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MEDITATION

Filled with the Spirit

"And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it set upon each them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

... we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God." —Acts 2:2-4, 11b

Filled with the Holy Spirit!

Oh, that makes all the difference. If you are the happy recipient of that Holy Spirit, you are filled with the love of God; you are being purged of your sins; you are filled with the holy zeal of God; you are united to those that with you received like bounty; you are filled with rejoicing unto all eternity.

If not, you will mock at the holiest of all: you will say, they are full of sweet wine!

Listen to Paul: Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His! How utterly terrible! If you have not that Spirit, you call Jesus a curse. If you have that Spirit, you cry out: Jesus the Lord!

They!

Who are they?

They are the one hundred and twenty who stood gazing at the heavens, after the cloud took the Lover of their soul away from them. They are the same company of common fisherfolk from Galilee who had followed Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are the witnesses of His resurrection. They are the church of the New Testament at its inception. They are all in heaven now where they continued their song of great rejoicing.

And they are waiting there for you.

But about two thousand years ago, this little company of plain ordinary people were all with one accord in one place. No, I do not know where that was. I have vacillated with respect to the question from the house of John Mark to the temple. But at present I am inclined to think that they were in a large upper room in the temple, and for the same reason that they had to go to Jerusalem to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. God was going to connect the Old with the New. And since the New Testament church is the spiritual counterpart of the city of God, and that therefore they might not go to Galilee to receive the Spirit, so the temple at Jerusalem is the type of the temple of God which is fulfilled in the church of the New Testament. Which is the very reason that Paul addresses the church of his day, saying, ye are the temple of the living God! God will connect the hallowed temple of old with the spiritual counterpart, the Church of the New Testament. The temple always said: God dwells with men! Well, this day, this hallowed day of Pentecost, the speech of the Temple of God will resound so that all hear it.

And there they are: the one hundred and twenty. They are still waiting for the promise, for the Holy Ghost, and at Jerusalem, and in the temple of God.

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And suddenly, miraculously they are being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Oh, that was an event of far reaching consequences. They were all filled with the Holy Ghost.

What does it mean?

No, it was not a limited and individual event of the day and on those one hundred and twenty persons. It would have a broader significance than that. It would mean that the Holy Ghost was come to stay in the Church!

He came upon the promise of Jesus: I will send you another Comforter, and He shall abide with you!

It is the fulfillment of Jesus' promise: And lo I am with you alway, even to the end of the world.

Who is this Holy Ghost?

O, He is the Same Holy Ghost that visited God's people in the Old Testament, but there was a difference. The difference is so great that the Holy Spirit Himself said in John 7: "for the Holy Spirit was not yet since Jesus was not yet glorified."

It is the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, there can be no question of that. But He was more now. He brings with Him the very flavor of Jesus Christ. He was the Third Person as given to Jesus at His glorification at the right hand of God.

When He was poured out on this glorious Pentecostal day he brought with Him Jesus Christ in all His accomplished work up to and including His sitting at the right hand of God, filled with all the blessings of salvation.

Then too, He came also as far as the quantity is concerned to this first New Testament Church. It was an outpouring upon them, instead of a trickling as in the Old Testament. Drops of that Spirit were upon Moses and David and Isaiah, and all the prophets and Kings of God. But now it was as a flood. And it touched the whole church, person for person and head for head; that is the difference.

And therefore, He is the Holy Ghost of God as given to Jesus, and therefore called: the Spirit of Christ.

And He brought with Him reconciliation, forgiveness, adoption, resurrection-life, access within the inner sanctuary, knowledge and wisdom of the mysteries of God's Kingdom, in short: the law written in our hearts. He was the entire realization of the great promise of God!

Study the signs which accompanied His coming and you will see the difference.

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They suddenly hear a sound from heaven, and what a sound. It sounded like a mighty rushing wind.

I think that the people in Iowa that read this will have a better idea of this than we here in Michigan. The sound of the rushing mighty wind is overpowering.

But how strange that must have been: the sound of a tornado, but not a thing stirred. I think that God so directed the weather that on that morning all was still. There was not a breeze stirring. And that terrible sound concentrated itself in the house where they sat. Therefore the mighty multitude unerringly goes to the upper room.

And then that phenomena of the thing that was

not fire but looked like a great column of fire, darting downward in fiery tongues and resting upon the heads of each of them.

And then they began to speak, all of them. That too is significant. And watch the multitude: they are in a flux, a strange flux. They mill around, they separate themselves in definite groups, surrounding a certain speaker for each of these groups. One says: what? I hear my own dialect. And all those of the country of Elam grouped themselves about Peter, or Thomas, or some other fisherman.

All of a sudden the people that knew not how to speak in those strange languages are fully conversant in those several tongues with the proper pronunciation, syntax, vocabulary, etc. You may safely believe that all these one hundred and twenty spoke fluently and easily, and with burning hearts, themselves wondering what was happening to them.

Oh yes, the Holy Spirit of Jesus was poured out. There is no doubt about that.

They were all filled with the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

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But what was the meaning of these signs?

First, they all are from heaven. Make no mistake on that score. There is a humbling lesson in that. Learn that lesson and you are fortified against all heresy. It means that everything good and comely, everything holy and righteous, everything salutary (pick that word apart: the root of it means salvation) is from heaven. From that time until this evil day all salvation from the beginning to the end is wrapped up in the given Spirit of Christ.

Second, the sound of that tornado is the rushing God who is in a hurry to embrace His Church. The fulness of time had come when He would give Himself to His own people as never before. And then God is in a hurry. You see that same hurry when Jesus is taken back into heaven. Read it in that strange sign in heaven of the woman that gave birth to a man child. The devil stood ready to devour Him. But God snatched Him to heaven. God was in a hurry.

Why in a hurry? He loves you and me. Wind is irresistible: so is He.

A screaming and bleeding child is lying on the sidewalk: it is grievously hurt in great agony. The mother spies her crying and miserable child from afar. I ask you: is she going to saunter down to that dreadful spectacle? No, she will rush, she will run as fast, no, faster than she should run: she will overstrain herself.

God is in a hurry to enfold the church in arms of

love, even the love which the Spirit brings. Read Romans 5:5.

The spectacle of fire?

It is the fire that burns and burns in the heart of God. He is going to give the church the zeal of His own love.

Henceforth you will note that zeal, that burning zeal of God.

Watch Stephen: he will be killed for His God. But he blesses as he expires. It is because of this fire that burns and burns.

And the tongues?

National Israel was at an end. The confusion of Babylon is healed. It matters not that you stand with a Phrygian soul in Jerusalem. You are going to understand the Gospel. God will accomodate Himself. He will heal the confusion you created while Nimrod spewed forth his pride of life.

Oh those tongues, those tongues. They sing the sweet song to me that the Promise of God is to all the elect in all nations.

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No, I have little more to say to you. My story is almost ended.

They all speak, the whole New Testament speaks. And what a speech!

They all speak the wonderful works of God.

My dear reader: Do you want to know whether or not the Pentecostal blessings found you?

Attend to this: if and when you are touched by the Pentecostal Spirit of Christ, you conclude the whole story by saying: How wonderful is my God!

I know it, I know it: you will be interrupted and you will interrupt yourself in that musing. But you will say it repeatedly, and when you die you will say it again in heaven. It is set on melodious music there.

David had a foretaste of Pentecost. Listen to him: "Oh that man would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!"

—G. Vos

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All the disputes between us and the Arminians, may be reduced to these two questions: 1. Is God dependent on man, or is man dependent on God? 2. Is man a debtor to God, or God a debtor to man?

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Wherever there is a Paul, to preach, there will be a Tertullus, to find fault —from *Toplady*.

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EDITORIALS

Classis West versus the Declaration

The last grounds which Classis West adduced to sustain its decision under "II" are taken from the protest by the Rev. W. Hofman, under "B", 1-6. I will quote them here in full:

"B. The action of the Synod of 1951 in adopting the Declaration of Principles as likewise revealing a hierarchical spirit contrary to that of our entire Reformed Church Polity and as specifically militating against and violating Art. 29, 30 and 84 of our adopted Church Order. This is again evident from: 1) The disregard of Consistory and Classis, contrary to Art. 29; 2) the failure to treat this material in the proper ecclesiastical manner, contrary to Art. 30; 3) the evident attempt of some to lord it over others, contrary to Art. 84.

"Grounds:

"1. The Declaration was adopted by a small majority of Synodical votes:

"a. Over the protest of one of our two Classes without even answering that protest;

"b. Over the protest of at least two consistories, again without answering them;

"c. In spite of, and contrary to the advice not to adopt, of an overwhelming majority of our Consistories to whom it had been submitted for advice.

"2. The Declaration was adopted by a simple majority of Synod without giving any grounds for its adoption, or answering the question as to its necessity, even though both were repeatedly asked of Synod.

"3. The Declaration was adopted without Synod's expressing itself positively on its legality though this was questioned. In fact, Synod never decided that it was a legal document, though this fact was protested. Synod simply presumed this legality while it refused to produce grounds or declare it to be so; though it was asked to do so.

"4. The Declaration was adopted over protests of its legality and necessity even though Synod refused to express that it was through with these aspects. See Acts of 1951: Art. 210, page 184 and Arts. 254 through 257, page 190.

"5. The arbitrariness of hierarchical action is clearly evident in the expression by Synod to limit the force and scope of this Declaration so that it is 'to be used only by the Mission Committee and Missionaries for the organization of prospective churches...' Such

action is not only inconsistent and contradictory but also contrary to all Reformed Church Polity.

"Finally, the Declaration was adopted directly contrary to a decision of Synod of 1950. See Acts of 1950, Article 117, page 90, and arabic 2 immediately above this article on the same page."

There is very little new in these grounds, and I will not repeat myself. All the alleged grounds in this protest are evidently adduced to sustain the contention that the action of Synod-1951 was hierarchical. It was not adopted in an ecclesiastical manner, but in a manner that is contrary to all Reformed church polity. The Rev. Hofman refers to Article 84 of the Church Order, which reads as follows:

"No church shall in any way lord it over other churches, no minister over other ministers, no elder or deacon over other elders or deacons."

I am afraid that the Rev. Hofman thinks that when a decision by the major assembly is passed by a majority vote, it means that the majority lords it over the minority. That this is his notion is evident from all the grounds which are adduced. Yet this is evidently an error. In fact, the entire Church Order is based on the principle that a strict majority shall rule in the churches, and that the minority must submit to the majority.

Nevertheless, I will briefly discuss the grounds which the Rev. Hofman offers.

1. The Declaration was adopted by a small majority of Synodical votes. This, of course, as I have already remarked, is perfectly legal, and according to the Church Order. Whether a majority is large or small, it is a majority nevertheless. Under this ground the Rev. Hofman mentions three sub-grounds, a, b, and c. All I can say about these is that they are simply not true. It is not true that the protest of Classis West was not answered. The fact is that it was very elaborately answered, as the detailed report of Synod-1951 that appeared in the *Standard Bearer* will certainly prove. The same is true of "b" under "1". All the protests were answered and answered even in detail. And that the Declaration of Principles was adopted by Synod "contrary to the advice not to adopt of an overwhelming majority of our Consistories, to whom it had been submitted for advice," is certainly not true, unless the Rev. Hofman means by "our Consistories," only the consistories of Classis West. As soon as he has the grace also to include the consistories of Classis East, he will discover that "c" under "1" is not true at all.

Grounds 2-5, I already answered in my previous editorials on this matter. The Synod only had to answer protests of Classis West against the legality of Declaration of Principles. After it had answered

those protests, which it certainly did, it did not have to establish the fact that its action was legal. The Synod of 1951 certainly proceeded from the assumption that it acted entirely according to the Church Order, and did not have to establish the legality of its own action, except in so far as Classis West protested against it. Nor, as I have said before, was it illegal of Synod to adopt the Declaration of Principles only for the Mission Committee and for the organization of churches. But in view of all the action against the Declaration of Principles by Classis West, I would not be opposed in the proper ecclesiastical way to adopt the Declaration of Principles as a document that is binding also for our churches. There is certainly nothing against such an action, seeing that the Declaration is only an expression of what is taught in our Confessions.

The logic of the sixth ground I fail to understand. In this ground the Rev. Hofman states that the Declaration was adopted directly contrary to a decision of Synod 1950. He refers to Art. 117 of the Acts of Synod on page 90. There we read:

"Motion is made to accept the document as drawn up by the committee, and to act according to the three propositions found at the conclusion of the document. This motion carries."

Now the three propositions referred to, that appeared at the conclusion of the Declaration of Principles as drawn up by the Synod of 1950 are as follows:

"If Synod adopts the above propositions, we advise,

"1. That Synod subject this entire document to the approval of the churches.

"2. If no objection is offered, to adopt this at our next Synod.

"3. To adopt this in the meantime as a working hypothesis for our Mission Committee and for our Missionaries in the organization of churches."

Now the Rev. Hofman argues that the adoption of the Declaration by the Synod of 1951 is contrary to these decisions of the Synod of 1950. For this he appeals especially to article 2 of the three propositions that appear at the end of the Declaration of Principles in the Acts of Synod, 1950. Evidently he understands this proposition as meaning that if any objection at all is offered by any individual or by any consistory in our churches, the Declaration could not be adopted by the Synod of 1951. However, if this had been the meaning of the Synod of 1950, it would certainly have opened the door for a minority, and even a very small minority, to rule over the majority. In that case you could never adopt anything whatsoever. But this certainly is not what the Synod meant. What it meant was only that if no objections were offered that were

valid and weighty enough to reject the Declaration of Principles, it would not be adopted. But this was not the case at the Synod of 1951. There were indeed objections. And they were properly weighed, and found wanting. And therefore, the Synod of 1951 did not act contrary to the decision of Synod-1950.

The *Standard Bearer* advises the coming Synod in re the protests of Classis West against the Declaration of Principles as follows:

1. It advises Synod carefully to sift all the grounds offered by Classis West against the legality of the adoption of the Declaration of Principles in 1951, in order to discover and to determine whether Classis West actually brings up any new grounds, that have not been discussed and decided upon by the Synod of 1951. I doubt very much whether this has been done by Classis West, as certainly it should have been done. For, according to Art. 46 of the Church Order, "Instructions concerning matters to be considered in major assemblies shall not be written until the decision of previous synods touching these matters have been read, in order that what was once decided be not again proposed, unless a revision be deemed necessary."

2. It advises Synod also to enter into the contents of the protests by the several consistories of Classis West, concerning which Classis West offers no advice. Also in regard to these contents it advises Synod carefully to sift the arguments and grounds that are produced by these consistories of Classis West, in order not to enter again into matters that have already elaborately been discussed and decided by Synod-1951.

I am convinced that if this advice of the *Standard Bearer* is followed, it will not have to take a long time to dispose of the matter in the proper ecclesiastical way.

H.H.



ANNOUNCEMENT

On Tuesday evening, June 9, 1953 the graduation exercises will be held of candidates: E. Emanuel, R. Harbach, M. Koerner, G. Lanting and J. McCollum, in First Church.

The Rev. H. Hoeksema, Rector of the Seminary, will speak on the subject: "Responsibility". There will also be an address by Candidate G. Lanting.

The exercises begin at 8 o'clock, the public is cordially invited.

Theological School Comm.
G. Lubbers, Secretary

OUR DOCTRINE

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

AN EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

PART III — OF THANKFULNESS

LORD'S DAY 35

4. God is a Jealous God (cont.)

Thus we understand that the mercy of the Lord is indeed only upon them that love Him and that fear His name. His mercy is not common. It is not general. It is strictly particular, limited to them that fear Him and do His commandments. Not as if our fear of the Lord was first and the cause of His mercy. The opposite is true. It is only because the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting unto everlasting, and because that everlasting mercy revealed itself in the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, because that mercy drew us out of sin into righteousness, out of death into life, out of darkness into His marvelous light, that we fear Him and love Him and keep His commandments. But this does not alter the fact that His mercy is only upon them that fear His name, that love Him and do His commandments. Not in the way of the flesh, not in the way of the world, can we taste this marvelous mercy of Jehovah. Not in the way of trampling under foot the glory of His name and the truth of His revelation in Christ Jesus can we taste its blessed assurance. For it is only for them that keep His covenant and that do His commandments. For them, to be sure, that are still beset with sin and often stumble, but that nevertheless have an inner and strong and heartfelt desire to be delivered from all iniquity and to be pleasing to the Lord, the light of this everlasting mercy shines.

LORD'S DAY 36

1.

God is Holy

Q. 99 What is required in the third commandment?

A. That we, not only by cursing or perjury, but also by rash swearing, must not profane or abuse the name of God; nor by silence or connivance be partakers of these horrible sins in others; and, briefly, 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.

Q. 100 Is then the profaning of God's name, by swearing and cursing, so heinous a sin, 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?

A. It undoubtedly is, for there is no sin greater or more provoking to God, than the profaning of his name; and therefore he has commanded this sin to be punished with death.

The third commandment reads: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."

The first commandment has reference to God's Being, and is based on the principle that God is One. He is One in all His virtues and attributes, and there is no God beside Him. The second commandment is founded on the truth that God is invisible, infinite in all His glorious virtues, and that therefore we can never of ourselves make an image or form a conception of the Most High, but must know Him from His own revelation and worship according to that revelation. The third commandment speaks of the name of God, and is based upon the truth that He is holy, and therefore His name is holy, and demands that we shall always use His name with reverence and holy fear, to adore and glorify Him in His name.

That God is holy implies, in the first place, that He is infinitely and incomparably good, that therefore He is necessarily Self-centered, seeks Himself as the only good, is consecrated to Himself, and as such is distinct and separated from all sin and sinners, but even from the creature as such. He is good in the sense that He is the implication of all infinite perfections.

It is in this sense that the Lord Jesus uses the term in answer to the rich young ruler. We are all acquainted, of course, with the incident in Jesus' sojourn of the rich young ruler approaching the Lord in quest of an answer to his anxious query: "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" The question was not an uncommon one. It was thoroughly discussed in the theological schools of those days. No doubt the young man had received an answer to his question more than once. And since with him it was more than a scholastic question, was not an abstract problem at all but a matter of life and death, he had endeavored to realize the answers he had received from the schools of his day. But when he did so, he found that they did not bring the desired result. He did not obtain the assurance that he was worthy of, and still less that he possessed, eternal life. His conscience still accused him. His heart was still restless with anxiety in the face of implacable and unavoidable death, and in the presence of God as Judge. And thus it happened that he still walked about with his life-question, that he sought new answers, and that he came to the Rabbi of Nazareth one day, jealous, perhaps, of the children whom he had seen Jesus bless; and falling down before Him, presented to Him his

problem, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" And before the Lord even enters into the matter of the question that was presented to him, He replies with another question: "Why callest thou Me good? No one is good but one, that is God."

It is evident that the Lord here uses the term *good* in the absolute sense of the word. The words of the Savior must be taken literally, and in their full significance. Their meaning must not be camouflaged; their force must not be weakened. Their absoluteness must not be made relative. No one is good but one, that is, God. This does not mean, nor did Jesus mean to assert so commonplace and self-evident a thing as that no sinful man or fallen spirit is good. It means just what it says: no one, no creature, no man, no angel, nor even Christ as the young man conceived of Him, as the Rabbi of Nazareth, is good. God alone, most emphatically alone, is good. "Why callest thou me good? No one is good but one, that is God." It is evident that Jesus employs the word *good* here in a sense quite different from that which it was meant to convey in the question of the young ruler. He used the term rather easily, just as we often do it in our day. He had been rather lavish with the use of the word: "Good Master, what good thing must I do to have eternal life?" But the Lord takes the word seriously. Good to Him means moral, ethical perfection. He uses the word absolutely. Reflections of goodness, graciously bestowed upon him by God, there may be in the creature. But ultimately and absolutely God alone is good. The young man must understand this. He purposed to do some good thing, that he might have eternal life. The impossibility of meriting anything with God, of obtaining eternal life in the way of doing some good thing, he did not see at all. And the reason was that he had an erroneous conception of what is really good. And therefore Jesus rebukes him at once for his easy use of the word *good*, and insists that he must speak of God, and emphatically of God as God, when he employs the term *goodness*.

God is good. That is, He is the implication of all infinite perfections. We may grant, of course, that the term *good* with application to God may be employed with a different connotation. To be sure, God is good in the sense that He is benevolent, charitable, loving, filled with loving kindness and tender mercies. He is rich in good things in Himself and for the creature. Pleasures forevermore there are at His right hand. He is the overflowing fountain of all good. Joy and peace are found in Him alone. All blessings flow from Him. It is unspeakably good to dwell in His house, to enjoy His fellowship. To know Him is life eternal. But all this He is only as the one that is good

in the sense in which the Savior used the term in His reply to the rich young ruler. He is the implication of all ethical goodness, of all perfections. It is highly important that this be emphasized, and clearly apprehended before we speak of the benevolence, the mercy, the lovingkindness and grace of God, lest we refer to an idol rather than to the living God when we say, "God is good." For we are all inclined to set up our own standard of goodness, and to say to one another, "Good brethren, what good things shall we do in addition to all the good we have already accomplished, in order that we may become worthy of eternal life?" We are therefore sorely in need of hearing the severe, the exclusive and uncompromising word of Jesus: "There is none good, but one, that is God." Unless we clearly grasp this truth first of all, we are bound to have a subverted notion of God's benevolence, of our own goodness, and even of such things as joy and peace and blessing.

God is good. This means that He is the perfect One, the implication of all virtues. This we know of Him through His own revelation. For the apostle testified of that "which was from the beginning," which they heard and looked upon with the eyes, and handled with their hands of the Word of life. For the life was manifested, and they saw it, and became witnesses of it. And they declared it unto us as the instruments of God's Self-revelation, in order that we might also have the fellowship they have, and their fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, and that our joy may be full. But if we are to partake of this fellowship and rejoice with this joy, we must hear the message they bring unto us. For "this is the message which we heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." I John 1:1-5. God is light. There is no darkness in Him. And light in the Bible is the direct opposite, the very antithesis, of darkness. The darkness is of the devil, the ruler of the darkness of this world. It is the lie in all its implications, deceit, malice, hatred, iniquity, corruption, unfaithfulness, unholiness, unrighteousness, and the like. But these are not in God. He is a light, and there is no darkness in Him at all. He is life, and in Him there is no death. He is love, and there is in Him no hatred, no malice, no envy. He is the truth, and the lie is never in Him. Righteousness and holiness is He, and unrighteousness is not found in Him at all. Justice, truth, faithfulness are His habitation. They are the foundation of His throne. God is good; He is the implication of all perfections.

Everywhere this truth is emphasized in Holy Writ. God is goodness. He is light. Perfection is His very Being. Goodness is the divine Essence. Of the crea-

ture it may be said that he *possesses* goodness as a reflection of the perfections of God. But of the creature it can never be said that it is perfection or goodness. Even as,—to use a figure,—it might be said of the sun that it is a light, seeing that it has light in itself, in comparison with other heavenly bodies, but that the moon merely bears or possesses light as it reflects the light of the sun, so it must be said of God that He is goodness in His very Essence, while the creature can never have any perfection in Himself. God's very Being is virtue. He is a light. He is love. He is righteousness and truth. He is justice and faithfulness, wisdom and knowledge. This implies too that He is good in all His thinking and willing; that all His works, within the divine Essence and without, are done in truth and righteousness. This implies too that sin is the very antithesis of God. He hates sin, and abhors unrighteousness. He is a light, and there is no darkness in Him at all. For God "is the rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." Deut. 32:4. And again: "Far be it from God that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity." Job 34:10. He is "not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with him." Psalm 5:4. "Good and upright is the Lord: therefore will he teach sinners in the way." Ps. 25:8. And "the word of the Lord is right; and all his works are done in truth." Ps. 33:4. "He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." Ps. 33:5. In Him is the fountain of life, and in His light only do we see light." Ps. 36:9. "His right hand is full of righteousness." Ps. 48:10. "His goodness endureth continually." Ps. 52:1. "His work is honourable and glorious, and His righteousness endureth forever." Ps. 111:3. "He is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works." Ps. 145:17. "And He is purer of eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity." Hab. 1:13.

This goodness of God is the basis of His holiness. For as the only good He must be and is consecrated to Himself. He seeks Himself in Himself and in all creatures. For in His goodness, and therefore also in His holiness, God is the Incomparable One. The holiness of God does not merely indicate that He is separate from sinners and from sin. It signifies no less that in His infinite goodness and the glory of His perfections He is distinct from all creatures. He is different, fundamentally, absolutely different from us, not only as sinners but also as creatures regardless of sin. No one is good but one, that is God. We must not say that He is the highest good. For this term however good its intention may be, does not express

the truth of God's goodness. It puts Him in a class. It denotes His goodness as the greatest of all, as to be found only at the top of an ascending scale, the end of all our conceptions. But nevertheless, it compares Him; it makes Him part of a series. And God's goodness is absolute, and therefore also His holiness. It is incomparable, it stands alone, not only in distinction from perfection found elsewhere, but in the sense that He is the only good. And as God is the sole good, it follows that He is consecrated to Himself. He loves Himself. He seeks Himself and His own glory. He seeks and loves Himself in Himself, but also in all creation. That is God's holiness. With us it is our highest calling to love and seek and be consecrated to the Lord our God. To love and seek self is sin. With God, however, it is exactly the reverse. He seeks Himself, and will give His glory to none other. And the reason for both lies in the fact that God is good, and that He is the sole good, that there is no goodness apart from God. He is the Holy One of Israel. Glory be to His holy name!

This holiness of God is emphasized throughout Scripture. God, according to Scripture, is the Holy One *par excellence*. It is especially in His holiness that the incomparable character of God's Being appears, and that He is distinct from all creatures. Hence, we read in Isaiah 40:25: "To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One." In this oratorical question it is emphasized that God is the Incomparable One. He stands alone. He cannot be classified. He is by and of Himself. Never can the comparison of Him be so made that He stands on the basis of equality with the creature. This incomparability of God, according to this text, is especially revealed in His holiness. It is in and through His holiness that He is the Incomparable One, that He is absolutely distinct from all creatures. We must note too that the term *holiness* here is used absolutely, as a name of God. He is the Holy One. This conception of the holiness of God as His divine ethical virtue *par excellence* is strongly emphasized in Isaiah 6:1-5: "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts." Let us notice

that the seraphims here give expression to what is evidently their main and combined impression of the revelation of God as they stand in His presence. He emphatically reveals Himself here as the Holy One. The seraphims express this impression emphatically by there threefold repetition, "Holy, holy, holy," and they reflect it in this attitude, as they cover their feet and their faces with their wings. This also implies that God is glorious in His holiness. The divine holiness and glory are inseparably connected. His holiness is His glory. And so they add to their praise: "The whole earth is full of his glory." From this we conclude that God's holiness is His infinite, divine, ethical perfection, concentrated in and consecrated to Himself. It is that divine virtue according to which He eternally wills and seeks and is consecrated to Himself as the only good. This is further corroborated by the attitude of the prophet who receives this vision of the majesty and glory of the Holy One. In the presence and in the sight of the holiness of the Sovereign of heaven and earth, he is wholly perplexed and amazed, realizing that he is but a sinful man.

Significant, from this viewpoint, is also Isaiah 10:17: "And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame; and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day." God is both the light and the Holy One of Israel. Light, as we have mentioned before, is a figure denoting the implication of all ethical perfection in God. It is here used as a synonym with holiness. The Holy One of Israel is Israel's light. As the Holy One He is a light, and there is no darkness in Him at all. And the destruction which, according to this prophecy, God as the Holy One shall cause by fire and flame is to be wrought among the Assyrians, who, according to the context, had denied that the God of Israel is truly sovereign, and had boasted in their own strength and work, although they were but the ax in the hand of Israel's God. The Holy One, therefore, and that too in the capacity of being holy, maintains Himself in His glory and sovereignty in divine perfection over against the enemy of His name. What is emphasized here once more is not only that God's holiness is ethical perfection, but that exactly in His divine perfection He stands alone, and is incomparable. For while in all the creature its goodness consists in its being consecrated to God and His glory, God's holiness is His absolute Self-consecration. He seeks Himself as the only good, and all creatures for His own name's sake. For this reason it is, according to Isaiah 29:19, the meek that shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor of men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.

—H.H.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

David's Return

II Samuel 19:9-14

Absalom was dead, slain in battle. The remnant of his army, called "Israel" in the text, fled every man to his tent. The king tarried in Mahanaim, the sight of his encampment during the final stages of the rebellion. He could have returned and reoccupied his throne by force and even reeked terrible vengeance upon all the leaders of the revolt. But he was not just another oriental despot but a true shepherd-king of God's people, humble, compassionate and forgiving. For much had been forgiven him. So he was decided to wait until recalled by the people. If they still desired him as their king, they must bring him back again.

Soon there was a strong movement among the "people" of all the tribes toward his restoration. "The People" were asking for him, especially all such who had continued loyal and had taken no part in the public demonstrations for Absalom. Throughout the narrative of the revolt they are called the "people" in contradistinction to all such who had flocked to Absalom's banner, and always indicated in the text by the name "Israel". So in chapter 18: "And David numbered the people that were with him . . . and the king said unto the *people*, I will surely go forth . . . But the *people* (always the followers of David) answered, Thou shalt not go . . . So the *people* went out against *Israel* (Absalom's troops) . . . And the *people of Israel* were slain before the servants of David. So in chapter 19: "And the victory that day was turned into mourning for all the *people*: for the *people* heard say . . . how the king was grieved. And the *people* got them by stealth that day into the city . . . And all the *people* came before the king: for *Israel* (Absalom's army) fled every man to his tent."

When the land was again quiet, the "people" in every community, loyal followers of David, let their voices be heard. They wanted the king brought back again. They pointed one another to the king's past deeds of valour in behalf of the nation, reminding one another of how he had saved them out of the hands of their enemies. They decried the fact that he was now fled out of the land from Absalom. And Absalom whom they had anointed over them had died in battle and his cause had perished with him. And they reproached one another, doubtless their leaders—the elders of the *people*—for not recalling the king.

It is not probable that this speech originated with the sworn enemies of David who had flocked to Absalom's banner and enlisted in his army. It must have come from the strong sympathizers of the king. And soon the large majority of the people who had not wanted the revolt but who perhaps had silently looked on while it was in progress were talking much the same way.

And Israel fled every man to his tent. And were all the people at strife throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, The king saved us out of the hands of our enemies; he delivered us out of the hands of the Philistines; and now he is fled out from the land for Absalom. And Absalom whom we anointed over us is dead in battle. Now why are ye silent with regard to bringing the king back. 9, 10.

The report of these procedures reached the king. It can be imagined that he was grateful. But he was not hearing anything from his own tribe (Judah). It can be explained. In Judah the rebellion had struck deepest root. It had been launched in Hebron and most of Absalom's troops as well as all the leaders of the revolt had been recruited from this tribe. Not that they did not want the king recalled. But they had need of some encouragement, some assurance from him that he was bearing them no ill-will but had forgiven them in his heart and was again capable of taking them all back to his bosom.

The king was not slow in giving them this assurance. He sent this message:

And king David sent unto Zadok and unto Abiathar the priests saying, Speak unto the elders of Judah saying, why are ye the last to bring back the king unto his house, and the word of all Israel is come to the king and to his house?

My brethren are ye, my bone and my flesh are ye. And why (then) are ye the last to bring back the king? 11, 12.

He and they belonged to the same tribe so that the ties of natural kinship were closer between him and the people of this tribe than between him and the members of the other tribes. It was especially true of them that "my bones are ye and my flesh are ye."

That the rebellion should have taken such hold on his own tribesmen! And that they should now be the last to recall him. That duty devolved especially on them and they should be the first to perform it. Ties of blood must be respected. Such indeed is the will of God. One illustration. An Israelite was forbidden to abhor an Egyptian, seeing that at one time he was a stranger in his land. But the reason he might not abhor an Edomite is that he was his brother, Deut. 23:7. And therefore also the people of Israel at the

time of the conquest were forbidden to meddle with them; for the Lord had expressly stated that He would not give his people of their land, no, not as much as a foot breadth. Meat and water they had to buy of them with money, Deut. 2:5, 6.

A man must love his brother according to the flesh and do well by him all the days of his life. For he is his brother, his bone and flesh. The reference here is to natural affection. Characteristic of men whom God gives over to a reprobate mind is that they are without natural affection, Rom. 1:31. So the men of Judah, David being their brother, they were under a special obligation to him.

There was of course still another reason and a higher one why they must recall him whom they had despised and rejected as their king. Despite his great sins of the past of which long ago he had repented, he was the Lord's anointed as king. And he was a god-fearing ruler, a great man of God. Besides, the promise was his, so that to slay him, as they had calculated to do, was like slaying the promise. And so, being much closer related to him than the men of the other tribes, they must repent of their great sin and must want to be the first to bring him back again.

But in his message to them he made no mention of this higher reason; nor did he upbraid them for the wrong that they had done him. He simply directed them to their duty arising from their being his brothers, his bone and his flesh.

That was his message to them, at least the first part of it. These words of his alone must have made a deep impression on them. It told them that their aloofness was painful to him, and they understood that this in turn must needs imply that, despite all that had happened, he counted them his brothers still. It again shows plainly that his hatred of wicked men was not sinful malice but essentially love of God. How otherwise could his natural affection have thus asserted itself? Nor did he allow his sinful pride to deter him. How true to form of sinful flesh would it have been had he cursed them all in his heart or at least vowed that that he had done with them forever unless of their own accord and without any prompting on his part they implore his forgiveness and beseech him on their knees that he again own them as his people. But he pursued with them an opposite course. Laying aside all malice and lust for revenge, he made the first approach, a course that, rightly considered, came down to this: that he was beseeching them to be reconciled with him.

What it also shows is that he was ending with the Absalom revolt not in man but in God. The Lord had done it all as activated by the gracious purpose to sanctify his servant through suffering. The adversary

—Absalom and his supporters—had entered in simply as agents of the Almighty but of course on this account none the less accountable. It is easy for a man to be patient with *his* enemies, if these be the principles of truth from which he lives and the faith in which he stands immovably.

How plain that from that crucible of affliction he had come forth a chastened man, that the sufferings to which he had been subjected had “yielded the peaceable fruits of righteousness” unto him who was exercised thereby.

Also in this his posture with regard to his ill-deserving brethren, as well as in his sufferings, he stands before us as typifying Christ. For was this not the glory of Christ, namely His undying love of His ill-deserving people, and His always taking the initiative in leading to glory the many sons. Where would His people be, were He not always first?

But in inducing them to return to him, he went a bit further than to remind them that they were his bone and his flesh. He besides instructed the high priests, Zadok and Abiathar, to tell Amasa, the general of the slain Absalom, that, whereas he, too, was his bone and his flesh, he was swearing by God that he would make him captain of the host in the place of Joab.

It may be doubted whether this was the right thing for him to do. It is true that Joab was not alone worthy of this demotion but he should have been put to death for his murder of Abner. But David in his weakness had permitted him to live. Why should he now want to rid himself of Joab? Doubtless he was grieved with him for disregarding his entreaty that Absalom be spared. But should he have issued such an order? Doubtless if there was one man in the kingdom that David could scarcely endure, it was Joab. And this is not a wonder. For he was thoroughly unscrupulous. In the past he had always kept his own counsel and had been doing much as he pleased. But for whatever reason he was loyal to the king.

But David's published intention regarding Joab pleased the men of Judah well as could be expected. They immediately sent word unto the king that he should return. For it was the best evidence that he bore them no ill-will and that they still enjoyed his full confidence.

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 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. 13, 14.

—G. M. Opphoff

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Matthew 7:21-23

This wellknown and sobering and yet comforting word of God reads as follows: “*Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*”

In this word of God Jesus very clearly speaks of two kinds of people, both in their heart and manifestation in life.

In the first place he speaks here of people, who simply are evil trees, which bring forth evil fruit. It is impossible for them to do ought but sin. Their very religiousness is sin. Even their saying: Lord, Lord have we not prophesied in Thy name does not change this matter one iota. Their inward thoughts and works are evil continually. There is only evil fruit in their life.

The deepest reason? It is because they are not known of God. That is the deepest reason for their being banished from the sight of God, as God reveals Himself in the one man Christ to whom all judgment is given. Jesus will not simply say to the evil-doers in that day: *I do not know you.* He will say: *I never knew you; depart from me ye workers of iniquity.*

Overagainst these my text clearly speaks of those who “do the will of my Father in heaven”. These are certainly the foreknown of God in sovereign elective love and grace, and efficaciously called in Christ Jesus. This is here not explicitly stated in the text, but it is implied in the contrast and it is the clear teaching of Holy Writ. God made them good trees in sovereign love and grace through the operation of His Holy Spirit, working faith in their hearts by the preaching of the Gospel and strengthening it through the use of the Sacraments.

These are good trees which cannot bring forth evil fruit; They cannot really sin, for in their inward man they have been made alive in Christ Jesus.

Now, both of these groups say: Lord, Lord! But not all who say Lord, Lord shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven. Some, however, of those who say Lord, Lord *shall* enter into the Kingdom of heaven.

Now certainly those who are the "doers of the will of My Father in heaven" are the very people who are the poor in spirit, whose is the Kingdom of heaven. They are regenerated by the Holy Spirit and have been translated into the Kingdom of God's beloved Son.

And by virtue of this translation the righteous are not workers of iniquity, but those doing the will of my Father which is in heaven.

What does this doing the will of the Father imply?

This certainly does not mean: working works of law, in order *to establish* a righteousness with God. It is not sanctification in order to be justified. Then grace would not be grace, and works would no longer be works. That is the righteousness of Pharisees and Scribes who never enter into the Kingdom of heaven.

What then?

Doing the will of the Father in heaven is fundamentally, that we trust God alone in Christ, rightly learn to know Him as the only true God, love, fear and glorify Him with all our heart, with humility and patience submit to Him, so that we renounce and forsake all creatures, rather than commit even the least thing contrary to his will. To do the will of the Father implies that I have a sincere resolution in my heart to walk in gratitude, that I ever learn to see how little I yet possess of this in my actual life, and that as much as I love the salvation of my soul I will avoid and flee all sin, and will never share in the deeds of the workers of iniquity but that I shall hate them with a perfect hatred. It means that I pray: Search me, O God, and try me, and see if their be an evil way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

For mark you well, Jesus is here speaking of the will of "My Father in heaven". When Jesus thus speaks he is speaking of the will of the Triune God as this will comes before us in Jesus. Jesus here speaks as the Mediator in our flesh. He is, indeed, very God of God, yet he is at the same time also truly man. And He came to perform the will of God, that is, to deliver all whom He had received from the Father and, therefore, those whom he ever knew. He is speaking of the Lord, our God, who has principally delivered us from Egypt out of the house of bondage. And as such we trust Him, love Him, obey Him in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

This will is expressed in the Law of Sinai. It is the same law which the law of the Spirit of life in Christ works in our hearts. It is the expression of the will of "my Father in heaven".

And what a contrast these form with the "workers of iniquity"!

Are these "workers of iniquity" in any way like the stumbling saints, or like the saints in their melancholy falls, or in their greatest temptations?

No, they are simply men who delight in evil. They have no delight, according to the inward man, in the law of God. They cannot rest save that they perform evil. They delight in performing iniquity, in persecuting God's saints, who as much as they love their soul's salvation, would rather forsake all creatures than commit the least thing contrary to God's will. And standing before the face of God, they say: For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: evil will not sojourn with thee. And while the righteous tell the Lord, their God all this, these workers of iniquity have no faithfulness in their mouth, their inward part is very wickedness, their throat is an open sepulchre and they flatter with their tongue. In multitude of transgressions they rebel against God.

They are evil trees which cannot bring forth good fruit.

They are in no sense like David even at his worst. It is not true that we can ever speak of the good that sinners do; we can never say that the wicked unbelievers often put the righteous to shame. They never put the righteous to shame. Even their very religious deeds are so many shining sins. A David sins and has his bones wax old in him because of the roaring and disquietness of his heart. A Peter goes out and weeps bitterly. But workers of iniquity have a delight in lawlessness. Such a worker of iniquity David could not be though he fell deeply in the sin of adultery and murder. And it took the stern word of the prophet Nathan to bring David to the humility of a little child, so that He cried for mercy and wrote the beautiful Psalm, the fifty first. Hear how he cries: create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me, cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit...."

How David wrestles with mighty wrestling before the Lord.

What an exhibition of the struggling saint to enter with all His soul into the joys of the Kingdom of heaven once more!

Such a praying saint, that has ceased to see the mote in his brother's eye and only sees the beam in his own eye enters in through the straight gate that leadeth unto life; he certainly belongs to the few that find it. He no longer thanks God that he is not like other people, but cries saying with the publican in the temple: O, God, be merciful to me *the sinner*!

And thus he surely experiences the true joy in

God through Jesus Christ, to with love and delight live according to all the commandments of the King of Kings in the Father's Kingdom. And he prays: rule me so by Thy Word and Spirit, that I may submit myself more and more unto Thee. May thy Kingdom come in my heart, and may I enter into the life of Thy Kingdom in thus subjecting myself, Father! May I crucify my old nature and thus enter into life and into joy of thee, my God in Jesus Christ!

To such confessors of the Lord Jesus the assuring word is here given: you shall surely enter into the Kingdom of heaven.

You *shall surely* enter into the Kingdom.

You shall enter it now by faith and hope. In this faith and hope we enter into the Kingdom in joyful anticipation, we enter into the Kingdom joys, into all the fruits of the Spirit, justification, sanctification, the certainty of persevering even to the very end, that no one take our crown.

When I thus with David humble myself as a regenerated child of God through the power of the Holy Spirit then I have the requisite of God in me which makes it possible and a reality to enter into the joy of forgiveness, and to say: O, the blessedness of the man whose sins are forgiven and whose iniquities are pardoned. And we enter into the Kingdom through the opened door of the preaching of pardon to every one humbling himself in contrite confession by faith.

Yes, the doers of the will of God in humble trust shall surely enter into the Kingdom and its joys, ever anew.

But finally, too, they shall enter.

It will be a great day. Not only will it be said: now you may *enter* the Kingdom: you may now *enter* the glorious realization of the Kingdom of heaven, since Jerusalem has not come down from heaven as the beautiful city, and Zion has put on her beautiful garments, but it will be said: you now can *enter into* it. *Enter into* the perfected joy of Thy Lord, the Bride-groom, as the beautiful Bride.

O, the joy of the Lord, the Great Bride-groom at the sight of the hundred and forty four thousand out of every tongue and people and tribe and nation. What a joy of the King in His strength in the City Four-square. How the King in His strength will be glorious in joy; so will the King desire thy beauty. And as the heavenly Bride we shall forever enter into the Joy of our Lord, our Maker, our Husband.

—G. Lubbers

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Christ is still crucified between two thieves: Antinomianism and Phariseism. —from *Toplady*.

IN HIS FEAR

Green Eyes

Blue eyes.

They are usually considered to symbolize loyalty, honesty and integrity. Even as the expression "true blue" means to emphasize purity.

Brown eyes.

A romantic significance is attached to them as a rule. They seem to have attributed to them more depth of expression and feeling or emotion.

Green eyes.

Well, now, that is something different. And we do not mean "green eyes" in the literal sense. They are synonymous with jealousy. They are the color of the eyes of that beast, the Green Eyed Monster, according to which jealousy, greed, covetousness and envy are personified. You may physically have green eyes, and you are not condemned because of it. You may have blue eyes and be very dishonest. Your eyes may naturally be brown, and yet spiritually they may be green. We would like to call your attention in these lines to that vicious evil of having green eyes in the spiritual sense.

That the sin of jealousy is widespread is to put it very mildly. We can better say that it is universal. Wherever you find man, you find these green eyes. For all are born by nature with green eyes. When a child is born the question is often asked, does it have blue eyes? Does it have brown eyes? Does it have eyes like its father or like its mother? Spiritually it has eyes like both its father and its mother, for both of them, always, by nature have, from the spiritual viewpoint, green eyes, the eyes of jealousy, envy, greed and covetousness.

Now it is true that jealousy does not always manifest itself the same way. It assumes quite a different form when it is to be seen in the lives of little children trying to outboast each other as to what their daddies, their mommies, their brothers or sisters can do, than when it is practiced by more mature and sinfully enterprising business men. That childish prattle may cause you to smile (though you should not, for it is sin) and to take steps to bring this "green eyed" contest to an end, but most likely you will find a word for the "green eyed" deeds of the adult, progressive businessman which will take away the sting out of *sin*. We often call that the spirit of competition and laud to the skies the opportunity in our land for all or most of us to have our "green eyes" satisfied

to a very great degree, because we can make a good bargain, since two businessmen or business concerns are "slugging it out" (pardon the expression, but sin is awful) to see who is going to get the trade in a certain district, to see who is going to cause whom to move out of the district and leave the whole area for a noncompetitive business, where prices may once again be raised. A large, attractively arranged super-market is built, and people in the area and perhaps from far and wide make it their store. It does a million dollar business. This does not go by unobserved. Oh, no! "*Green eyes*" see it. They also see a large open field very near by where another super market can be built within plain view of this store that does the million dollar business. So it happens that soon we have two super markets in competition with each other. No, wait! A third one is also going up!

Now we call these men enterprising business men, men with vision, men who have their eyes open. Indeed, but then they are "*green eyes*"! What would the Apostle Paul have said had he been taken on a tour of one of our modern cities instead of walking the streets of Corinth, Ephesus and Athens? Would he have said, not in vain did I write to the church at Philippi, "look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others"? And he did not mean look on the things of others with those green eyes of jealousy but with eyes of love.

And do we not like those "green eyed" tactics ourselves because our eyes are also spiritually green? We like to "keep up with the Joneses". The neighbour gets a new car, we must have one too. The neighbour's wife gets an automatic washing machine, an automatic drier, a new fur coat, yea perhaps nothing more than a new hat. But "I got to get one now too !!!" And how glad I am that those two stores are fighting it out and competing with each other for my trade, for what I save on my groceries because of their "green eyes" I can use to satisfy my own "green eyes". And so the world goes around.

James, as taught by the very Spirit of God, tells us that these "green eyes" are the root and cause of all the grief and bloodshed we are now experiencing in war-torn Korea where our boys are suffering and dying. He states in chapter 4:1-5: "From whence come wars and fighting among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss that ye may consume it upon your lusts... Do ye think that the Scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?" There is the reason for *all* wars, price wars as we mentioned a-

bove also, strikes and revolutions, world wars and "policing duties".

It is interesting also in this connection to note what the Apostle Paul writes to the churches at Ephesus and at Colosse. To the church at Ephesus he writes, "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person nor covetous man, who is an idolator, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God", Eph. 5:5. Note the words "...covetous man who is an idolator..." By this statement he does not single out certain covetous men and say that only those covetous men who are also idolators are barred from the kingdom of God. He exactly means that all men by virtue of their covetousness are idolators. Covetousness is idolatry. This last he states also when he writes to the Colossians. We read "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry, for which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience," Col. 3:5, 6. How could it be otherwise? Covetousness by its very nature must be idolatry. For the covetous man makes the thing which he covets his idol. He puts it above everything else. He puts his wishes, his ambitions above God and all that He made. The covetous, "green-eyed" man is rebellious against the living God, Who has kept him from having these things He has given to the neighbor. And that thing, or those things, are the idol at whose feet he will fall. It he will seek with all his heart, mind, soul and strength.

Plain it also is that the covetous man ignores and deliberately rejects the Scriptural principle of Christian stewardship. He goes out from the viewpoint that all the things on this earth exist for his carnal lust, that he has no higher calling than to use the things of this world for himself and that his joy, his pleasure and his prosperity are the most important things in his life. He simply cannot rejoice to see that his neighbour has something and has joy and pleasure. No, he must be above that neighbour. His neighbour must always be inferior to him. Covetousness is pride. So proud is the covetous man that he dares to set God aside! He dares to call God unjust when He distributes His Own goods as He sovereignly pleases. And the only god he wants is one that will exalt him above his neighbours.

Back of it all is the lie of Paradise. By means of it the devil succeeded in bringing envy, greed, covetousness and jealousy into the heart of the human race. By the lie he succeeded in causing that creature that was created in the image of God to be jealous of the God in Whose image he was created. He succeeded in chasing man to greedily reach out for

what he might not have and could never have. Yea, he succeeded in seducing man to desire that his eyes of "blue" be changed to a greedy "green".

But there is hope for the afflicted. There is the possibility of normal sight being restored according to which we shall see God and our calling towards Him with what we do not have as well as with what we do have. That hope is in the cross and Spirit of Him Who in our flesh was not at all tainted with these "green eyes". Listen, if you please what the Apostle says of His pure eyes, ". . . Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God," Phil. 2:6. The very thought of being like God in His human nature never entered the holy mind of Him Who according to His Divine nature is God. In His cross there is redemption for those afflicted with this spiritually repulsive coloring of the eyes. By His Spirit in the way of regeneration and the continued process of sanctification our eyes may be and are changed. Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. With his "green eyes", which he has by natural birth, he cannot see a kingdom in which God is all in all. But being born again by the Spirit of Christ on the basis of Calvary a man receives those cleansed eyes whereby He does see God as God and His kingdom as a realm which exists for His glory alone.

And in the way of continual sanctification by the power of that same Spirit we will fight and overcome our lust, our greed, our envy, our jealousy and our covetousness. And we will live with our little or with our much, with what God has given us and with what He has given to others to the glory of His name. For we shall live "in His fear".

And we shall by the same power of sanctification make our song.

Help me Thy will to do,
Thy truth I will pursue,
Teach me to fear;
Give me the single eye
Thy name to glorify,
O Lord, my God Most High,
With heart sincere.

—J. A. Heys

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—NOTICE—

There will be no Standard Bearer issue on June 15th, July 15th and August 15th.

The Voice of Our Fathers

The Canons of Dordrecht

PART I — HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Chapter 3—The Confessional Status of the Canons

It is well, before we discuss in detail the contents of our *Canons*, to devote a few words to the subject of the position of the *Canons* as a creed, and especially as the third of our Three Forms of Unity.

The subject of creeds in general is an important one, and a right understanding thereof is essential to the understanding and appreciation of any given creed, of course. And it may be added, without much fear of contradiction, that the age in which we live is not marked by an appreciation of and loyalty to the creeds of the church. This is due undoubtedly to the fact that our age has little or no understanding and love of distinct and clearly defined doctrine. Sad to say, even those churches which call themselves Reformed are by no means innocent on this count. However this may be, it is well that we be able to give account of just what a creed is, and of exactly what we have when we have as one of our creeds, our official standards, that *Canons of Dordrecht*. Do we, in this creed, in any creed, acknowledge a second authority, beside the authority of Holy Scripture? Do we become guilty, when we adopt and maintain a creed, of causing schism and sinful division in the church of Christ? Or, on the other hand, is a creed something which may be acknowledged or ignored at will, as though it is of no real authority in the church? Is a creed, perhaps, something for the clergy alone, rather than for the laity? Are the official standards of the church so many dead letters, divorced, as far as the reality of life is concerned, from the faith, the assurance, and the conversation of the church and the individual believer? Are creeds the cause of what is often referred to as dead orthodoxy in the church? And must we, in the light of all this, abandon our creeds, or at least broaden them, and forsake the narrow doctrinal trails along which they lead us? What is really our calling with respect to these matters?

It is evident, therefore, that much might be written on this subject. We shall confine ourselves, however, to drawing a few fundamental lines in this regard, and briefly pointing out the value of creeds. And for the rest, we refer the reader to more extensive discussions of this subject.¹

¹Cf., e.g., H. Hoeksema, "The Triple Knowledge," I, 9, ff.; and Schaff, "Creeds of Christendom".

As a comprehensive definition of standards, or creeds, the following will suffice: *A standard, or creed, is an official ecclesiastical statement of what a church believes to be the truth of Holy Scriptures, or the true doctrine concerning salvation.* The terms *standard*, *creed*, and *confession* are synonyms, each depicting the same thing from a slightly different aspect. The name *standard* looks at a creed from the viewpoint of the fact that it serves as a banner, or ensign, identifying and distinguishing the church which formulated and adopted a given creed for both friend and foe. The term *creed* is derived from the Latin *credere*, "to believe". It therefore views a church's official statement of the truth as at the same time an object of faith, as a statement of the truth of Holy Scripture not merely in a cold, dogmatic, purely intellectual sense, but as an statement of that truth as it lives in the hearts of the people of God. And when we employ the term *confession*, we do not refer to something new, but to that same declaration of the truth and object of the faith of the church as it is openly *professed* in word and walk by the church and by the individual believer. From this it will be evident at once that the formation and maintenance of creeds is, also from a practical viewpoint, an important matter. It will also be clear that creeds, rightly understood and maintained, do not lead to dead orthodoxy, nor engender an evil brand of intellectualism or "brain-theology". The very contrary is true. If only we remember for ourselves, and thus cause the opponents of our creeds and the opponents of all creeds to realize, that our standards are not something to be relegated to the dust-covered archives of the church or to the appendix of our books of praise, perhaps, but that they are indeed our creeds, that which we believe with the heart, and our confessions, that which we profess with the mouth,—and let me add that the living church and the earnest believer certainly does remember this,—then there is no danger whatsoever of dead orthodoxy and doctrinal indifference, with their consequent rationalism and apostacy. And let the church, therefore, be warned to take its confessions seriously and with deadly earnestness, as though it were a matter of life or death, to maintain and defend its creeds, appreciate them, and thereunto strive to understand and to know them! Especially with regard to the *Canons* may Reformed people take this warning to heart. For I fear greatly that though there is none of our standards which is so peculiarly Reformed, so specifically *our own*, yet there is none of our creeds which is so little appreciated, so weakly maintained, so very little studied, so steadfastly ignored, and so flagrantly contradicted and trampled under foot by those who still presume to call themselves Reformed.

The use and benefit of having creeds lies chiefly in the fact that they serve as a means whereby the church, by the grace of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, may keep itself strong and pure and well-equipped to fight the good fight of faith unto which it is called. Because our creeds serve to define and delineate what we believe to be the truth of the Word of God, they serve as a basis of unity and a bond of union for a given group of churches. There can be no real unity, except upon the basis of the truth. Any union on any other basis is false, and will never survive. But our confessions, instead of causing strife and schism, engender a genuine unity. By our confessions we say, as it were: "This is the truth. This we believe. And with any who believe as we do, and who will rally to the maintenance and defense of this truth, we are agreed, we are one; with such we will actually unite and have communion and fellowship. And together, in obedience to our calling to shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, we will then declare this truth abroad to all the world, and in distinction from the world and from others who claim to have the truth." Moreover, our creeds serve the purpose of preserving the transmitting the truth from generation to generation. That truth, as, under the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, it has been elicited from Scriptures, formulated, and systematized, and that too, over against every form of the lie, which also appeals to Scripture, though falsely,—that truth need not be and may not be discovered anew by each generation. It need not be, because God establishes and calls His church in the line of continued generations, so that each generation grows up and becomes heir to the heritage of the preceding one. And it may not be, because to do so would not only be a waste of effort but also a flagrant denial of the operation of the Holy Spirit in the church of the past. And for the transmission of this heritage of the truth our confessions serve as a means. Two further benefits of creeds may be mentioned in connection with the immediately preceding. In the first place, our creeds serve as a strong bulwark against the repeated assault of the enemy, both from within and from without, as he comes with the lie as his weapon to destroy the church. With its creeds the church, profiting from the experience of the church in the past (for the lie is not new, though it often comes in a new garb, and many of our creeds have become necessary and have been occasioned exactly by the appearance of the lie), is well-equipped to cope with these onslaughts of those who would lead the church to exchange the truth as it is in Jesus for the lie of the devil. Our *Canons*, as a defense against the Arminian error, are a clear example of this. And

in the second place, the various creeds serve as a ready vehicle for the instruction of the church, and especially of the youth of the church. Certainly, if the church is to preserve its heritage, its children and young people must be taught to know and to understand the truth. And what sounder means can be found to instruct the covenant youth in the truth of the Word of God thoroughly and systematically, and to equip them to cope with the multitudinous winds of doctrine of our day, than our confessions. Let us therefore appreciate the heritage preserved for us in our confessions, and give good heed to the voice of our fathers. For in that voice of our fathers is easily detected the voice of the Lord our God Himself, as by the Spirit of Christ and through the Holy Scriptures, He speaks to us.

From all this it will be evident that in our creeds we do not at all acknowledge an authority next to that of Holy Scripture, but that in them we exactly acknowledge the authority of the only rule of faith and practice, the infallible Word of God. For this reason we do not acknowledge any standard which cannot meet the test of Scripture. For this same reason we stand ready at all times to subject our confessions unconditionally to the final authority of Scripture. And for this reason, in the defense of our standards, we go armed with the Word of God.

Well, therefore, with respect to our creeds may we apply the words of the psalmist: "Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death."

—H. C. Hoeksema

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If, therefore, the good we are enabled to do is done in the strength of divine grace; it follows, not that the Deity is indebted to us, but that we are unspeakably indebted to him, for working in us both to will and to do the things that are well pleasing in his sight. "Are good works, then, and moral obedience unnecessary?" Quite the reverse. They are of indispensable necessity. They must and will be wrought, by all who are born from above. They are the evidences of faith, and the necessary consequences of justification. Believe in Christ for justification, and lead a bad life if you can. It is impossible. They that are of God will do the works of God.—*from Toplady.*

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

EARLY VIEWS OF THE CHURCH

Introducing this material.

Confronted with the task of writing on the history of doctrine, a rich field, we understand, lies before us. Bitter struggles have been fought by the Church of the living God in defence of such fundamental doctrines as: the Divine Person of the Son, the two natures of the Saviour in unity of Divine Person and their relation to each other, the utter depravity of man, God's absolute sovereignty and the unconditional character of election, particular atonement, the efficacy of Divine grace, the certain perseverance of the saints, etc. The attacks by the prince of the powers of the air upon the truth of Holy Writ have been constant and unrelenting. The Church of the Lord has surely been called upon to exercise unceasing vigilance in its defence of the Word of God.

The Lord willing, we will begin our articles on the history of dogma proper by calling attention to the doctrine of the "Church and the Sacraments." In this series of articles we will discuss the history of the Church, as such, and also the history of the related doctrine of the Sacraments: Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper. We will begin by calling attention first to the history of the Church during the first three centuries of the New Dispensation, and continue with the views of the sacraments which were prevalent during that early period. We will conclude these articles by calling attention to the views of the Church and the Sacraments at the time of the Reformation and as embodied in our Reformed Symbols or Confessions, our Three Forms of Unity.

This material is of great interest.

Of great interest, on the one hand, is the doctrine of the Church. Although it must be conceded that the early views of the Church, especially as entertained immediately after the age of the apostles, was characterized by simplicity, it cannot be denied that this simple conception of the Church underwent a tremendous change. The matter, of course, would be quite simple if there were but one church and one people in the midst of the world. Such, however, is hardly the case. It is true that, nominally speaking, there was but one true church in the world until the middle of the eleventh century when the famous schism

between the East and the West occurred. But it is especially since the Reformation that the Protestant Church has been split up into innumerable parts and fragments. And it is surely an interesting question which concerns the nature and identity of the true Church. Must we make the absolute distinction between one true Church and all other churches as being false? Or, is it better to speak of degrees of purity so that we distinguish between pure churches, less pure churches, and least pure churches? Besides, who belong to the Church of God as constituted in the midst of the world? There are those (as e.g. the Liberated Churches) who frown upon the distinction between the visible and invisible church, outward and external covenant. More questions could be asked at this time. Enough, however, has been said to warrant the conclusion that a discussion of the history of the Church is indeed of great importance.

On the other hand, it is equally true that a discussion of the history of the Sacraments could be of great significance in our present day. We do not hesitate to say that it is especially one's views on the Sacrament of Baptism which reveals a person's reformed or unreformed tendencies. The ground for the baptism of infants is of fundamental significance. Do we baptize our children because we assume their regeneration? Or, do we baptize them because they are all equally in the covenant and because they are all equal partakers of the promise? This question is a fundamental question especially today. It can hardly be denied that the history of this doctrine should be of great interest especially in our present day. Incidentally, we have mentioned only the sacrament of Baptism. The history which concerns the Eucharist or Lord's Supper should also be of great interest. We know, for example, that three Lord's Days of our Heidelberg Catechism are devoted to this doctrine. We should, therefore, also be interested in the history which concerns the development of our doctrine as it concerns the Lord's Supper.

The Apostolic Fathers.

As we consider the views of the Church as expressed by the Church Fathers we must bear in mind that the conception of the Church itself was not clearly defined by them. This is true of this entire period, and especially of the Apostolic Fathers. Their views were generally characterized by indefiniteness. This need not surprise us. Their conception of Christianity in general was certainly characterized by simplicity. And this also applies to their conception and views of the Church. This, we believe, is easily understood. There were no creeds or confessions. In fact, the New Testament Scriptures or Canon was

not established until the New Dispensation had been well under way. Neither was there any specific need of creeds as long as the apostles lived and directed the affairs of the Church of God. The people of the Lord naturally looked to the apostles for leadership. They were infallibly inspired and led by the Spirit of God, and their word was therefore accepted with finality. Besides, it lies in the very nature of the case that the Church's conception of the truth should be characterized by simplicity in the days of its New Testament infancy. The doctrines concerning Christ and the Kingdom of Heaven were not understood in their profundity as they are today. The position of the Church of God in the Old Dispensation was naturally much simpler than it is today. Then it was limited to merely one people, whereas, beginning with the New Dispensation, the Church embarked upon a universal course. It lies, therefore, in the very nature of the case that the truth of the Holy Scriptures, also as pertaining to the views of the Church, should be marked by simplicity.

Speaking of the Apostolic Fathers in distinction from the Church Fathers, we refer to those leaders in the Church who assumed leadership immediately upon the era of the apostles. Among them appear such famous names as Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp of Smyrna, Hermas and Clement of Rome, Barnabas, probably of Alexandria, and others. The name, "Apostolic Fathers," is derived from the assumption that they were personally taught by the apostles. We need not dwell at length upon these early leaders of the Church in its New Testament infancy, especially because we do not know too much about them. I am sure, however, that our readers will not be adverse to a little information concerning these men, several of whom suffered martyrdom because of their faith in the living God and of Christ Jesus Whom He did send.

Little is known of the life of Ignatius of Antioch, except what may be gathered from the letters which bear his name. Irenaeus, a later Church Father, quoted him as a martyr who was condemned to be thrown to the wild beasts. Origin speaks of him as the successor of Peter in the bishopric of Antioch, giving the same account of his death as Irenaeus. Purely legendary are the assertions that Ignatius was the child which Jesus placed in the midst of His apostles—see Matt. 18:24—and also that he was a disciple of either John or Peter. Ignatius, who suffered martyrdom shortly after the turn of the second century, was bishop of the church at Antioch. His letters, and this is true of all the letters of the Apostolic Fathers, are admonitions and exhortations in tone and content. He views the Church of God as the people of God and believers in Christ Jesus, possessors of the life of

Christ, called by the Spirit and through the preaching of the Word unto salvation of God in Christ Jesus, and called to walk in all unity and humility, faith and love, confessing Christ and revealing themselves as a people saved by the blood and grace of Jesus Christ, our Lord. A sharp distinction was not made between the Church visible and invisible, the Church as an organism and an institute, etc. There was but one Church of God in the days of Ignatius. The only distinction which existed was between the Jews, the heathens, and the Christians. And the Church was constituted of those who by the grace and Spirit of God believed in Jesus, had been purchased and washed by His blood, and confessed His Name in the midst of the world.

Another of the Apostolic Fathers concerning whom little is known is Clement of Rome. He was probably a Gentile and a Roman. He seems to have been at Philippi with Paul when that first-born of the Western churches was passing through great tribulations and trials of faith. There, with holy women and others, he ministered to the apostle and to the saints. As this city was a Roman colony, we need not inquire how a Roman happened to be there. He was possibly in some public service, and it is not improbable that he had visited Corinth in those days. A co-presbyter with Linus and Cletus, he succeeded them in the government of the church at Rome. In an epistle written by him to the Corinthians we note the same admonitory and exhortative tone and content which characterized the writings of Ignatius. From the apostle, Paul, and his companion, Luke, he had no doubt learned the use of the Septuagint, in which his knowledge of the Greek tongue soon rendered him as adept. It is believed that he survived the fiery persecution under Nero in which Linus and Cletus are believed to have perished. He fell asleep in the Lord, probably soon after he had dispatched a letter to the Philippians. He certainly shares with others what the apostle, Paul, has written in Phil. 4:3: "His name is in the Book of Life."

—H. Veldman

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—NOTICE—

There will be no Standard Bearer issue on June 15th, July 15th and August 15th.

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Some people can no more help cavilling at the doctrines of grace, than some dogs can help howling at the sound of a trumpet.

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

The expression: "The promise of the Holy Spirit," occurs in Acts 2:33, and we quote: "Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." It is not our purpose, in this brief article, to call attention to this entire passage. We are merely interested now in the expression: the promise of the Holy Spirit.

The expression is unique. Two interpretations are grammatically possible. Some would interpret it as signifying: the promised Holy Spirit. The expression, then, would simply mean that the Holy Spirit is the content of the promise. The Spirit is He Who was promised; hence, the apostle would emphasize that Christ received of the Father the promised Holy Spirit. Others would interpret this expression in the sense that the Holy Spirit is Himself the promise. The essence and, therefore, the fulfilment of God's promise is the Holy Spirit. This explanation would not merely declare that the Holy Spirit was promised, but also that He Himself is the promise, its essence and fulfilment.

The first of these interpretations is commonly adopted. The Spirit is the promised Spirit. He has been promised throughout the Old Testament, particularly in such prophecies as that of Joel which is quoted in this second chapter of Acts. And now Jesus receives that promised Spirit of God.

However, we prefer the second interpretation. It is simply a fact that, had the apostle meant to refer to the promised Holy Spirit, he could have stated it in simpler language by writing, not "the promise of the Holy Spirit," but "The Holy Spirit of promise." Thus stated, the expression could mean only one thing: the Spirit characterized by the promise, the Spirit Who was promised. But now we read: the promise of the Holy Spirit. We conclude, therefore, that he does not mean what could have been expressed in simpler speech which would allow no other interpretation, but that, speaking of the promise of the Holy Spirit, he means to say that Jesus received the promise, namely the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is Himself centrally the promise of God and, therefore, centrally its fulfilment. For God to fulfil His promise or to give the Holy Spirit is the same thing.

We understand, of course, that when we speak of the Spirit as the fulfilment of the promise of God we express ourselves thus because we realize that Christ, too, is called in Holy Writ the promise of the Lord. In Him God's word of salvation is realized for all the elect given Him of the Father. The Spirit, however,

is called the promise of the Lord because He alone is its realization and fulfilment in the hearts of God's people.

This implies, in the first place, that the promise of the Lord is His Word relative to salvation. To speak of the promise of the Holy Spirit implies that the promise is identified with the work of the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit works salvation. It is true that Acts 2:33 refers to the Spirit of Pentecost. We know, however, that the outpouring of the Spirit upon Pentecost does not mean that He now began to work in His Church for the first time, but that the operation of the Holy Spirit within the Church would now occur in connection with the historically risen and glorified Christ. Even so, the Holy Spirit, be it in connection with the Christ, works salvation in us, calls us out of darkness and death into light and life, and continues to operate in us until we shall appear as the perfected Church in everlasting and heavenly glory. Hence, the promise of the Holy Spirit is the promise of the Lord relative to our salvation.

This implies, secondly, that the promise of the Lord is not an offer of salvation. To say that the promise of the Lord is an offer means that the will and desire of God is to save us depends upon the free will of man. An offer presupposes that God would bestow salvation upon us and that it is man who accepts this Divine offer and, therefore, determines whether or not he shall be saved. Hence, if the promise of the Holy Spirit be an offer, the implication must be that the work of salvation by the Holy Spirit depends upon the free will of man. This is contrary to all of Holy Writ which teaches us that the Holy Ghost is as the wind which bloweth whithersoever it listeth. Besides, to identify the Holy Spirit with the promise of God surely emphasizes that the promise of the Lord is not merely an offer addressed or proposed to man, but an irresistible work of the living God which He works through His Spirit in our hearts.

This implies, in the third place, that the promise of the Lord is wholly unconditional. A conditional promise is a promise which depends for its fulfilment upon man, particularly the act of faith. To teach a conditional promise means that there is something outside of the promise which determines its fulfilment. We fail to understand how anyone can deny this. This simply means that the Lord declares His love to the sinner and His desire to have him, but that that sinner will actually receive salvation if and when he believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. This, we know, is indeed the Liberated conception of the general promise for all those who are baptized. If, however, the Holy Spirit Himself is the promise, then the promise cannot be anything else than unconditional. Nothing, then, can

be presented as a condition for the promise, because the Holy Ghost is the Sole Worker of all our salvation. Unless we would defend the theory that the Holy Spirit will operate within us if we will believe. This, however, is inconceivable for anyone who clings to the Reformed conception of the Holy Scriptures,

Finally, another thought which emphasizes the Scriptural and Confessional conception of the promise is expressed in Acts 2:39. Nothing reveals this unconditional realization of God's promise more than the beautiful truth that the Holy Spirit realizes God's promise of salvation in the hearts of God's people generally in their infancy. I do not know of a truth more clearly taught in our Confessions than this truth concerning the place of the elect child in God's covenant. It is surely Reformed to teach that adults and children share equally in God's salvation, not only from the viewpoint of election and the atonement of Jesus upon the cross, but also from the viewpoint of the operation of the Spirit within our hearts. The truth that the Spirit of promise generally begins His work of salvation in His people during their very early infancy surely emphasizes that the Lord realizes His promise unconditionally in whom He wills, and this means that His promise is intended for and realized only in the elect. This promise of the Lord is sovereignly unconditional because of Divine election. It is certainly unconditionally realized by Christ upon the cross of Calvary. It is unconditionally bestowed upon His people because they are generally saved in their infancy. For, no flesh may boast, now and forever.

—H. Veldman

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CALL TO SYNOD

The Consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, the calling church by decision of the last Synod, hereby notifies our churches that the 1953 Synod will hold its opening session on Wednesday, June 3, D.V., beginning at 9 A.M. in the aforementioned church.

The pre-synodical service will be held on Tuesday evening, June 2 at 8 o'clock in Fourth Church. Rev. C. Hanko will lead us in this worship service.

Delegates to this Synod, needing assistance for lodging arrangements, please inform the Clerk of First Church: G. H. Stadt, 754 Prince St., Grand Rapids 7, Michigan.

Consistory of the
First Prot. Ref. Church

DECENCY and ORDER

The Order of Assemblies

THE OFFICES (cont'd.)

"No one, though he be a professor of theology, elder or deacon, shall be permitted to enter upon the ministry of the Word and the sacraments without having been lawfully called thereunto. And when anyone acts contrary thereto, and after being frequently admonished does not desist, the classis shall judge whether he is to be declared a schismatic or is to be punished in some other way." (Art. 3, D.K.O.).

The office of the ministry of the Word of God is a sacred trust of Christ in which He has privileged men of His own choice to serve. The faithful church has always regarded this office as such and, therefore, has also in as far as it was in her power taken the necessary steps to see to it that no one, other than those lawfully called thereunto, be permitted to enter upon the duties of that office. We write, "in as far as it was in her power" because the imperfect church has not always met with complete success in barring the *intruders*.

However, the Reformed Churches since the days of the Reformation have made a serious attempt to safeguard this holy office. During the hunting season as you ride out into the country you often see signs which are posted by the farmers who do not want the hunters on their property. These signs are unmistakably clear as to their intention. They usually state: "No Trespassing! Private Property! Keep Out!" Although these warnings are not always heeded, their evident purpose is to keep out intruders and when some nevertheless will venture into the forbidden regions, they make themselves guilty and worthy of punishment.

So too, Reformed Churches have posted signs in the field of the ministry of the Word of God. These signs may be found in the Order of the Churches and read as follows:

"No Trespassing

This is the Private Property of Our Lord
enter only upon the *Lawful* Call of Christ"

These signs, too, have not always been properly observed. There have been and still are *intruders*. Coping with these violators was an acute problem to the Churches of the Reformation especially in their formative years. The Churches were not as yet well organized and well ordered. Many itinerant priests

and monks who had seceded from the Roman Catholic Church and joined the Reformation began to perform the duties of the Ministry. Some were qualified, others not. In other places men without previous theological training simply began preaching wherever and whenever they could get a hearing. Although some did, yet, there were also a good number who refused to submit to an examination and did not care to place themselves under the supervision of any Consistory. Sometimes men of questionable character and purposes, by eloquent and fair speech would create a following for themselves, to the disruption of churches and ultimate spiritual damage to many. The Holy Office of the Ministry of the Gospel was imposed upon and misused by these "loopers, indrangers, scheurmakers" (tramps, intruders and schismatics).

The Churches had to act to safeguard the sacred trust. In 1563 the Churches of Flanders went into action by declaring: "None shall be permitted to administer the Word of God without a lawful call, and such as boldly intrude themselves shall be punished." Five years later the Weselian Convention decided that "without a lawful calling, election, approbation, proper examination and observance of that lawful order none shall be admitted to the Ministry." Likewise later Synods of 1571, 1574, 1578 took definite action against these self seeking freebooters. In 1581 at the Synod of Middelburg the sign that now appears in Article 3 of our Church Order was adopted. Since that time the position expressed in that Article has been maintained by Reformed Churches.

This does not mean, however, that the sacred office of the Ministry of the Word is now safe and protected against all intrusion. No more than the farmers' posting a sign on his land, forbidding the hunter entrance, protected his property from the trespasser, will the posting of a sign in the Church Order guarantee that there will be no more "indrangers" to the Holy Office. Such a sign is a necessity for good order as it does prevent anyone from entering the sacred field in any other than the legal way in the organized church but it is not a complete protective.

That this is so follows from the fact that we have intruders unto the present day. These "loopers" are seen tramping across the land without any authority of Christ or His Church preaching (as they call it) the gospel and functioning as ministers. Their notorious revival meetings have become famous. Most of them don't know the simplest A - B - C's of the Gospel and if they would submit to an examination they would fail miserably. Jesus' words to the Pharisees are fitting: "Ye compass seas and land to make one proselyte and when he is made ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves." (Matt. 23:15)

These, however, remain outside the established church and do not intrude into the office there and do not, therefore, become a serious menace except in so far that they do sometimes lead some who are in the church astray.

Intruders are also found within the church in spite of the fact that the signs forbidding their entrance are clearly posted. An intruder is one who enters the office of the ministry of the Word by force, bribe, deception, or in any way other than that of the lawful calling by Christ and His Church. He seeks the office for reasons of personal ambition rather than out of the desire to be a servant and spokesman of Christ. He has no right nor authority to preach the word and to administer the sacraments. In fact, he really cannot do so either for Christ, Who does not call him, also does not deliver unto him His revelation enabling him to speak the truth "to the edifying of the body of Christ". (Eph. 4:12) Consequently, when he speaks he brings forth his own word which is always contrary to the Word of Christ. He produces false doctrines. He declares unto the church the lie. He emits sounds which are strange to the ears of the sheep and in which they cannot recognize the voice of the True Shepherd. They give stones for bread. They are intruders.

Against these the church is warned repeatedly in the word of God. She must be on her guard. The apostle Peter tells us: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." (II Peter 2:1, 2) The apostle Paul warns against those "who have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm." (I Tim. 1:7) And again in I Tim. 6:3 "If any man teach otherwise and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strife of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings . . . etc." So we might add many passages.

No one has the right to intrude upon the office of the Ministry of the Word in any way. Irregardless of who or what one may be, whether a professor of theology or elder or deacon or anyone else, he may not enter upon the duties of that office except in the lawfully appointed way. Professors are mentioned here because it must be remembered that years ago men were professors of theology who had never been ordained

to the ministry. Inasmuch as our present professors are also ordained in the ministry, this article does not affect them. Where, however, this was not the case it meant that they, as well as elders and deacons, who are not ministers might not function in ministerial duties. To do so is intrusion. Likewise, those who are legally in the office may never intrude upon the lawful function of that holy trust. To do so is gross sin!

When such intrusion occurs the guilty one must be admonished. The article states "frequently admonished" and if he does not desist from such intruding practices he is to be punished as an evildoer being declared a schismatic by the churches or punished in some other way. Classis shall judge the case. This does not mean, of course, that Classis shall execute the punishment. The autonomy of the church is not destroyed here for the article implies that the admonitions and all other treatment of the intruder shall be done by the local church and at the proper time the Classis shall also judge the case and serve the local church with proper advice. This matter will come under consideration in connection with Article 79. Here it must be pointed out that each church must guard the office of the ministry of the Word against all intruders and when they appear admonitions and punishments must be enacted for where these are neglected the intruder's conduct left undisciplined will lead to schism.

The intruder is also a schismatic! And schism is a gross sin. (Art. 80 D.K.O.) Schism means to make separation. It is the offense of seeking to produce division in the church of Jesus Christ. This is what the intruder always does. He does not care about the flock of Christ. He is not concerned about Jesus' sheep. He is self-willed and self-seeking. He scatters the flock. Woe unto him for God shall punish. In this he may be known from the lawfully called and faithful ambassador of Jesus Christ who "endures all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory". (II Tim. 2:10). They seek not their own but rather the things that are of Christ Jesus. And seeking the true welfare of Zion in all their ministry, they are never the cause of schism.

Next time then, D.V., we will consider what constitutes the lawful calling of the Minister Verbi Deum which is the exclusive protective for any man from the sin of intrusion and schism!

G. Vanden Berg

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To a true believer, death is but going to church: from the church below to the church above. —*Toplady*

ALL AROUND US

Our Courts On The Spot.

In the May 4th issue of Time Magazine, in the department of Religion, we came across an interesting article entitled: "God's Country" which we here quote in full.

"Wladyslaw Plywacki, 24, had passed all his tests for U.S. citizenship with flying colors. Imprisoned for five years by the Nazis in his native Poland before he escaped to the U.S., he had served a hitch in Japan for his adopted country. He was an Air Force corporal stationed at Hickam Field, Honolulu when he came up before Federal Judge J. Frank McLaughlin to take the official oath and became an American:

'I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state or sovereignty... that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America... and that I take this obligation freely without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion...' But here Corporal Plywicki boggled. The next words were 'So help me God.' Wladyslaw Plywicki explained that he was an atheist, therefore could not in honesty use those words.

Judge McLaughlin directed Plywicki to take a coin out of his pocket. 'What does it say on the back?' he demanded. When Plywicki had read the legend, 'In God We Trust,' Judge McLaughlin made a little speech.

'Our Government is founded on a belief in God. You are asking for the privilege of being part of the Government, but you are apparently seeking admission on your own terms. If you are not willing to take the oath in good faith, the oath prescribed by the Congress of the United States, I cannot grant your petition.'

The court immigration officer, surprised that the judge had not merely substituted an affirmation of allegiance permitted for those who object to oath-taking, suggested that, since Plywicki was about to leave for the States, the whole matter could be settled on the mainland. But Judge McLaughlin, a Roman Catholic, had his principles, too. He ruled Plywacki ineligible for citizenship.

Plywacki appealed to the ninth circuit court of appeals in San Francisco. His argument: 'If a native-born citizen is entitled to freedom of religion, which would include the right not to believe in God, then a petitioner for naturalization has the same

right.' Last week the Justice Department in Washington told its office in Honolulu to 'confess error,' indicating that it would not support Judge McLaughlin's ruling in the appeals court. But Immigration Service lawyers have so far been unable to find a single direct precedent for a case like Plywacki's, and there remains the possibility that the court will be required to make a historic decision.

Judge McLaughlin, meanwhile, is sticking to his spiritual guns. 'I appreciate the right of a person to be an atheist,' he says. 'But if you join an organization that has principles based on the existence of a Supreme Being, from the Declaration of Independence on down to the latest pronouncements by President Eisenhower on the importance of religion—you must abide by the rules of that organization'."

The article, of course, leaves the case of Corporal Plywacki pending. We would like to know what the courts will decide. As we see it, Judge McLaughlin has a point in his argument which cannot be gainsaid. It is always true that when you join any organization that has a constitution stipulating certain principles, you are obliged to abide by the rules of that organization. He also assumes responsibility for all that that organization stands for and does.

But we think Plywacki also has an argument. He insists that a native-born citizen is entitled to freedom of religion, which right, as far as this country is concerned, entitles him not to believe in God if he so chooses. Hence one petitioning for his naturalization should have the same right.

Now we do not mean by this that we believe any man has the right not to believe in God. No man has that right. Every man by virtue of his being a creature is obliged to not only believe in Him, but to serve Him with thanksgiving. And in a certain sense, we may say every man does believe in God. Strictly speaking there are no atheists. God does not leave Himself without witness. He testifies in every man that He is. But as far as the laws of the land are concerned, the constitutional right of all our citizens is freedom of religion, and I believe our founding fathers meant by this that one could worship God if he pleased, and he could desist if he was so pleased.

The fact that the Declaration of Independence mentions the name of God does not change this. The opening paragraph of the Declaration reads as follows: "When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bonds which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare



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the causes which impel them to this separation." And the opening sentence of the next paragraph is "We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

When I consider that a man like Thomas Paine, a naturalist and avowed deist, was greatly responsible for the political and religious thinking in the days immediately preceding the forming of the Declaration of Independence, then I am inclined to believe that the "Creator" mentioned in the Declaration is none other than the god of the deist. And I believe I am supported in this conviction by the fact that Paine's contemporaries and friends were men like Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, both of whom were avowed deists, and men who formed the Declaration. Hence it is questionable whether "Nature's God" mentioned in the Declaration, is the God of Scripture at all.

And when I refer to the Constitution of the United States I find no mention of God at all. The first amendment to the Constitution reads like this: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." Here it is evident, as far as religion is concerned, that our Constitution allows one to do as he pleases. No one can tell you, as far as the Government is concerned, that you have to believe in God, or that you may not disbelieve Him.

Now whether you are a deist or an atheist, it makes practically no difference. Neither one wants God. Both are allowed by our Constitution to be American citizens. Hence Plywacki, in our opinion has a case. And it is also our opinion that the courts are certainly on the spot. They will certainly have to define or interpret our Constitution and declare whether or not prospective citizens in their oath of allegiance shall recognize God.

As a final observation, we conclude on the basis of historic data that the remark which is often heard in our day, namely: "Our country is a Christian nation because it was founded on the faith of our founding fathers who believed in God" is one, in our opinion, you can take with a grain of salt. We do not deny that many emigrants at the beginning of our history came to this country for religious freedom, and that many of them no doubt believed in the God of Scripture, but we deny that the formers of our Declaration of Independence and of our Constitution were all

of them believers in the God of Scripture. The freedom of these formers was the freedom from John Bull, the freedom of the French Revolution, of Voltaire and Rousseau, which was nothing more than the freedom of humanism, the freedom of the deist who puts God out of His world, and boldly goes his own way without so much as reckoning with Him.

On the basis of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of our land, Judge McLaughlin has no right to deny the Corporal his citizenship, and the courts should give the correct interpretation to these documents by saying: "In this country, every one has a right to believe as he pleases, and the Government has no right to coerce its citizens or prospective citizens into even a formal confession of God."

—M. Schipper

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IN MEMORIAM

On May 2, 1953, it pleased our Heavenly Father to take unto Himself our beloved Mother and grandmother

MRS. PETER VANDER SCHAAF

at the age of 64 years. Our loss is great but our comfort is that she has entered into the rest which remaineth for His own.

The bereaved children

Mr. and Mrs. Fred Van Engen

Mr. and Mrs. Dowie Vander Schaaf

Mr. and Mrs. Tom Van Maanen

and five grand children.

Hull, Iowa.

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If, then, we are justified by the alone imputation of Christ's righteousness, it more evidently follows, that good works, on our part, are, in no sense, meritorious of heaven: neither as causes nor conditions; for, however plausible and innocent the word condition may sound; a condition is no more than a softer name for cause; as being something on account of which something else is given or done. And that works can be neither causes, nor (which amounts to the same thing) conditions of justification is clear; because the performance of a condition necessarily precedes the reception of a benefit suspended on that condition; whereas, good works do not go before, but follow after justification . . . Therefore, to put good works before justification, is making the effect prior to the cause; and representing the fountain as flowing from the stream, instead of deducing the stream from the fountain.

—from *Toplady*