men stand round about altars, mounds of earth, elevations of and in the world. I hear Abel's cry and Noah's lament, but lament and cry notwithstanding: they worship and adore about the altar of God, the God of their salvation.

The altar, later the tabernacle, still later the temple are types. They are types of a reality that is blinding and dazzling in its glory and brilliancy.

The altar, the tabernacle and the temple have this in common: they typify unto us the fact that somehow God is dwelling with His people, drawing them upward and onward, from out of the abyss of hell unto the hill of God, the heavenly beauty of His House in eternal bliss.

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Now let us listen to the answer: clean hands, pure heart, rich soul and true tongue. All those who answer that description shall receive the blessing of the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation. They are the men and women that seek the face of Jehovah-God. Their name is attached in a summarizing sense at the end of the description: Jacob is the name of that generation. Somehow, in some way, Jacob will dwell in the house of God, he will ascend the hill of Jehovah, partake of the exaltation of all things and finally sit in splendor and majesty in the thrones round about the God of his salvation.

Now continue your psalm for here comes Jacob! King Jacob!

There is someone who is seen ascending the hill of God. And when he comes within hearing of the walls of the city, we hear a cry of the accompanying host: Lift up your heads, O ye gates: and be ye lifted up ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in!

From within comes the question: Who is this King of glory? And the answer: The Lord mighty in battle!

The question is repeated and so is the answer, with a variation. The King is identified with the Lord of Sabaoth, the Lord of hosts.

All this happened when David led God's people in Old Testament times around the ark of the covenant upward on the slopes of Mount Zion. The doors of the walls of the city were opened and the ark was deposited in the rightful place: in the midst of the people of God.

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But that was a type.

All this was fulfilled centrally when Jesus arose in the garden of Joseph of Arimathea and later ascended from Mount Olivet, penetrating the heavens and arriving in heavenly Jerusalem, going through the heavens and appearing before the throne of God. He is King Jacob, King David, King Solomon, the fulfillment of all types.

He answers the description of those that shall calmly be able to ascend and stand, right before the face of the Holy God!

Clean hands, pure heart, rich soul and true tongue. It is the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

Do you know any other?

Clean, pure, rich and true are the *sine qua non* of communion with God. And only in Jesus they are found.

The rest of mankind are unclean, impure, vain and deceitful.

I hear you repeat a question that came to us through the ages: Who then can be saved?

To answer that question is easy if you understand the types.

Come with me and we will retrace our steps. I have spoken to you of altars, tabernacles and temples. I have spoken of the ark of the covenant and you must look strongly at it. So did the cherubim: they were very desirous to look into the things of reconciliation. They did not fully understand until they were commissioned to go to the earth along with the Son and witness the Nativity. Then they fully understood. Later, they saw again and were very still. I refer to Golgotha. Yes, they were still around Golgotha. It was their turn to be still. This hour was for the horrible laughter of satyrs, of devils, of hell.

But we were to speak of the altar.

Essential to the altar is the blood that is spilled on it, the sacrifice, bleeding, crushed, slaughtered. Essential to the ark of the covenant is its mercy-seat on which is spilled with solemn regularity the blood of the innocents.

Yes, I have pointed out to you that we have seen many of the sons of Adam, round about those altars of the ages, crying and wailing, but also singing and rejoicing. Psalm 68.

They have cried and they have wailed; they have sung and they have rejoiced because of the blood.

And that blood is Jesus: it is fulfilled in the death of Innocentius, and that is our blessed Lord, the royal Jacob, David, Solomon. Jehovah Salvation!

And that blood is precious. It is so valuable and rich that it has bought untold millions of the generation that seek the face of God. It has bought that generation not *because* they seek God's face, but *that* they might seek it.

That blood has covered your and my uncleanness, impurities, vanities and lies.

And through the power of that blood (the Spirit of grace) he makes you principally clean, pure, rich and true. Since then you lift your heads on high and look toward the mountains: the exaltation of the kosmos; centrally, the throne of David.

Yes, God spake and the earth appeared out of the whirlpools of mud.

And: Hallelujah! God spake again, now through His Son, and the exalted earth and heaven appear with its heart: New Jerusalem, Jesus our Lord and all His brethren.

God has gone up with a shout (Psalm 47:5); Thou hast ascended on high (Psalm 68:18). Yes, in order to give gifts unto the rebellious even.

You will kindly remember, beloved, that I drew a parallel between the appearance of the dry ground and Jesus' ascension. God made the earth: He established her upon the waters. God made New Jerusalem: He established her forever!

Well, now listen to Psalm 68:22b: "The Lord said: I will bring My people again from the depths of the sea!"

Is it not Divinely beautiful?

Yes, we will follow Jesus, ascending the slopes of Mount Zion.

Looking strongly at Golgotha we sing: The glorious gates of righteousness, throw open unto me; and I will enter them with praise, O living God to Thee!

O God of eternally miraculous wonders! I never wrote with fonder adoration: For Jesus' sake!

Amen and amen!

—G. Vos

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Editor — REV. HERMAN HOEKSEMA

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EDITORIALS

The Split

After almost thirty years of Protestant Reformed Church life, the falling away from the Protestant Reformed truth which, already for some time, corrupted our churches, has officially become a reality and the split in our churches has begun.

It became a reality in the mother church, the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids which together with our Hope Church and the Protestant Christian Reformed Church in Kalamazoo formed the beginning of all our churches.

No doubt, if all signs do not fail, the split in the First Church is only the beginning, and it will have its repercussions in some of the other churches.

Already the Rev. A. Petter took sides with those that apostatized and severed, with them, his connection with the Protestant Reformed Churches.

The same may now be said of the Rev. A. Camenga. He also preached for those that severed themselves from the Protestant Reformed Churches, and refused to recognize the legal consistory of the First Protestant Church of Grand Rapids that called him as missionary for our churches. The Mission Committee has, for the time being relieved him of His labors as missionary.

For the time being, to avoid a church fight for the buildings, the First Church meets in the rather large and convenient auditorium of the Christian High School. This does not mean that First Church repudiates its right to the property. But if at all possible it would like to settle this matter outside of the world's court.

But let me now relate from the beginning how this split in the First Protestant Reformed Church came about.

The immediate occasion was two sermons preached by the Rev. H. De Wolf.

This does not mean, of course, that these sermons were the only or even the deepest cause of the separation. On the contrary, for some time previous to this, things were not right in the First Church. We must not forget that, from the beginning in 1924, there were always those that did not go along with us for the sake of principle. This was unavoidable in a large church like ours. But the first manifestation of opposition to the Protestant Reformed truth came in connection with the effort to establish our own Protestant Reformed School. Many, far too many, were

opposed to this movement and were satisfied to have our children instructed in the existing Christian Schools. It became evident then that a large number did not care for Protestant Reformed truth. Even today, a large number still do not send their children to our own school, as will be evident from the fact that only about three hundred children attend our school and these come from all the four Protestant Reformed churches in Grand Rapids. The opposition was accentuated when such a thoroughly Protestant Reformed document as the Declaration of Principles was being proposed, discussed, and finally adopted. Then, indeed, it became clearly evident that many did not want the Protestant Reformed truth. They wanted something else, although it was not immediately clear, even to themselves, and, perhaps, still is not clear, exactly what they wanted. It seems that they were no longer satisfied with Protestant Reformed preaching. Some spoke of biblical preaching in distinction from doctrinal. They emphasized the activity of faith, what ever that meant to their own mind. They liked to hear the "demand" of faith and repentance, and the "responsibility of man." In connection with all this they felt the needs of "conditions" and of "conditional preaching." They emphasized the Bible over against the Confessions, although most of them were not even acquainted with the Confessions. A group of ladies even attended the Reformed Bible Institute and, according to reports, were very much edified.

But although, in the First Church, this spirit of opposition to pure Protestant Reformed truth gradually gained ground, the immediate occasion of the split was, as I said, two sermons preached by the Rev. De Wolf, the first on April 15, 1951, the second on September 21, 1952.

These sermons were bad.

It has often been alleged that the Rev. De Wolf stands condemned on two "unhappy statements" which are, besides, supposed to be taken out of their connection with the rest of the sermons. But this is not true as I hope to make plain. Although it is true that the consistory of the First Church finally concentrated its attention on especially two statements of these sermons which were censured, it certainly is not true that, for the rest, the sermons were Protestant Reformed.

The first sermon emphasized a general-condition promise. Literally, the Rev. De Wolf said to his audience: "God promises every one of you that, if you believe, you shall be saved."

Do not overlook the date of this sermon: April 15, 1951.

This was right after Classis East had adopted the Declaration of Principles with its strong emphasis on

the truth that the promise of God is unconditional, that it is for the elect only, and that faith is not a condition but a means.

The sermon, therefore, was preached, no doubt, with intentional opposition to that Declaration. At least, it is hard to believe that the preaching of such a sermon on that particular date was incidental.

Let us analyze that sermon.

As I said, the whole sermon was bad. How could it be different? When a man emphatically preaches that the promise of God is general, meant for everybody, on condition of faith, the rest of the sermon cannot be Protestant Reformed. Besides, according to the protests against the sermon that were filed with the consistory, the Rev. De Wolf made other statements that no Protestant Reformed man could possibly get it into his head to make. According to one of these protests (by the late Rev. Jonker), he said: "You have nothing to do with election and reprobation; your responsibility is to believe. If you will believe, you shall be saved." Or, according to another protest, he declared in the same sermon: "Election and reprobation have nothing to do with the gospel." The consistory did not treat this part of the protests. Besides, the Rev. De Wolf denies that he made them. Nevertheless, there can hardly be any doubt that, somehow, he spoke in a deprecatory manner of election and reprobation. But he surely offended the truly Protestant Reformed people by making the following statements, which he does not deny to have made; "Some of you carry Protestant Reformed on the lapel of your coat. You are proud of being Protestant Reformed. Don't think you go to heaven because you are Protestant Reformed." I cannot imagine a man that knows and loves the Protestant Reformed truth can make such statements from the pulpit and insult his own people publicly.

But let us concentrate a moment on the statement that was condemned by the Consistory.

"God promises every one of you that, if you believe, you shall be saved."

What are the implications of this statement?

Let us compare it with the stand we took as Protestant Reformed Churches in 1924 over against the well-known "Three Points."

In 1924, we will remember, it was the theory of common grace that was the bone of contention. The Synod of Kalamazoo adopted the "Three Points." The first of these Three Points declared that there is a grace of God to all men. For this, however, the Synod could find no confessional grounds. In order, then, to offer a semblance of proof from the confessions for the theory of general grace, the Synod appealed to certain passages from the Canons of Dordrecht that

refer to the preaching of the gospel, such as Canons II, 5, and III, IV, 8 and 9. In this way, Synod reached the conclusion that the preaching of the gospel is grace to all that hear, for it is a well-meaning offer of grace and salvation, well-meant on the part of God, to all that externally hear the preaching of the gospel.

This we used to call "het puntje van het eerste punt."

And again and again we asked the question: what grace do the reprobate receive in the preaching of the gospel?

Over against this teaching of the First Point we maintained that the preaching of the gospel is grace only for the elect.

And ever since 1924 it has been the stand of the Protestant Reformed Churches: the promise of the gospel is not general, even though its proclamation is general, but it is for the elect alone.

But the sermon of the Rev. De Wolf which he preached on April 15, 1951, was even worse than the declaration of the First Point.

The First Point spoke of a well-meaning offer of salvation to all.

But the Rev. De Wolf preached that *God promises salvation to every one in the audience*, if he will believe.

Note that this statement is thoroughly Arminian and cannot be interpreted in a sound Reformed sense.

1. It is *God* that promises. The Rev. De Wolf did not say: "I preach to every one of you that, if you believe, you shall be saved." This might pass, even though it would not be the whole truth. But in a sermon in which such a statement would occur it would be possible to explain, in the rest of the sermon, that faith is not a condition which man must fulfill but a gift of God, and a means unto salvation. But the Rev. De Wolf said nothing of the kind. He said: "*God* promises salvation to every one of you."

2. *God promises*. The Synod of 1924 declared that the preaching of the gospel is a well-meaning *offer*. But this is much worse. *God promises*. Now, the promise of God is always an oath. Moreover, it stands to reason and it is plainly taught in the Scriptures, that God promises salvation only in His grace. The statement, therefore, is tantamount to saying that God is gracious unto every one in the audience, and that he swears this with an oath. This is pure Arminianism. It is common grace in the preaching of the gospel emphasized.

3. *God promises to every one of you*. Who are they? To whom did the Rev. De Wolf speak? To the Church? To the elect? To the spiritual seed? To the children of the promise? No, but "to every one of

you." To every individual within the reach of his voice. To elect and reprobate God promises. To believers and unbelievers God promises. To strangers as well as to members of the First Protestant Church God promises. To carnal as well as to spiritual seed God promises salvation. Not the gospel is preached to all, but God promises salvation to all!

4. But you say, perhaps, that this presentation does not do justice to the statement made by the Rev. De Wolf. For there was a limiting clause, a conditional clause attached to this general promise of God: "if you believe." Is it not true, then, that the Rev. De Wolf plainly indicated that the promise of God is only for the believers?

This, however, cannot possibly be the meaning of this statement.

I say again, if the Rev. De Wolf had said: "*I preach* to every one of you that, if you believe, you shall be saved," he might have preached the truth, though he would not have preached the whole truth, and though even then no Arminian would have had any objection. More true, and, in fact, in harmony with the Confession in Canons II, 5, it would have been if he had said: "I preach to every one of you that believeth salvation." For in that case salvation and the promise of God would have been limited to believers i.e. the elect.

But he said nothing of the kind. He made the promise of God as general as possible: to every one of you. Now, if God in His grace promises salvation to all without distinction and, if yet every one is not saved, the cause must lie in man. He does not fulfill the condition. Or positively speaking: the general promise of God to all without distinction is dependent for its realization on man, on his willingness to believe.

It is exactly this that the Rev. De Wolf preached in his sermon of April 15, 1951.

And that he meant to preach it is evident from the fact that he refuses to retract this statement openly from the pulpit, in spite of the fact that his attention was called to that bad sermon, that the consistory condemned that statement, that the classis condemned it as heretical, and that he rather causes schism in the churches than to retract it.

H.H.

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—NOTICE—

Their will be no issue of the Standard Bearer August 15.

OF BOOKS

HET ONAANTASTBARE (The Untouchable) by the Rev. J. Overduin. Published by J. H. Kok N.V., Kampen, the Netherlands. Price f. 7.25.

This is, in my opinion, a beautiful book, beautifully written, on a very important and beautiful subject. The author is, undoubtedly, not unknown to some of our people here in this country for he is the same that wrote "Een Theater In Dachau." During his horrible stay there, he no doubt experienced somewhat the realities of what he writes in his present book, although the first print of it was published before the war. By the title, the author refers to the untouchableness and imperishableness of all the treasures of the Christian hope. All the earthly things, all the things of this world, and the fashion of this world passes away but hope and its expected and longed for treasures are sure and abide forever. About this hope and its various aspects and relationships the author writes. He writes about the relation between hope and faith and love, about its ground and sole possibility in Christ, about its significance for the present life of the Christian, about hope and sin within us and the sinful world about us, etc., etc. And he writes about it in a spiritual and practical manner.

If you can still read Dutch, buy this book and read it. You will enjoy it as I did.

HET WERK VAN CHRISTUS, by Dr. G. C. Berkhouwer. (The Work Of Christ). Published by J. H. Kok N.V., Kampen, the Netherlands. Price f. 9.75.

Dr. Berkhouwer is no unknown author among us. His "Dogmatische Studiën" are not only known in this country but they are being translated. In the present volume he treats of the work of Christ. He follows the order of the Apostolicum: "And in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried, he descended into hell. The third day he arose again from the dead, he ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead." In other words, the author treats of the work of Christ in his states of humiliation and exaltation.

Dr. Berkhouwer is a student. He is especially interested in the study of the development of dogmatical studies in the nineteenth century and in recent years. All through the book he offers a comparative critical study, in the light of this development, of the work of Christ. This, in my opinion, is the chief merit of the work.

I agree, of course, with the author, when he repudiates the idea that the incarnation of the Son of God

would have occurred apart without the entrance of sin into the world. Christ came, indeed, *for* sin. However, this does not alter the fact that, according to the counsel of God, sin served the purpose to make room for the "Firstborn of every creature" to come into the world.

As to the question whether, through the blood of the cross, man was reconciled to God or God was also reconciled to man, the fact remains that Scripture never speaks of the latter but only of the former. In this connection, the idea of reconciliation and that, too, in connection with the covenant idea, might have been more clearly defined.

One more remark. In a treatise on the work of Christ, one would expect proper emphasis on the truth of election. This, in my opinion, is a lack in the book.

I heartily recommend the book to all that are interested in a comparative-critical study of the work of Christ.

HET GELOOF DER VADEREN (The Faith of the Fathers), by the Rev. P. Visser. Published by J. H. Kok N.V., Kampen, the Netherlands. Price f. 4.95.

This is a nice book on our Confessions. We are always interested in any publication on our Three Forms of Unity. And this book is very worthy product in many respects. In one respect it is unique. It combines all the three parts of our confession into one and, in connection with the various doctrines briefly discussed (God, revelation, Scripture, creation, the fall, Christ, etc.), it places them side by side. The book was designed for catechetical instruction as well as for the purpose of acquainting outsiders with our confessions.

We agree with the author, of course, that faith is not a condition but a means unto salvation. We hardly agree with him on his definition of the covenant, and particularly not with his theory of the covenant of works, which is not confessional.

We heartily recommend the book.

—H.H.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Society of the Doon Protestant Reformed Church hereby express their sympathy to Mrs. Sy Stellinga in the loss of her husband, and to Mrs. Ed Van Egdome and Mrs. H. Stellinga in the loss of their father

MR. SY STELLINGA

May the God of grace who performs all things according to His own good pleasure but also in unchanging love to His people comfort and sustain them in their sorrow.

The Martha Society

Rev. H. C. Hoeksema, Pres.
Mrs. S. Aardema, Sec'y

Doon, Iowa

OUR DOCTRINE

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

AN EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

PART III — OF THANKFULNESS

LORD'S DAY 36

3.

With Fear and Reverence

This profanity can and does assume different forms. A very common and simple manifestation of profanity, to which we probably do not always call attention, is the thoughtless use of the name of God. By thoughtless use I mean any use of the name of the Lord that is not accompanied by and is not the true expression of a corresponding fear and reverence in the heart. We, for instance, often show this lack of fear and reverence in our prayers, especially in prayers which we offer in public. This is true not only of the vain repetitions of which the Lord speaks in Matthew 6, verse 7, but is especially the case with the repeated and useless mention of the name of God in our prayers. The same is true often of our conversations, of our Bible discussions in our societies, and even of our preaching and hearing the Word of God. All such use of the name of Jehovah that finds no corresponding profound fear and reverence in our hearts is really profanity, reflecting upon the profanity in our sinful nature. When we shall be perfect, we shall never again thus lift up the name of God into vanity. In heaven we shall never be able to use the name of God coldly, as an object of discussion and debate. There our whole being, with all our heart and mind and soul, with all our intellect and will, shall spontaneously respond to the name of the Lord in fear and reverence.

Profanity it is, too, when men refuse to use the name of the Lord at all. In decent society in the world swearing and cursing is often avoided, and is even condemned. Public swearing is contraband, for different reasons. It is not good manners. It is not considered to be refined to use the name of God in vain. Does that mean that in such society the third commandment is kept, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain?" Certainly not: for God has not revealed His name in order to be passed by in silence. To do so nevertheless is just as much profanity as is cursing and swearing. The name of the Lord is simply forgotten, is intentionally avoided,

is not mentioned at all. This is an insult, provoking the Lord our God. It is heaping contempt upon the name of the Most High. For do not forget: the name of Jehovah is everywhere. It is in all the works of His hands. And it is, or should be, on the lips of every Christian who loves that name and glorifies it as it is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord. Even when a man's name is intentionally avoided where it ought to be mentioned, it is an insult to him. It means that he is ignored and slighted. And this is exactly what decent society, that avoids swearing and cursing, but at the same time never mentions the name of the Most High, does in regard to the name of Jehovah. He is simply not mentioned. Contemptuously they pass by the glorious name of God. This also is profanity, and certainly a violation of the third commandment.

Finally, there is that direct and most terrible form of profanity that is called cursing and swearing. Even this may be done directly and openly, or indirectly and covertly. You can say, "My God," and so use the name of God in vain; or you can express one of the attributes of God, and say, "My goodness," or "Good gracious!" When you use the latter terms as exclamations of surprise or indignation or amazement, you refer to divine virtues, and therefore it is the same as if you had said, "My God!" Such expressions are camouflaged and indirect profanity, and are meant to be such. The same may be said of other expressions that are commonly used and certainly should be avoided by him that professes to be a Christian. Many people seem to imagine that they do not use profane language when, instead of using the name of God, they use expressions as "By heaven," or similar expressions. But the Lord teaches us that heaven is the throne of God, and that to swear by heaven is the same thing as swearing by God Himself. The same is true of the thoughtless use of the word "hell". People become disgusted, and express their disgust by exclaiming, "O hell," and imagine that by using such expressions they do not violate the third commandment. Nevertheless, they are mistaken. Hell is the place of God's wrath; and when you use the term *hell* in a vain and thoughtless sense, you mean to mock at the place where God's wrath burns eternally. The regenerated and sanctified believer certainly does not use such terms, but is called to use a language of his own, in which he glorifies the God of his salvation. But finally, there is that most abominable expression of the sinner's profanity that is known as cursing and swearing, and that consists in making a veritable plaything of the holy name of God, a vehicle for the expression of all kinds of corrupt emotions, of sinful wrath and anger, of bitterness and rebellion, of

hatred and envy and malice, of mockery and contempt, and even of drunken revelry and dissipation. The name of God is used by the corrupt sinner as he would use no other name, and is dragged in the mud by him as no other name is ever humiliated, not even of his bitterest enemy. I do not have to elaborate upon this well-known and most terrible sin, which in some circles in the world,—notably our army and navy,—is so general and prevalent that it is well-nigh impossible for the child of God to move about in them. And why does the sinner so defile the name of God and take it in vain in the bitterness of his sinful soul? There is only one answer: the carnal mind is enmity against God!

The Catechism reminds us that there is no greater sin, or more provoking to God, than the profaning of His holy name, and that His wrath is kindled against those who do not endeavor, as much as in them lies, to prevent and forbid such cursing and swearing. Nor, it seems to us, is it difficult to understand how especially this sin must be God-provoking. Only let us think of ourselves. If there is any self-respect in a person, and they take his name to profane it, to make it a plaything and an object of mockery, will he not deeply resent that his name is thus trampled upon? And what is our name in relation to another man's name, compared to God's name in relation to us? Little specks of dust in the balance, drops of the bucket we are, in relation to the infinitely glorious God. And when that sinner presumes to make an attack upon the holiness of God's name, the Lord assures us in His third commandment: "I will not hold him guiltless who taketh my name in vain."

The Catechism also warns us that by connivance or silence we may not leave the impression upon those that use God's name in vain that we either take this sin lightly or even agree with them, and thus become partakers of these horrible sins. In regard to this, we may remark, in the first place, that it is of course our calling openly, and, if necessary, publicly, to condemn the sin of profanity, of cursing and swearing, wherever it is committed in our presence and within our hearing. We must let our light shine before men, that our Father in heaven may be glorified. Secondly, however, we must not forget that there comes a time when we had better cease either privately or publicly to condemn those that use the name of God in vain repeatedly. When we are obliged to live in close contact with men or women that swear and curse and generally use profane language, and we have given testimony against this horrible sin repeatedly, and our testimony is not heeded, it is better not to cast our pearls before swine any longer. Ursinus, in his "Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism", is of the

opinion that it is possible to make an untimely and unseasonable confession of the truth: "By which men stir up and excite the enemies of religion either to condemn or revile the truth, or to bitterness and cruelty against the godly, without advancing the glory of God and the salvation of anyone, and without any necessity demanding a confession of the truth at the time and under the circumstances under which it was made. Such an untimely confession Christ prohibits when he says, 'Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine.'" And in the same paragraph the author concludes: "Hence, if anyone should make a mock of religion, or deride the doctrine of the gospel after it has been sufficiently declared and explained to him, and should ask a reason of our hope, we should not return an answer to him, but leave him to himself. So Christ himself after he had sufficiently confessed and confirmed his doctrine, made no reply to the High Priest and Pilate with reference to the false witnesses, and gave a reason of his silence, 'If I tell you, ye will not believe.'" With this we agree, although, of course, this should never be a pretext to excuse or cover up spiritual cowardice. Besides, in all our walk and conversation we should glorify the name of God, of the God of our salvation in Christ, so that our entire life is a testimony against the ungodly and profane.

Of course, the third commandment does not only prohibit the vain use of the name Jehovah, but of any name of God and of Jesus-Christ, and, in general, all profane use of and reference to holy things, such as, for instance, the Bible or any quotations from Scripture, or the doctrines contained in and based upon Holy Writ. Moreover, the third commandment does not only have a negative and prohibitive implication, but rather presupposes a positive meaning. To this the Heidelberg Catechism refers when it teaches us that the third commandment admonishes us "that we use the holy name of God no otherwise than with fear and reverence; so that he may be rightly confessed and worshipped by us, and be glorified in all our words and works." This positive meaning of the third commandment covers a wide field, and implies that in all our walk and conversation we confess the name of the God of our salvation in Christ Jesus, and glorify our Father which is in heaven. It means that we develop and maintain and defend the truth of the Word of God over against all heresy; that we do so privately and individually in the midst of the world, and even over against the apostatizing church; and also that we maintain the truth over against all false doctrine in the preaching of the Word, as well as in our official confessions. It implies, moreover, that we instruct our children in the knowledge of Jehovah as

the God of our salvation in Jesus Christ in our homes, in church, as well as in our schools, lower and higher, and that thus we fulfill the promise we made when we presented our children for baptism, "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?" And of course, it implies that all our walk and conversation are a clear testimony to the fact that we know and love the name of Jehovah our covenant God in Christ Jesus, and thus "glorify him in all our words and works." It implies that whenever we use the name of our God, we shall do so in the consciousness that we stand in His holy presence and be filled with a sense of His glory, and that so being filled with the consciousness of His divine holiness, we shall at all times in our speech and in our prayer, in our confession and in our walk, ascribe glory and honor to the adorable name of the Most High with thanksgiving.

In conclusion, let us ask the question: do we and can we keep this third commandment in all its implications perfectly? And the answer, according to Scripture, as well as according to the testimony of our own consciousness is: by no means. The Christian, the believer in Christ Jesus, has but a small beginning of the new obedience; and his old nature is still profane. And according to that old nature, we still frequently violate also this third commandment of the law. We hate it, and we are heartily sorry for it. But we do that which we hate, nevertheless. And therefore, in the first place, it is a good thing that we realize by faith that we are not under the law, but under grace, and that we may take the threat that is connected with this third commandment, "The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain," to the cross of Jesus Christ our Lord. In Him we know that we have the forgiveness of sins and everlasting righteousness. But in Him we are not only redeemed from the guilt of sin by the blood of the cross, but we are also in principle delivered from the power and dominion of corruption, so that we can truly confess from the heart: "O how love I thy law, it is my meditation all the day." By the power of God's marvellous grace in Christ Jesus we have been delivered from that horrible corruption that makes us swear and curse and trample under foot the name of God, to drag it in the mire of sin. We stand on Mt. Zion, redeemed by the blood of Christ and delivered from the bondage of sin in principle, and instead of lifting up a presumptuous and rebellious fist in the face of the Holy One of Israel, we prostrate ourselves before him with reverence and holy fear, with the prayer which our Lord taught us upon our lips: "Hal-

lowed be thy name." And in that attitude, conscious too that we have but a small beginning of this new obedience and that sin, also the sin that is forbidden in this third commandment, still dwells in our flesh, we are eager to be instructed by God's holy law, and ask: "Lord, what wilt Thou have us do?"

The law as a code of commandments enjoins us: "Do this, and thou shalt live." This is for us, apart from Christ, an impossible commandment. By that injunction we can never live. But what is impossible with men is possible with God. Christ has fulfilled the law. Therefore we may not turn the injunction of the law about, and instead of living in the bondage of fear, the fear that we must first fulfill the law before we can ever live, we now know that God has established His eternal covenant with us, and by faith we confess: "We live: therefore we obey."

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Lord's Day 37

1.

The Place of the Oath in the Kingdom

Q. 101 May we then swear religiously by the name of God?

A. Yes: either when the magistrates demand it of the subjects; or when necessity requires us thereby to confirm fidelity and truth to the glory of God, and the safety of our neighbor: for such an oath is founded on God's word, and therefore was justly used by the saints, both in the Old and New Testament.

Q. 102 May we also swear by saints or any other creatures?

A. No; for a lawful oath is calling upon God, as the only one who knows the heart, that he will bear witness to the truth, and punish me if I swear falsely; which honor is due to no creature.

This Lord's Day is an appendix to Lord's Day 36. It treats of one particular aspect of the third commandment, the oath.

An oath, according to the Heidelberg Catechism, is "calling upon God, as the only one who knows the heart, that he will bear witness to the truth, and punish me if I swear falsely."

Now it may probably appear rather superfluous in our day to devote a separate chapter of our Heidelberg Catechism, and a special sermon, to the positive question whether we may swear an oath at all. It would seem that at the present time it may probably be proper to discuss the subject of a rash or unlawful or improper oath; but the question whether the oath may be sworn at all would appear to be rather void of practical significance and instruction. No one, it seems, could possibly have any scruples to swear an oath when the magistrates demand it of us, or even when it is necessary to confirm fidelity and truth to

the glory of God and the well-being of our neighbor. Yet we will find it to be instructive to examine the question as to how and when and whether at all the Christian may use the oath. It may be doubted whether this is properly understood, especially in the light of the emphatic words of the Saviour in Matthew 5:33-37: "Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all, neither by heaven, for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth, for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." And again, we read in James 5:12: "But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation." It is especially in the light of these Scriptural passages that we will try to answer the question: why is it possible and proper for the believer, and for him only, to swear an oath, or even to demand an oath of anyone?

This, we must understand from the outset, is the question.

H.H.



IN MEMORIAM

The undersigned societies of the Doon Protestant Reformed Church hereby express their heartfelt sympathy to the bereaved family in the recent death of

MR. SYBRON STELLINGA

May the God of all grace so comfort them, that they may experience in their present sorrow the peace that passeth all understanding.

Men's Society
Ladies' Society
Young People's Society

Doon, Iowa

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

IN MEMORIAM

Het behaagde den Heere, door den dood tot Zich te nemen een onzer leden

MRS. T. ZUIDEMA

in den ouderdom van 77 jaar. Zij was voor jaren een getrouwd lid onzer Vereeniging. Haar heengaan was vrede.

Door deze betuigt de Hollandsche Vrouwen Vereeniging van de Eerste Prot. Geref. Gemeente "Wees een Zegen" haar oprechte deelneming met de treurende familie.

Mrs. D. Jonker, Pres.
Miss W. Woudenberg, Sec'y

Grand Rapids, Michigan

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

David's Return

In convincing the men of Judah that he bore them no ill-will, the king went much further than to chide them for being the last to bring him back. He instructed the highpriests Zadok and Abiathar to tell Amasa that, whereas he, too, was his bone and flesh, he was making him captain of the host in Joab's stead.

That must have been surprising news, seeing that Amasa's part in the rebellion had been that of captain of Absalom's rebel troops. So, to persuade the men of Judah that he meant what he said, the king confirmed his word by an oath.

How angry it must have made Joab when he heard about it. The Absalom rebellion had come and run its course. But he had remained loyal. That now when it was all over and the forces of iniquity that had arrayed themselves against the king had been vanquished also through his generalship, he should be thus humiliated and this to make room for one like Amasa! How the thought of it must have galled him.

And yet, he really had this coming to him, first by his crime of the past. He had murdered Abner in cold blood. For that foul deed he should have been put to death. But aside from publicly condemning him and bewailing the fate of his victim, the king had taken no action. He had allowed Joab to go on living not only but continued him in the position of captain of the host.

But now Joab again offends. He slays Absalom in total disregard of the king's expressed wish that he be delivered up to him alive, if he be captured. It is understandable that the king was bitter, and that he wouldn't spare Joab if by sacrificing him to make way for Amasa, he thereby could win over the tribe of Judah.

One may ask whether it should have been held against Joab that he had made an end of Absalom, though it be that the king had ordered him spared; considering the enormity of Absalom's offence—Israel's law called for the destruction of such offenders—and considering also that Joab could not but conclude that the king had no intention of making him pay for his crime with his life, should he be delivered up to him alive. But that would have been the king's responsibility. It did not give Joab the right to take the law in his own hands. And that precisely was what he had done. He ignored the fact that David was king and judge in Israel and not he. But his disobeying the king's orders is understandable. It is a fair

conclusion that Absalom would have continued to plot in the attempt to overthrow the existing government.

But Absalom, though the instigator and leader of the revolt, was not the sole culprit. All who had flocked to his banner shared in his guilt, particularly the captains of his rebel army and his counsellors. All deserved to die, especially the leaders. This might also have happened, if Joab could have gotten his way. It may have been one of the king's reasons for discharging him as captain of the host. He may have feared that in the present situation Joab was not to be trusted with the power and influence that went with that position.

For the king was of a different spirit. After the manner of the dictators in the world of ancient and modern times, he might have ordered a purge of his army and official family. But instead he forgave his ill-deserving people and again took them to his bosom as *his* enemies, even going so far as to raise one of their number—next to Absalom the chief rebel of them all—to a position of highest honor in his army. That certainly was a thing unheard of in heathen lands. But as was already stated, David was not just another oriental despot. As king he was the shepherd of Israel and in this capacity he pre-indicated Christ. He, too, like David came to his own, and they that were His own—the Jews, His brethren according to the flesh—received Him not: they crucified Him. But as many as received Him to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name (John I: 11, 12).

But let us go back to David. In rebelling against him, the people of Israel had committed a great sin, he being the anointed of the Lord, the vice-gerent of Jehovah, and in this station a man according to God's heart, despite his great sins of which he had repented. Hence they had not rejected him. It was the Lord whom they had despised. Yet instead of destroying this people, as they reserved and also as their law demanded, he continued to own them as his people and forgave them all that they had done to him. That was right. He could not do otherwise. For the Lord had done likewise with respect to this same people through all the ages of the past. For despite all their sins and rebellions, they were His people in Christ, foreknown by Him in Christ and foreordained to be conformed to Christ's image, and called, justified and glorified in Christ in His counsel before the foundation of the world. This being true, what could he do but show this people mercy and forgive them even as the Lord had forgiven them and him. For certainly the Absalom rebellion cannot, according to the text of the Scriptures, be limited to the reprobated in Israel as

if it did not also involve many who were of God's elect. According to the text the sinner here was Israel. So what might he do as shepherd of Israel but come to his ill-deserving subjects with overtures of peace and with the call that they bring him back as their king. And this he did. For, as was said, the mind of Christ was in him. This he did, doubtless as mindful of the Lord's word to Moses, "Jehovah, Jehovah, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abundant in lovingkindness and truth; keeping lovingkindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, upon the third and fourth generation (Ex. 34: 6,7)."

"Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children . . ." This, too. For all were not Israel that were of Israel. It was of course to the true Israel that the heart of this shepherd-king continued to go out during all this terrible crisis. For the guilt of the great sin here committed rested also upon this Israel. And it was this Israel that by God's grace repented of this sin and again brought him back, though of course in the new enthusiasm of the moment they would be joined in bringing him back by many of the others. So it always goes.

So, in all his behavior in this crisis David does indeed typify Christ.

As to Amasa, the king was soon to discover that he could not rely upon him and that therefore he still needed Joab.

The king's gestures of goodwill toward his unworthy people could not help but make a deep impression. And so it did. This is especially plain from the reaction of the men of Judah. They sent unto him, "Return thou and all thy servants." But let us quote the text here.

And to Amasa say ye, Art thou not my bone and my flesh? Thus do to me God, and more also, if the captain of the host thou shalt not be before me all the days instead of Joab.

And he bowed the heart of all the men of Judah as one man. And they sent unto the king, Return thou and all thy servants. So the king returned and came to the Jordan. 13, 14, 15 a.

But now let us turn and look at the psalms which have been generally regarded as belonging to the era of Absalom's rebellion. Already we have referred to the morning and evening hymns so expressive of David's confidence in God, which he composed, as is commonly held, in connection with his flight from Jerusalem, and which are numbered 4th and 3rd in our Psalter; but there are others which must not be overlooked. We find that many psalms are traced to the circum-

stances and experiences of David during his son's revolt. The 5th psalm; which is much akin in tone and sentiment to that which precedes, may well enough have been written on the same occasion; and it is interesting to note how, amidst the plottings and counter plottings of the time, he preserves the calm composure of confidence in God. "But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy; and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple. Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face;" and again: "Let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them." "For thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous; with favor wilt thou compass him as with a shield." To the same trying hour belongs the 143rd Psalm, which, read in the light of the history, becomes full of instruction and comfort for God's believing people. Remembering the connection between his sin and his calamities, he beseeches God not to enter into judgment with him, because in His sight no flesh living could be justified; then, plaintively describing the evil done to him by his enemies, he falls back on the memory of former times, and encouraged by the tokens of God's mercy which he had then received, he says, "I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land." Thereafter he calls for help, saying, "Hear me speedily, O Lord; my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit. Cause me to hear thy loving-kindness in the morning; for in the do I trust: cause me to know thy way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee."

After he had heard of Ahithophel's treachery, he wrote, most probably, the 41st, and the 55th and 69th Psalms, which agree in the mournful description which he gives of his case, and the plaintiff wail he utters over the treachery of his former friend; in the calm trustfulness with which he leaves his cause to God; and in the prayer which he offers for the punishment and destruction of his enemies.

These "cursing Psalms," as they are scornfully called, must not be held up as evidence of the revengeful spirit of David. They were not uttered in a spirit of revenge but under the impulse of the Spirit of Prophecy, as is evident from the disposition of David all through history. Meekly he bore Shimei's curses, and refrained from punishment in the day of victory.

David being the anointed of the Lord, the rebellion against him was treason against Jehovah. Hence, his prayer for their punishment was a prayer that God would vindicate the honor of His name.

—G. M. Ophoff

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of I Peter 1:13

The passage of Scripture which we will consider in this essay reads as follows: "*Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind, being sober, and set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*"

Once more we take up our pen to write a few thoughts of an expository nature on the first Epistle of Peter. In the past we have written some seven or eight articles on the foregoing verses, the verses 1-12 of Chapter 1. You may be assured, dear reader, that it was a great joy of heart for me to write those thoughts. While I penned them I might drink deeply from the great mercies of God in Christ Jesus rejoicing in hope. I trust that this was mutual with those who read them. That makes the work a spiritual joy. Writing then is no drudgery but a good activity of the entire soul, laying hold by faith on the riches in Christ, our Lord!

The chief points that called for attention in the foregoing verses were the following:

1. We took notice of the fact, that Peter addresses the churches in Pontus, Galatia, Asia, Capadocia, and Bithynia according to their new "Status Quo" in Christ Jesus. Fact is that Peter takes position in the midst of the Churches and with these Churches claims all in faith that is ours in Christ. God *has* blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus our Lord! The Church has been born anew unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

2. We might read and observe how we are kept by the mighty God in an evil world against all the powers of hell and death—unto the inheritance that is ready to be revealed in the last day. Yes, if need be, we must suffer a little while, but this is not defeat, but it is the greater exhibition of the faith that God works and displays in our hearts.

3. And while we suffer we are very happy. Our hearts are filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory. We have never seen Jesus, and yet we love Him.

4. And this is not something strange to thus love Jesus, even though we have not seen Him; rather it is the expected thing. For prophets and bards of old thus searched out the time and the manner of the time of the sufferings to come upon Jesus and of the *glory* to follow. It is in view of this final glory of Christ,

which is ours in living hope, that we thus rejoice. Fact is, that the very angels, who always behold the face of our Father, are desirous to look into this salvation.

Such were our observations in former articles; and such is the trend of the Apostles setting forth of the grand truth of the Gospel in these verses.

However, the Apostle has more to say about this living hope of ours. The Holy Spirit leading the Apostle in all truth keeps the Apostle's feet on the ground; this letter is addressed to the churches in *this* world! One might ask at this juncture: why did the Apostle not write "finis" when he came to verse 12 of this chapter? All is so "spontaneous" in the life of the saints in these churches. They *are* blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ! They are full of joy unspeakable! And they are a holy nation, a royal priesthood, an elect nation, a peculiar treasure unto the Lord in all the earth, are they not? This is the undeniable assertion of the writer of I Peter! Then why did Peter not write "finis" at the end of Chapter 1:12; why did the Holy Ghost move him to write all the remainder of this letter to the churches?

For Peter has more to write. And we hasten to add that this "more" written by Peter is not something different from the foregoing!

What does he write in the remainder of this letter? He writes many *exhortations* of the Gospel.

These exhortations, incidentally, should not be confused with, nor be presented caricaturedly as the command of the law requiring meritorious works for salvation. He, who does this, does not rightly divide the word and is a workman that will surely be put to shame; he neither saves himself nor those who hear him! The word of God must be very carefully and accurately interpreted. Hence, let it be observed that we have to do here with exhortations of the Gospel to God's people redeemed in Christ Jesus!

These exhortations are necessary. They are the admonitions and the nurture of the Lord, who has brought us forth from the land of Egypt, from sin's house of bondage. The great presupposition of all these "exhortations" of the Gospel is that we *are* the people of God. God says: I am the Lord, thy God! Wherefore, walk before my face in Christ Jesus and be ye perfect. It is not always thus seen, but it is surely true nevertheless, that the law of the Ten Commandments, is really the royal law of liberty in Christ. It is the law, which is written by the Holy Spirit in our hearts. It is the law in which we walk with willing feet in thankfulness.

Yet we still need this law; we still are in dire need of these exhortations. We are not yet in heaven, where no one needs to say to his neighbor: know the

Lord. We are *not yet* in glory where the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God, even as the waters cover the bottom of the sea.

We are still in this world where the *full-fledged* spontaneity leaves much to be wished for; yes, where the new man in Christ must constantly receive new strength and impulses of the Holy Spirit so as to be kept in the power of God by faith! Such we are in this world as struggling saints.

This is the naked reality kept in mind by the Apostle in this letter.

The exhortation here is that we should *hope perfectly* for the grace to be brought unto us in the revelation of Jesus Christ. The text speaks of the great requisite also for our hope to be a truly living hope. The requisite for our living hope to be a hoping perfectly is: that we have the loins of our mind girt up, and be sober! It should not escape our notice, that to speak of the requisite is not the same as to speak of the pre-requisite. Requisite is that quality and attribute which belongs to the very nature of a thing. Thus our Heid. Catechism, Question 117 "What are the requisites of that prayer, which is acceptable to God, and which he will hear?" And the question is not what must there be in me *before* I pray, but the point is very clearly this: what must be the disposition of my heart and mind *in* my praying to God. And the requisites in my praying are threefold: 1. That we pray from the heart to the one true God. 2. That we rightly and thoroughly know our need. 3. That we be fully persuaded that God will hear our prayer, although we are most unworthy. Threefold *requisites* in the praying, in the actual exercise of the true faith as the chief part of gratitude!

Let this truth sink deep into our hearts!

But let us then fully see this reality also in our text when it speaks of the requisite of the hoping *perfectly* for the grace to be brought to us in the revelation of Jesus Christ.

And, again, we would warn, that we must not confuse the "exhortations" of the Gospel in this text with the "requisite" of hoping perfectly. *In* the exhortation the requisite of perfectly hoping is held before our eyes.

Let us attempt to see the implication of our text.

In the first place let us notice the object of our perfectly hoping. The text says: the grace that is being brought unto you in the revelation of Jesus Christ. There are those who would interpret this to mean: the grace that is brought to us in the Gospel in which Christ is revealed, preached to us. Now certainly no one will wish to deny that this certainly is the truth of Scripture. It certainly is true that Christ is revealed to us in the Gospel out of faith un-

to faith. However, the point is whether that is the sense here in this text; whether Peter has that revelation through the Gospel in mind, or whether He has in mind the revelation of Christ which will make all preaching of the Gospel forever unnecessary, when we shall see Christ face to face, knowing Him even as we are known! And we are of the conviction that Peter has the latter in mind when he speaks of the *revelation of Jesus Christ*.

(1) Because the entire context points in the direction which necessitates our taking "revelation of Jesus Christ" to refer to the unveiling of the living and exalted Christ in all His glory in the saints, in the new heaven and earth, in the saved Kosmos, where God shall manifestly be all in all!

(2) Notice the following points. In the first place Peter spoke in verse 3 and 4 of the inheritance, which is kept in store for us in heaven. Then, too, remember that this inheritance is the salvation which is ready to be uncovered for us in the last time! We do not see Christ now, and we love Him now in hope of seeing Him presently in all His glory. (Verse 8) And the prophets looked for Christ suffering, but only in view of the glory that will follow afterwards. And this glory too is the glory of the final day of Christ in His coming. Finally, the very angels are desirous to look into this mystery; in glad strains they sing of this final glory in Bethlehem-Ephratha, and they speak of it to the Galilee Fishermen, of which Peter was one, at the occasion of Christ's ascension on high!

In the light also of the various expressions and the general tenor of the entire epistle of Peter there can be no doubt that Peter has the final revelation of the Son of God in mind. Does he not literally speak of the fact that "the end of all things is at hand"? Chapter 4:7.

Such then is the revelation of Jesus Christ.

In this revelation a certain *grace is brought to us*. We shall not simply be spectators in that day, but we shall very really then be made partakers of that glory. It will be the glory of the God of all grace in the saints. Then shall the glory of God be fully shared by all the saints in Christ. We shall be perfectly conformed unto the image of God's Son, that He may be the First-born of all the children of God. A new body shall then be ours, a new tongue, and we shall never grow weary because of corruption of the body. Our best works shall then no longer be defiled with sin. And we shall never more fade away. Eternal youth shall be ours in the strength of the midday.

This grace is borne to us.

(to be continued)

—G. Lubbers

IN HIS FEAR

Vacationing In His Fear

Vacation time is here again!

And in these hectic days of hustle and bustle, of hurrying and worrying, of nervous tension and nervous "breakdowns" the question becomes not whether we may take a vacation but rather whether for health's sake we ought not take a vacation to enjoy a little relief from the strain of today's mad rush.

Vacationing can be sinful. Often it is. With the ungodly it is always sinful, for an ungodly man can only do ungodly deeds whether at work or at play. And the child of God's vacationing can also be sinful, for he still has the motions of sin in his flesh, and often vacation time for him becomes a greater opportunity for him to satisfy the craving of his flesh for the things of the world.

But it need not be that way. And the increased zeal, the freshness for work which a proper vacation works speaks itself for the possibility of a vacation being in the fear of God's name and being right to take. And the apostle says to Timothy, "Every creature of God is good and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving." If we forget God and His laws for a week or two, if our idea of a vacation is to get away from all those who would restrain us from evil ways, to get away from all church-life and serve our flesh, then vacationing is of the devil. And such do not and cannot receive it from God with thanksgiving. The lake, the beach, the mountains, the car or train you travel with are not evil in themselves. We may receive them from God with thanksgiving. But what we and what the world makes of them is something else. And John warns us not to love the world nor the things that are in the world, for they all shall perish. The child of God may spend a quiet time at the lake, may exercise himself in the water, may view the majesty of God in the mountains and glorious scenery He has made and receive it with thanksgiving. He may close his eyes at night and say, "O Lord, how great Thou art! I thank Thee that Thou didst give me to be reminded of Thy power, Thy wisdom and Thy majesty in the works of Thy hands which Thou hast caused me to see." Then he has lived near His God in his vacationing. He has been vacationing in His fear.

There are, no doubt, as many variations in vacationing as there are individuals who take vacations. Each has his own idea of how he would relax and

cut himself loose from the strain of his daily work. For the one who works by the sweat of his brow and comes home physically exhausted each night it looks good to wile the time away in quiet reflection and thought at some remote place in the woods or at the lake. For the man who works with his mind, who is daily in the midst of a rushing, maddening business world, constantly on edge and alert to every business opportunity that might come his way, such a "let-down" would do him more harm than good. He finds joy in strenuous physical activity. He would indulge in an early morning swim, would hike up the steeply ascending mountain trail. He would, perhaps, don his waders and plod some cool, swift flowing stream to match his wits with the delicious yet danger-wise trout who lies in the deep pool behind yonder log. For one it is a time to catch up on the gardening and things about the home for which there just was no time before. Still another would travel far and wide and experience what Solomon says that "the eye is never tired of seeing". He finds joy in seeing the beauty spots of his or of another country.

But in all these there are temptations. All these the child of God may receive with thanksgiving. But all these he may also turn into opportunities to satisfy the lusts of his flesh. He may forget the God Who gives him these. He may forget that God demands that we serve Him also with and in these. And his vacationing is not in His fear. There are things you want to leave behind when you go on vacation. To take some things along would mean that you have no vacation. But do not leave God behind! Do not seek a vacation from living in His fear! The danger is very real, for we live in a world that is pleasure mad, that is a lover of pleasure more or rather than God. We live in a world which has pressed the creation of God into the service of sin in so many ways, in so many subtle, clever ways, that this danger is very real. The devil who came very cleverly in the beginning to Adam and Eve has not forgotten how successful he was. He has learned much since that time and has imparted the instruction of the lie to his followers. Not for nought does the Apostle John warn us not to love the world and the things in the world.

He who travels on his vacation soon comes in contact with the unbelief of the world even expressed in inanimate things. Atheism you can hardly call it. There is not true atheism. All men know that there is a god even though they will not confess Jehovah as The God, the Only God. This becomes manifest and reflects itself in the names they give to the things Jehovah has made. Many of our readers have either seen or surely heard of "The Garden of the Gods" in Colorado. Wyoming and Utah supply us with many

titles which indicate that though the ungodly do not receive the truth of the Scriptures in true faith, yet they are aware of its contents and of the reality of that of which it speaks. Utah supplies us with such names as "Devil's Gate", "Hell's Backbone" and "Devil's Slide" (which, by the way, as a scenic attraction is very disappointing to one who has imagined it to be as colorful as it is pictured to be). Wyoming comes up with such startling names as "Hell's Half Acre", "Devil's Kitchen" and Devil's Tower". Washington, along the beautiful Columbia River Valley and across from the Oregon side of the valley labels one section of these bluffs "Horse Heaven Hills". All these to one degree or another are borrowed from the Scriptures, and the Scriptures are thereby made sport of by those who love not its testimony. We could add to the list, but it is sufficient to indicate what the ungodly do with God's creation. Do they, perhaps, feel or sense somewhat of the curse of God upon this earth in these wierd, grotesque and unusual clay and rock formations to which they give these awful titles? The child of God can marvel at these things, and in his sanctified thoughts he always returns to the Scriptural account of the Flood; and that which he knew from childhood onward and which he has always believed to have happened becomes even more of a reality to him. He receives that scenery with thanksgiving. He receives in the fear of God and in his soul he says, "How true are the Scriptures! This is not the Paradise God created. It is the world that suffers His wrath! How well to point these things out to your children who travel with you and who are old enough to be puzzled at these names. How easy, on the other hand, to take them in a "matter of fact" way and even to be untouched by the sacrilege contained in these things.

The beach, the lake and resort have their own problems and are becoming more and more nudist colonies. Strange as it may be, it is true that what some would blush to have happen to them in any other place, they consider the beach to give them license to do; and they can do it without a trace of shame or blushing. The Fear of the Lord never gives license to immorality. Shall we also read what the Heidelberg Catechism says about this? And we will underscore especially the part we have in mind. In answer to the question, "Doth God forbid in this commandment only adultery, and such like gross sins?" the catechism says, "Since both our body and soul are temples of the Holy Ghost, He commands us to preserve them pure and holy: therefore he forbids all unchaste actions, gestures, words, thoughts, desires and *whatever can entice men thereto.*" This we can take in connection with Jesus' words in Matt. 5:28, "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her

hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Young women, you are not enticing men to this adultery in the heart! are you? That is not recreation nor vacationing in His fear! Take God with you on your vacation and receive all things from Him with thanksgiving! And while we are on this subject, has the Unchangeable One changed His mind in regard to that which we told Israel in Deut. 22:5? "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God." Remember that these are God's words. Have you the courage to receive them as such and to heed them? If you continue in that which is an abomination to the Lord, you will not have to answer to this department. And you do not need to argue the point with the editor of this department. If you feel that you can do these things "In His Fear", if you can do all you can to erase the distinction He has made between man and woman, you will have to convince Him that you are right and that He is wrong.

In His Fear, not the slavish fear of the servant, but the childlike reverence of His adopted children, you will want to do your vacationing so that you please Him in it, so that you seek relief and relaxation for the body and soul, so that you may serve Him both in that vacationing and afterward.

Has your vacationing been thus? Is your vacation yet ahead of you? Seek it in His Fear!

—J. A. Heys

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IN MEMORIAM

On June 29, 1953, it pleased our Heavenly Father to take unto Himself our dearly beloved Mother and Grandmother:

MRS. PETER ZUIDEMA

at the age of 77 years. Our loss is great and we miss her much but our comfort is that she is now present with the Lord in glory.

The bereaved children

Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Van Alten

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Zuidema

Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert Verburg

Mr. and Mrs. Peter Zuidema

Mr. and Mrs. Frank Zuidema

Ten Grandchildren

Five Great Grandchildren

Grand Rapids, Michigan

The Voice of Our Fathers

The Canons of Dordrecht

PART I — HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Chapter 3—The Confessional Status of the Canons (Cont'd)

As to the content of the *canons* in comparison with that of our other creeds, it must be noted, first of all, that the *Canons* treat only a certain aspect of the truth, while both the *Belgic Confession* and the *Heidelberg Catechism* cover the entire field of Reformed doctrine. In this respect the *Canons* could never stand alone as the doctrinal standard of a church, while it would be conceivable that a church could stand merely on the basis of the *Catechism* or the *Netherlands Confession*. Even though, to take the latter example, our *Netherlands Confession* is rather sketchy on some subjects, and from a realistic and historical point of view could no longer serve alone as the expression of our Reformed faith, yet all the fundamentals of the Reformed truth are treated; and the *Confession*, could therefore, theoretically considered, stand alone. This is not the case with the *Canons* because they single out a particular phase of the Reformed truth and elaborate on it, saying nothing about the remainder of our doctrine except by implication.

However, that aspect of the truth with which our *Canons* deal is a fundamental one. Indeed, it is so important that no individual or church which rejects the truths expressed in the pronouncements of Dordt can be called Reformed, or Calvinistic. For our *Canons* give expression to that which is uniquely Reformed.

What is their contents?

According as we view the *Canons* from various aspects, we may describe the content of this creed in various ways. It is concerned with the well-known Five Points of Calvinism, namely: 1) Unconditional Election; 2) Total Depravity; 3) Limited Atonement; 4) Irresistible Grace; 5) Perseverance of the Saints. It is obvious, therefore, that from the very practical point of view of the question of the certainty of our salvation, our *Canons* treat matters which are close to the heart of every child of God. This does not mean that other elements of the truth, as, for example, the truth of God the Creator, are not important. They are. Nevertheless a creed which touches directly on the matter of our salvation deals with a subject which is very dear to our hearts. And in this latter fact lies the reason why our *Canons* must needs endear them-

selves with any believer who becomes acquainted with them and studies them.

Again, from the theological point of view, we may say that the *Canons* deal with the subject of God as the God of our salvation. They are an answer to the very crucial question, whether God is really GOD in regard to the salvation of the elect and the damnation of the reprobate. And once more it is evident that the pronouncements of Dordt concern a matter of the highest import for the Calvinist, who takes as his motto in his entire confession: *Soli Deo Gloria!*

And closely allied with the foregoing is the fact that our *Canons* in last instance deal with the subject that is discussed in the First Head of Doctrine, namely, the subject of sovereign predestination, that which has come to be known among Reformed people as the *Cor Ecclesiae*, the heart of the church, and, for that very reason, the heart of the gospel. Take away that First Head of Doctrine, and the other four chapters of the *Canons* become meaningless and untenable. Take away the truth of sovereign predestination, and the body of the gospel becomes lifeless, just as that church must needs die which denies this cardinal truth. Let that *Cor Ecclesiae* beat weakly, or fail to beat, and this weakness or failure will inevitably affect not only your confession concerning God, but your confession concerning man, Christ, salvation, the church, and the last things as well. Conversely speaking, tamper with any of the Scriptural truths just mentioned, and sooner or later you will begin to tamper with the Scriptural truth of sovereign predestination. This implies, of course,—and this became very evident in the case of the Arminians,—that as soon as you deny the unconditional character of election, you must needs maintain a conditional element throughout the entire gospel of salvation. Or again, conversely, as soon as you anywhere introduce a conditional element in the work of salvation, you must logically end by “conditionalizing” the fountain and cause of that salvation, God’s eternal counsel of election. And in this light it is not difficult to understand, even apart from the historical occasion for the *Canons*, that the Reformed churches devote an entire creed to this one phase of the truth.

This also sheds some light already on another important question, namely: what is the relation between the *Canons* and our other creeds? Why was it necessary to formulate the *Canons*? Were our other creeds insufficient? Were they ambiguous, perhaps? Or did they omit to define the truths maintained in the *Canons*? And what, then, is the specific position which the *Canons* occupy among our creeds?

Before attempting to answer these questions, let us, in the first place, briefly remind ourselves of the

subject matter of the *Canons*. The First Head of Doctrine bears the title, "Of Divine Predestination." The Second Head speaks "Of the Death of Christ, and the Redemption of Men Thereby." The Third and Fourth Heads together treat "Of the Corruption of Man, His Conversion to God, and the Manner Thereof." And the Fifth Head of Doctrine bears the caption, "Of the Perseverance of the Saints." In the second place, we must bear in mind that the controversy which was settled at Dordrecht concentrated around the truth of predestination, and around the other truths only as related to the latter. Of this the Arminians themselves were aware when they composed their own Five Points at Gouda. And in fact, very early in the controversy Arminius himself had concluded that the doctrine of predestination was in need of reconstruction. The aim, therefore, of the Arminians was to reconstrue the truth of election, and, consequently, to reconstrue all the related truths. And it was this intention of the Arminians that our fathers opposed at Dordrecht.

This does not mean, however, that the *Heidelberg Catechism* and the *Netherlands Confession* were ambiguous or even had failed to maintain the above-mentioned truths. Such was not the case. There is not a single one of the truths presented in the *Canons* which is not directly, or by implication, maintained in both the *Catechism* and the *Confession*. The *Catechism* makes mention of the cardinal truth of election in a most beautiful connection in Q. and A. 54: "What believest thou concerning the 'holy catholic church of Christ? That the Son of God from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends and preserves to himself by His Spirit and word, out of the whole human race, a church *chosen to everlasting life*, agreeing in true faith; and that I am and for ever shall remain, a living member thereof." And the *Confessio Belgica* elaborates more on this truth in Article XVI: "We believe that all the posterity of Adam being thus fallen into perdition and ruin, by the sin of our first parents, God then did manifest himself such as he is; that is to say, merciful and just: Merciful, since he delivers and preserves from this perdition all, whom he, in his eternal and unchangeable counsel, of mere goodness, hath elected in Christ Jesus our Lord, without any respect to their works: Just, in leaving others in the fall and perdition wherein they have involved themselves."

Now, as long as there was no controversy about these matters in the Reformed churches, the existent confessional standards were sufficient both as to the central truth of election and as to the related truths that are maintained in the *Canons*. There simply was no need for a further confessional exposition of them.

It was understood and taken for granted among Reformed people generally that the election spoken of by the *Catechism* and the *Netherlands Confession* were sovereign and therefore unconditional. And it was mutually understood that the work of salvation was God's work from beginning to end. Furthermore, among Reformed people that truth of sovereign predestination pulsated throughout their entire confession and preaching. Nor is it true, as the Arminians tried to maintain, that the confessions left room for divergent views on the matters in question. It was obvious then without the *Canons*, as it is obvious today with the *Canons*, that the *Heidelberg Catechism*, with its strong emphasis upon the twin truths of total depravity and the absolute necessity of the Godhead of the Mediator, as well as its emphasis upon the divine bestowal of the benefits of salvation and its unswerving maintenance of free justification, became completely devitalized and untenable the moment the heart-beat of sovereign election ceased to throb and surge thru its arteries. And the same was true concerning the *Netherlands Confession*. Conceived of in their entirety, neither of the existent creeds could tolerate an Arminian construction. In fact, it was just this which played a large part in the birth of the *Canons*.

However, when the controversy arose, and when the opponents of the Reformed truth craftily and deceitfully maintained that they were in harmony with the existent creeds, as Arminius himself maintained, the *Catechism* and the *Confession* became inadequate as far as their literal expressions are concerned; and it became necessary for the church to elaborate and to declare officially what was the implied meaning of our creeds. In the face of Arminianism, the lone expression of the Heidelberger concerning a church, "chosen to everlasting life," was not sufficient. And the *Netherlands Confession* does not express itself *directly* on the sovereignty and unconditionality of God's predestination, but rather views the subject from the standpoint of God's mercy and His justice.

—H. C. Hoeksema



The house that is built partly on a rock, and, partly on the sand, will fall: and the sinner, who rests his hope of salvation, partly, on Christ, and, partly on his own works, will be damned.

—Tolpady

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

EARLY VIEWS OF THE CHURCH (Cont'd)

We had concluded our preceding article by calling attention to Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, and noted that he, too, declared that there could be no salvation for anyone except in the Church.

We will have an opportunity to refer to him again in connection with the rise to power of the bishops and the episcopalian form of church government which was in effect until the Reformation. We are now discussing the views of the early Church Fathers with respect to the Church and Salvation. We quote the following from Cyprian: "Now also his words are evident, and his poisons are plain. He promises peace, in order that peace may not possibly be attained; he promises salvation that he who has sinned may not come to salvation; he promises a Church, when he so contrives that he who belives may utterly perish apart from the Church.... For as our unanimity and concord ought by no means to be divided, and because we cannot forsake the Church and go outside her to come to you, we beg and entreat you with what exhortations we can, rather to return to the Church, your Mother, and to our brotherhood. I bid you, dearest brethren, ever heartily farewell.... Whoever he may be, and whatever he may be, he who is not in the Church of Christ is not a Christian. Although he may boast himself, and announce his philosophy or eloquence with lofty words, yet he who has not maintained brotherly love or ecclesiastical unity has lost even what he previously had been.

The Unity of the Church.

We may certainly observe that the catholicity of the Church was rather strongly emphasized during this early period of the Church of God as it revealed itself in the day of its New Testament infancy. It was strongly maintained that the Church is one and not many, although there are many congregations. We understand, of course, that when we now call attention to the unity of the Church, we do not refer to the unity or oneness of the Church as constituting one of its attributes. Confessing that the Church of God is one we thereby express the truth that the Church of all ages and out of all lands, peoples, and tongues is one. This oneness of the Body of Christ is a oneness of the body, a oneness of the head, a oneness of the spirit and of faith. However, when discussing the views and

conceptions as entertained in the post-apostolic period and during the first few centuries of the New Dispensation, we do well to bear in mind that these views were characterized by simplicity and indefiniteness. Sharp distinctions were not made, as e.g., between the Church visible and invisible, organism and institute, etc.

The Church of God was generally represented by the Apostolic Fathers and the Apologetes (immediately upon the age of the apostles) as a communion of saints, the people of God whom the Lord had chosen for a possession. They were the people who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. We can understand the simplicity of this conception of the Church as entertained during the early days of its New Testament existence. There was only one Church of God and of Christ Jesus in the midst of the world. The distinction between Jews, heathens, and Christians was very pronounced and clearly marked and defined. The present day phenomenon of churches and denominations, all confessing the same Lord Jesus Christ and advocating their conception of Christ and of the Scriptures to be the purest, was wholly lacking in the days of and immediately following upon the apostles.

Very emphatically the early Church Fathers maintain the catholicity, oneness, and universality of the Church. The catholicity of the Church, we understand, denotes its universal character. The Church was constituted of the saints, the elect; they have one God, one Christ, one Spirit of grace, one calling. Because it was the communion of saints all salvation was limited to it and there was no salvation possible outside of it.

However, a great change soon developed in this conception of the unity of the Church of God. Many sects and heresies arose in the second century. And these many sects and heresies necessarily demanded a revision in the concept of the Church. The question concerning the identity of the true Church asserted itself, and an answer to this question was imperative.

It is especially Cyprian to whom we are indebted for his emphasis upon the unity of the Church. He compares the Church to the sun with its many rays, to a tree with its many branches, to a source from which there flow many brooks. He emphasizes, therefore, the thought that, although there are many congregations, the Church is one. Quoting this Church Father, we hear him say the following: "Does he who strives against and resists the Church trust that he is in the Church, when moreover the blessed apostle Paul teaches the same thing and sets forth the sacrament of unity, saying, 'There is one body and one spirit and one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God?'" And this unity we

ought firmly to hold and assert, especially those of us that are bishops who preside in the Church, that we may also prove the episcopate itself to be one and undivided. Let no one deceive the brotherhood by a falsehood: let no one corrupt the truth of the faith by perfidious prevarication. The episcopate is one, each part of which is held by each one for the whole. The Church also is one, which is spread abroad far and wide into a multitude by an increase of fruitfulness. As there are many rays of the sun, but one light; and many branches of a tree, but one strength based in its tenacious root; and since from one spring flow many streams, although the multiplicity seems diffused in the liberality of an overflowing abundance, yet the unity is still preserved in the source. Separate a ray of the sun from its body of light, its unity does not allow a division of light; break a branch from a tree, —when broken, it will not be able to bud; cut off the stream from its fountain,—that which is cut off dries up. Thus also the Church, shone over with the light of the Lord, sheds forth her rays over the whole world, yet it is one light which is everywhere diffused, nor is the unity of the body separated. Her fruitful abundance spreads her branches over the whole world. She broadly expands her rivers, liberally flowing, yet her head is one, her source one; and she is one mother, plentiful in the results of fruitfulness; from her womb we are born, by her milk we are nourished; by her spirit we are animated."

Continuing with this quotation from Cyprian, we read as follows: "The spouse of Christ cannot be adulterated; she is uncorrupted and pure. She knows one home; she guards with chaste modesty the sanctity of one couch. She keeps us for God. She appoints the sons whom she has born for the kingdom. Whoever is separated from the Church and is joined to an adulteress, is separated from the promises of the Church; nor can he who forsakes the Church of Christ attain to the rewards of Christ. He is a stranger; he is profane; he is an enemy. He can no longer have God for his Father who has not the Church for his mother. If any one could escape who was outside the ark of Noah, then he also may escape who shall be outside of the Church. The Lord warns, saying, 'He who is not with me is against me, and he who gathers not with me scattereth.' He who breaks with the peace and the concord of Christ, does so in opposition to Christ; he who gathereth elsewhere than in the Church scatters the Church of Christ, and the Lord says, 'I and the Father are one;' and again it is written of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 'And these three are one.' And does any one believe that this unity which thus comes from the divine strength and cohere in celestial sacraments, can

be divided in the Church, and can be separated by the parting asunder of opposing wills? He who does not hold this unity does not hold God's law, does not hold the faith of the Father and the Son, does not hold life and salvation. This sacrament of unity, this bond of concord inseparably cohering, is set forth where in the Gospel the coat of the Lord Jesus Christ is not at all divided, nor cut, but is received as an entire garment, and is possessed as an uninjured and undivided robe by those who cast lots concerning Christ's garment, who should rather put on Christ."

We do not purpose at this time to call attention to the sentiments expressed by this renowned Church Father relative the episcopate, the rule by the bishops. These thoughts are indeed of great interest. However, we will have opportunity to call attention of our readers to these sentiments in subsequent articles. It is now of interest to note what Cyprian teaches us in connection with the unity of the Church. There may be many rays, he writes, many branches, and many streams, but there is only one sun, one tree, one source from which all these streams flow forth. Moreover, the catholicity (world wide) of the church is also maintained in the words: "Thus also the Church, shone over with the light of the Lord, sheds forth her rays over the whole world." However, the author adds that it is one light which is everywhere diffused and that the unity of the body is not separated. In fact, although the multiplicity seems diffused in the liberality of an overflowing abundance, yet the unity is still preserved in the source. And he also declares emphatically that whoever is separated from the Church is separated from the promises of the Church, from God the Father, and from salvation. Hence, the unity and oneness of the Church of God must be maintained. There may be several congregations, but there is and can be only one Church. This unity of the Church was therefore strongly emphasized by the leaders of the Church in the days of its New Testament infancy.

—H. Veldman

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The best clock in the world will be spoiled; if you are perpetually moving the hand backwards and forwards, and altering it, in order to make it keep time with a variety of other clocks: it will hardly ever go regularly and well. —So a minister, who shapes and accommodates his sentiments and discourses to the tastes and humors and opinions of other people, will never be happy, respectable, or useful.

—Toplady

DECENCY and ORDER

The Lawful Calling

The fourth article of our church order defines the lawful calling of candidates to the office of the ministry of the word. In this respect it is to be distinguished from the next article which speaks of the calling of ministers who are already in the office. Later articles in our church order speak of the calling and ordination of elders and deacons.

The order to be pursued by the church in calling one to the ministry as prescribed by our church order is not above criticism. We cite the article here in its entirety:

"The lawful calling of those who have not been previously in office, consists:

First, in the ELECTION by the consistory and the deacons, after preceding prayers, with due observance of the regulations established by the consistory for this purpose, and of the ecclesiastical ordinance, that only those can for the first time be called to the ministry of the Word who have been declared eligible by the churches, according to the rule in this matter; and furthermore with the advice of classis or of the counselor appointed for this purpose by the classis;

Secondly, in the EXAMINATION both of doctrine and life which shall be conducted by the classis, to which the call must be submitted for approval, and which shall take place in the presence of three delegates of synod from the nearest classes;

Thirdly, in the APPROBATION by the members of the calling church, when, the name of the minister having been announced for two successive Sundays, no lawful objection arises; which approbation, however, is not required in case the election takes place with the co-operation of the congregation by choosing out of a nomination previously made.

Finally, in the public ORDINATION in the presence of the congregation, which shall take place with appropriate stipulations and interrogations, admonitions and prayers and imposition of hands by the officiating minister (and by other ministers who are present) agreeably to the form for that purpose."—Art. 4.

According to this method the candidate is chosen by the elders and deacons and then presented to the congregation for approbation. The article also allows the possibility of the congregation co-operating in this election but does not require this. Our criticism then is that the method prescribed belittles the

function of the church in calling her shepherd and and this is contrary to the thirtieth article of our Confession which states: "We believe, that the ministers of God's Word...ought to be chosen to their respective offices by a lawful election by the church."

In our Protestant Reformed Churches the election of a minister of the Word shall be conducted in the following manner:

"1. The consistory shall make a nomination consisting usually of a trio of eligible ministers or candidates.

2. The nomination shall be submitted to the approbation of the congregation and unto that end publicly announced to her on two successive Sundays.

3. From the nomination the male members assembled on a congregational meeting which has been announced on two successive Sundays shall elect by secret ballot...." Decision of classis, June 1934 and Synod, 1944)

Although this is definitely an improvement, it, too, is not above criticism. It is conceivable that a certain congregation may desire to call a certain candidate but that the consistory for various reasons refuses to place that name on the nomination. Such a situation may result in unrest in the church or in the congregation receiving a shepherd who is not of their choice. To avoid this we believe that some provision similar to that found in Art. 22 should be incorporated here according to which "an opportunity is given to the members of the congregation to direct the attention of the consistory to suitable candidates." With this addition the trio would come closer to being the choice of the congregation. Concerning this suggested method the Rev. Ophoff writes: "This method I consider the best for the following reason: It allows the consistory to properly control the election and at the same time to place on the nomination the names of such persons as the flock prefers. With this method the consistory can function (in respect to the calling to the office) as Scripture would have it, and the congregation's choice is, as near as this is possible, honored. Finally, this method reduces the danger of a clash between consistory and congregation to a minimum."

However, it must also be said that the method prescribed here in our church order is not altogether erroneous. Certainly it is not the intention of this article to deprive the church of her Divinely appointed rights nor does it mean to minimize the important function of the church in calling a minister of the gospel. On the contrary, when we look at this article in its historical setting, we conclude that the very opposite was intended by its framers. In former days the calling of a minister was an extremely difficult

task for the church. There were no candidates who had received a thorough training and then had been declared eligible for call to the churches. But the churches had to choose from various aspirants in general, some of which were worthy and others not. The danger was very real, therefore, that the congregation would be swayed by some eloquent and unworthy stranger. To safeguard against this the article prescribes that the election shall be by the consistory and the deacons who would be more able to investigate the background and qualifications of the aspirant than the entire congregation and thus the latter would be more assured of receiving a shepherd worthy of the office. Thus Dr. H. Bouwman in his *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht* judges: "Although Article 4 of the Church Order does not mean to limit the congregation in any of its rights, the formulation of this article does not give full expression to the prerogatives of the congregation." (Vol. I, p. 385)

In view of this the present practice of our churches is certainly proper although it does not adhere strictly to the letter of this article. Our candidates are well prepared and upon the successful completion of the peremptory examination they are declared eligible for a call and recommended to the churches. The consistory has no right to impose its own selection from these candidates upon the congregation but the latter should be given the liberty to choose from as broad a selection of eligible and worthy men as possible. That this is in harmony with the teaching of Scripture can not be gainsaid. In II Corinthians 8:19 we read of Titus "who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord." In Acts 6:3 the apostles instruct the church "to look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom whom we may appoint over this business." This is a significant passage because it clearly defines the function of both the consistory and the congregation in the matter of calling office bearers. The latter is to choose. The congregation elects. The apostles set forth the qualifications of the men to be chosen and also make final approbation of those selected. Today it is the task of the ruling body of the church to control and govern the election of all office bearers. This duty must not be withdrawn from their jurisdiction for it is their calling to have oversight over the congregation which includes taking the necessary action to prevent unworthy men from intruding upon the holy offices. Likewise it is the right and privilege of the church to choose men for the offices and this may never be taken away from her. She has attained the age of spiritual maturity and may not, therefore, be regarded as a spiritual minor. She has

the anointing of Christ and in the office of believers must perform her God given duties. Where this is understood and there is mutual regard for each other, the consistory can function together in their own domain without following any one hard and fast method and the results will be gratifying to both and glorifying to the King of the church.

Calling a minister is a serious matter and must be done "after preceding prayers." This is generally interpreted to mean that no election or calling of a minister shall take place unless the gathering be opened with prayer. And because all congregational meetings are conducted thus the practical thrust of these words is to a great extent lost. Originally, however, the intention was that the congregation should come together for a special prayer service prior to the time when the actual work of calling a minister was to take place. This custom has now fallen into disuse but we would raise the question as to whether it ought to be resurrected? Certainly the matter of choosing a shepherd for the flock is sufficiently important to the congregation to warrant this, isn't it? Often congregational meetings are held solely for this purpose and the matter itself is transacted in a short time and the meeting adjourns. Would it not be a richer experience if the congregation would be called together in worship to pray and to hear the word of God after which the voting members of the flock would assemble to choose a shepherd as it seemed good to them and the Holy Spirit?

Our present practice does not exclude preceding prayers. The congregation prays. The families of the church pray. The individual members of the flock ascend to the throne of grace. And in the case of those who have not previously served in the ministry much prayerful labor is performed by the churches even before they are declared candidates. However, when the church is confronted with the specific task the guidance of Christ and His Spirit is of paramount importance. This guidance is sought in prayer. This prayer ought then not to be reduced to a formality but must have a predominate place in the mind and heart of the church when she gathers to call a minister of the Word.

G. Vanden Berg

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Among the great variety of preachers, some give the pure gospel wine, unadulterated and undashed. Others give wine and water. Some give mere cold water, without a drop of wine among it.

—Toplady

ALL AROUND US

Eating and Drinking Christ.

In the *Blue Banner Faith and Life* magazine of July-September issue, we came across the following review of Hoeksema's latest book on the Heidelberg Catechism written by Adam Loughridge. We liked most of what the reviewer says of this book and pass on to our readers the entire article in the hope that it will encourage especially our own people to read the book.

"This is the seventh volume in a series of Expositions of the Heidelberg Catechism. The book is divided into four sections, and covers in detail the answers to questions 75-85 in the Catechism. In Section 1 the author deals with the institution of the Lord's Supper. He shows the significance and the meaning of the various symbols; what is represented by the bread and wine, the breaking of the bread and the pouring out of wine, the eating and drinking, and how by partaking in fellowship and communion we feast upon Christ through faith. He shows clearly that the Lord's Supper is more than a commemoration of His death; it is a means of grace.

"In Section 2 the errors and false teaching concerning the Supper are exposed. The author reviews the positions held by the Romanists, by Luther, by Zwingli and by Calvin. He gives an accurate survey of the whole teaching on the subject from a historical and from a doctrinal angle, and the arguments are well substantiated by references to the Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent on the one hand and to the Reformed Confessions on the other. He concludes convincingly that the spiritual food at the table of the Lord can only be received in a true spiritual disposition of heart and mind.

"Section 3 deals in a most heart-searching manner with the question of those who would worthily partake of the Sacrament. Three distinguishing marks of a worthy communicant are listed and expounded. There must be sorrow for sin, trust in the Saviour for forgiveness of sins, and a desire for a stronger faith and for holiness in life and walk. The believer is to examine himself in the light of God's Word on these three points. The subject of self-examination is dealt with faithfully and in great detail.

"The concluding section brings refreshingly before us the much neglected matter of discipline. In every true church there should be three things: the preaching of the Word, the proper administration of the Sacraments, and the right exercise of Christian Dis-

cipline. The modern Ecumenical Movement has discarded the use of discipline and has attempted to make one body of all the churches. The result is a failure. The preaching of the Word is corrupted, the sacraments are profaned, and the body thus formed, whatever it may be, is certainly not the body of Christ. The exercise of discipline in the spirit of love will glorify God, promote the well-being of the Church and the salvation of its members.

"In a thought-provoking chapter on the preaching of the Gospel the author effectively argues that the Gospel is not a conditional offer to be received or rejected by man at will, but an unconditional promise of salvation to the heirs of the promise, the elect of God.

"The book is a faithful interpretation of the Heidelberg Catechism. The language is simple, the argument lucid, the tone sincere and earnest, the appeal heart-searching and altogether full of spiritual comfort for the believer. Here and there in the book the very intensity of the author leads him to use language that is strong almost to the point of extravagance. In his evident desire to magnify the Grace of God in our salvation, the doctrine of man's depravity, with which we are in entire agreement, is over-emphasized on pages 47 and 48 to the extent of denying the existence of any good whatever in the unbeliever. Surely also at the top of page 136 it is not correct to say that to debar those who hold false doctrines from the Lord's Supper is essentially the same as to excommunicate them from the Church of Christ. A man may be suspended from fellowship without being excommunicated from the Church.

"The book will be read with pleasure and profit by all who love the Lord and His ordinances."

We wish to note here in the first place that it is refreshing to read of some outside our circle who apparently agree with Hoeksema's conception that the Gospel is 'an unconditional promise of salvation to the heirs of the promise, the elect of God'; while some of our own people appear ready to discard this view.

And secondly, we find it difficult to understand how the reviewer can say he is in agreement with Hoeksema's doctrine of man's depravity, while at the same time he thinks it too much to say that there is no good in the unbeliever. This is an inconsistency we find also in the writings of several Christian Reformed brethren. It must be, according to them, that man is not by nature totally depraved after all.

The 'Absolute' Antithesis.

This is the caption over the article written by the Rev. L. Verduin in the June issue of the Reformed



MRS EFFIE MONSMA
726 FRANKLIN ST SE.
CITY 7

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Journal. A popular subject, indeed, for comment among some of the clergy in the Christian Reformed Churches in recent weeks.

Verduin's article is too long to quote in full. We can only give the reader a snatch here and there, while we try to restate his main thoughts on this subject. Here follows the quotations:

"In Reformed circles men speak of an antithesis between the Kingdom of Christ and that of Satan, between the children of God and men of the world, between the regenerate and men in the raw. And, this antithesis is sometimes said to be 'absolute'.

The history of Christ's Church is littered with the wreckage caused by an extremism, an absolutism touching the antithesis. It is born of a 'relentless logic' rather than of an agonizing attempt to be faithful to the Word of God. To tone down the antithesis so that presently all the Faith's great opposites pale into a common grey is to do the cause of Christ great harm; but one can also paint in such contrasty colors as to fall into equally serious fault.

We seek to serve a good cause as we set down in this article some of the axioms that have hitherto been a part of the Reformed tradition and faith anent the matter of the antithesis.

First of all, it should be stated that *ideologically considered* the antithesis is necessarily absolute. By definition regeneracy is the exact opposite of unregeneracy. Life and death differ absolutely not gradually....

It is indeed the glory of the Reformed faith that it has insisted upon an antithesis, and, upon an antithesis that is absolute—when considered ideologically.... To cease from using these terms (i.e., 'sheep' and 'goats', 'saved' and 'lost', the 'elect and reprobate'—M. S.) as opposites is not only to cease from speaking in the Reformed idiom—it is to scuttle historic and Biblical Christianity." Verduin continues:

"*But*" (I underscore, M.S.) "now come footnotes, modifying footnotes, in which complementary truths are set forth, ... And it is the need for such footnotes that marks the mind of the truly Reformed thinker. *When he is discoursing on the sovereignty of God, for instance, he will feel the need of a footnote in which the complementary truth of the responsibility of man and the actualness of option are recognized.*" (I underscore, M. S.).

"It happens that it is part of the Reformed heritage to feel the need of a modifying footnote when we speak of the antithesis. This will account for the fact that the expression 'absolute' antithesis is quite rare in our tradition."

"A second but equally well enunciated axiom of

the Reformed faith is that the antithesis as it manifests itself empirically in this dispensation is never absolute... In the regenerate there are traces of the earlier modality of unregeneracy; and in the unregenerate there are similarly traces of the earlier mode of rectitude. It is this situation that makes it necessary for Reformed people to be extremely cautious with the expression 'absolute' antithesis."

The Rev. Verduin then proceeds to develop his thoughts under the following three main titles: "Absolute' Unregeneracy?"; "'Absolute' Regeneracy,"; and "So What?".

Under the first he takes you into the 'laboratory' to let you see the unregenerate under the microscope. And what do you see, according to Verduin? "Unregeneracy, by and large, sin, depravity, fallenness." But—oops! just a minute, down there in the corner of the plate you will see an area that is not so depraved. Hence, the unregenerate is not absolutely unregenerate.

And what happens when you go into the same 'laboratory' and take a look at the regenerate? Do you see 'absolute' regeneracy? Of course not! To be sure, you see something radically different than in the unregenerate. You see a "heavy concentration of regeneracy", but up in the right-hand corner of the plate you also see traces of carnality which is but another name for unregeneracy.

So what? The conclusion is plain and simple. There is no such thing as an "Absolute" antithesis, except as you think and speak of it ideologically. To speak of an "absolute" antithesis is to be guilty of "relentless logic". Absolutism "breeds the notion that there are men and organizations that deserve only benediction," this is Phariseism.

If Verduin's conclusion of "absolute" antithesis is the result of relentless logic, I'm wondering what our conclusion must be of Verduin's conclusion? Is his based on a sound exegesis of the Word of God? or is it the fanciful imagination of a rationalistic bent in the mind of Verduin? I'm inclined to conclude the latter.

—M. Schipper

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Repentance and faith, new obedience and perseverance, are not conditions of interest in the covenant of grace (for then it would be a covenant of works); but consequences, and tokens, of covenant interest.

—Toplady

Report of Classis East . . .

MET IN GRAND RAPIDS, MICH. — APRIL 8, 1953 .

Classis East convened on April 8, 1953 at 9 o'clock A.M. in our Hope Protestant Reformed Church. During the month of April¹⁹⁵³ Classis East met six days; two days in Hope, two in Second Church and two in Hudsonville. Then Classis recessed until May 19, 1953 and met during two weeks for the sum total of eight more days; two days in First Church, two at Fourth Church, two at Hudsonville Church and two at the Creston Church.

All the Consistories of Classis East were duly represented during all these days by two delegates from each Church except Creston, Randolph and Grand Haven. These latter sometimes were represented by one delegate.

The Rev. De Wolf presided in many of these sessions according to alphabetical order, and the Rev. J. Heys ably relieved him when this was necessary. It is worthy of mention that the Rev. J. Blankespoor faithfully and ably kept a record of the voluminous minutes of these sessions.

Grand Haven requested and received Classical Appointments for the weeks between the April and July Classes. We may report too at this juncture that, since there will be no July meeting of Classis, it was decided that the Classical Committee arrange pulpit supply for Grand Haven and give proper notification of these appointments.

The Committee of preadvice, appointed on the January Classis, to give advice in regard to the matter of the protest of one Consistory against another Consistory in the matter of singing Hymns on the radio program reported. It is decided to place this entire matter in the hands of the Stated Clerk who will make copies of this material and send it to each Consistory for study, so that each Consistory may report on the next meeting of Classis by their delegates.

Three separate protests are read by members of a certain congregation against the preaching of their pastor, who is accused of preaching Conditional Theology. Two of these protests are read and were placed in the hands of a committee of pre-advice. This advice of this Committee has not yet been treated by Classis but awaits the meeting of Classis East in October. The other protest was not read on the April meeting of Classis but was read on May 19, and placed in the hands of a Committee of pre-advice, which reported at a later session of the meeting of Classis. This matter too awaits the meeting of Classis on October 6.

Two other separate protests are lodged against another Consistory for unholding the erroneous preaching of their pastor. These protests are against definite statements made by the involved pastor in the public ministry of the Word. After days of discussion and debate Classis condemns the statements in question as being heretical. These statements in question are:

1. "God promises everyone of you that, if you believe, you shall be saved."

2. "Man's act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter into the Kingdom of heaven."

The decision literally reads as follows:

"In our opinion both the statements which the protestants condemn are literally heretical...."

The first teaches a general promise of God unto salvation to all that externally hear the preaching of the gospel, head for head and soul for soul, limited by a condition which man must fulfill, while Scripture and our Confessions plainly teach:

1. That, indeed, the proclamation of the gospel comes to all to whom God in His good-pleasure sends it,

2. That, however, in our proclamation of the gospel, we may never say that God promises salvation to every one of the hearers, on condition of faith, for the promise itself is particular, unconditional, and only for the elect; for it is an oath of God which He, in His everlasting mercy and grace, swears by Himself to His beloved elect; which He in sovereign grace, fulfills only to and in them, without any condition or prerequisite to be fulfilled by them; and which promise implies that, by His Holy Spirit, He causes them to receive and appropriate salvation by a true and living faith.

The second (statement) teaches that our act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter the Kingdom of God, which means that we convert and humble ourselves before we are translated from the power of darkness into the Kingdom of God's dear Son, while Scripture and the Confessions plainly teach:

1. That the whole work of our conversion is our translation and entering into the Kingdom of God. Hence, it is not, cannot be **before** but **through** our conversion that we enter the Kingdom. We humble ourselves in the light, never in darkness; we humble ourselves, whether initially or repeatedly in the Kingdom, never **outside** of it. Hence, our act of conversion is never antecedent to our entering in, but always is performed in the Kingdom of God, and there are no prerequisites.

Grounds: a. The protestants have clearly shown from Scripture and the Confession that the literal statements are heretical. b. We believe this is necessary to state in the light of our past experiences and history with the Liberated Churches who use these Arminian expressions.

Detailed grounds:

a. For the first statement:

1. Scripture: Heb. 6:16-18; Rom. 9:6-8, 16, 18; Acts 13:48; John 6:36; 10:26-30.

2. Confessions: Heid. Cat. Q. 20, 65, 66; Confession 22, 33-35; Canons I, A, 6 7 10; I, B, 2 3 5; II, A, 5 8.

b. For second statement:

1. Scripture: Col. 1:13; Eph. 2:1-3; John 3:3-5; Phil. 2:12 13.

2. Confessions: Heid. Cat., Q. 8, Canons III, IV, 1-3, 10-12; V, 6-8.

It was further decided that the minister in question make a public apology for having made the two statements in question, and that the Consistory also publicly apologize for having supported the pastor with respect to the two statements in question.

There also was a protest by a brother against his consistory in re a matter of deciding not to call a missionary pastor because of the unrest in our churches. This matter, too, was placed in the hands of a committee of pre-advice. Also this matter still awaits the decision of

Classis in October. Classis also requests a certain brother to make public the content of a written document published earlier to a certain congregation.

It was decided not to have Classis in July, but that the same Classis reconvene in the month of October, the 6th day.

Rev. George C. Lubbers
Stated Clerk, Classis East