

# THE STANDARD

*Bearer*

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## MEDITATION

### Anguish In Darkness

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the day time, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent." etc. —Psalm 22

There are many difficulties confronting us when we set ourselves to write something about this Psalm, difficulties of a various nature, exegetical, historical, theological. A man could write a rather long treatise about the difficulties alone.

Try to write something about this Psalm, restricting yourself to this theme: What did David suffer when he wrote here as he did? For instance, what ever could have happened to David when he complains: "Thy have pierced my hands and feet"? Or this: "they part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture"?

Yes, we must meet all kinds of difficulties here.

The Psalm is superscribed as "Aijelet Shachar". Its author is David. Aijelet Shachar means "hind of the morning". David, in a measure, and Christ, fully, are considered fair game for every wild and fowl beast to hunt Him on the mountains if haply they may rend Him to pieces.

David certainly must have been in terrible straits at the time of this Psalm. We can tell this by the impassioned plea of the Psalm itself, by the opening verse that speaks of utter forsakenness, by the repeated, My God, My God!

We are left in the dark as to the exact reason for this state.

Do we say too much when we presume it to have been occasioned by Saul? Saul certainly has been the arch-enemy among all those that would seek his

life. Saul hated David more than any of his enemies. And when we pursue the story of David's life we note that this hunting went on from month to month, from year to year. When David found rest for a spell in some mountain, glen or cave, an enemy would come by stealth to Saul and spit out his poisonous information: Doth not David hide himself in our hills? And the army of Saul would gather for the hunt. David, the hind of the morning.

And all the while David was not really dangerous to Saul. He never did him any wrong. More, he would even defend him when Saul's life was given to him as on two occasions. He held up the slip of his mantle and cried: My father, see and behold! I do not seek your hurt! And for a moment Saul, that devil, was persuaded: he wept a few salty tears on David's neck! Beware, David! That embrace is as slimy as the embrace of a serpent. It reminds me of the embrace of Judas kissing Jesus: Rabbi, Rabbi!

But we see much more in Psalm 22 than Saul, Saul's cohorts on the hunt, Philistia and the other heathens surrounding God's anointed.

You can see all that and fail to receive your answer to the question: What means this crying about God's forsaking of David?

David's agony because of the bulls, lions, dogs; the wicked, the mockers, the enemies is aggravated by a consciousness of the lack of God's communion. Judging from the words of this cry he sought for salvation, God's nearness, quietness in the soul because of God's communion, and answer and peaceful silence.

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But God seemed far, O so far away.

In the daytime he cried and roared in the night season. All to no avail. God held Himself away from David.

And the enemy noted this deplorable situation. Listen: They laughed him to scorn, they shoot out the lip, they say: Did not David trust in God? Well, let God help him, that is to say, if it is true that God has delight in David! But it is plain that He has not! David, where is Jehovah now?

And they rejoiced in David's agony.

And while sobs are racking David's tortured breast, he meditates on the past. Jacob, his father, also was in agony. And he cried in Peniel. Yes, muses David, Jacob and on occasion Abraham also, they trusted in the same Jehovah. But here is the difference. Since last week when I started by roaring and crying agony to God, I have been without an answer. They trusted, and in the case of Jacob an angel of God came down and blessed him in the morning. He was strengthened to meet Esau.

But I? I am no longer a man. I am a worm. I crawl in the dust and there is no soothing silence for me. God hears me not.

And who am I? Am I not David, the beloved of the Lord? Was not my mother that sweet Moabitish maiden who always charmed my heart when I read of her? A sweetness that was inherited by my grandmother and mother? Did not my mother go to Jehovah when she perceived that her arms were filled with me, the future King of Israel? And how did my mother act toward Thee, O Jehovah? She began to pray and she cast me into Thy loving arms.

And Thou hast heard. Because when I was but a small lad I was made to trust in Thee and hope in Thee, even as the Fathers.

I took Thee with me in the fields when still young and tender. And while the woolly sheep grazed I would meditate on Thy greatness and begin to sing. Presently the melody, the correct meter, came to me, wafted on the winds of Bethlehem-Judah, and I began to play and sing! O God, dost Thou not remember how I used to sing, surrounded by unbroken silence: 't Hijgend hert der jacht ontkomen; schreeuwt niet sterker naar 't genot van de frissche waterstroomen; dan mijn ziel verlangt naar God!

And I know that I have never hoped (and that means that I possessed the yearning for Thy communion) in vain. Because even before my thirsting heart came to the last stanzas of my song, I knew already that I would presently close with: Ik zal God, mijn God nog loven! And happy, divinely happy, I would grow silent and go home with the sheep.

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But now I am a worm and no man.

Besides having all these warriors to contend with, Thou gavest me no answer.

This cannot continue long, O my God!

Even now, I am poured out like water. There is no strength left in me. A person should be able to sleep nights. When I rise from my couch in the morning I present a sorry spectacle for the beholder. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.

And it is a good thing they cannot see any farther than my outward appearance. Within I am like wax. My heart is melted within me. My bones feel out of joint. There is no strength left in me.

And all I hear around me is sneering, mocking, derision, contempt.

And I could bear all that, my Lord. Only, be Thou not far from me, haste Thou to my help!

Abraham was helped when he trusted and hoped, and Jacob found his God. Israel did not remain in Egypt. Moses was the strong arm of Jehovah. Therefore, my Father, ride upon the clouds to my help!

And David did find his God again.

He prophesies of it from verse 22 on. It is the break in this Psalm.

He visualizes himself delivered from all his sorrows. There will come a time when he shall tell all his brethren that God finally came. And such time he will find all his praises concentrated on one thing: Hallelujah! the praises of God! Well, it could hardly be anything else. That is the Omega of all life and living.

Yes, in the midst of the congregation of Israel David will stand. He visualizes them even to the end of the world.

Righteousness, glory and utter redemption will come. Even through him as an instrument. All the ends of the world will at first shudder when they hear David's story of Psalm 22. But the end of the song will be: that God finished the agony. Incidentally, the last phrase of this Psalm is the same as Jesus' final cry: It is finished!

Yes, it is finished for David. He grew calm; could even smile again. His part in the present, heavenly, glorious concert is not small. I can even imagine that David will sing some solo parts. But His great Son would later quote him. And such quotations.

Throughout the worlds and the planets and the suns there resounded much later that agonizing cry to God: O why, why hast Thou forsaken Me? In utter darkness.

They tell me that from the sound of airplanes overhead they can by delicate instruments compute the exact distance from the airplane to the batteries on the ground.

I would implore you not to try and compute the

distances around Golgotha. That cry came from a great abyss. It sounded from a sphere that sometimes is called *hell*. Your reckoning will be a mockery anyhow. The instruments will break. The roaring is too intensive.

A good man has said some years ago: When that cry resounded on the place of a skull, a hand from hell was extended to the heavens and it laid itself on the steps of God's temple. And here is the miracle. That hand from hell did not besmirch the steps.

Much later, much later, (theologically we speak of eternal death of which the cry is the echo) the golden gates opened and a beckoning hand asked Jesus of Galilee: Come up hither, My Son!

The greater David, no longer a worm, ascended the steps.

Psalm 22 finds Him at last in the midst of the congregation. And David will stop his solo's. And heaven experiences a hush. David, God's beloved Son, will make an announcement in singing such as no earthly choir ever could render: I will proclaim Thy blessed Name unto all the brethren.

Instructions in singing will follow. They have waited until all the members of God's symphony have arrived.

John at Patmos was given the pre-audition. And he has told you. "And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying: Alleluia!"

I am syow in leaving this spectacle. The heavenly version of Golgotha, the heavenly rendering of Psalm 22 is so engrossing, so surpassing in beauty.

Slowly on I begin to understand why the Holy Ghost calls David the sweet singer of Israel.

—G. Vos

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I can compare some ranting Arminian preachers, who represent salvation as a matter of chance, and press men to help forward their own conversion, upon pain of damnation, to none so well, as to auctioneers; who, with the hammer in their hand, are always bawling out, "Now is your time; now is your time: agoing, agoing, agoing." Such a method is equally inconsistent with the analogy of faith, and subversive of the majesty of the gospel. Shall I order a dead soul to awake, and raise itself to life? Let me rather address the living God, and say, "Awake, and put on thy strength, O arm of the Lord! Breathe on these slain, that they may live!"

—Toplady

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## EDITORIALS

### Our Candidates

The evening of June the ninth was for me, as well as for all that have a heart for our Theological School and still love our specific Protestant Reformed truth, a joyous occasion.

On that evening, five students graduated from our seminary after previously having been examined and declared candidates for the ministry of the Word in our churches.

In a way, I felt that this occasion was like an oasis in the wilderness.

By "the wilderness" in this familiar figure of speech, I refer to the unrest, the disharmony and disagreement, the strife and contention that are everywhere rampant in our churches, fundamentally, no doubt, because many are not satisfied anymore with the pure Protestant Reformed truth. They seek a new emphasis, the emphasis on MAN, man's responsibility, man's moral choice, man's activity of faith. Hence, this entire strife concentrates around the matter of "conditions." And the matter was brought to a head by the adoption, in 1950 and 1951, of the well-known *Declaration of Principles*, which sharply maintains that the promise of God is unconditional and only for the elect, and that faith is not a condition but a God-given means unto salvation.

The result is much wrangling, not only the congregations, but also in the ecclesiastical gatherings, consistory, classis, synod.

In the midst of this wilderness I felt that the occasion of the graduation of our five candidates was, indeed, an oasis, at which I might refresh myself.

Even during the entire school year, the seminary was as it were a haven of rest. There the atmosphere was pleasant and peaceful, even though also there problems naturally arose and were discussed.

There was something special about our graduation exercises this year.

Only one of the candidates, George Lanting, came originally from our churches. He was from our church in South Holland.

As for the rest, one, Marvin Koerner, hailed from the German Reformed Church of classis Eureka, in South Dakota, while three, Emanuel Emanuel, Robert Harbach and James McCollam were ministers in the Reformed Episcopal Church in this country. Partly through the radio broadcasts of Oak Lawn and South Holland, partly through the instrumentality of the Rev. Schipper and, I think, also of the Rev. Vanden

Berg, partly also through the reading of literature, they came to love our truth, and with the financial aid of our people were enabled to enter our seminary.

We earnestly hope and pray that, before long, all these brethren may be called to a place in Christ's vineyard.

A suitable program was arranged for the occasion.

Mrs. Anne Vandenberg was at the organ. The Rev. G. M. Ophoff read a portion of Scripture and opened with prayer. An address was delivered by Candidate George Lanting on the subject, "The Word of God" in which he also criticised the Barthian conception of the Word. The "Trumpeters", R. Griffioen and B. Klaver, treated us on a musical selection. Thereupon the rector delivered a speech on "Man's Freedom and Responsibility" and at the close of this speech he briefly addressed the candidates and handed them their diploma's. Then, after a few closing remarks by the Rev. George Lubbers, the Rev. G. Vos, president of the theological school committee, closed the meeting with prayer.

May God's blessing rest upon our candidates, and may they ever remain faithful to the truth that was taught them.

And may the blessing of Jehovah, our covenant God, continue to rest upon our school, that, for years to come, it may be instrumental for the maintenance and dissemination of the Reformed truth, the truth of God's unconditional and sovereign grace.

Bless, O Lord, our churches!

H.H.



### Man's Freedom and Responsibility \*

Esteemed Members of the Curatorium, Candidates, and Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ:

I have taken my lecture along; so maybe I will read parts of it. I do this, not because I like to read, but because, in the first place, I don't want to speak too long; and in the second place, I don't want to say anything in this evening hour that is probably not true.

My introduction, which is, nevertheless, a proper introduction to my subject, is, perhaps, in your estimation, somewhat pessimistic. But it is nevertheless very realistic. It is this. There is, as is well known to you all, a general rumor in our churches that there is going to be a split.

With regard to this I wish to say, first of all, that my personal attitude and my personal feeling towards that rumor, which is very real, is that I think a split

(\*) Address delivered by the Rector, Rev. H. Hoeksema, at the commencement exercises of our Theological School, June 9, 1953.

certainly must be regarded as very deplorable. I ought to know better than any of you, because I went through a split of the church in 1924. And I assure you that it is not a pleasure, but a very real and profound suffering to go through a split of the church. And I think it would cause me more suffering to experience a split in our Protestant Reformed Churches than the suffering I went through when the Christian Reformed Churches cast me out in 1924.

Nevertheless, I must say more. And that is this. If there *is* a split, it must come, and no one can ever prevent it. If there is *no* split, we certainly should not make one. But if there is in reality and essentially in our midst, as Protestant Reformed Churches, a split, that split should not only come, but should come as soon as possible, lest the corruption eat in our churches like a canker. That is my conviction.

And, if you ask me whether, then, there are signs or phenomena which indicate that a split actually exists, I answer that I am afraid sometimes that what Professor Holwerda wrote to the churches in Canada was after all probably true, namely that there is quite a different sound in our churches.

This is connected with my lecture.

That different sound is expressed in many, many ways, but principally concentrates around a new emphasis in our churches on Man, instead of on God. There are those who claim that after all the Christian Reformed Churches in 1924 were probably correct when they said that I and the Reverend Danhof, who were both cast out at that time, were one-sided. And that the one-sidedness consisted in this, that they laid too much emphasis on God, and not sufficient emphasis on Man. In other words, we refused,—and we still refuse, by the way,—to subscribe to a double track theology: Man and God, each running his own track. I am afraid that there are signs of a real split in our churches,—and God forbid that it be true, and that it be realized,—because of the very determined opposition against such a thoroughly Reformed and Protestant Reformed document as the *Declaration of Principles*. I am afraid that there is a split in our churches when I hear sounds that speak of and emphasize *responsibility of man*, and a *moral choice*; which claim that our preaching has been too passive, and that we must be active, and that our preaching must stimulate activity.

When I listen to all these sounds, I tremble, and I'm afraid. But I say we certainly must not have a split *if no split exists!* On the other hand, *if the split exists, we must have it!*

That is connected with my subject. My subject is: "The Freedom of Man and His Responsibility." I first thought of treating this subject in a synthetic

and logical way, so that I would divide the subject somewhat as follows: I. Its Idea; II. Its Implication; III. Its Manifestation. But for practical reasons, and because I think it is more understandable,—and the subject somewhat difficult,—I finally decided to follow the historical and analytical scheme. And, therefore, when I speak on "Man's Freedom and His Responsibility," I will follow this line: I. In the State of Rectitude; II. In His Fallen State; and, III. In the State of Perfection.

#### *I. In the State of Rectitude.*

What is responsibility? I think that this is a question that ought to be answered, and that is answered very seldom by those that speak of responsibility most often. Responsibility is the ability and obligation of the rational, moral creature to respond to God. That is responsibility: his ability, as well as his obligation, to respond to God.

Man is, in distinction from God, always under the law. And under the law he always hears, whether he answers positively or negatively, the Word of God: "Love Me. Love Me with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength. And, love me with all thy needs, and in all the world and with all creation." And, I say, no matter whether you talk of responsibility or do not talk of responsibility, you can never deny it. Responsibility is no problem. It cannot be a problem for the simple reason that man can never ignore it, and can never avoid to answer, to respond to God under the law. He must say either *Yes* or *No*, and he can never avoid it.

Now then, in connection with this responsibility stands, of course, man's freedom. And there are those that have the idea that those of the Calvinistic or Reformed faith cannot speak of man's freedom and of his responsibility because they emphasize the counsel of God. They are, of course, the Pelagians and the Arminians. There are others, however, who call themselves Reformed, and think that they belong to the Reformed churches, that conceive of God and the responsibility and moral freedom of man as two parallel lines,—a double track, two parallel lines that never meet as far as eye can see. I say they are the double track theologians. And that double track theology we as Protestant Reformed Churches have rejected in 1924, and still we must have nothing of it. The real and Scriptural conception of the relation between man's responsibility and man's freedom, on the one hand, and the sovereign counsel of God, on the other hand, is this, that the freedom and the responsibility of man are hemmed in from every side by the counsel of God. Have before your mind a circle, representing the counsel of God. In that counsel of God stands the morally free and responsible creature that is called



man; and that counsel of God hems him in on every side. It is not so, therefore, that there are two parallel lines, but so that man in his moral relation to God is dependent even as a moral creature. Even in his moral thoughts he is dependent upon God. He is not sovereignly free. Man can never be sovereignly free. God only is sovereignly free! And man is forevermore dependent, even as a moral creature, upon God! Further, man is not only dependent upon God in His counsel; but he is dependent upon God, as a moral creature he is dependent upon God in His *almighty providence*. It is not only so that God abstractly determines the moral freedom and responsibility of man, while in actuality man stands independent. God in His providence rules and governs man's every act, his every thought, his every desire. The king's heart is in the hand of God as the river of waters: He turneth it whithersoever He wills.

Man is morally free. O yes! Free? In what sense?

In a formal sense, beloved, moral freedom means that whatever God's counsel and whatever God's almighty providence determines with regard to man, that man is nevertheless always the conscious and moral and willing subject of all his actions. That is, in the formal sense freedom is the state of the creature in which he is willing and conscious subject of all his actions *without compulsion from without*. God never touches that moral freedom. That this is Scriptural is evident from every part of the Bible. Let me quote just one or two passages if I may. First of all I wish to refer you to Isaiah 10:15: "Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith?" That's the king of Assyria. The king of Assyria boasted. He didn't know anything about it, did not feel at all that he was the tool of God, felt himself perfectly free in all his actions. Yet listen: "Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood." That's God with His counsel and with His almighty providence hemming in and limiting from every side the moral creature that is called the king of Assyria. And although God in His almighty providence and eternal counsel determines,—as if it were the saw that is drawn, and the axe wherewith the Lord hews,—determines every man, nevertheless he stands there consciously and willingly lifting himself up against the Lord of hosts. The same is true, by the way, as you well know, in the words of Acts 2, verse 23, the well known words where the apostle speaks of the eternal counsel of God and the wicked crucifixion as follows: "Him, being

delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands crucified and slain." God's counsel determined the crucifixion. God's counsel determined every thought and every act of the men that crucified Him. Yet, they took him by wicked hands, and slew Him. That's Scripture.

Adam's freedom was more than that in the state of rectitude.

Adam's freedom was not only a formal freedom, so that he was a conscious and willing subject of all his actions. But he was also materially free: materially free in the relative sense. By material freedom I mean that state of the moral, rational creature in which he is also *able* to love God with all his heart and mind and soul and strength. Adam was not only created a moral, rational creature, so that in all his actions he was consciously and willingly before God; but Adam was also endowed with the image of God. He stood in true knowledge of God, so that he did actually love God. He stood in positive righteousness, so that it was really his inmost desire to keep the law of God. He stood in perfect holiness, so that in all his desires and in all his actions and in all his emotions and in all his inclinations he was consecrated to God.

Only, Adam's freedom was not the highest freedom. As it is expressed in a Latin phrase, his freedom was *posse non peccare*, to be able not to sin, *et peccare*, and also to sin. Mind you, that Latin phrase is not quite correct. The freedom of Adam did not consist in the fact that he could simply choose, so that he was in a sort of neutral position and so that he could choose to serve God and not to serve God. No, his freedom in as far as he did possess freedom consisted in the fact that he did love God, that he could keep the law of God, that he could serve Him. And the limitation upon his freedom was exactly this, that that freedom was not rooted in the Son of God, but was rooted in his own will. That was his limitation.

That was also Adam's responsibility. Adam's responsibility was,—O, certainly, as a moral, rational creature he could respond to God, and did respond to God; he had to respond to God. But his responsibility was higher than that. It was also this, that he did love God with all his heart and mind and soul and strength in the state of rectitude. Adam was not responsible for what God made him. We are never responsible for what God does! God is responsible for what he does! We are never! Adam was not responsible for what God made him, though He did not immediately make him free in the highest sense of the word. Adam could not say to God,—and, in fact, he never had it in his mind to say to God,—"Why hast

Thou made me thus?" That was God's business. But Adam's responsibility was,—and that responsibility he could fulfil as a free moral creature, formally and materially,—to love the Lord his God with all his heart and mind and soul and strength, and with all the works over which God had placed him. That was responsibility in the state of rectitude.

## II. In His Fallen State.

But man fell. Man fell!

We must not imagine that we are through with the problem of responsibility when we have talked about the relation between the moral creature and God's counsel, or between the moral creature and God's providence. We must not imagine that the problem of man's responsibility ends there. The problem becomes much more serious and becomes much more profound when we begin to speak of man's responsibility in the state of sin.

Man fell! That's the problem. Of course, the Pelagian, the most superficial Pelagian, who is always individualistic, and at the same time is the most modernistic of all theologians,—the Pelagian denies (and that's why he tries to save the responsibility of the fallen man), he denies that man's fall was really such that he became dead in sin and trespasses. He denies that. Man, he says, still has a free will. Of course, if you attribute to man a free will, or any degree of free will, it seems as if you have no problem in regard to man's responsibility. I say: *it seems*. It isn't true. But, nevertheless, according to the Pelagian, man is not dead. He is probably weakened. He is probably sick. But he is not dead in sin and trespasses. That is why, according to him, man is still a responsible being, who can choose either-or, *yes* or *no*, against or for God; and therefore, he is responsible.

The Arminian does not go quite so far. I say this all simply because I want to put before you the real problem, so that you do not skirmish with terms that you don't know anything about. O, it is so easy to talk about responsibility. And I am afraid that most people that talk about responsibility don't know what they are talking about. The Arminian says: "No, man is dead in sin and trespasses; *but* he can still will to be saved. That is why you have some contact with him. You can address him in the gospel as a moral creature, with moral responsibility, and moral freedom." Don't you see? You can present to him a general offer of salvation. That was also 1924,—something which we rejected as churches. You can offer him a general promise. He can take it, or he can refuse it. But you address him! You address all men as rational and moral creatures *that are able to*

*will salvation!* That's Arminianism! That's not Reformed!

Reformed is this: 1) That man, fallen man, is responsible for his own corruption. That's Reformed! Man is responsible that he is corrupt. That is Reformed, and that is Biblical!

2) That in that state of corruption he nevertheless acts as a moral, rational, conscious, willing creature.

3) That in that state of corruption he is bound to evil, so that his state is expressed from of old,— and again, I want to criticize that a little bit; but nevertheless it will stand,—by the Latin phrase: *non posse non peccare*, not to be able not to sin. You must remember that when you talk about the moral choice of man to your audience. When you address man individually you do not address an audience that is willing and able to hear and to receive the gospel of salvation. You cannot! Remember that!

Let me explain.

Adam fell. That means that he became guilty. Guilt means liability to death. God said to man: "The day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." That Word of God was fulfilled. Adam died. He died! Wherein did he die? He didn't live. He doesn't live anymore. He has no life. He is in death. He is in death with the whole creation. The whole creation that fell with him lies in the bondage of corruption. And man, at the head of the creation, lies in utter death. That death includes the corruption of his moral nature.

But we must emphasize a little more. When we say that man fell, we must understand this: *man* fell. That's Reformed. That is also denied by the Pelagians. That is according to the Word of God, as you all know. In Adam the whole human race fell: not Adam alone, but the whole human race fell in Adam. That is, the whole human race became guilty, and the whole human race became corrupt because of its guilt. Once more I say: that is also denied by the Pelagian, the very superficial, the individualistic, the modernistic Pelagian, that always emphasizes man rather than God. I always say, beloved: Give me God, if I must make a choice. If I must make a choice to lose God or man, give me God. Let me lose man. It's all right to me: no danger there. Give me God! That's Reformed! And that's especially Protestant Reformed! Give me God: there is no salvation in man! But the Pelagian says, beloved, superficially: man is still free. He did not sin in Adam. He did not become guilty in Adam. He did not become corrupt in Adam. He is still free. O, he is weak; and, what is more, he is liable to imitate in his freedom a bad example. There are bad examples all

over, so you must really take him out of his environment. Modernism! Through and through modernism! All because of a wrong conception of responsibility.

What is the responsibility of fallen man?

Beloved, I would say in this connection,—and you can work it out if you want to. It's worth while. But please don't speak in a superficial way any more of responsibility. Work it out.—I can speak of the responsibility of the fallen man in three ways.

In the first place, there is *corporate responsibility*. By that I mean, beloved, that we are all responsible for the sin which Adam committed in paradise. That is our sin, and we are responsible for that sin. That's the Word of God. I really don't have to read it to you. Read Romans 5: "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." All have sinned when? In paradise. That is where we sinned. That is where we became guilty. Or, if you please, read the 18th verse: "By one man judgment came upon all men to condemnation." That's judicial. That's legal. So there is corporate responsibility. You may deny it, of course. In the proud Pelagianism of your wicked heart you may say: I have nothing to do with the sin of Adam. But you can never escape it. God judges you and me guilty by nature of the sin Adam committed, because He created the human race a corporation with Adam as its Head. Corporate responsibility!

In the second place, there is *organic responsibility*. By that I mean that even as Adam became guilty, and therefore, corrupt, so we become guilty in him, and corrupt in him. The corrupt tree brings forth corrupt fruit; and the corrupt stock brings forth corrupt branches. And yet we are responsible for our corrupt nature. That's hard, isn't it? That's hard. Yes, but we are talking about responsibility in the light of Scripture, aren't we? We don't talk about responsibility in the superficial, philosophical sense. We're talking about responsibility in the light of the Bible. That's Scripture. We are responsible for our own corrupt nature which we nevertheless have received from Adam because from him and in him we also received his guilt. You say to God: "Why hast Thou made me thus?" God doesn't answer. He is God! You are a creature! But that's the truth!

And, thirdly, there is, of course, *individual responsibility*. By that I mean the responsibility of man for his own moral actions. For in that corrupt nature he still stands... That's the trouble. No, that's not the trouble. But that's the relation nevertheless. In that corrupt nature, which he received from Adam, and which he received on the basis of the fact that he is

found guilty in Adam's sin, in that corrupt nature he still, nevertheless, stands with a moral choice. As a rational, moral being, who can only do sin, never will desire anything but sin! *Non posse non peccare*,—that's his state and that's his responsibility. Not to be able not to sin, because from an inward impulse, and not from an outward compulsion, he loves the darkness rather than the light. And God holds him responsible.

### III. In the State of Perfection.

Nor, beloved, is the problem solved when you simply speak of the counsel of God and the providence of God in relation to man's freedom and responsibility, or when you speak simply of man's total depravity and corruption. There is still another fact. The problem still remains when you speak of sovereign grace. You have responsibility and moral freedom. Also that problem remains. Don't you see in all Scripture that against all Scripture has been raised the objection that God by sovereign grace justifies the *ungodly*? That is salvation: God justifies the ungodly. And He gives no account! O, I look forward, I look forward in faith to the time of the complete Theodicy! *Theodicy* means justification of God in the moral consciousness of the moral creature. And when I speak of the Theodicy, I make God the subject, and the predicate righteous justification, the act of God. In other words, we do not justify God. God justifies Himself! That's sufficient. I do not have to solve the problem of Scripture concerning God's righteousness with regard to evil and sin and man and damnation and salvation. O, how could I attempt even to approach that problem. All we have to do is to preach the Scripture. But I take Scripture in the hope, the sure hope, that God will justify Himself also in my consciousness by His Spirit, so that I may then see face to face.

But that is a problem, don't you see? Don't you see that justification means emphatically that the justified ones are not responsible for their sins? That is justification! I am not responsible for my sins before God. I am not! Christ is! Christ is responsible for my sins. I cast all my guilt on Him by faith. And don't you ever tell your congregation that they are responsible for their own sins. God forbid! You are a bad shepherd if you do. You must tell the congregation to cast their sins upon Christ. Tell them that they are no more responsible for their sins. Tell them that, by all means! You say that this is a dangerous doctrine? Of course it isn't. It seems that way, but it isn't. It seems that way. That was always the objection. That was always the objection against the Biblical conception of justification. Al-



ways! Don't forget that. That was already the objection in the Scriptures, when Paul, according to the inspiration of the Spirit, had developed the doctrine of justification. They finally came then and said: "What shall we say then? what shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" That is where the objection is raised in the Heidelberg Catechism: not against the counsel of God, but exactly against and in connection with the doctrine of justification. The objection is raised: "Does not this doctrine make men careless and profane?" What will you tell your congregation? Would you tell them: Yes, yes, yes... But, but, but? God forbid! Will you tell your congregation: O, you're not responsible for your sins; Christ is responsible, but... but... but you must do something too? God forbid! You kill them! You kill the people of God by such preaching! That's not true. That's not Scripture. That's not the Confessions. That's not the Heidelberg Catechism. The Heidelberg Catechism says: No, sir: just this doctrine of absolutely free justification, that casts all the responsibility of my individual sins upon Christ, does not make me careless and profane. It answers: That is impossible! Why is it impossible? Because he that is justified by faith is also sanctified by faith, and, therefore, says spontaneously when you tell him that now he can sin as he pleases: "God forbid! How shall I who am dead to sin live any longer therein?" That is the answer, the only answer.

That is the Christian's responsibility. The Christian is free in the highest sense of the word.

Formally free; O yes. But also materially free in the highest possible sense of the word, because his freedom is rooted no longer in his own free will, but is rooted in the Son of God. And if the Son of God shall make you free, then you are free indeed. That is freedom. And that at the same time is the highest responsibility.

Don't you ever give the congregation a moral lesson! What you must have is the gospel of the freedom in Jesus Christ our Lord! When you preach that gospel, the gospel of the cross in all its fruits, there is no danger of leading the congregation in ways of laxity and passivity. On the contrary, that congregation, standing in the freedom of Christ, will be strong and fight the good fight of faith even unto the end, looking forward to the hope eternal, when all that is of sin shall have been destroyed and when freedom shall have been perfected.

Freedom and responsibility! And in that everlasting freedom man, the redeemed man, shall forever thank God for His sovereign grace, and respond and say: "O God, I love Thee."

I have said.

—H.H.

## OUR DOCTRINE

### THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

AN EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

PART III — OF THANKFULNESS

LORD'S DAY 36

1.

God is Holy

Meekness and humility is the only proper attitude that dare to be assumed toward the Holy One, Who as the sole good seeks His own glory. And while the wicked, that love darkness rather than light, must needs say to the prophet of Jehovah, "Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us," God's children, the work of His own hands, shall sanctify Jehovah's name and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob and fear the God of Israel. Isaiah 29:23. This Holy One of Israel, and that too emphatically as the Holy One, is the Redeemer of Jacob. Isaiah 41:14. And when the Lord shall have redeemed His people and shall have destroyed all their enemies, they shall rejoice and glory in the Holy One of Israel. Isaiah 41:16. Against the pride of Babylon, that shall be brought low, God's people shall say: "As for our Redeemer, the Lord of hosts is his name, the Holy One of Israel." Isaiah 47:4. And this Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, shall be called the God of the whole earth. Isaiah 54:5. Jehovah is the Holy One, and as the Holy One He is the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity. But for that very reason, while He Himself dwells in the high and holy place, He also dwells with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. Isaiah 57:17. Throughout the Old Testament, and emphatically so in the prophecy of Isaiah, the holiness of God stands out as His ethical virtue *par excellence*. It is the divine perfection in which He is the Incomparable One that distinguishes Him from all creatures and according to which He is wholly consecrated to Himself as the sole good.

However, not only in the Old Testament, but also in the New the holiness of God is emphasized as the implication of His ethical virtues. Also here the term *holiness* is used absolutely of God. He is called the holy Father in John 17:11: "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come

to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are." God is the absolutely holy One, and as such is separated from the common and unclean, from the kosmos, the world, in its ethical corruption. The world as such is not consecrated to God; it is unholy. In this world, however, are the elect, the saints, that are called to be holy and to walk in holiness, even in the midst of the unholy world. Therefore, they must be kept in the name of the holy Father, that is, in the sphere of the revelation of the Holy One, that to Him they may be consecrated, separated from the world, and in this consecration may be one. Thus also in I John 2:20 God is called the Holy One absolutely: "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." The idea is that God is absolutely holy, the One that is consecrated to Himself. Hence, only when we are anointed by Him with the spiritual ointment that causes our hearts and minds to be consecrated to Him, can we know all things, that is, are we rightly able to discern the truth of God. Without this unction from the Holy One we love the lie and are incapable of knowing the truth. This is also the thought in I Peter 1:15, 16: "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation: Because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy." Here too the fundamental idea is that God is the absolutely holy One, that He is consecrated to Himself as the only good. When He calls, therefore, that calling is necessarily a calling unto Himself, and therefore unto holiness, that is, to consecration to God. For even as holiness in God is the virtue according to which He seeks and finds Himself, is consecrated to Himself, and according to which He desires and wills all things for His own name's sake, so holiness in the creature must necessarily consist in this, that he seeks and is consecrated to God alone in his whole being and nature and walk. Because God is holy, that is, consecrated to Himself, His people must be holy, that is, consecrated to Him. Because He is self-centered, the creature must be God-centered. Hence, also the Spirit of God, the Third Person in the Holy Trinity, is called the Holy Spirit: for He is spirated forth, and proceeds from the Father to the Son, and again proceeds from the Son to the Father, and as such He is the very principle of divine Self-consecration. Of the Father, through the Son, and in the Spirit the Triune God is consecrated to Himself, is absolutely Self-centered, as the only good.

Hence, Christ as the Servant of Jehovah is the Holy One of God in the highest and perfect sense of the word. It is remarkable that according to Luke 4:34 it was the man that had the spirit of an unclean

devil that cried out, "Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God." Profoundly the unclean spirit realizes that there is nothing common between him and the Lord. And the antithesis is rooted in the fact that Jesus is the Holy One of God, that is, that He is wholly and perfectly consecrated to God and His cause and therefore must needs destroy the house of Satan. And even as the unclean spirit apprehends the holiness of Christ by way of the antithesis, so the disciples discern through the Spirit that He is the Holy One of God. Thus they call Him, according to a well-established reading of John 6:69. They are attracted to Him because they discern that He speaks the words of eternal life. For to know the Holy One, that is, God, is eternal life. Hence, He that is the Holy One of God speaks words of eternal life, and the disciples acknowledge this. Christ is the Holy One of God because the Father sanctified Him, separated Him from the common sinful world, that He might be wholly consecrated to God. Even from and through His very conception He was so sanctified. For "the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore, also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Luke 1:35, Acts 3:14, Acts 4:27.

This holiness of God lies at the basis of the third commandment. Because God is holy, His name is holy. And because His name is holy, it must be revered.

Let us therefore briefly recapitulate what we have found to be the teaching of Holy Writ in regard to the virtue of God's holiness: 1) God is holy in the absolute sense of the word. And holiness is the divine attribute of God *par excellence*. 2) Especially in His holiness God is the Incomparable One, the One that is of and by Himself and that is distinct from all creatures. The reason for this is that holiness denotes that He is the sole good, the implication of all perfections, and that as such He seeks Himself, is consecrated to Himself, is the absolutely Self-centered One. 3) Especially the revelation of His holiness as the divine virtue *par excellence* is at the same time His glory. In this respect the third commandment is closely related to the second, as is evident from the threat that is added to both of them. To the second commandment it is added that God is a jealous God, Who will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children in the third and fourth generation of them that hate Him. And to the third commandment the warning is added that God will not hold him guiltless that taketh His holy name in vain. The holiness of God is His glory. 4) Because God's holiness con-

sists in His being Self-centered and Self-consecrated, the holiness of man can only consist in being God-centered and consecrated with all his heart and mind and soul and strength to the living God.

Briefly, therefore, we may describe the holiness of God as that wonder of the divine nature according to which God is absolute, infinite, eternal, and ultimate ethical perfection, Himself being the standard, motive and purpose of all the activity of His personal nature, so that He is eternally consecrated to Himself alone as the only good.

Such is the holiness of God. And because He is holy, His name, by which He stands revealed to us and through which He personally comes down to us, that we might have fellowship with Him, speak about Him, and address Him, is likewise characterized by holiness. His name is separated from and infinitely above all other names. It is not a class name. It is not common. God's name is unique, as God is unique, and stands all by itself. This holiness of the name of God is the basic principle of the third commandment. In this commandment God, as it were, speaks to His people and says: "I am Jehovah thy God, thy Reconciler and thy Redeemer. I make known unto thee my name, that thou mayest know me and speak about me and to me, and that thou mayest glorify and sanctify me in thy heart and in thy life. Beware, lest thou take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. For I will not hold him guiltless that taketh My name in vain."

## 2.

### God's Holy Name

The third commandment prohibits that we use the name of God in vain, which positively implies that we always speak of that name with fear and reverence. The question is: what is meant by the name of God? Can the incomparable God have names at all? And if so, are they names of our invention, or are they given to us by God Himself?

Among men the word *name* is used in more than one sense. Thus, for instance, it is used in the sense of reputation. When we speak of the good or bad name of a person, we mean his reputation, that which is known of his character, his dealings with men, and his general walk of life. In this sense it is used in Prov. 22:1: "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold." Secondly, we have our class names, by which we denote certain species of creatures and things in distinction from others, such as horses, sheep, tree, flower, river, mountain, table, chair, and the like. And finally, we have our personal, our proper names. By these last names we refer to one another and ad-

dress one another and speak about one another as persons. In someone's name, such as John, William, Henry, and the like, there is always a reference to his person. Person and name are inseparable. When a person signs his name to a certain document, he thereby expresses that he is personally responsible for its contents. When a person's name is passed by, he feels that his person is slighted. When his name is slandered or reproached, it is his person upon which contempt is heaped. The name in this last sense has reference to the person. It may be said, however, that names among men have lost their real significance. They do not express anything about the being or nature of a person or thing whatever, but they are mere marks of distinction.

In Scripture, however, this is quite different. A name, according to the Bible, has profound meaning. Originally a name was a sign of the nature or being of anything. This is evident from the fact that Adam in the state of righteousness was able to give the animals their real names. Thus we read in Gen. 2:19, 20: "Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field." From this account it is evident, in the first place, that the real nature or being of the animal, and therefore, of any creature, is its sense, its meaning in itself and in relation to all the rest of creation. And this sense or meaning of the creature is expressed in the name. God had created all things through the Word. All are a reflection of the eternal Wisdom of God of which we read in Prov. 8:22-31: "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men." Hence, every individual creature has in it the individualized

Word of God. It is the embodiment of God's eternal idea. This idea, this Word of God, is its real being. And this being as it is revealed is manifested in its name. The name, therefore, is the expression of the being of anything. Secondly, this name of each creature is known to God. He reads and calls all things by their names, and glorifies Himself in the revelation of His wisdom. But in the midst of this creation he had formed a creature that was adapted to bear His own image, and was originally endowed with that image, in true knowledge of God, righteousness, and holiness. To this creature, in whose heart was to be the union of all creation with God, He had given power intuitively to know the meaning of creation about him, as well as within himself, and of each creature in relation to all the rest and to God. In other words, Adam could read the words of God in the things that are made and discern their real meaning. He looked into their being and knew their names. And, in the third place, this name of the creature Adam was able to express in human language. And whatever he called the animals, that was their name, that is, the expression of their inner nature or being in a human word symbol. This intuitive knowledge we have lost through sin. Hence, our names are mere distinguishing signs. No longer do we see the real meaning or essence of things. We may see the difference between one creature and another, because we observe some external attributes of the creature; and this difference we denote in the different names we give to the things that are perceived. But names among us are no longer the expression of the essence or real meaning of a creature. In Scripture, however, the original meaning of a name is often preserved, particularly in those instances in which God Himself appoints the name of a person or object. This is evident from names such as Melchizedek, of whom we read in Hebrews 7:1, 2: "For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation king of righteousness, and after that also king of Salem, which is king of peace." This is evident too from the change of Abram into Abraham, that is, father of many; and of Joshua into Jehoshua. Jacob, heel-holder, is changed to Israel, a name which is interpreted in Scripture as follows: "For as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." Hosea is instructed by the Lord to call the three children which Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, bare unto him: Jezreel, Loruhamah, and Loammi, respectively. The first of these names expresses that presently the Lord will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu and will cause to cease

the kingdom of the house of Israel. Hos. 1:4. The second, Loruhamah, signifies that God will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel, but will utterly take them away. Hos. 1:6. And the third, Loammi, signifies that Israel will no longer be the people of God and that God will not be their God anymore. From all these passages, and many more, it is evident that the name in Scripture has a profound significance. It is not a mere mark of differentiation, but denotes the being or nature of anything.

And this is especially true of the name of God. God's name is God Himself. It is the revelation of His Being. It is Jehovah Himself as He reveals Himself to us, is known unto us, and is near us. God is God. He is the infinite and eternal One, Who is invisible. But He made Himself a name. He revealed Himself, and by this name He Himself came down to us, is known by us, is near us, and surrounds us on all sides. This name of the Lord is in all the works of His hands; as the Psalmist sings: "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!" Ps. 8:1, 9. For all creation is his handiwork. Brute creation, sun and moon and stars, mountains and valleys, oceans and seas, streams and lakes, forests and fields, as well as the living creature, man and beast, are called forth by His Word. And they are, as it were, so many letters spelling the name of the Most High. And not only did He call them into being, but He is in them and upholds them by His almighty and omnipresent power. He sustains and governs them all in their existence and operation. It is He that causes the sun to rise every morning and to set every evening; that causes the clouds to gather and the rain to fall on the thirsty land; He makes the seed to sprout in the earth, and prepares food for man and beast; and He governs the life of man and beast, of individuals and nations; and He directs the whole creation to the end which He determined from before the foundation of the world, the glory of his everlasting kingdom. Hence, in all that occurs in creation and in the history of the world, we may see the name of the Lord, the revelation of the living God, Who is always near, so that the psalmist may sing: "Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks, unto thee do we give thanks: for that thy name is near thy wondrous works declare." Ps. 75:1.

And thus it is throughout Scripture. The name is God. It is His revelation to us. To love the name of the Lord is to love Him, Is. 56:6: "And the sons of the stranger that join themselves to the Lord to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, everyone that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant." To cause His people to forget the name of the Lord is the same as to forget Him, Jer. 23:27. To call upon the name

of the Lord is to call upon Him, as He has revealed Himself to His people, Ps. 105:1, "O give thanks unto the Lord; and call upon his name; make known his deeds among the people. Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works. Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord." Very often that name of God is identified with God Himself, Deut. 28:58: "If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, the Lord thy God." That name of God is said to be near, Ps. 75:1. It is holy, Ezek. 36:20. It is great, Ezek. 36:23. The name of the Lord is a strong tower, unto which the righteous runneth and is safe, Prov. 18:10. And the name of the God of Jacob defends those that trust in Him, Ps. 20:1. It is in the name of the Triune God that we are baptized, Matt. 28: 19, 20. All these, and many other passages of Holy Writ plainly reveal that the name of God is God Himself, as He has revealed to His people.

But there is more.

Scripture not only speaks in general about the name of the Lord, but also gives us names of God that correspond to what we call proper, or personal, names,—names by which we may speak about Him and address Him, and through which He enters into personal contact and fellowship with us. These names of God, such as Jehovah, Lord (Adonai), Almighty (El Shaddai), Most High (Eljon), God, Father, indeed also express who and what God is, because they all denote one or more of His glorious virtues. But they are nevertheless names by which we may refer to Him, speak about Him, and address Him in prayer and adoration. These names of God, you understand, are not of our own invention, but they are given us by revelation. They are a gift of God to His people. And how marvelously gracious an act of condescending love and friendship on the part of God it is, that He who is infinitely glorious, and Who only knows His own name, was pleased to reveal Himself to us in such names as we can understand and use to speak of Him and to Him. How unfathomable is the covenant mercy of our God, revealed in this, that He, Who is the Holy One of Israel, introduced Himself to us by name,—to us, who are not only creatures of the dust, but also sinners, unworthy, and incapable of using the name of God aright. You will understand that this covenant act of boundless grace is possible only because it pleased God to reveal Himself to us in a name in and through which He made it possible for sinners such as we to approach Him, to enter into His sanctuary, and to address Him as our God. That name is the name Jesus. That name means Jehovah

Salvation. In that name He makes Himself known to us, and enters into personal fellowship with us, as the God of grace and mercy, Who blotted out all our sins and forgives all our iniquities, Who clothes us with an everlasting righteousness and makes us worthy to dwell in His tabernacle, Who delivers us from sin and death, and makes us heirs of eternal life and glory.

That name of God, and all that is connected with that name, is holy, even as God is holy. For even as God is the Incomparable One, that cannot be compared with any creature, so the name of God is not common, but is absolutely unique. It stands alone. It is infinitely exalted above all other names. And this also means that the holy name of God stands antithetically opposed to all that is of sin and darkness in this world.

When, therefore, standing on Mount Zion, in the New Jerusalem, as the redeemed and sanctified people of God, we hear the name of Jehovah our God, a holy fear and reverence fills our hearts and minds. It is in that name that He has covenant fellowship with us. It is in the name of Jehovah Salvation, revealed unto us in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Redeemer, that we approach Him, enter into His sanctuary, pour out our hearts before Him in prayer and supplication, praise and adore Him, trust in Him, seek our refuge in Him, and hope for His salvation. Whatever other names of God we may use, we can take them upon our lips only in and because of His revelation in Jesus Christ our Lord. And it is also in that name Jesus that we hear the third commandment: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."

### 3.

#### With Fear and Reverence

The Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day 36 teaches us that the third commandment implies, negatively, that we refrain from cursing, from perjury, and from rash swearing, and also that we do not become partakers of these sins by connivance or silence when we know that others violate this third commandment; and positively, that we use the holy name of God with fear and reverence, so that He may be rightly confessed and worshipped by us, and glorified in all our words and works. Moreover, it teaches us that there is no sin more provoking to God than the profaning of His holy name, and that therefore God has commanded that this sin be punished with death.

In the narrowest and most direct sense of the word, therefore, this commandment has reference to the use of God's holy name in vain by cursing. An illustration of this we have in Leviticus 24:10, ff.:



"And the son of an Israelitish woman, whose father was an Egyptian, went out among the children of Israel: and this son of the Israelitish woman and a man of Israel strove together in the camp; And the Israelitish woman's son blasphemed the name of the Lord, and cursed. And they brought him unto Moses: (and his mother's name was Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan). And they put him in ward, that the mind of the Lord might be showed them. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Bring forth him that hath cursed without the camp; and let all that heard him lay their hands upon his head, and let all the congregation stone him. And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin. And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the Lord, shall be put to death."

From these verses it is evident that the name Jehovah is *the* name of God *par excellence*. Twice in these verses we read in the original "the name." In verse 11 we read that the son of the Israelitish woman blasphemed "the name", and cursed. And again, in verse 16, in the last part of that verse, we read that he that blasphemeth "the name" shall be put to death. Our version has correctly inserted the words "of the Lord", that is, of Jehovah, because it is evident that the reference in the entire passage is to that name. It is emphatically by that name that God revealed Himself to Israel through Moses when He was about to deliver them from Egypt, the house of bondage. Thus we read in Ex. 3:13, 14: "And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." In Ex. 6 we read that to the fathers God had revealed Himself under the name of El-Shaddai, or God Almighty: "And God spake unto Moses and said unto him, I am the Lord: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them." It is evident from the book of Genesis that this cannot mean that the name Jehovah as such was not known to the patriarchs. For not only do we read repeatedly of that name in the first book of Scripture, but the patriarchs even addressed God as Jehovah. The meaning must therefore be that while God revealed Himself emphatically to the patriarchs as God Almighty, so that be-

fore their consciousness He stood out as the omnipotent God, to the children of Israel in bondage He became especially known as the covenant Jehovah, Who is faithful and true, the unchangeable God, Who never forsakes His people or breaks His covenant with them. Such indeed is the meaning of the name Jehovah. It reveals God as the I AM THAT I AM, or the I WILL BE AS I WILL BE. He is the eternal God, Who loves His people from everlasting, and Who keeps covenant and truth with them forever. He is the absolutely independent One, Who has the ground of His Being in Himself, and Who is not dependent for His existence on any being outside of Himself. He is, therefore, the Immutable One, with Whom there is no change or shadow of turning. In fact, virtually all the divine attributes are implied in and may be deduced from the name Jehovah. And in the narrowest sense of the word it is directly to this name that the third commandment has reference when it prohibits to use the name of God in vain. It is that name that was especially considered to be the holy name of God among Israel. In fact, it was considered too holy to be pronounced by them; and therefore, instead of pronouncing the name, which originally was most probably pronounced as Yahweh, they inserted the vowels of the name Adonai into the name, and so pronounced it Jehovah.

Now what does it mean to use the name of God in vain, or, as we read in the original, to raise, or lift up, that name into vanity? It is any rash or profane use of the holy name of God. The sinner, the natural man, is by nature profane. And therefore, profanity is a very general thing in the world. Profanity is to make common that which is uncommon. It is the act of obliterating the distinction, all and any distinction, between that which is holy and that which is common; in fact, between that which is pure and that which is impure. Profanity, with a view to the name of God, therefore, is all such use of God's name, and all such attitudes which we assume over against the name of God, that tend to obliterate all distinction between His name and other names, between the name of Jehovah and the name of the creature. Moreover, profanity is the act whereby we use the name of God in the service of sin and corruption. The sinner not only drags the name of God down to the common level of the creature, but he also drags it into the mud of the defilement of sin.

—H.H.

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The weight of opposition will always fall heaviest on those who sound the gospel trumpet loudest.

## IN HIS FEAR

### Purified In His Fear

Rest.

What a sweet sounding word when you are weary and worn! O, to be left alone, to be free from any disturbance, to relax and be with your thoughts! How disturbing when you have prepared yourself for a night's sleep to be called to answer the insistent and merciless clamor of the telephone bell! O, to be left alone, to have no troubles, no cares and anxieties!

Peace.

Another sweet sounding word. O, to have peace, that wars might cease, that strife be o'er! Then we can rest. Then we can live quiet peaceful lives. Fear is all gone. Danger is not imminent. You can gather your children about you and sing. You can look forward with them, plan with them and for them. Peace and rest. Relaxation and contentment. Of these man dreams.

But do not draw the conclusion that it is good for you and me to have peace and rest in this life. And if we would attain to it for a few brief moments in this life, we would have nothing yet of which to sing. Yea, rather would we live in great danger even then, when we think that all danger is for the moment past. We could quote you from the Word of God many passages that exactly teach us that. If our rest and peace is not the rest and peace of the Kingdom of Christ, the Prince of Peace, if it is not the peace of the *New Jerusalem*, the peace of the new heavens and the new earth, there is great danger for us during these "spells" of earthly quiet and rest.

David confessed in Ps. 30:6 of his own experiences in times of peace and rest, "In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved." The Word of God as we receive it through James declares the same thing from the opposite viewpoint. James declares in chapter 1:2-4, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." And times of diverse temptations are not times of quietness and rest. They are times when the workers of iniquity, and the devil through them, exactly gives you no rest but throws at you temptation, times when you have to stand wide awake, alert, sober, realizing that evil is all about you seeking to ensnare you in its wiles and guilt.

But the thought we had particularly in mind when

we penned down the above title, "Purified in His Fear", we borrowed from what Jeremiah wrote in regard to the ungodly world as it was represented by wicked Moab in contrast to Israel which represented the Church of God. In Jeremiah 48:11 you have the truth in a very beautiful figure of speech. We read there "Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed." The force of this statement is that this cannot and must not be said of Israel. Israel has been emptied from vessel to vessel, its taste has not remained and its scent was changed. Israel did go into Captivity and God *in His grace* did not allow Israel to settle on its lees. Neither should we desire it.

The figure, as you well understand, is borrowed from the procedure followed in producing wine. The lees are the sediment or dregs of the wine. In it is the bitterness which would spoil the wine. It is the worthless element that is thrown away after the wine is properly fermented. The bitterness of these lees, and the fact that it is given not in favor but as punishment, is evident from Psalm 75:8 where we read, "For in the hand of the Lord, there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and He poureth out of the same: but the dregs therefore, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them."

How necessary then that we collectively and individually be emptied from vessel to vessel from time to time to be purified in His fear. Each time the wine is poured from one vessel to another the lees cling to the sides and the bottom. The bitterness is left behind and the wine is purified. But the longer the wine remains on its lees, the stronger its taste and color become. And Moab, who had been at ease, had never been emptied from vessel to vessel, had never been taken into captivity, grew stronger and stronger in its bitterness and hatred towards Israel. By her prosperity and peace she became hardened into more and more rebellion against the living God and the Church which represents Him.

God forbid that we be left at our ease! But pray that He may purify us so that we may live even more in His fear. And when He sends calamities (if indeed we may call them such when they work together for our good and when through them He delivers us from the bitter dregs) to our country, disturbs the peace of our church life, troubles our family life with sore and painful trials and touches us personally with things hard for the flesh to bear let us not quickly question His love and grace, His unsearchable wisdom and perfect judgment. Nay, let us remember that it is Moab,

the world that He leaves at ease for its own condemnation. He is interested in His Church. And He will therefore empty His church and His people from vessel to vessel until He has attained the glory and salvation which He has promised to His Church and to His people.

Peace.

It is a sweet sounding word. But think, then, of the peace God has in mind. Think of the peace in that New Jerusalem. Consider that for that real, true, lasting peace His church must go through many trials and through much strife here below. A church that is at ease, that never suffers the reproach of man, that is left alone by the world, is untroubled by the false prophets and the world is settled on its dregs. It becomes more and more corrupt. Its members become more and more bitter against the truth and against God.

Rest.

It is a sweet sounding word. But then you must have in mind the rest that remaineth for the children of God. The church that finds rest here below, the church that does not feel the enmity between the serpent and the woman, between his seed and her seed, is undoubtedly on the side of the serpent and his seed. The church that is never troubled by the unrest of controversy, that in its craving for rest from the battle covers up all heresy and tries to make the discordant notes sound as though they belong to the symphony, that tries to show the value of them, really has no rest. And these dregs, this sediment that collects over a period of time will soon give the wine its noticeably strong taste and scent whereby you will be able to brand it as the false church.

Moab never went into captivity. Israel did. Why the one and not the other? The answer is: God's grace! Israel is precious in God's sight, and all that emptying from vessel to vessel which she experienced only emphasizes that fact. Surely it does not deny it. Indeed, we say again that if your rest and peace is vain, temporary and deceiving peace of this present world, then God surely is not gracious to Israel. Then, surely, He is gracious to the world, and His people miss out on His favor and loving kindness. But it is not so! He works with an eye to that true rest and peace which He has prepared for His Church in Christ. And to prepare them for that rest and peace, to purify unto Himself a people that delights in that peace and rest, He does disturb our earthly peace and quietness.

We may not forget Him. We may not live as though we are independent of Him. We may not take to ourselves the bounties of His earth and fail to

thank Him for them. We may not receive sons and daughters from Him and bring them up as though they are ours to do with as we please. *In* all we must fear Him. *With* all we must be thankful to Him. *For* all we must look up to Him. And that we may remember Him Whom we so easily forget; that we may be reminded to thank Him Who is the overflowing fountain of all good; that we may rededicate all that we have and receive to Him; He in His infinite grace and mercy reaches down and touches us, our families, our nation and country and our church life. He lays us or our loved ones low with serious ailments. He sends our sons to bloody battlefields and leaves aching hearts. The peace and quietness of our home life is gone. We have been emptied of that vessel. We have not been allowed to remain undisturbed in our comfortable position of forgetting Him. We have suddenly been alerted to our dependency upon Him, our need of Him, our calling before Him.

It is a blessed disturbance, then!

Our rest and our peace were taken away in order that we might consciously enter into that true and lasting peace and rest of trust and confidence in the promises of God in Christ. But then, the very fact that *our* rest and peace could be disturbed and were disturbed reveals, does it not? that they really were not true peace and rest. True peace and rest are enjoyed in the way of faith. True peace and rest are peace and rest which the ungodly cannot enjoy. There is no rest for the wicked, the Scriptures declare. If your only rest and peace is the rest and peace you enjoy with the wicked, be sure that it will come to a sudden and violent end. Be sure that you are going to be disturbed! What an awful disturbance it will be in the days of Gog and Magog, to say nothing of the awful disturbance in that eternal lake of torment!

But if the Almighty Covenant Father disturbs you in His grace to purify your faith, to strengthen you in His fear, complain not. There IS a rest that remaineth for the people of God. It *remaineth* to all eternity. And God's people shall remain in it to all eternity.

To be pleasing in God's sight, to be "tasteful" in His mouth, to be acceptable to Him, that is worth more than all the earthly rest and peace this world can produce. And our present afflictions, which serve the purpose by God's grace of purifying us in His fear, are not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed in those who are pleasing in His sight and are tasteful in His discerning mouth.

—J. A. Heys



## The Voice of Our Fathers

### The Canons of Dordrecht

#### PART I — HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

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

Turning now to the subject of our own Three Forms of Unity, and in particular to the subject of the *Canons*, we discover that from every point of view the *Canons* occupy a very peculiar position among our Reformed confessions. A comparison of the Three Forms as to their historical position, their form, and their content will at once reveal this.

The *Heidelberg Catechism* and the *Netherland or Belgic Confession* belong to the period of the infancy of the Reformed movement in the Lowlands. The *Catechism*, completed in the year 1563, though German in origin, soon found its way into the Netherlands. And while it is true that the *Catechism* was not finally ratified and officially included among our standards until the time of the Synod of Dordt, nevertheless long before this time it was held in high esteem in the churches, was generally recognized by Reformed men, and had been adopted by several particular synods. An indication of this you have in the fact that the very Synod of Dordt refused to be misled by the Arminians into reviewing and revising either the *Catechism* or the *Confessio Belgica*. Likewise does the *Netherland Confession* belong historically to the period of the infancy of the Reformed movement. The first Dutch edition is dated 1562. However, in distinction from both of these creeds, composed at a time when the battle of the Reformed churches was as yet mainly against Roman Catholicism, our *Canons* may be said to mark the date when the Reformed churches arrived at majority of years. They were here to stay; and now that they had established themselves over against Roman Catholicism, they did not intend to be destroyed by the enemy from within. Instead, having been cast into the crucible of this new affliction, and having come to grips principally with the same old enemy of Pelagianism (only this time it was an enemy within the gate), the church asserted its faith, maintained its Reformed convictions, emerged victorious from the fray, and after Dordrecht appears as indeed Reformed, united in the faith, and strong for the battle.

The form and the content of the *Canons*, and that too in comparison with and in relation to our other confessions, are closely related matters.

Our *Netherland Confession* is comprised of thirty-seven articles which set forth the chief doctrines of the Reformed churches, following what is usually called the objective, dogmatic order, treating successively the doctrines concerning God, Man, Christ, Salvation, the Church, and the Last Things. And it is because in this creed we have a systematic formulation of the whole of Reformed doctrine that the *Confessio Belgica* is often simply called *the Confession*. The *Heidelberg Catechism* also is designed to cover the whole rank of Reformed doctrine, but its form and method are different. It employs the subjective-experiential approach, following the order of the knowledge of sin, redemption, and gratitude, all from the point of view of the very question: "What is thy only comfort in life and death?" It is, therefore, an extremely practical book of instruction at the same time that it serves as one of our standards.

Even a hasty inspection of our *Canons* will reveal some very important differences between it and our other symbols. The *Canons* are divided into five chapters, each divided into a positive and a negative part, each of which, in turn, is comprised of several articles. This form of the *Canons* arises from the fact that the church found itself compelled to formulate and defend the true doctrine over against the *Five Articles of the Remonstrants*. In passing we may remark that this also accounts for the rather peculiar phenomenon that Chapters III and IV of our *Canons* have been combined. Taken all by itself, there is nothing objectionable in the third article of the Arminians; any Reformed man would subscribe to it. Our fathers, therefore, could not very well compose a separate formulation of the doctrine of human depravity over against this article of the Remonstrants. However, when the Arminians' fourth article, which teaches a resistible grace, is added to their third pronouncement, the result is not only a denial of the sovereign operation of God's grace but also a contradiction of the Scriptural doctrine of man's corruption. The Synod saw exactly this point, and they therefore treated the third and fourth articles of the Remonstrants in combination, the result being that the Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine in our *Canons* are coupled, and together treat "Of the Corruption of Man, His Conversion to God, and the Manner Thereof."

Special attention must be paid to that very distinctive feature of our *Canons*, namely, the addition of a negative part, the "Rejection of Errors," to each chapter. Upon occasion our other confessions also very articulately reject certain errors. Thus, for example, our *Catechism*, in Lord's Day XVIII very noticeably combats the Lutheran conception of Christ's ascension; and in Lord's Day XXX it expressly con-

demns the popish mass as a "denial of the one sacrifice and sufferings of Jesus Christ, and an accursed idolatry." Thus too, the *Confession* rejects and abhors the error of the Sadducees and of the Manichees, Art. XII; rejects "that damnable error of the Epicureans," Art. XIII; rejects "all that is taught repugnant to this, concerning the free will of man," Art. XIV; rejects "the error of the Pelagians, who assert that sin proceeds only from imitation," Art. XV; detests "the error of the Anabaptists," Art. XXXIV, etc. It cannot be said, therefore, that either the *Catechism* or the *Confession* are purely positive. Besides, the confession of the truth necessarily implies the rejection of the lie. To cite but one example, the truth concerning the Trinity necessarily excludes the error of Unitarianism. However, it cannot be gainsaid that the *Catechism* and the *Netherland Confession* do not always pointedly and expressly reject errors when they furnish a positive formulation of the truth. And in this respect our *Canons* are different: they not only reject certain errors in passing, but they devote a separate section in each chapter to a rejection of errors. Still more. The *Canons* very specifically define the errors, point out their danger in many cases, and expressly oppose them with the Scriptures in hand.

Objections are sometimes raised against this aspect of our *Canons*. In fact, there are some who accept only the positive part of the *Canons*. There are those who say that to be positive is sufficient, and that to specifically mention and condemn certain errors is unnecessary. They are usually the same people who never care to hear any rejection of errors in the preaching of the Word. And especially when our *Canons* reject the errors of the Arminians at length, and sometimes do so in very strong and condemnatory language, these people who have been polluted by the false notion of politeness and tolerance of our age, and by a silly conception of brotherly love, object that an articulate rejection of errors offends people, drives them away from the church instead of winning them, and can serve no good purpose in the church of Christ.

What shall we say to these things?

Allow me to point out, first of all, that this method of our *Canons* has a very sound historical reason. We must remember that the Synod of Dordrecht was in the very nature of the case on the defensive. Moreover, the enemy against which it was called to defend the faith was an enemy within the gate: Arminianism had arisen within the church, not outside of it. Furthermore, by the year 1618 Arminianism had made gigantic strides toward a conquest of the Reformed citadel. What else could the Synod do than to ward off these fiery darts of the devil with the Scriptures in hand, and very succinctly clarify and

condemn the errors of the Remonstrants? Above all, this negative part of the *Canons* was necessitated by the very nature of the enemy which assailed the church at that time. Arminianism, more than any other error, I dare say, is deceptive. Heretics are usually deceptive, but the Arminians were especially so. They apparently had their mouth full of Reformed truth; they spoke freely of divine election; they were seemingly Reformed (cf. their third article) on the doctrine of human depravity; they expressly announced that the grace of God is "the beginning, continuance, and accomplishment of all good." Besides, they very freely appealed to the Scriptures in order to defend their errors. Because, therefore, the enemy had arisen from within, and because he employed deception and subterfuge and camouflage in an attempt to sway and confuse the simple people of God, it was necessary that all the errors be exposed ruthlessly in the light of Scripture, as well as that the true doctrine be expounded.

But we need not attempt to excuse the Synod of Dordrecht on this score. For after all, is not a rejection of errors thoroughly Scriptural? Do not the Scriptures repeatedly and emphatically condemn false teachers and their errors? And is it not highly presumptuous, yea, contradictory of the Word of God, for any man, to say, then: "Let us be positive; let us not offend people by calling attention to the lie; we should be tolerant and should love one another in spite of our differences?" Are we wiser than God, Who gave us His Word in which He Himself warns against and condemns both the lie and the liar? Shall we let the sheep of Christ go unprotected in a world that is full of false doctrine, and allow them to be ensnared by the wiles of the devil? There is no more certain way to cause the church to depart from the truth of God's Word than not to teach that church to be on guard against false doctrine. And underlying all this is the principle that the truth is antithetical in its very nature. To say *Yes* to the truth implies already our *No* to the lie. And because the lie is in the world, is real, that *No* must not only be an *implied* one, but an expressed one, both on the part of the church and on the part of the individual believer. Not to reject all heresies repugnant to the truth is certainly a dereliction of duty.

—H. C. Hoeksema

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#### —NOTICE—

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



## Contending For The Faith

### The Church and the Sacraments

#### EARLY VIEWS OF THE CHURCH (Cont'd)

Continuing with the views of the Church as entertained by Apostolic Fathers, we now call attention to another of these Apostolic Fathers, Polycarp. It is not at all improbable that he was the "angel" of the church in Smyrna to whom the Lord Jesus Christ had written in His letter to the church at Smyrna (see Rev. 2:10: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."). He is said to have been a disciple of the apostle, John. He suffered martyrdom at a very old age, testifying at his martyrdom that he had served the Lord Jesus Christ for eighty six years. Polycarp's letters contain a surprising number of short passages which occur in the New Testament and cover a large proportion of its books. This clearly indicates that these books were familiar to him and his readers, and that for him and his readers they possessed definite authority. Also his writings are characterized by simplicity and abounds in practical admonitions.

Concerning the martyrdom of Polycarp, the following may be of interest to our readers. Polycarp was known in his day as the "teacher of Asia." He was betrayed by members of his own household. When his pursuers finally apprehended him they were astonished that such an aged man should be the object of such a relentless and merciless pursuit, declaring: "Was so much effort made to capture such a venerable man?" He is reported to have set food before his captors who were utterly astonished because of the godliness of this aged disciple of the Christ of the Cross.

Having been brought into the stadium in Smyrna and identifying himself as Polycarp, he was asked by the proconsul to renounce the Lord Jesus Christ. When told that he would be set at liberty if he renounced the Christ, the aged man replied: "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me any injury: how then can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?" Hereupon the proconsul first threatened to cast him to the wild beasts and then to consume him by fire. Nothing, however, could persuade the venerable Christian from renouncing his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He answered these threats with the words: "Thou threatenest me with fire which burneth for an hour, and after a little is ex-

tinguished, but art ignorant of the fire of the coming judgment and of eternal punishment, reserved for the ungodly. But why tarriest thou? Bring forth what thou wilt." Hereupon his execution occurred, but not until he had expressed his thanks to the Lord for the privilege bestowed upon him that day that he should be counted worthy that day to have a part in the number of His martyrs.

Without referring to other Apostolic Fathers, such as Hermas of Rome and Barnabas of Alexandria, we may safely remark that this conception of the Church was characterized by indefiniteness. They did not distinguish sharply but emphasized the calling unto sanctification and holiness. They did not hesitate to place the origin of the Church of God beyond creation and, therefore, in the eternal counsel of God.

#### *The Church and Salvation.*

The Church and salvation were inseparably linked together by practically all the early church fathers. They all taught and emphasized in their writings that salvation is only in and with the Church and that there is, therefore, no salvation outside of the Church. Concerning this there can be no doubt.

We call attention, first of all, to Irenaeus. He was very outspoken on this matter. Irenaeus, attaining unto a great age as did Polycarp whose disciple or pupil he had been, was bishop in Gaul (as France was known at that time) and suffered a martyr's death with thousands of his flock about the year, 202 A.D. He struggled heroically against the heresies that threatened to undermine the truth already in his day and finally closed his life in the fiendish massacre which was stimulated by the wolfish Emperor Severus. He was very outspoken, we have already observed, on the question of the Church and salvation, and surely emphasized that salvation is only in and with the Church and that there is no salvation outside of the Church. He maintained that in the Church of God all the treasures of the truth are deposited. Outside of the Church are only thieves and robbers, pools of foul water, referring, of course, to them that professed to be Christians but were not connected with the Church of the Lord. "Where the Church is," Irenaeus declares "there is the Spirit of God; where the Spirit of God is there is the Church and all grace." According to this ancient Church Father, the apostles, like a rich man depositing his money in a bank, lodged in the hands of the Church most copiously all things pertaining to the truth. The Church is the entrance to life; all others, according to him, are thieves and robbers.

Another of the Church Fathers to which we would call attention in connection with the Church and Sal-

vation is Clement of Alexandria. Clement was originally a pagan philosopher. The date of his birth is unknown. It is also uncertain whether Alexandria or Athens was his birthplace. Embracing Christianity he eagerly sought the instruction of its most eminent teachers; for this purpose he travelled extensively over Greece, Italy, Egypt, Palestine and other regions of the East. He is known as the teacher of Origen, the greatest thinker of the early Christian Church in the New Dispensation until his time. The close of his career is covered with obscurity. He is supposed to have died about A. D. 220. Clement defines the Church as the society of the elect. He writes the following, and we quote: "From what has been said, then it is my opinion that the true Church, that which is really ancient, is one, and that in it those who according to God's purpose are just, are enrolled . . . For it is not now the place, but the assemblage of the elect, that I call Church. This temple is better for the reception of the greatness of the dignity of God." He also calls the Church the Body of the Lord, as for example: "And does he not say that these are, as it were, the fleshy parts of the holy body? As a body, the Church of the Lord, the spiritual and holy choir, is symbolised. Whence those who are merely called, but do not live in accordance with the word, are the fleshy parts. Now this spiritual body, the holy Church is not for fornication." Moreover, Clement compares the Church to a mother to whom we owe our spiritual life and nourishment, as in the following: "O mystic marvel, the universal Father is one, and one the universal Word; and the Holy Spirit is one and the same everywhere, and she is the only virgin mother. I love to call her the Church. But she is the one virgin and mother-pure as a virgin, loving as a mother. And calling her children to her, she nurses them with holy milk, viz., with the Word for childhood." Or, to quote the following: "Their children, it is said, shall be borne upon their shoulders, and fondled on their knees; as one whom his mother comforteth; so also shall I comfort you. The mother draws the children to herself; and we seek our mother, the Church." It also appears from these passages that this Church Father viewed the Church as the gathering of the elect, and also that the Church and salvation are inseparably related.

Another of the Church Fathers to which we would call attention in this connection is Origen. He was surely one of the most distinguished of the Fathers of the early Church. Origen was born probably at Alexandria, about the year 182, and died at Caesarea not later than 251. He was a disciple of Clement of Alexandria and surely outshone his teacher. In the year 250 A. D., persecutions of the Church broke out

anew, and Origen, who had sought to follow, when a child, his father in martyrdom, did not escape these persecutions. He was tortured, pilloried, and bound hand and foot to the block for days without yielding. These tortures seem to have resulted in his death. He declared that: No one is saved outside of the Church. He, too, speaks of the Church as the Body of Christ and animated by the Son of God. He was the outstanding churchman in the early Christian church of the New Dispensation.

The last Church Father to whom we would call attention in this connection is Cyprian. He was the bishop of Carthage and died about the year 258. A rich and well educated man, he became famous as a teacher of rhetoric, or speech. In the year 246, he was converted. Two years later he became bishop, and in 258 he was beheaded as a Christian martyr. The day after he was imprisoned he was examined for the last time and sentenced to die by the sword. His only answer was "Thanks be to God." The execution was carried out at once and in an open place near the city. A vast multitude followed Cyprian on his last journey. He removed his garments, without assistance, knelt down, and prayed. Two of his clergy blindfolded him. He ordered twenty five gold pieces to be given to the executioner who, with a trembling hand, administered the death-blow. The body was interred by Christian hands near the place of the execution, and over it, as well as on the actual scene of his death churches were afterwards erected, which, however, were destroyed by the Vandals. Concerning this Cyprian it is declared that he was the first Christian martyr in Africa. There is no record of any other, of men or priests, who were forced to forfeit their lives because of their faith in the Lord Jesus. Of him his enemies had said that he was a standard-bearer of the sect, an enemy of the gods, and one who was to be an example to his people. How true were these words, even though they were spoken by his enemies! He had indeed been a standard-bearer, teaching according to the standard of Christ; he had surely been an enemy of the gods, having commanded that the idols be destroyed; and he surely gave example to his friends, since, when many were about to follow in a similar manner, he was the first in the province to consecrate the first-fruits of martyrdom.

Also this Church Father declared that there could be no salvation for anyone except in the Church. However, we will return to this in our following article.

—H. Veldman

## DECENCY and ORDER

### The Order of Assemblies

#### THE CALLING OF THE MINISTER

Thomas Nichols said, "We believe that the gospel ministry is the noblest and most exalted office to which man can aspire. But not everyone is qualified to preach." This is another way of saying that one is unable to put himself into the office of the ministry of the Word. There is only one entrance into that position and that is thru the lawful calling of which both the third and fourth articles of our church order speak. It is of course also evident that in this field there always have been and there still are many 'imposters' who, through subtlety or deception, have gained entrance but only he who is lawfully called is "*Verbi Dei Minister*" in truth!

Reformed people have always laid stress upon the necessity of the calling. Scripture teaches with unmistakable clarity that the ministry is not of men but of God. In II Corinthians 5:18 the apostle says that "God hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation". To Timothy the apostle expresses his gratitude to Christ Jesus Who "hath enabled him, for that He counted him faithful, putting him into the ministry". (I Tim. 1:12) Now it is not true, as some allege, that this was so only for the apostles and is no more in vogue today. The same God that gave the ministry to men and put them into it then does the same today although it may be said that what was then done audibly and visibly is now done through the Holy Spirit. Our Confession in Art. 31 warns that "everyone must take heed, not to intrude himself by indecent means, but is bound to wait till it shall please God to call him; that he may have testimony of his calling, and be certain and assured that it is of the Lord". And when men are ordained to the ministry of the Word the first question that is asked them according to our Reformed form of ordination is: "whether he feels in his heart that he is lawfully called of God's Church and therefore of God Himself, to this holy ministry"? To this he is expected to reply: "Yes, truly with all my heart." This, certainly, is according to Scripture so that the fundamental requirement to the office of the ministry is the calling of God.

Of what then does this calling consist?

In discussing this matter we may distinguish between the *internal* and the *external* aspects of the calling provided we do not confuse and separate them.

There is essentially but one calling that comes from God through the medium of the Church to the minister of the Word.

To the internal aspect of the calling there is more than a mystical feeling in the heart. The mere desire to be a minister is not necessarily a calling of God. When one supposedly sees the letters "P.C." in a heavenly vision, they might mean "Plant Corn" as well as "Preach Christ". The calling of God to the ministry is rooted far deeper than the stirring of one's emotions. It is a conviction of heart that one can do nothing else than proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. As the apostle Paul expresses it in I Corinthians 9:16, "Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel". There is no uncertainty about it. It is a Divine 'must'. The minister so called does not then place the ministry in juxtaposition with other vocations which also might have an appeal to him should he become discouraged. If he is called the work of the ministry becomes his one and only pursuit in life. He has no other choice than to do the bidding of the Lord. It is laid upon him of necessity!

Implied also in the internal phase of the calling of the minister is the consciousness that he is to be an ambassador of Jesus Christ. More is to be written about this in a later connection when we discuss the office itself but here we are to note that the minister called of God must be aware of the fact that he is not called to go forth to tell others about Jesus and to give his opinion of the Saviour but rather he is called to speak only that Word that Christ Himself shall put in his mouth whether that Word appeals to his hearers or not. Only then is he a "sweet savour of Christ unto God, in them that are saved and in them that perish; to the one the savour of death unto death, and to the other the savour of life unto life". (II Cor. 2:16, 17) Moved by this conviction of his calling the minister will not be reluctant to declare "thus saith the Lord" and, thereupon, proclaim the whole counsel of God as revealed to him in the Holy Scriptures. In that confidence alone will he be able to leave the fruits of his ministry in the hands of his Sender Who through His own Word accomplishes the good pleasure of His will.

Finally, the qualifications for the work of the ministry may also be included in the internal phase of the calling. These are both physical and spiritual. One who aspires to the ministry of the Word must certainly have the love of God in his heart and must have above all other things an abiding desire in his heart to serve the Lord in all his labors. He himself must know that he is a child of God and a partaker of that exalted life in Christ, the way unto which he proclaims to others. It is true that God is able to build

and edify His Church for a time through even the labors of a reprobate but it is also true that a reprobate can never be a true preacher of the Word of God. The minister must also have natural gifts. He must be sound in body; he must possess the ability to speak; he must have the power of intellect to study and various other necessary talents. To be sure one does not have to possess extraordinary gifts or brilliant talents to be assured that God calls him to the ministry. There are ten talents, five talents and also one talent, which may be sufficient for this calling. Nevertheless, a measure of talents must certainly be there. It was once said, for example, that if a man has hands like coal shovels and no brains, he may very well make up his mind that the Lord does not call him to the ministry of the Word. The point is that where the Lord calls He also provides the necessary gifts and powers to realize that calling.

To the calling of the minister of the Word there is also an external aspect. We would mention especially two things in this connection. The first is that where there is a calling the way must also be opened to realize that calling. We believe that the only proper ministry is the "trained ministry" which is also in accord with the injunction which Paul gave to Timothy "to commit the things which he had learned to other faithful men that they might be able to teach others also." (II Tim. 2:2) This means years of preparation and a means of livelihood during the time of preparation and certain limited aids to study, etc. These are not accessible to all and, therefore, where the way to obtain the necessary training is closed it is evident that the Lord does not call.

Then, in the second place, the call by the church belongs to the external calling of the minister of the Gospel. This is above all important. No matter how sincere one's desire may be to serve the Lord in the ministry, and no matter how many gifts and talents one may have, and though the way is wide open for him, as long as he is not called by a congregation he cannot consider himself called to the ministry at all. The call by the church seals as it were the internal calling. The actuality of the inward calling is brought to manifestation through the call by the church. This phase, therefore, is very important and may not in any way be solicited. There may never be any simony. As our Confession puts it, "one must wait till it shall please God to call him", which means that he must wait until it becomes evident that God has called him through His church. Another lawful way into the ministry of the Word of God there is not.

In this connection we may well consider what is written in Acts 13. We showed earlier that the apostle Paul was conscious of his having received his minis-

try from the Lord. Yet, the apostle could not and did not go forth into that ministry until he was called by the church. In Acts 13:2-4 we read: "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them they sent them away. So, they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia." Several things we would note here briefly in connection with this passage. First, the Lord definitely calls these two men to a special work *through His Church*. He does not do this directly though that was not impossible but He uses the medium of the church. Secondly, the church called these men through *fasting and prayer*. Only after fasting and praying did the church send them forth unto their labor. Thirdly, we read that *the church sent them away and they were sent forth by the Holy Ghost*. And being sent thus their labors were also abundantly blessed as the subsequent history shows.

Now this order is no longer held in regard by many in our day. Preachers today apparently no longer need to be sent. And, certainly the church is no longer regarded as the proper body to send forth the minister in the name of Christ. Today, everybody with a whim and a wish attempts to preach. Men, women and even children occupy the pulpits. And others who should preach no longer do so but devote themselves to lecturing on sundry topics. Today there is gross ignorance with respect to the fundamental questions concerning the calling to preach the gospel. And the result is that a generation has been produced which is superficially religious but which no longer recognizes or understands the WORD OF CHRIST but clamors more and more for religious entertainment by the modern comedian who calls himself a 'revivalist'. With fluent oratory and wild gesticulations they stir the passions of the populace and through their bringing in the name of Jesus they deceive many. However, as Jesus says: "My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me." (John 10:27) And again: "And a stranger will they not follow but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers." (John 10:5)

In conclusion, therefore, we may say that Christ, through His Spirit, calls His ministers. This call the same Christ seals through the calling by His Church. Through the servant thus called Christ speaks to His sheep calling them by name and giving to them eternal life.

G. Vanden Berg

## ALL AROUND US

*Dr. Daane and Common Grace.*

In the May issue of the Reformed Journal Dr. James Daane writes an article entitled: "Reflections on Common Grace." We enjoyed reading this article not because we agreed with its contents, but because we believe he seriously attempts to bring into discussion the doctrine of common grace which has been virtually smothered in the Christian Reformed Churches for more than 25 years, while at the same time he diligently attempts to defend this doctrine. We have respect for one who dares to take the old skeleton out of the closet, trying to put some flesh on it, giving to it the right of existence. What's the use of having a doctrine you don't talk and preach about?

In our opinion, however, the writer is not a little philosophical in his reasoning. He makes sweeping statements without proof from the Scripture or the Confessions, nor from the writings of others. And he understands little of the Protestant Reformed conception of the antithesis, which he criticizes, making a serious attempt to sustain the First Point of 1924 which we have called "het puntje van het eerste punt," an Arminian doctrine, namely that part which speaks of the Gospel offered to all.

We understand that Rev. Hoeksema has been asked to write on the matter of common grace in the Torch and Trumpet, another periodical published in the Christian Reformed Churches. We were told that in that article he will also reflect on Dr. Daane's conception. So we can be brief in our remarks.

In the opening paragraphs of his article Dr. Daane writes as follows: "Since 1924 the doctrine of common grace has sailed in peaceful waters in the Christian Reformed Churches. The counterwinds that blew from the Protestant Reformed Churches were not even able to ripple the waters. Now after more than a quarter of a century the climate is beginning to change. Noises of distant thunder can be heard, and rising winds can be felt moving the waters and creating new theological currents." Here Daane refers undoubtedly to the questionings and dissatisfactions of many of his people and not least among the clergy in his churches. We too have heard rumors that many of the ministers of the Christian Reformed Church are considering it necessary to reinvestigate the decisions of 1924. But let Dr. Daane continue.

"I have often expressed the opinion that the Rev. Herman Hoeksema in his views on this matter is *prematurely* right, and therefore wrong. In my judg-

ment he will be right when history ends, but not before. Not before, because while one can think abstractly, one cannot get out of history. But if this new emphasis is right, then my judgment regarding Rev. Hoeksema is wrong, and he is getting to be more right and 1924 more wrong each passing day. Presumably the margin of difference will become so small that the continued separate existences of the two denominations will not be justifiable."

It is rather difficult to determine just what Dr. Daane means with this paragraph. In the light of a short preceding paragraph which I have omitted, it appears that though he is aware there is a "new and strange emphasis" in his churches relative to the doctrine of common grace he himself is at a loss to determine exactly what they want. He concludes that if they are right and their conception agrees with Hoeksema then he, Daane, may be wrong. But he is quite sure, at present at least, he understands Hoeksema and that Hoeksema is wrong. Accordingly Hoeksema believes in the absolute antithesis which will be realized not in time but in eternity when light and darkness will be perfectly separated. But so long as history continues there can be no absolute antithesis. Hence Hoeksema is wrong now and the Christian Reformed Churches are right. It follows too that anyone who agrees with Hoeksema must be wrong now. But Daane is not too sure of himself, and he perceives that there is possibly a chance that the difference between the element emitting a new emphasis and the conception of Hoeksema will be so little that the two will eventually come together.

The new emphasis, according to Daane, has to do with a doctrine of the absolute antithesis. And two things he has to say about this view. "First, it deals with the antithesis in the realm of the abstract, in the realm of the non-historical.... Second, this non-historical approach absolutizes the absolute antithesis." The first puts the antithesis outside of history and declares that believers and unbelievers have nothing in common. The difference between them is absolute. While the second suggests a "dualism between the two poles of the antithesis which is so deep and permanent, that there are two worlds in endless and eternal opposition."

Daane calls this "questionable theology." "After all God alone can create a world, and he created but one. The devil is hardly so absolute that he can create his own world. Moreover an absolutizing of the absolute antithesis constitutes a denial of the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ. This version of the antithesis is defined out of reference to Christianity, which is a very historical religion."

Daane argues that the Bible never speaks of the





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antithesis in the abstract, but it knows only of an antithesis in history. "In its Old Testament form it is a conflict between the pagan nations and Israel as a people of God. Neither side wins the decisive battle in the Old Testament dispensation. But when the Seed himself comes (i.e. of Gen. 3:15—M.S.) the decisive battle is pitched, and Christ emerges as the Victor.... Christ's victory is decisive. The New Testament consequently speaks of good news, of the binding of Satan, of the fact that Jesus is the Lord. Yet although decisive, Christ's victory is not complete, for the opposition is not completely crushed. The New Testament teaches concerning the anti-Christ and the anti-Christ is clear evidence that the victory is not yet complete.... The question, therefore, is not in the first instance whether people in the New Testament times are for or against goodness, truth, or beauty, but whether they are for or against Jesus Christ... Men in the New Testament are not confronted with mere good or mere evil in general. They are confronted with the good in the form of God who is for them in the Christ of the cross. And the question is whether men are for or against God in this form, in the form expressed by the gospel."

"In the New Testament the gospel must be preached 'to every creature', and to all nations. For God is for the world. God is *for* the world, and for the *whole* and *only* world. Therefore the gospel must be preached to every creature and all nations."

"This 'being for the world' must be defined and understood in terms of the Cross, in terms of the general offer of salvation." "... Thus the antithesis according to the Bible is not abstract, static, absolute, or non-historical. It is rather historical; it runs through the Cross and the general offer of the gospel, and in its New Testament form is suspended by the world's reaction to the gospel message that God is for the world in terms of the Christ of the Cross."

Dr. Daane asks the question: "What do the Church and the world, believers and unbelievers have in common?" He answers this question by saying: "The Synod of 1924 said two things regarding this question. It taught a general or common operation of the Holy Spirit.... But it also said that there is a general or common offer of the gospel. With this only am I concerned here."

"Liberalism believes neither in the antithesis nor in the ministry of reconciliation. It therefore has no message. The absolutizers of the antithesis preach the absolute antithesis and therefore have no gospel offer. But 1924 recognizes the historical character of the antithesis. It recognizes that the antithesis passes through the Cross, and 1924 therefore posits a

general offer of salvation. It further declared that this general offer is well-meant. It thereby declares that God is for the world in terms of the Cross and in terms of the gospel as the message of the Cross."

"The proponents of the absolute version of the antithesis—at least when they are consistent—deny that the gospel is an offer to all men. And when the gospel ceases to be an offer, it becomes a *mere* announcement, an announcement that things are bad for the reprobate and nothing can be done about it, and that things are well for the elect and nothing needs be done about it. But this is not the biblical idea of gospel proclamation. In the biblical idea of proclamation man is placed in a moment of serious decision, a time of crisis and judgment. For when the gospel is properly preached it is not announced that all is well, nor that all is bad, but rather that God is for the world in the Christ of the Cross *in such a manner* that the hearer is placed before an *offer* and *demand*.... Thus when 1924 taught the general offer of salvation, it on the one hand repudiated an absolutized non-historical version of the antithesis, and on the other repudiated both the position that the gospel is not an offer, and the position which reduces gospel proclamation to *mere announcement*."

Daane has more to say about the stand of his churches which we cannot quote here. But he closes his article with the following observation:

"Hoeksema insists on the absolute version of the absolute antithesis and defines it non-historically in terms of the abstract and trans-historical difference between election and reprobation. He, therefore, denies common grace and the common offer of salvation. It should be added, however, that he is far too good a theologian to give it an application that speaks of two worlds in eternal and endless opposition."

Well I'm glad he has something to say about him anyway, even though he does not agree with his doctrine of the antithesis and his denial of common grace. But maybe someday Daane will get around to really understanding Hoeksema's doctrine of the antithesis and throw away the miserable conception of a general offer. We hope and pray that he and his colleagues will get their eyes open and give a little less time to philosophical reasoning, and a little more to sound exegesis.

—M. Schipper

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If God had not chosen thee in His Son, he would not have called thee by His Spirit: and He that called Thee by His Spirit, will preserve thee to His kingdom.

—Toplady