

THE STANDARD

Bearer

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MEDITATION

Grace or Work?

"And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." Romans 11:6.

What do you desire? To be saved by grace or by works?

That is the question. Shakespeare would say: To be or not to be, that is the question. And it fits here too. To be or not to be in the arms of God unto all eternity. Tremendous question.

There are those that want to be saved by works. Foolish? Yes. Stupid? Yes. Proud? Yes. Offending to God? Yes.

Did any attain unto salvation by the works of the law? No, not one.

Did the Pelagians learn that lesson through the ages? No, they did not. It is an error that is as old as the sinner. Cain is the first Pelagian. He cast a disdainful look at weeping, sobbing Abel, as that righteous man gathered his sticks of wood for the altar, after killing the lamb of God, and went to work: he was going to be saved by his own toil. He brought the sacrifice of the labors of his hand: the fruits of the field. Foolish, stupid, proud, impossible, and an offense to God. But he brought it.

Did he learn the lesson? Even after he killed the correct worshipper? No. Did he learn the lesson after God took him to task and set a sign on the crooked worshipper? No.

Did his corrupt stock learn that lesson? No. They continued the impossible task.

Brethren, that is bad! very bad.

But it is not the worst you can do.

You do worse when you mix work and grace.

Nebuchadnezzar had the oven made seven times hotter because of the challenging answer of the three children. Why? Because he was very angry. I assure you that God hates the mixer of grace and work much more than the blunt Pelagian.

When you work with all your might to lay hold of salvation, and really hate grace, but when you nevertheless prate about grace no end, you are a double offense to God.

It is either or: grace or work!

Do not mix them. This mixture is a fire that burns and evokes great indignation with God.

Grace or work.

Either the one or the other.

What is salvation by grace?

It is this: God loved you before the world was made. Sovereignly, lovingly, He saw you and willed you and determined you, and said within Himself: on you I will look with favor from this eternity to that eternity. I love you now while I am dwelling in eternity. All the dynamo of My Being is set on you in sweetest love.

I am going to love you when you stand before me in Paradise, where all things around you testify of that love and will help you to love Me.

And I am going to love you when you shall have become wicked and when you shall smite Me in the Face. I will still go on loving you.

I am going to love you when I will come to you and will stand before you in the Face of My Anointed Son. And I will speak and sing to you of this My everlasting love.

I am going to love you when you shall hate Me and despise Me and turn your back upon Me. I will

never cease loving you no matter how wicked you shall have become.

I am going to love you when I shall hear your voice, cursing and swearing and calling upon Me in heaven to witness to the fact that you will have none of Me. Even then I will still love you.

And then you shall tear at Me and beat Me and crucify Me and kill Me, but My love is eternal, and I will still go on loving you.

And then I shall prove My everlasting and beautiful love, because I will actually die for you, the wicked sinner!

But my love is so great and so beautiful and so strong that death shall not be able to hold me in its cruel cords: I shall awake in the garden of Joseph.

And then I shall stand before you, and I will say to you: Do you love Me?

And you? There shall be a blush of shame on your cheeks, and you will stammer: Yes, Lord, Thou knowest all things: Thou knowest that I love Thee!

And I will say: Of course, you love Me! I know it. It was I that placed that love in your breast.

Listen, My dear people, I will save you from yourselves, from sin, from guilt, from death, from the curse, from hell, from damnation, from the devil, from the wicked, from the earth, and I will give you My own virtues: I will make you beautiful and spotless as the angels in heaven, no, more beautiful than they: the greater is served by the lesser. You shall exceed in beauty the holy angels of God.

And I will write My new name on your heart, your forehead. And you shall be called The Beautiful!

And I will recreate a new Heaven and a new earth so that you may have a new dwellingplace forever and ever.

And I will come and dwell among you and be a Father unto you and you shall be My sons and daughters.

And your peace shall flow like a river.

And great shall be the peace of your children.

And all this love I will spread abroad in your hearts, while you are walking in the valley of the shadow of death. And that love shall burn in you and shall quicken you, and you shall begin to sing with breaking voice, and you shall look up to Me at times and you shall say, weeping as you go, Abba, beloved Father! I shall continue to spread love in your heart, and faith and hope, and you shall work for the night is coming. You shall notice in your heart, in your inmost heart, that you want to be pleasing unto Me, and you will needs work, but you shall weep again, and say with burning eyes, at night, when all is black:

O my wonderful God: to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not!

And then I will show you the nature of My everlasting love, and I will say: I forgive you all your good works! Fret no more, and worry no more! Did you not hear Me say: It is finished!?

My child, My beloved child: you are saved by grace!

That, my brother, is to be saved by grace!

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

And what is salvation by works?

I hate to outline it: it's a foul thing.

It is foul, for it is born of the devil.

It says: I am a sinner, but by Jove, I am going to save myself. I am going to be good. I am going to see to it that God is obliged to me. I am going to sanctify myself, so that I may be able to stand in the Temple of God and say: I thank Thee God that I am not as the rest of men are!

Salvation by works is a foul thing.

But fouler still is when you mix the above paragraph where I tried to outline salvation by grace with the paragraph where I outline salvation by works. That breeds a very obnoxious mixture. And of that mixture Paul spoke in my text. It is when you mix grace with works.

You do that when you say: Sure, sure, sure, sure God works salvation by His marvellous grace. But we must also do something. We are responsible creatures, you see. God gave us much, oh so much. And you must get to work, *ably* assisted (they will insist on that that) by the *grace* of God. The Arminians almost wore out the word *grace* in their foul productions.

And then you have salvation by a mixture of grace and work.

And Satan smiles.

But God is furious.

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

What then?

If it is grace, then be silent about work unto all eternity.

If it is work, then be silent about grace unto all eternity.

If it is work, then take your chances with God

who damns the proud. I will give you a preview: He will cast you into the pool that burns with fire and sulphur.

If it is grace, then sing, sing, now and forever, for you are blessed and shall not come into condemnation. For His salvation by grace is founded on work which shall make heaven musical forever. Oh yes, your salvation by grace is also by works, but they are the works of God which He wrought in the depth of the hell He tasted for you.

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But I hear your quest: But must we then not work at all? Oh yes, we must work and we do work. And when we work it is because God wrought in us, and set us on a pathway of works which He foreordained that we should walk in them. But wait: two things in this connection: 1/ what kind of proprietor are you with respect to these good works? Imagine: they are ordained before the world was! 2/ when you are through working the works of God that He ordained that should go *through* you, you look behind you when the shadows of the night are upon you, and the night hears your cry: That's not what I had to do, must do, intended to do: Oh God, forgive my good works!

And he listens, and hears, and paints His cross before your sorrowing eyes.

And that cross whispers, just before you sleep in peace: your warfare *is* accomplished; your iniquity *is* pardoned: and I love you stil!

Shall we barter that kind of salvation for a foul mixture of grace and work?

We throw it from us as we would a poisonous reptile.

Why? Because I hate it; because I do not want to infuriate the Almighty; because I want to go to heaven!

G. Vos.

—:—

Many of the enemies to God's truths, when they are silenced by the force of evidence, do, like a snail provoked, draw in their horns and spit. —Toplady.

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Faith is the eye of the soul, and the Holy Spirit's influence is the light by which it sees. —Toplady.

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EDITORIALS

Classis West versus the Declaration

Before I continue, I wish to refer back to the argument of Bellflower that Synod failed to honor the request to consider the necessity of adopting the Declaration of Principles.

I ask: was this necessary? Was it necessary for Synod to point out that necessity? Should it not have been evident to all, in the light of what happened before the Declaration was adopted, that it was indeed very necessary to adopt a document of this kind?

Did not the Mission Committee have a request from the Liberated in Canada that they might be organized into a church without subscribing to the distinctively Reformed conception of the covenant which is always maintained in the Protestant Reformed Churches?

Was there not a report by Prof. Holwerda concerning the testimony of the Revs. de Jong and Kok?

That report was circulated among the immigrants in Canada.

According to that report the Revs. de Jong and Kok had presumed to do the very work in the Netherlands which properly belonged to the Committee of Correspondence. I understand that they did not presume to do so in any official capacity. But the effect was the same. I will grant that they met with the Committee of Correspondence of the Reformed Churches (Art. 31) in the Netherlands on their invitation. Fact is, nevertheless, that the brethren of the Reformed Churches (Art. 31) in the Netherlands received their testimony as a true picture of the stand of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America.

What was their testimony?

We do not have their own report, which indeed we should have had, but only the report of Prof. Holwerda.

But we may nevertheless gather what was the contents of their testimony not only from the letter which Prof. Holwerda wrote to the immigrants in Canada, but also from the effect which their testimony produced among the Liberated brethren in the Netherlands whom they met. It is evident that they did the work of the Committee of Correspondence in such a way that even the most pronounced opponents of the Protestant Reformed truth, such as van Dijk, van Raalte, Holwerda, and others, were satisfied. were very willing to have full correspondence with us, even so that they considered further discussion quite unnecessary. The effect of their testimony was such that

the Rev. de Jong, upon his return to this country, had a letter in his pocket asking for full correspondence.

Judging by this effect, which their testimony had upon the brethren of the Liberated Church in the Netherlands, we may, even apart from the report by Prof. Holwerda, certainly conclude: 1/ That they denied the distinctively Protestant Reformed truth, and left the impression that there was since 1924 no distinctive explanation of the Three Forms of Unity in opposition to the Three Points and in opposition to the Liberated and Heynsian conception of the promise of the covenant *binding in our churches*. 2/ They gave the impression that our churches stood wide open for the Liberated and their doctrine. This is evident from the very fact that the same brethren, such as van Dijk, van Raalte, and Holwerda, who after they heard the testimony of the Revs. de Jong and Kok were entirely ready, without further discussion, to enter into correspondence with us, now, after the Declaration of Principles was adopted, in which the distinctively Protestant Reformed truth of the promise of the covenant is set forth, will have nothing to do with us anymore.

Moreover, this is very clearly evident from the letter which Prof. Holwerda sent to the immigrants in Canada.

Let it not be said that this letter is not true. For, in the first place, it is the only report we have of the discussions between the brethren in the Netherlands and the Revs. de Jong and Kok. They never offered a report of their discussions. In the second place, the report by Prof. Holwerda was never contradicted. Although we have repeatedly asked the two brethren to give Prof. Holwerda the lie and to offer their own report, they never did. In the third place, as I have already stated, the report by Prof. Holwerda is corroborated by the effects. The opponents were willing to have correspondence with us on the basis of the testimony of the Revs. de Jong and Kok, but changed around again when they discovered that our churches were after all Protestant Reformed, and not Liberated, and adopted the Declaration of Principles.

Now what did Prof. Holwerda write to the immigrants in Canada? I quote the following:

"His (the Rev. Hoeksema's) conception regarding election etc. is not church doctrine. No one is bound by it." What does this mean? What impression must this have left upon Liberated ears? The only impression it can have left is that their view in relation to the covenant, that is, the Heynsian view of election, has just as much right in the Protestant Reformed Churches as the view of Rev. Hoeksema, which is that the covenant is established only with the elect,

although the reprobate are under the dispensation of the covenant. It also implies that the view of the Liberated concerning the promise as being for all that are under the dispensation of the covenant has a place in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

"Most (of the Protestant Reformed people) do not think as the Rev. Hoeksema and the Rev. Ophoff." This is nothing less than a schismatic statement. It is the same as the other statement which made, according to Prof. Holwerda, that an entirely different sound was heard in the Prot. Ref. Churches.

"Sympathy for the Liberated was great, also in the matter of their doctrine of the covenant." And again: "For the conception of the Liberated there is ample room."

Let this be sufficient. From all this it is very evident that in the Netherlands the Revs. de Jong and Kok denied the clear-cut Protestant Reformed conception of the covenant and of the promise of God, and that they gave the impression that the door of the Prot. Ref. Churches was wide open for the Liberated and their view. It is evident that they sold out our churches to the Liberated, and denied that there was anything distinctively binding in our churches as far as Prot. Ref. truth is concerned.

Now I ask: in the light of all above, must Bellflower and Classis West still ask the question why it was necessary that we composed and officially adopted the Declaration of Principles, in which is set forth the distinctive conception of the promise of God as only for the elect, and as unconditional, as this conception is clearly based on the Three Forms of Unity, the confessions that are believed and maintained in the Protestant Reformed Churches?

Excuse me for saying it, but the opposition against the Declaration of Principles by Classis West leaves upon me the impression that they are no longer interested in distinctive Protestant Reformed truth, but that they rather support the "entirely different sound" that is recently heard in our churches.

But I insist that it was very necessary indeed that we as Protestant Reformed Churches officially declare to the whole church what is our conception of true Reformed doctrine.

The Declaration of Principles should have been adopted long ago.

The next ground which Classis West adduces for its contention that the Synod of 1951 "in adoption of the Declaration of Principles, violated Article 30 of our Church Order which states that 'ecclesiastical matters shall be transacted in an ecclesiastical manner,'"

is found in the protest of Pella, the closing paragraph, pp. 19, 20 of the Classical Agenda. There we read: "Now we believe that since synod submitted the Declaration to the churches for their approval and thus asked for objections, synod owes it to our consistory to honor our objections with an answer before it proceed to ask us to accept the Declaration. We believe that Scripture requires such procedure among brethren and the churches, and Art. 30 D.K.O. speaks of an 'ecclesiastical manner,' of doing to the Lord's work."

The objections to which this paragraph refers concern especially three matters, according to the protest of Pella.

The first is stated in the protest itself as follows: "In Acta 1951, page 131, we objected to the fact that Synod made a Declaration of Dogma, with rejection of errors, when we, and the Churches in general were not conscious of any errors." This objection I would answer as follows: 1/ It is hardly true that Synod made a Declaration of Dogma, with rejection of errors. What it did do is make a Declaration of Principles which were clearly enunciated in our Confessions, in the Three Forms of Unity. It did not make a new dogma. And until now no one has ever even attempted to prove that the Declaration of Principles is not based foursquarely upon our Reformed Confessions. 2/ The Declaration of Principles was not motivated by the supposition that there were errors within our churches, but by the danger, which was very real, that errors would creep into our churches from without, namely, through the organization of churches. 3/ The Synod did not adopt the Declaration of Principles for our churches, but for the use of the Mission Committee, with a view to the organization of churches. In doing this the Synod of 1951 violated no article of the Church Order whatsoever. For according to Art. 30, to which Classis West appeals partly, those matters which belong to the churches in common may be decided directly by the synod. And certainly, according to Article 51 of the same Church Order, mission matters belong to the churches in common and are regulated by the general synod. All these matters were thoroughly discussed at the Synod of 1951, and therefore Pella brings nothing new.

The second objection to which Pella refers is briefly expressed in the following quotation from the protest of Pella: "While we expressed that we were not pleading for the ushering in of the term 'conditions' and likewise expressed that we were in agreement with the essence of the Declaration, we nevertheless felt that if Synod so simply declared all conditionality to be heresy, we were not being serious about what the Fathers taught, and we stood to alienate ourselves to them." To this I answer as follows: 1/ It is not true

that Synod condemned all conditionality, although it would be a good thing if in the proper way our churches would come to a definite conclusion about this matter. The Synod, however, dealt with the question of a conditional promise for all, or the unconditional promise for the elect only. And on the basis of the Confessions it decided for the latter. 2/ The Synod was not concerned about what our Fathers taught, but only with the Confessions. If we want to make a study of what the Reformed fathers taught, much more must be said than the simple statement that they taught conditions. But it must be admitted that the Confessions certainly never speak of conditions, except to condemn them. And this is what the Declaration of Principles maintained in regard to the promise of God. But also this matter was thoroughly and elaborately discussed at Synod, and there is nothing new in the protest of Pella.

The third objection to which Pella refers in the above statement is found in the following quotation: "And we also notified Synod that we objected to a definition of the promise which practically set aside the definition of Canons II:5, which the Reformed Churches have always acknowledged and used." To this I can only answer that this accusation is not true. All the brethren will remember, and Pella can find it in my elaborate report of Synod-1951, that this matter was discussed again and again; that we never set aside the so-called definition of the promise found in Canons II,5, but maintain it; and only contended that we would make a mistake if we would appeal only to Canons II, 5 for a complete definition of the promise. But as far as the "ecclesiastical manner" is concerned, this certainly was not violated whatever by the Synod of 1951. If a thorough and elaborate discussion for days on end, concluded by legal decisions by a majority vote, is not ecclesiastical manner, then I do not know what it is.

The next reference to which Classis West points as a ground for its contention is to the protest of Oskaloosa (Rev. Howerzyl), point II, page 22 of the Classis Agenda. I will quote the entire paragraph from the protest of Oskaloosa, which was presented by the Rev. Howerzyl:

II. I wish also to protest against the action of the Synod of 1951:

a. In adopting the Declaration of Principles in spite of the well grounded protests and objections to the contrary.

b. And its hierarchical action in departing from the true ecclesiastical character of an advice-giving body. In proof of the above I offer the following:

1. That Classis West came to Synod with a **Protest**. As far as its **Protesting** was concerned Synod simply ignored Classis West. I know Synod made a motion to adopt the protest of Classis West which motion was defeated by a very close vote.

But the point is this, that as an ecclesiastical broader gathering, conscious of its calling according to Articles 30 and 36, and especially in the strained situation, Synod was obligated to answer the arguments of Classis West and give light on the matter. This she failed to do, but hierarchically went on to other phases of the Declaration after defeating the motion to adopt the protest of Classis West.

2. This hierarchical action is all the more glaring in view of:

a. The advice of the Committee of Pre-advice I-B which exactly advised Synod to enter into the arguments of Classis West and declare positively and with grounds that the action of Synod 1950 was legal and correct. This advice Synod refused to adopt in a substitute motion, Article 211. Now I do not believe that the arguments of Committee I-B were convincing but it pointed Synod to the proper way, which she refused to follow.

b. This hierarchical attitude becomes even more evident when one of the delegates of Classis West pleaded with the Synod to express its reasons for its actions and asked to have them justified, Art. 254. This request was simply ruled out of order by the president, but may I point out that this very fundamental question was again called to Synod's attention and Synod simply went on in its hierarchical way.

c. This is evident once again when the question was raised as to the necessity of the Declaration, Art. 255. The motion lost by a tie vote, but the point is that here the Synod refused to express or to discuss the necessity of the Declaration, but even their reminder was not enough for Synod to do so, for neither then nor later did Synod ever express the reason for its action, nor the necessity for it as a search of the Acta of 1951 very evidently reveals."

What shall we say about all this?

The Rev. Howerzyl and his Consistory evidently have the accusation "hierarchical" on the tip of their tongue. They speak of "the Synod's hierarchical action in departing from its true ecclesiastical character of an advice-giving body." They claim that Synod failed to answer the arguments of Classis West, "but hierarchically went on to other phases of the Declaration." They say that "this hierarchical action is all the more glaring" in view of other matters which their protest mentions. And they say: "and Synod simply went on its hierarchical way."

I begin to doubt whether the Rev. Howerzyl and his consistory understand what the terms *hierarchy* and *hierarchical* mean. I understand by hierarchy a form of government in which the broader gatherings assume the power of higher courts and lord it over the consistories. Of this, certainly, Synod in 1950 and Synod of 1951 were not guilty, and could not be guilty, simply because the matter of the Declaration of Principles concerned the churches in common. And I find it very strange that the Rev. Howerzyl, who in 1950 was a delegate to the Synod in Hull, and certainly voted in favor of adopting the Declaration of Principles, now speaks so repeatedly and emphatically of hierarchical tendencies and hierarchical ac-

tions. Nevertheless, also about this part of the protest of Oskaloosa, which was adopted by Classis West for its own, I wish to make a few remarks.

1. First of all, a remark about the statement, "Its hierarchical action in departing from its true ecclesiastical character of an advice-giving body." Principally this objection is absurd. The Declaration of Principals does not concern the Synod as an advice-giving body whatsoever. And therefore, there was not and could not be any hierarchical action involved. The Declaration of Principles was not in the nature of an advice, given by the Synod to any particular consistory, but concerned a matter that belonged to the churches in common, which, therefore, could not possibly come in the way of consistory, classis, synod, nor could assume the nature of an advice, but was a definite decision which the Synod had the right to make, on the basis of Articles 30 and 51 of the Church Order. This has been stated so often that its repetition becomes positively tiresome.

2. As to the contention that the Synod of 1951 simply ignored Classis West and its protests, everyone knows that attended the sessions of Synod-1951 in June and September, that this is simply not true. Synod did not ignore anything at all that Classis West presented, but elaborately discussed their protests, both as to the legality of the Declaration and as to its contents. Surely, Synod was conscious of its calling according to Art. 30, and therefore was quite conscious of the fact that the Declaration of Principles was a matter pertaining to the Mission Committee, and therefore belonging to matters that concern the churches in common. What Art. 36 has to do with the matter, I fail to understand. This, in fact, is an article which we are discussing in connection with the revision of the Church Order in the Netherlands, because if any article of the Church Order, this one is liable to misinterpretation in a hierarchical sense. It speaks of "the classis" having "the same jurisdiction over the consistory as the particular synod has over the classis, and the general synod over the particular." Surely, Synod defeated the motion to adopt the protest of Classis West. But it did not do so hierarchically, but in the way of a long discussion, day after day, in which the Synod defended its right with an appeal to Articles 30 and 51 to adopt the Declaration of Principles.

3. The same is true of the argument under "2", an argument which I already answered in connection with the protest of Bellflower. Certainly, after Synod had rejected the advice of the Committee of Pre-Advice I-A, it was no longer necessary to discuss the contents of I-B. By rejecting the contention of Classis West that the Declaration of Principles was il-

legally adopted, it automatically adopted, or rather re-affirmed, the legality of the Declaration. Synod dealt with protests, but certainly did not have to establish positively its legal right to adopt the Declaration of Principles and offer grounds for this.

4. What Oskaloosa states under 2-b is not quite correct. It states that the request of Classis West that Synod "express its reasons for its actions and asked to have them justified . . . was simply ruled out of order by the president." The reference by Oskaloosa is to Article 254 of the Acts of Synod-1951, which reads as follows: "Rev. Doezeema requests Synod to state definitely the reasons why it expresses the previous motion (Art. 247) and asks that this request be recorded and that Synod's answer be recorded. The chair rules this request out of order. Grounds: The procedure to express that the Declaration is in harmony with the Confession properly belongs to the business of Synod. Synod of 1950 placed this matter before the churches, convened in Synod of 1951." Now, in the first place, it is not correct of Oskaloosa to state in general that Classis West "pleaded with the Synod to express its reasons for its actions and asked to have them justified." For the action of Synod referred to in Art. 254 of the Acts applies only to the motion in Art. 247 of the Acts, "that the Synod declare that point II of the Declaration as amended by Classis East is the expression of the Three Forms of Unity, with regard to certain fundamental principles, as these Confessions have always been maintained and interpreted by the Protestant Reformed Churches." And secondly, the contention of Oskaloosa that the president simply ruled this out of order is also not true. For according to Art. 254 of the Acts, the president produced grounds for his ruling. And what all this has to do with the accusation of Oskaloosa that Synod acted hierarchically is a mystery to me.

5. As to the necessity of adopting the Declaration, I do not have to repeat what I already wrote in connection with the protests of Bellflower and Pella.

—H.H.

— : — : —

The Arminians think that in conversion, God does little or nothing for men, but gives them a pull by the elbow, to awake them from their sleep. Rather, He acts, as maritime officers do by their sailors; He cuts down the hammock of carnal security in which the elect are: down they fall, and the bruises and surprise they receive, awaken them from their death in sin, and bring them to themselves, whether they will or no. —from Toplady.

OUR DOCTRINE

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

AN EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

PART III — OF THANKFULNESS

LORD'S DAY 35

4. God is a Jealous God (cont.)

Once more the apostle repeats the phrase, "God gave them over," in verse 28. In this verse there is an expressed comparison between the sin committed and the punishment inflicted. The apostle designs to show how proper the punishment of God was, seeing it was entirely in harmony with the very nature of the sin they committed: "Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient." As the sin, so is the punishment. God is just and righteous. The sin they committed is expressed in the words: "They did not like to retain God in their knowledge." The original here is richer than the translation. For "they did not like" the original employs one word, the meaning of which is really "to prove, to test, to examine, and to express judgment upon a thing after due examination." The object of the examination in the question, "Is God worthy to be kept in mind; is He worthy of consideration and honor?" And the deliberate answer was negative. They did not deem God worthy of remembrance. The knowledge of God was manifest in them, and they knew that He was worthy to be thanked and glorified. But they were of a reprobate mind, and stood in enmity against God. And so, in their sinful mind they passed judgment on God, and came to the wilful conclusion that He was not worthy to be remembered. They cast Him out. They wilfully rejected Him. They made of God a reprobate. In full harmony with this is the punishment God inflicted upon them. He gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient. By an operation of the God of wrath the minds of men became morally reprobate, and turned to unseemly things. Thus God vindicates Himself. In the punishment of the sinner He justifies Himself. And He reveals that to live apart from God is death, and that the sinner that rejects God does so only because he is of a reprobate mind. When the sinner passes the judgment that God is not worthy to be kept in mind, and to be feared, it certainly must become evident

that this judgment is false, and that he who thus judges is a liar. Hence, God punishes him by giving him over unto that reprobation of mind which impells him to practice horribly unseemly things. And by doing these he plainly shows that his mind is corrupt and that also his first judgment regarding God proceeded from a corrupt mind.

Finally, in verses 29 to 32 the apostle gives a more detailed description of the actual condition of the world of his time from a moral, spiritual viewpoint.

First of all, the inward spiritual and moral disposition is described in vs. 29: "Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity." The first part of this text speaks rather of the general spiritual disposition of the ungodly, the second part of the more particular sins that are hid in their heart. It cannot escape our attention that the apostle speaks in terms that are absolute. All is full of wickedness; and what is full of anything certainly cannot contain anything else. We must also remember that the apostle is speaking of a highly civilized world, often praised and extolled in our day because of its attainments. Yet, according to the Word of God, that cannot lie, this world was full of iniquity. There was absolutely no room for any good in their hearts and minds. The first five terms employed all describe the corrupt condition of the inward disposition of the natural men: unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness. Of these, unrighteousness and fornication, that is, spiritual fornication, are so related that the first expresses the inward antipathy against the righteousness of God, the opposition of our nature to His law and precepts, its antithesis to His holy will; while the latter expresses the tendency of that unrighteous nature to go a whoring from God, to seek the darkness and eschew the light. Again, wickedness and malicious are closely related, and nearly alike in meaning, with this difference, that the former refers to the depravity of our nature in general, to its moral and spiritual corruption, while the latter points to the tendency of that depraved nature to be vicious and to do evil. Covetousness denotes sin in its insatiable character. Sin tends to create always deeper cravings. Every form of wickedness accomplished leaves a larger hole in the heart, that craves for more and deeper sin. Lust craves lust as soon as it is satisfied by sin. The end of sin is hell, eternal dissatisfaction. Even as righteousness tends to ever greater satisfaction because it finds rest in the eternal God, so unrighteousness creates ever deeper dissatisfaction because it separates from the Fount of all good. The second part of the text rather points to specific tendencies

and inclinations of this depraved nature, even as to be full is the result of to be filled. They are full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity. Certainly, one does not have to look far to find these same sins in the modern world. The political world is full of them. The commercial world is permeated with them. The strife in the industrial world is rooted in them.

Finally, in the last two verses the apostle refers to the actual sins of the ungodly as they manifest themselves in the world. They are whisperers and slanderers, backbiters, secretly or more openly defaming and speaking evil of one another. They are haters of God, in all their actions assuming an attitude of opposition against Him. They are despiteful, proud, haughty, boasters, always overestimating self and depreciating the other, trampling him under foot. They are inventors of evil things, employing their genius and power to work out evil schemes. They are disobedient to parents, revolutionaries, breaking all bonds of authority. They are without understanding of spiritual things, and so far have they wandered from the truth that you cannot interest them in things heavenly, or reach even their natural understanding with them. They are covenantbreakers, faithless with regard to God and men; without love of kindred and natural affection. Cruel they are, without mercy, deaf to the cries of those whom they oppress. A most terrible list indeed! Yet perfectly true, and without a shadow of exaggeration is this picture!

The apostle concludes by emphasizing the wickedness of the world in a twofold statement in vs. 32. In the first place, he reminds us once more that ignorance is not the explanation of the wickedness of the world. They do these wicked things conscious by very experience of the judgment of God, namely, that they who do such things are worthy of death. Yet, they not only commit these things themselves, but also have pleasure in them that do them. Here is the climax of it all. To commit wickedness themselves implies that they have a certain interest in the fruit of sin. Covetousness seeks to satisfy self. But to rejoice in the sins and wickedness of others reveals that there is a certain disinterested love of sin for its own sake. They are lovers of darkness and haters of the light. And this love of darkness as such causes them to love those who with them walk in the same darkness, and to rejoice in their iniquity.

Once more, this whole chapter illustrates the truth expressed in the second commandment, that God is a jealous God, that He will not allow His glory to be trampled under foot, and that He will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Him.

The phrase, "unto the third and fourth generation,"

must not be interpreted to mean that after the fourth generation the wrath of God will cease to be revealed upon them. The meaning is rather that the sin of image-worship, or the sin of rejecting God as He has revealed Himself in His Word, will continue under the influence of the wrath of God, and develop more and more, in the line of generations, until they are completely hardened in their sin and are hopelessly lost.

On the other hand, the commandment concludes with a glorious promise that God will show mercy unto thousands that love Him and keep His commandments. Mercy is, of course, a virtue of God. God is rich in mercy in Himself. As such, mercy is the virtue of God according to which He is tenderly affected toward Himself as the highest and sole good, and as the implication of all perfections. As the Triune God He knows and wills Himself as the most blessed forever. And with respect to His people, mercy is the virtue of God according to which He wills them to be perfectly blessed in Him, to taste His own blessedness, and according to which He leads them through death to the highest possible life of His covenant friendship. There is, of course, a close relation between the virtues of love, grace, and mercy. Love is the bond that unites those that are ethically perfect. Grace is the objective pleasantness and the subjective attraction of those that live in ethical perfection. And mercy wills and desires that the ethically perfect shall be blessed forever. Hence, it is evident from this that God cannot be merciful to the reprobate wicked. And His mercy toward His people must be founded in His sovereign election, according to which He beholds them eternally as perfectly righteous in the Beloved. God's mercy is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him. His mercy, therefore, is unlimited. He is merciful to thousands of them that love Him and keep His commandments. That they love Him is not of themselves, but is solely the fruit of His sovereign grace. He loved them first. And He revealed His love to them in the death of His beloved Son. He caused them to taste His love by shedding it abroad in their hearts, so that they know and experience His love. And it is the fruit of that love of God which He causes them to taste, that they love Him. And this love reveals itself in the fact that they keep His commandments.

H.H.

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According to Arminianism, grace has the name, but free-will has the game. —from Toplady.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

David's Grief for Absalom

II Samuel 18:24-19:8

The sacred writer now takes us again to Mahanaim across the Jordan, the sight of David's encampment. The city had an outer and inner gate with a roof supporting an upper chamber. On the roof was a watchman on the outlook for messengers. For the day was well spent, so that reports on the battle could be coming in at anytime now. David was seated in the space between the two gates below. Here he may have been sitting all the day long waiting for this hour. For it was the same place in which he had parted from his troops in the early morning. His deep concern was Absalom.

There was a cry from the watchman that he saw a man running. "If he be alone, there is tidings in his mouth," remarked the king perhaps to the porter. It was a likely conclusion. For if the battle had been lost, several would be coming as fugitives. Again the watchman cried, "Behold another man running alone." "He also bringeth good tidings," was the king's only comment. The watchman could now recognize Ahimaaz by his rapid running. "I see the running of the foremost is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok." The king observed that "a good man this (Ahimaaz). With good tidings he comes." Doubtless the reasoning back of his remark was that Joab would not have chosen Ahimaaz as a messenger of evil. His hopes seemed to be rising. Little did he surmise that Joab had not sent the priest.

The cries of the watchman bespeak not a little excitement. But the king was scarcely moved, judging from his words. The one thing that he was waiting to hear was that it was well with his son.

But David sat between the two gates. And went the watchman unto the roof of the gate unto (its) wall; and he lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold a man running alone. 24

And cried the watchman, and told the king. And said the king, if (he be) alone, (there is) tidings in his mouth. And he came hastily and drew near. 25

And saw the watchman a man, another, running. And called the watchman unto the porter, and said, Behold, (another) man running alone. And said the king, Also this (man) bringeth tidings. 26

And said the watchman, I see the running of the foremost as the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok.

And said the king, A good man this (Ahimaaz), and with tidings good he comes. 27.

No more was Ahimaaz within earshot of the king then he cried out his greeting, "All is well". Rushing into the king's presence, and hurriedly paying him his respect by bowing with his face to the ground, he proclaimed his tidings. "Blessed be the Lord thy God which hath shut up the men that lifted up their hand against my Lord the king." "Blessed be the Lord..." It was a challenge that the king now, too, bless the Lord. But the king did not bless. The matter was not clear to him, particularly the greeting of the priest, "All is well". Did this include Absalom? Had he been captured? And had his life been spared? Let Ahimaaz say definitely. Anxiously the king asked, "Is it well with the young man Absalom?"

Absalom. Yes, indeed, Absalom, Ahimaaz. He is dead. And thou knowest. Tell the king the truth, Ahimaaz. But his courage failed him. But he must give some kind of answer. "I saw," he said to the king, "the great crowd, when Joab sent the king's servant (meaning the Cushite) and (me) thy servant, but I knew not what it was." This was like telling the king that he was not able to report on Absalom, that, as far as He knew from what he had seen, Absalom might have been taken prisoner, and also might still be alive, depending on whether the king's mandate regarding his son had been obeyed. But Ahimaaz was not speaking the truth. He knew from Joab that Absalom was dead. He should have told the king and not kept him in cruel suspense by his ambiguities. Joab was right. The priest should not have run. But he had insisted. What could have been his motive? Was it that he loved the king and wanted so badly to be the one to gladden his heart with the good news that the Lord in His mercy had judged him from the hands of his enemies? That was my conjecture. But he may have been activated by a different motive. Who can tell. Perhaps the least we say about this priest the better.

And cried Ahimaaz and said to the king, All is well! And he bowed himself before the king with his face to the ground. And he said, Blessed be Jehovah thy God which hath shut up the men that raised up their hand against my lord the king. 28

And the king said, Is it well with the young man Absalom? And said Ahimaaz, I saw a great crowd, when Joab sent the servant of the king and thy servant. ..But not did I know what (it was). 29

Let us take notice, "Which hath shut up the men" So reads the statement in the Hebrew and not "which hath delivered up the men" (K. James and A.V. versions). This could be taken to mean merely that the leaders in the rebellion had been taken

captive and imprisoned. But there had been a great slaughter among the followers of Absalom.

Since Ahimaaz could not say what the king most of all wanted to know, he waved him aside. The watchman had announced the coming of still another messenger. Perhaps he could report on Absalom.

And said the king, Turn aside and stand there. And he turned aside and stood. 30

And behold the Cushite came, And he said, Tidings my Lord the king. For hath judged thee the Lord this day from the hand of all that rose up against thee. 31.

Indeed, but how went it with Absalom?

And said the king to the Cushite, Is it well with the young man Absalom? ..And said the Cushite, Let be as the young man (is) the enemies of my Lord the king and all that rise up against thee for evil. 32.

This was telling the king indirectly yet clearly that Absalom was dead, slain in battle, and justly so, seeing that he was an enemy of the king, one who had rose up in rebellion against him. The king now knew the full truth.

And was violently shaken the king. ..And he went up to the chamber over the gate and wept: and as he went he said thus, My son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Who would give that I, even I, had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son! 33

While David was crying out his heart for Absalom, Joab returned from the field of battle. It was told him that the king was weeping and mourning for his son. It was told him, Joab, as it was by his hand that Absalom had died. Apparently, it made him not want to face the king. For he did not go near him until some time latter as driven to it by the deportment of the people.

The people were no eye-witnesses of the king's tears. They heard that it was being said that he mourned for Absalom. And it distressed them. For the text states that what should have been a cause for rejoicing—the salvation that the Lord had sent—made them to mourn. Besides, recalling the king's entreaty regarding his son, and mindful of how that it had been disregarded, they felt ashamed. For the king's sorrow was great. He cried with a loud voice. It made them all feel like criminals. Naturally it made them want to get them out of his presence. So they stole away, says the text, that is, without notifying their generals and captains, they went quietly away, in small groups perhaps, and betook themselves to the city (Mahanaïm) nearby, probably as fearing that, should they remain, the king at any time might appear in their midst to bewail to their faces their disobedience. That they purposed not to forsake him, but as saddened and dismayed by his reaction, merely wanted

for the time being to remove themselves from his immediate presence would seem to follow from the fact of their betaking themselves to the "city". They did not each of them return to his own place. They behaved, says the text, like a people that have disgraced themselves by fleeing in battle.

It is plain that the king was making a dreadful mistake.

And it was told Joab, behold, the king weeps and mourns for Absalom, 19:1.

And was the salvation in that day for mourning unto all the people. For heard say the people in that day that the king was grieved for his son. 2.

And stole away the people in that day to go to the city as steal away the people put to shame by their flight in battle. 3

And the king covered his face, and cried the king with a great voice, My Son Absalom, Absalom my son, my son! 4.

And also (18:33), "Who would that I had died in thy stead." [Eng. A.V. and K.J.V., "Would to God that I had died for thee," but not correct]

We must not, as do some, turn away from this lamentation with some such remark as that "there are griefs, as well as joys, with which a stranger may not intermeddle" David's expression of sorrow with which we are here confronted is also scripture given by inspiration of God and thus "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (II Tim. 3:16)

The lamentation reflects the heart-rending sorrow of a wounded natural affection by which is to be understood the love of offspring and of kinsmen according to the flesh.

David's sorrow over Absalom is not to be frowned upon as though it were *as such* sinful. Christ *as man* knew this sorrow, as is evidenced by His weeping over Jerusalem. And wasn't the thought of kinsmen doomed to everlasting perdition to Paul a great heaviness? It gave him continual sorrow in his heart. For the sake of these brethren he could wish himself accursed from Christ, if that were allowable. And so, too, David. He wept copious tears over Absalom. He could do that because, being a saint, his hatred of the wicked was not sinful malice but at bottom love of God, truth and righteousness. He derived no gratification from the suffering of the damned *as such*.

How David pitied Absalom! And this despite all the great wrong that this son had done his father and all the grief that he had caused him. His pity seemed boundless. Doubtless this was largely due to his awareness that his past gross sinning—his adultery

and murder—was causally related to Absalom's rebellion and his perishing in it. He recalled the words of the prophet: "Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; *because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.*" It was a terrible example that he had set his children. Amnon's rape of Tamar and later Absalom's murder of Amnon climaxed by his attempt to capture his father's throne were but so many cases in which the Lord was visiting his sins upon his children. It explains the violence of his grief, his bewailing the fact that he could not have died in Absalom's stead.

And this brings us to the observation that there were elements in David's grief that were sinful. "Who would give that I had died in thy stead, Absalom, my son, my son!" That bespeaks not submission but despair. Absalom was lost. And he could do nothing about it, however much he would. Apparently, were it in his power, he would have recalled him from the grave, and delivered him from the ruin of hell. His grief was inordinate. He cried with a loud voice, "Absalom, my son, my Son! So it went, on and on as if Absalom had been the innocent victim of his father's sins and had not been wicked also by choice, and as if he, himself, had sinned by his own choice and not also by the sovereign determination of God.

His sorrow was inordinate indeed. It stifled for a moment every impulse of grace in him to praise God for the salvation He had wrought in his behalf; moreover it blinded him to his obligation to honor and comfort his troops who had stood by him in his calamity.

So, however rough and unfeeling Joab's words of rebuke may have been, they were just what the king had need of hearing in that moment, submerged as he was in his great sorrow for his son. The torrent of his grief had to be damned up, if he was to be rescued from it.

And went Joab unto the king to his house and said, Thou hast shamed this day the face of all thy servants, who have delivered thy life this day and the life of thy sons and daughters and the life of thy wives and the life of thy concubines in that thou lovest them that hate thee and hatest them that love thee; for thou hast shown today that the princes of thy servants are nothing to thee. ..For I perceive today that if Absalom had lived and all we had died, then it would have been right in thy sight. 5, 6.

It cannot be denied that the king's reaction made this impression. But actually there wasn't a grain of truth in what Joab said. It was simply that he was

overcome with grief for Absalom's sake—grief to which there was also this side that, as freed from its sinful ingredients, it was a creatural and dim reflection of the heart of God. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him" (Ps. 103:13). As a flower of the field that, when the scorching winds from the desert pass over it, is so completely gone that its place knows it no more, so they flourish. But he knoweth their frame. And in His compassion He will one day raise them up from the dust of death into which he brought them, and clothe them with a perfection and glory that is heavenly. For He is not a man as if anything can separate His prodigals from His pity. He is God. His pity is infinite, from everlasting to everlasting, and infinitely potent, able to save to the uttermost them that fear Him, His chosen ones, apart from his grace lost and undone, but by His mercy fearing Him, keeping His covenant, and remembering His commandments to do them.

Joab's words of rebuke seemed to have their effect almost immediately. With a sudden jolt they brought the king to himself. When he was sufficiently calm, Joab spake to him words of advice that were wise and good.

And now arise and go forth and speak according to the heart of thy servants. For by Jehovah I swear that, if thou goest not forth, if will lodge a man with thee this night. ..And that will be worse evil to thee than all the evil that befell thee from thy youth until now. 7.

Joab does not explain just why, to his mind, the king might be overtaken by greatest calamity, should he be forsaken that night by all his people, or what that calamity might be. Certainly, the enemies of David, hearing about it, would be jubilant. They might even be encouraged to renew their attempt to rid the land of him. And with him abiding solitarily at Mahanaim, as now forsaken even by those who had risked their lives for him in the recent crisis, they would be certain to succeed.

Apparently, David was now fully alive to this danger. For he arose, and sat in the gate with a heart heavy with silenced grief. The news went quickly through the people. They returned to the king. In accordance with Joab's counsel, he expressed to them his kind feelings. So was the danger of his once more losing his throne averted.

And arose the king and sat in the gate. And all the people heard that it was said, Behold, the king sitteth in the gate. And came all the people before the king. 8.

—G. M. Ophoff

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of John 6:51

The passage from Holy Writ to which we will call your attention in this article reads as follows: "*I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread which I give is my flesh, for the life of the world.*"

Jesus had multiplied the three barley loaves and the two small fishes on the shores of the sea of Tiberias on the day before He spoke these words to the multitudes in Capernaum. He had come to Capernaum toward morning after He had spent most of the night alone on a mount in prayer. And, now, on this day after He had multiplied the bread the multitudes came to seek Him.

They come to Jesus, saying: Rabbi, when camest Thou hither?

They had eaten from the multiplied bread, it must be remembered. In their enthusiasm they had desired to make Him King by force. They had recognized in Him the "prophet" of whom Moses had spoken. But the one thing that they had forgotten, as all men forget by nature, is, that Jesus is also *Priest*; that He is the King-Priest after the order of Melchizedek. And as the Priest He brings the perfect sacrifice for all that the Father has given Him in sovereign election. These must be brought to glory through His death and resurrection; He must give His life a ransom for their souls. And as He *gives* His life, His flesh and blood, He is the *Living Bread* that came down from God. He is the Bread of God, prepared by God in the sacrifice of His Son in the flesh.

O, the unbelieving Jews only saw the multiplied bread; they had not really perceived the meaning of the "signs", and penetrated to the thing signified by it. They simply labored for the bread that perishes. Living bread they do not eat.

Why do these not eat?

Because they do not share in God's work. What is this work? It is this: That we believe in Him whom God hath sent! No, this does not simply mean, that this faith is the work, that God asks of us instead of the works of the law, but it means that *our believing*, *our act of believing* is *God's work in us*!

It is God's *work* that we *actually believe*, as well as that we have the *potens*, the *ability to believe*. Both are wholly what God energizes, works into us; both

to will and to do is of Him. No one can come to the Son except the Father which hath sent Him draw us by the almighty operation of the Holy Spirit. This the unbelieving Jews lacked. They come not because they are not drawn, and they are not drawn because they do not belong to the "all that the Father hath given" to the Son!

This is a "hard saying" in the ears of these Jews, but it is the truth of God.

For this same reason the Gibraltar truth remains standing, that every one that cometh and believeth in Christ shall be saved, he shall in no wise be cast out, but shall live forever, and be raised up in the last day.

What has this now to do with the text under consideration?

This text speaks of our "eating" Christ, the living Bread; it says that if anyone eat of this bread, he shall live forever.

Let us try to understand this.

What does it mean that Jesus is "bread"? And what does it mean that He is the *living bread*?

Jesus is bread. Now "bread" is prepared food. It is not the same as simply bare grain, be it barley or wheat. Bare grain, it is true, is very nourishing and can make a meal. But it is not the same as bread in its nature and idea. For, let it be observed, that bare grain can be sown, it can die and bring forth new grain. But this is not true of bread. Bread is many grains ground to flour and made into a lump and baked. And in this process grain has been *transformed* into another product. It is a product that is finished. Bread cannot bring forth new bread. It is in this sense not like wheat.

Jesus, we should notice, did not multiply bare grain on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. That God does every day in nature. But Jesus multiplied "bread" and "fish"! He gave sufficient bread, abundance of bread. Twelve full baskets of the fragments are gathered. He multiplies the finished product.

And what is the sign? It is that Jesus is the bread of God from heaven, the real bread of which the Manna in the Desert was but a type. That bread was wonder bread. The people said: Manna, that is, "what is it"? But the Bread that God gives is the true Bread, the Wonder of grace. It is Christ's *flesh and blood*. Not in the literal sense; it is not flesh and blood, but in the sense that Jesus *gives* it a ransom for the sins of all His people in every tongue and tribe and people and nation. He gives it for the life of the *Kosmos*. All creation will share in the benefits of Christ's suffering. The *Kosmos* shall be saved.

And then this prepared bread is the Bread of God,

because He becomes unto us from God wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and complete redemption.

Thus Jesus is the prepared food for the hungering and thirsting souls of those believing, that is, those drawn by irresistible grace, who are "taught of God"!

With this in mind Jesus makes the statement, saying: "if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever".

What does this statement imply?

We wish to point out that what we have here is not "Conditional Theology", that is, the teaching that there is objectively salvation for all in Christ, that it is offered well-meant to all, and that it now depends upon man whether he will believe the Gospel, whether he will accept Christ. We will say it still more pointedly: That it is objectively intended for all men head for head, and soul for soul, but that it is up to man, whether he by his own "native free-will" is willing to accept Christ and take Him as his Savior. That is Conditional Theology.

That we do not have here in the text!

Fact is, that that is nowhere the teaching in Holy Writ!

That is the heresy of Arminius together with the proud heresy of Pelagius raised up out of hell!

But, perhaps, someone interrupts and says: But Jesus says: if any (man) eat of this bread he shall live forever!

I answer: every word is true, and must be carefully weighed.

In the first place, we underscore the truth, that we must carefully distinguish between a *conditional sentence*, and Conditional Theology as above circumscribed. A conditional sentence is *logical thought*, a conditional Theology is the teaching of a Christ for all, and the Free-will of natural man! Jesus never taught or teaches the latter, but He often employs the former. These two must not be confused. If we do, we simply make it impossible to interpret the Bible. Then each time we see a conditional sentence we immediately associate it with Conditional Free-willism. That is fatal to all good understanding of Scripture.

In the second place we must interpret Scripture in the light of Scripture. In this case it means that we do the following:

1. That we notice that eating and drinking Christ is wholly identical with believing in this chapter. We must not say, that believing is the "condition" for eating. We must say that believing is the spiritual appropriation of the riches of the graces in Christ, the forgiveness of sins and life and glory. "Eating" is a metaphor for believing; it presents faith to us as the

need of the regenerated and enlightened mind and will longing for nourishment in Christ.

2. When we eat food, this food passes into our stomach, and thus into the process of digestion, and is transformed into living energy of the body and physical soul. Then we live. Now it is true, this food does not really impart life. It only keeps the flickering life in our body burning for three score years and ten. Eating it we still die. But this food given by Jesus, the Bread from heaven, is different. It gives endless life in our spiritual souls now, effects our entire life even of the body, and gives us the hope of presently living forever in the heavens above.

3. This, however, is only true "if any man eat it". "Condition", I hear someone say. I answer: it is a conditional sentence expressing that those drawn by irresistible grace *only*, receive the conscious enjoyment of the forgiveness of sins, and that they are more and more "bone of His bones, and flesh of His flesh" only when they *eat*. It is only in eating that we taste the goodness of the Lord as a conscious possession in Christ. No one, who does not *eat*, receives. Only those who eat and drink Christ shall live forever!

4. This certainly is a word for the entire audience. It tells those who *eat not*, that they have no hunger, they do not have the knowledge of sin, misery, redemption and gratitude. They are not "taught of God". But this not knowing God reveals itself in not eating. Hence, this statement is an announcement to those not eating, that they have no part in Christ. On the other hand, those eating Christ taste the goodness of the Lord. They lift up their hearts into heaven and see Christ as the true spiritual Manna, and live by God's Covenant faithfulness; they are admonished and assured of Christ's hearty love. They are assured of this in the sentence: if any man eat of this bread he shall live forever.

The *act* of believing is eating.

The *act of our believing* is the *work of God*!

Hence, if any man eats he shall live forever.

This, I repeat, is not "Conditional Theology." It is a conditional sentence telling us who shall live forever, and who shall not see life.

But is is more.

It is an assurance and admonition, a promise of God to all believers, the oath-bound word of Jesus to every believing one that he has life, and it thus is a strengthening from faith to faith.

It is the Key of the Kingdom of heaven, whereby it is publicly testified to all and every believer, that, whenever they receive the promise of the Gospel by a true faith, all their sins are really forgiven them of God.

—G. Lubbers

The Voice of Our Fathers

The Canons of Dordrecht

PART I — HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

CHAPTER II

THE GREAT SYNOD (Cont.)

As we remarked in the beginning of this chapter, one of the reasons why the Synod of Dordrecht merits the reputation of being "the great synod" must undoubtedly be found in the method which it followed in its labors. And because of this method, of course, the Synod produced such a sound and lasting product. Sound methods and sound products are inseparable.

In order to evaluate the method which Synod followed, it will again be necessary somewhat to enter into the history, this time the history of the Synod itself, as it is recorded for us both in the official *Acts* and by church historians.

The Synod convened in November 1618. For approximately a month it gave its attention to matters other than the Arminian controversy, so that it was not until the sixth of December that the most important part of Synod's labors began. On that date the Arminians made their appearance for the first time on the floor of Synod. They had, according to proper ecclesiastical procedure been indicted, and were called to defend themselves and their views before the broadest gathering of the church. The elite of the Arminian party were represented by the group of heretics who appeared at the Synod. At their head was Episcopius, erudite, polished of manner, conceited, and, admittedly, a rather capable leader. He had some years before been elevated to the chair of professor of theology at the University of Leiden, and is usually acknowledged as the theological leader of the Arminians after the death of Arminius himself. At the Synod he certainly acted as their spokesman.

Before appearing at Dordt, the indicted Arminians had assembled at Rotterdam, in order to determine upon a plan of action. They had decided upon two things. In the first place, they would cling to the illusion that the Synod was really a conference between the opposing parties, at which the political commissioners, aided by the advice of the foreign theologians, would act as arbiters and make the final decision. In the second place, their strategy was, especially with an eye on the foreign delegates, to depict the national delegates as men who maintained horrible, God-dishonoring opinions, and further as schismatics and as persecutors of the innocent and simple. Character-

istic is this strategy of all heretics, and especially of those who assail the truth of God's sovereign predestination. It is nothing new that heretics refuse to abide by proper ecclesiastical procedure. Nor is it an innovation when they attempt to portray those who hold to the truth as terrible men, hard, implacable, cruel. But notice that in this double strategy the question of the truth is not so much as mentioned. Their purpose was, if at all possible, to avoid the issue of the truth, and as long as possible to obstruct the procedure of Synod.

From the very beginning they attempted to follow this strategy. Already before they appeared at the Synod they tried, first with the foreign delegates, and then with the political commissioners, to have Bogerman removed as president of the Synod. They failed. Then, at the time of their entrance, having been given the floor by President Bogerman, Episcopius amazed the entire assembly by piously pronouncing a blessing upon them. Thereupon he announced the readiness of the Arminians to proceed to the matter at hand, but spoke pointedly of a *conference*. This was but the beginning (for we have not the space to recount the daily proceedings of the Synod) of a lengthy period of pious subterfuge, obstructionism, and forthright flaunting of the authority of the Synod by the Arminian defendants. Stedfastly they avoided entering into the doctrinal issues. Patiently, yea, almost to the point of folly, the Synod labored with them, tried to examine them, allowed them at their own request more time to prepare their opinions. All was in vain. Finally, even the foreign theologians, who apparently were not very well acquainted with the cunning craftiness of these heretics, also agreed that the Arminians were incorrigible. And on the fourteenth of January, 1619, when once more they refused to submit to the authority of the Synod in the matter of their examination, President Bogerman burst forth with those memorable words of dismissal: "The foreign delegates are now of the opinion that you are unworthy to appear before the Synod. You have refused to acknowledge her as your lawful judge and have maintained that she is your counter-party; you have done everything according to your own whim; you have despised the decisions of the Synod and of the Political Commissioners; you have refused to answer; you have unjustly interpreted the indictments. The Synod has treated you mildly; but you have,—as one of the foreign delegates expressed it,—'begun and ended with lies.' With that eulogy we shall let you go. God shall preserve His Word and shall bless the Synod. In order that she be no longer obstructed, you are sent away!" Thereupon the undeniably wrathful president thundered: "*Dimittimini*,

exite! You are dismissed, get out!"

All the Remonstrants arose and left. Episcopius cried out: "With Christ I shall keep silence about all this. God shall judge between me and this Synod." Niëlles appealed to Christ's throne. And Naeranus, another foremost Arminian said: "You, who now sit as judges, shall soon stand with us before Christ's judgment-seat." To his associates another of the heretics, Hollinger, called: "Go forth, go forth out of the assembly of the godless!"

Everyone was, of course, upset. But now that the Arminians were dismissed, the Synod could proceed with its work.

One could conceive of it that the Synod could now have justifiably ended its sessions, and simply refused to have anything further to do with the Arminians and their heresies. After all, they had shown beyond a shadow of a doubt that they did not want to be Reformed, and had, besides, made themselves unworthy of being dealt with, through their stubborn rebellion and refusal to recognize the Synod. But this did not happen. The fathers were determined to rid the churches of these false teachers and their evil doctrines once and for all, and to set up such confessional barriers that they could never again occupy any rightful position in the Reformed Churches.

Now began the long and tedious process of judging the Arminians' views and of constructing a careful formulation of the Reformed truth in opposition thereto. For this purpose the Synod divided itself into as many committees of pre-advice as there were delegations from the various Dutch particular synods and from the foreign churches. Each group of delegates worked separately, and was instructed to present in writing a thorough and well-grounded opinion concerning each of the Five Articles of the Remonstrants. The Arminians had now no personal representation at the Synod, but were judged from their writings. The Commissioners, with extraordinary longsuffering, still permitted those who were indicted to present to the Synod in writing whatever they wished in the way of a further defense and explanation of their views. This they did, and wrote voluminously. In all, their defense of the first article comprised more than two hundred pages. Later they came with similarly lengthy documents concerning their other points. By the eighteenth of March (though they had been allowed only 14 days originally) they were finished, and concluded their defense with the claim that they fought the Contra-Remonstrants out of reverence for God, seeing that the Reformed view fell short of God's honor, was injurious to true piety, and offensive to Christianity. But in all that they wrote there was nothing new, and though the Synod very patiently read

their lengthy documents, it is evident that the heretics were at their same old strategy of obstructionism, trying their level best so to tax the patience especially of the foreign delegates that the Synod might perhaps break up.

Finally, however, by the twenty-second of March, 1619, all the written opinions of all the delegates had been received and heard by the Synod. In order to understand how thoroughly the Synod worked, you must remember that the Acts of the Synod of Dordt comprise a volume of almost a thousand large, finely-printed pages, and that by far the largest part of this volume is made up of the various written judgments concerning the Arminian errors. The Synod was at long last ready to formulate its official stand. President Bogerman presented to the Synod his own formulation of concept-Canons I and II. But the Synod would not work this way. A committee consisting of the president, the two assessors, three foreign delegates, was appointed to present concept-Canons to the Synod. This Committee worked until the sixteenth of April, and on that date presented the Synod with its formulation of the first two Canons, which included in each case a Rejection of Errors, something which Bogerman had not provided in his personal formulation. On that date the first two chapters were adopted, and the following day was set aside as a day of prayer and thanksgiving by order of the States General. The Remonstrants called it "Ahab's prayer day." On the eighteenth of April, in its 130th Session, the Synod adopted Canons III, IV and V, thereby finishing its main work. Now it only remained to formulate and adopt an Epilogue and a foreword to the *Canons*, which work was completed without great difficulty, in spite of the fact that there were some delegates who also wanted to include a condemnation of certain "hard" Reformed expressions. And now the *Canons* as we know them were finished! Synod had, after long and hard labor, given birth to our third Form of Unity.

The Synod gathered yet until the ninth of May, busying themselves with various matters connected with the controversy, and then the foreign delegates formally said farewell, after receiving the thanks of the Synod for their long and helpful labors. Following this a Post-Synod was held, of a strictly national character, with whose labors we need not busy ourselves.

Such, then, were the methods of labor of the great synod. Small wonder it is, in the light of all this, that our *Canons* have now for more than three centuries stood without change, and without any need of change, as a redoubtable bulwark of the Reformed truth.

—H. C. Hoeksema

IN HIS FEAR

My Brother's Keeper

Your brother in Christ, is he your friend?

Theoretically he is, and according to the new principle of life in him and in you he can be nothing less. What is more, you are admonished by the Word of God to live with him in that sweet fellowship of God's covenant. Zion also sings

"How good and pleasant is the sight
When brethren make it their delight
To dwell in blest accord;
Such love is like anointing oil
That consecrates for holy toil
The servants of the Lord.

Such love in peace and joy distills
As o'er the slopes of Hermon's hills
Refreshing dew descends;
The Lord commands His blessing there,
And they that walk in love shall share
In life that never ends."

But your brother in Christ has an old evil nature which lusts after the things of the flesh. And you still have an evil nature, because of which the admonition of the Apostle Paul to the Galatians is to be heeded, namely, "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." Galatians 5:13

And therefore it is not at all impossible that your brother in Christ is your friend and companion because of the things of the flesh which so easily beset him and because he finds encouragement in walking in these things by the example you set and the attitude you assume over against these things of the flesh. We remarked last time that as our brother's keeper we were certainly to be very careful lest we offended the brother. At that time we also remarked that to offend him does not mean that we hurt his feelings by the things which we allow but rather that we cause him to stumble and fall into sin by the things which we excuse and after which we seek. It is about this matter of offending the brother and so ceasing to be his keeper that we wish to add a few lines this time.

Let us repeat, then, that to offend, as the Scriptures understand it and speak of it does not mean that we shock someone by our liberty and lack of

conscience concerning a particular deed. We may grieve some one in the congregation by our boldness to perform a particular deed. We may cause the pastor of the local congregation and the consistory members and even our parents and brothers and sisters to be heavy hearted and to spend sleepless nights by sins which we openly and boldly perform without a qualm of conscience. But this is not offending them in the sense that Scripture speaks of offending others by the things we allow. You may find such a description of an offense in the English dictionary, but the word Scripture uses (skandalon, from which we get our english word "scandal") means "the moveable stick or trigger of a trap; any impediment placed in the way and causing one to stumble and fall." Metaphorically it means anyone or anything that causes another to be drawn into sin or error." This idea is clearly borne out in the passage we quoted last time when Jesus says in Matthew 18:6 "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me" and also that other passage which follows a few verses later "... if thine eye offend thee... if thy hand or foot offend thee"

Now surely one's eye, hand and foot never causes the person to be shocked or grieved by what they have done as something it would never think of doing. Rather did the person do these things through the eye, hand and foot *and enjoyed them*. Nor does one shock a little child and cause it to grieve that some awful offense has been committed before God. And note we use the word "offense" in the sense of sin and not unexpected deed. The meaning surely is that that eye, that hand and that foot are a snare to us, a thing which causes us to stumble and fall into sin.

And we, by our sins, can very really cause the brother, whom we must keep, to fall into the sins we excuse, practice and at which we laugh as something humorous instead of something abominable in God's sight. To have friends and to enjoy their fellowship is a wonderful experience. Yet "in His fear" it is also well for us that we time and again take stock of ourselves and make sure that we are not seeking the friendship of certain individuals because they are as liberal about sin as we like to be or that we attract the friendship of others by our loose living. The dutch has a saying "Soort zoekt soort" which is also expressed by our english proverb "Birds of a feather flock together." Let it be in your life that others are attracted to you because you live "in His fear." Then you will have real friends with whom you can fellowship in the friendship of God's covenant. You will be able to enjoy their friendship while experiencing God's friendship. Beware of any friendships which must be sought and be experienced at the expense of

loosing God's friendship! The Psalmist declares "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts." Psalm 119:63. Let it be said of you "He is my companion because he fears the Lord and keeps His precepts."

Sad to say but nevertheless true is also the fact that congregations and denominations will grow and gather members because of the sins and evil practices it will *not* discipline. Churches also make a name for themselves and become known for allowing their members to walk in certain sins without being disciplined. Surely those to whom the keys of the kingdom are given to exercise over God's people must be doubly careful as the brother's keeper lest they be *keeping him in sin*. Ministers of the Gospel, elders and deacons cannot walk too carefully either in their own personal walk or in their official work in the kingdom. Popularity for an office bearer in the Church of God may be an evil thing and always is when it is due to the laxity and looseness of life of the one who has received the office. Cause none to follow your example of sin, but let it be said that men follow you for the truth and for righteousness' sake. And without a doubt it is a higher compliment to be bestowed upon a minister of the Gospel to be told that he practices what he preaches than to be told that he preaches an interesting and well organized sermon.

There is another side to the matter. As your brother's keeper you do nothing to encourage him in sin. You never set him a bad example. But as his friend you also rebuke him for his sins, and you do it in a spirit of brotherly love. At first he may resent it and consider you to be an enemy rather than a brother. And that is to be expected. As far as his old nature is concerned, you are his enemy, and with that old nature you can never have fellowship. But by God's grace he will according to the new principle of life recognize your rebuke as one of brotherly love, as one coming from the brother's keeper. Even then, you will need to walk in His fear yourself and set him the example. You will have to deny yourself, very often, things which in themselves are not sinful and which you can perform with a clear conscience. But for the brother's sake, you *will* desist that you may gain him and not encourage him in worldliness.

Do not say, must I let his weaker conscience and unspirituality rule me and my conscience? Must I be hemmed in and be put in a straight-jacket by the weaker, more unspiritual brother? Nay, that is not stating it correctly. Remember that you are your brother's keeper. That is your calling. Bear that in mind before you ask what you must give up. Sinful practices, of course, you must give up wholly and always. But even when it comes to those things which

in themselves you, with your stronger conscience, can perform to the glory of God, you are to remember that your stronger conscience is due to the fact that God has given you more light, a clearer insight into the truth. A stronger conscience is not one hardened by sin. Not at all! It is one that judges your deeds in the light of God's Word with a fuller revelation of the truth in that Word than the man with a weaker conscience possesses. And it is GOD Who has brought next to you that weaker brother. It is God, then, Who gave you that clearer insight into the truth, and it is God Who put next to you that brother with less insight and, perhaps, with a greater tendency to fall into sin. The brother's weaker conscience then, and the brother's "lowered resistance" to sinful things does not rule your conscience and determine your walk of life. But God's calling to you to be your brother's keeper does! Listen to the Apostle in I Cor. 8:11: "And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?" Still more in the next verse, "But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ." Or read I Cor. 9:20-23. Nay the brother's weaker conscience and his tendency to seek the world does not determine your conscience and your walk of life, but your calling of God to be your brother's keeper and your calling of God to deal with the brother as a true brother and friend do determine your conscience and your walk of life, but your calling of God to be your brother's keeper and your calling of God to deal with the brother as a true brother and friend do determine your life before your brother's eyes.

Think it over. Think before you laugh at sin. Consider before you walk a certain way whether you are not encouraging others to walk in sin. Your brother's keeper. Indeed. But parents! your children's keepers also. In the home when they are so close to you, closer than the brother who is outside your home, what example do you set? Be sure that you are keepers of these children and not offenders. Read Matthew 18:6 and tremble! Yea, rather, read it and run in His fear to the throne of grace for help and strength to live before your children in His fear.

—J. A. Heys

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Arminians consider the grace that is inspired into a true believer's heart, as a text of Scripture written upon a pane of glass, liable to be demolished by the first hand that flings a stone at it. —Toplady.

Contending For The Faith

The Study of the History of Doctrine

THE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY (cont'd.)

It enables us to understand more clearly the doctrines of our Church.

The reader will recall that we were calling attention in our previous article to the benefits which we derive from a study of the history of doctrine. And we concluded our article with the observation that one of these benefits is that it unites us with the Church of the past. Another benefit which we derive from this study is that it enables us to understand more clearly the doctrines of our Church or Churches.

This truth is illustrated in natural life. The history of our country enables us to understand our country as it is today. We cannot discuss this now, of course, in detail—to do so would lead us too far astray from our present subject. The desire, for example, for personal freedom and liberty is inseparably linked up with the past. Our country's decision to have a democratic form of government can be understood better if we examine conditions in Europe at the time of the founding of our country. Our country would not exist as it does today were it not for its peculiar history. The history of the French Revolution certainly affected the content of our country's constitution—the two can never be divorced.

This truth is also illustrated in the histories of various churches. The past, also in this respect, vitally affects the present. There are, for example, any number of churches who lead an anemic spiritual life and existence because their origin was not rooted in a desire and longing for the truth and the things of God's Kingdom and covenant. Is it not true that the California of today stands in the sign of the "gold rush" in the middle of the nineteenth century? And has this also affected the spiritual life of that state today? Is it not true, to quote another example, that the existence of the Liberated Churches in the Netherlands of today must be viewed and appraised in connection with the doctrinal controversy in the Netherlands some fifty years ago? The undersigned was told repeatedly that the rejection of "Common Grace" by these brethren must be viewed historically as revolving about the person of the late Dr. A. Kuyper, noted for his systematic setting forth of this doctrine which champions the synthesis: that the church and the world can live together in cooperation and fellow-

ship in the things of this present life. And this also applies to our Protestant Reformed Churches. The existence and life of a church or a group of churches is unquestionably affected by their place in history and in the light of the past.

Hence, a study of this history of doctrine will enable us to understand more readily and more clearly the doctrines of our Church or Churches. Fundamental truths such as the Trinity, Absolute and Unconditional Predestination, Total Depravity, Particular Atonement, Irresistible Grace, Preseverance of the Saints, the Promise, Infant Baptism, can be more clearly understood when studied in the light of the past. This lies in the nature of the case and needs very little elucidation. In fact, the possibility certainly exists that words and terms change in meaning, and that certain terms as they appear in our Confessions today may have had another meaning when these Confessions were composed. A striking example to illustrate this truth is the use of the word "offer". We know that the meaning of this word today certainly varies from its meaning at the time our Confessions were drawn up. The word today denotes a general inclination on the part of God to save all those who hear the gospel, whereas in the past it simply meant: to exhibit, show forth. Hence, a study of the history of doctrine will certainly enable us to understand more readily and clearly the doctrines of the Church of God today.

It enables us to discern the true from the false.

This, too, is a matter of vital and fundamental significance. It is not always easy to discern the true from the false. To be sure, we can readily recognize error when the so-called cardinal truths of Christendom are brutally attacked and lived. It is not difficult to recognize error when the enemy boldly denies that Jesus is God in the flesh or brutally asserts that our Lord Jesus Christ never arose from the dead. However, the devil can be very subtle in his attack upon the truths of the Holy Scriptures. It is characteristic of him to appear as an angel of light, to be garbed in the garments of the truth, and to camouflage his attacks upon the Word of God. One of his most effective weapons is to borrow the language and terminology of Reformed truth and use it to "cover up" and spread his distortion of the Word of God. This is also true of the modernist. He speaks of the Son of God, of the death and resurrection and ascension of the Lord and His return upon the clouds of heaven to judge the quick and the dead. The trouble is that, although he uses the same terms we do, he gives them an entirely different connotation. We certainly need not quote examples to substantiate this observation. It

is well to bear in mind that we, also in our terminology, emit a clear and no uncertain sound. People should have no difficulty understanding us and knowing exactly what we mean and proclaim.

A study of the history of doctrine will prove to be helpful and very beneficial also in this respect. It is extremely helpful, in our attempt to discern the true from the false, to be able to recognize the modern voice of heresy because we have learned to know them in the light of the past. Doctrines have a history, but this is also true of heresies. One may well begin to wonder when he recognizes in the voice and speech of some the same speech of those who were condemned in the past. It is also extremely beneficial when the same truths are attacked which were attacked by those who were condemned as heretics in the past. To use an illustration, we could point to the truth of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. When, for example, we are accused of laying undue stress upon the sovereignty of God and insufficient emphasis upon man's responsibility, we should not feel alarmed because, judged in the light of the past, we find ourselves in exceedingly good company. Or, when we are told that, because of our emphasis upon election, we do not have anything for the wicked, we again recognize this speech as having been uttered in the past by those who were known enemies of the truth of the particular gospel. Again, when we are told that our emphasis upon God's election and irresistible grace makes men careless and profane, we are able to recognize that the apostle, Paul, already was compelled to contend with this same opposition. Romans 6 is a striking illustration in support of this observation. And thus we could continue. I am sure that we understand the importance and benefit of a study of the history of doctrine also from this point of view. It is extremely important that we are not merely able to discern the truth but also the lie; the two are inseparable. And the struggle of the Church of the living God in the past has been recorded for our benefit

It helps us in further development of the truth.

The truth must be developed. This lies in the very nature of the case. On the one hand, the enemy will afford the Church of God plenty opportunity to be busy along this line. Life becomes more complex and the position and calling of the Church and Christian more difficult in the midst of the world. And as these attacks upon the Church and the truth become more varied and complex it lies in the very nature of the case that the Church is called upon to sharpen its weapons to resist and ward off these attacks. Besides, on the other hand, the truth itself is so tremendous in its content and scope. Stagnant pools

must ultimately dry up. The purpose of our Confessions and creeds was certainly never to say the final word as far as the development of the truth is concerned, so that there would no longer be any development of doctrine. Our fathers did not compose these wonderful and beautiful documents to stifle and render impossible all advance, but rather to encourage and stimulate the study of the Scriptures. We may never rest upon our laurels. To do so is tragic, inasmuch as the enemy is never satisfied with past accomplishments. That enemy is ever on the alert to undermine the Word of God, and we must certainly be ever on the alert to study the Scriptures which alone can make us wise unto salvation. The Confessions must, therefore, never be studied as an end in themselves, but to help us in our understanding and study of the Bible. If we study and regard the Confessions as an end in themselves the invariable result will be an attitude of smug complacency and this will ultimately have for its result that we place these Confessions upon our shelves and simply pride ourselves in their possession without concerning ourselves with their content. To love our creeds, however, because they lead us to a richer study of the Word of the Lord will safeguard us against this error and danger.

How important, therefore, is also in this respect a study of the history of doctrine! It enables us to be busy in the further development of the truth along its positive historical line. It points out to us the direction in which we must go. These doctrines are as many sign-posts which direct us in the further development of the truth. A study of the past will disclose to us that we must not travel in a direction which will nullify or weaken the doctrines of God's eternal and sovereign election and reprobation, that the grace of the God of our salvation is sovereignly particular. We must never fall victim to a conception of the promise which fails to consider the fundamental truth that the Lord generally realizes His promise in His children during their infancy—to do so would imply that we have departed from the "tried, beaten path." A study of the past will help us to understand the road we must travel in the future. That must be our purpose and resolve.

—H. Veldman

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A truly enlightened believer (i.e., one who has a clear view of gospel privileges, and makes conscience of gospel duties,) stands between two fires: the Pharisees call him an Antinomian, and the real Antinomians call him a Pharisee. —Toplady.

DECENCY and ORDER

The Order of Assemblies

THE OFFICES (cont'd.)

It would be better if the second article of our Church Order were revised so that the word "*four*" were changed to "*three*" and the phrase "*of the professors of theology*" were elided altogether, or if it is desirable to retain that phrase the following redaction might be suggested as an improvement over the present article:

"Article 2 — The offices are of three kinds: of the ministers of the Word and professors of theology, of the elders, and of the deacons."

Our present redaction of this article, we wrote last time, is the result of a faulty interpretation by Calvin of Ephesians 4:11, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers". We quoted Calvin's interpretation of this passage and if you will now refer to the last issue of the Standard Bearer you will find that according to his view the office of the ministers of the Word and that of professors of theology are two distinct church offices. That this is not correct may be shown from the following considerations. Let it be understood, however, that we do not disagree with the Genevan Reformer when he asserts that the office of professors is a church office but we only beg to differ with him when he claims that this office is separate from that of the Word. Our reasons for this disagreement are these.

First of all his interpretation of Ephesians 4:11 we believe cannot be substantiated by the grammatical construction of the text. In the original especially but even in the English translation it is rather evident that the phrase "*pastors and teachers*" is intended as a single entity. Were this not the case the apostle could have made himself crystal clear by simply adding one word.

Secondly, in criticizing this view we might point to the fact that Scripture nowhere speaks of the office of professors of theology apart from the office of the ministry of the Word. Timothy, a minister of the Word, is enjoined by the apostle Paul to "commit those things which he had heard of the apostle among many witnesses to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." (II Timothy 2:2). In this passage the office of professors of theology is plainly an annexment of Timothy's ministerial office. All ministers of

the Word are not professors to be sure but all professors of theology are ministers of the Word.

Thirdly, if we adopt the view of Calvin in this connection we destroy in part at least the symbolism of the offices in the church. The three-fold office of ministers, elders, and deacons is undoubtedly a reflection of the three-fold office of Christ Himself. More will be written about this when we discuss the offices individually but permit me in this connection merely to cite the thirty-first question and answer of our Heidelberg Catechism which implies this analogy.

"Christ is ordained of God the Father and anointed with the Holy Ghost, to be our chief Prophet and Teacher, (Minister . . . G. V.) who has fully revealed to us the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption; and to be our only High Priest, (Deacon . . . Servant . . . G. V.) who by the one sacrifice of His body, has redeemed us, and makes continual intercession with the Father for us; and also to be our eternal King, (Elder . . . Ruler . . . G. V.) Who governs us by His Word and Spirit, and who defends and preserves us in that salvation He has purchased for us."

From this it is evident that we would have to have very preponderant reasons to introduce into this scheme a fourth office. These reasons Calvin does not have. We may, therefore, not destroy this symbolism and analogy by separating the offices of the ministry of the Word and that of professors of theology.

That the revision of Article 2 as suggested above is proper also follows from the fact that it would bring this article into better harmony with the rest of our Reformed Confessions. Article 30 of our Netherlands Confession, for example, speaks of a three-fold office in the church as follows: "We believe that this true church must be governed by that spiritual policy which our Lord hath taught us in His Word; namely, that there must be ministers or pastors to preach the Word of God, and to administer the sacraments; also elders and deacons, who, together with the pastors, form the council of the church . . ."

Likewise Article 31 of the same confession speaks of ministers, elders and deacons who are chosen to their respective offices by a lawful election by the church. In both of these articles no mention is made of the office of professors of theology which would not likely be the case if that were a separate office in the church.

It is also true that our Form for the Installation of Professors of Theology is written on the supposition that these professors are ministers of the Word. The following statements taken from this form indicate this clearly: "Beloved, brethren, it is known unto you that our brother *in the holy ministry N. N.*" (italics

mine, G. V.). And again, "Conscious of this calling our church has also established a Theological School and called *the reverend* brother N N." (Italic mine, G. V.).

And what is still more, the church order itself in Articles 16 and 18 essentially identifies the office of the ministers of the word and professors although a distinction may and also should be made in their respective labors. There we read that "the office of the ministry is to continue in prayer and in the ministry of the Word" while the "office of professors of theology is to expound the Holy Scriptures." Certainly, no one would aver that expounding the Scriptures does not belong to the ministry of the Word and is an intrinsic part of the proclamation of the Gospel except, perhaps, the modernist whose conception of the office of the ministry is grossly distorted in our present day.

Our conclusion is, therefore, that there are only three distinct offices in the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. This does not mean that the task of training men for the ministry of the gospel which is the labor of the professors of theology does not belong to the institute of the church. It certainly does. Our contention, based especially upon the passage of II Timothy 2:2, is that this work does not belong to a separate office but is inherent in the office of the ministry of the gospel. And, whereas the work is of such magnitude that it requires the whole effort and time of the office bearer, the minister who functions as professor of theology should be relieved of his congregational duties so that he may devote himself entirely to that labor.

We will not at this point enter into a discussion of these offices individually. This can be done more appropriately in connection with the particular articles of the Church Order which specially circumscribe these offices. (See Arts. 16, 18, 23, 25). In this connection we are only to note that these offices do exist in the church and that they are not man-made positions but rather that they are Divinely instituted. This fact must be firmly fixed in our consciousness before we can possibly go on to discuss any further implications of the offices in the church.

Hardly do we consider it necessary that we point out the Scriptural proof for this claim to our readers. No reformed person questions that the sacred offices in the church are of God. To remove all doubt, however, we might cite Ephesians 4:11 as proof that Christ (The Son of God) has instituted the office of the ministry of the Word in his church. Titus, in chapter 1:5 of the Epistle that bears his name, is enjoined "to set in order the things that are wanting and to ordain elders in every city as I appointed thee". It is, of course, the apostle Paul here that gives this

instruction and he does so only upon the authority of Christ. The institution of the office of deacons is clearly set forth in Acts 6. For still further references we might point out readers to Hebrews 13:7, II Corinthians 5:20, I Peter 5:1-4, I Tim. 5:17, Phil. 1:1, etc.

This means that these offices are one of the most precious gifts which God has given to His church and ought always to be regarded as such. Often this is not done. The offices are frequently misunderstood, taken for granted and even slighted. We should remember, however, that in these offices God has entrusted such things as the ministry of His Word and of the holy sacraments, the keys of the kingdom of heaven by which the doors of the kingdom are opened and closed, and the ministry of mercy in the Name of the merciful Saviour. Through the instrumentality of these offices it pleases the Lord to bestow the abundant goodness of His grace and the eternal riches of His inheritance upon His church. Through them the church of all ages is gathered, God's people are spiritually enriched, and His Kingdom is realized and prepared for its ultimate manifestation in heavenly glory. If these things are consciously before us, we, as children of God, will always properly regard these gifts of God with due respect.

Those who function in these offices must also know that they act therein only upon the authority of Christ Who has called them and placed them in this sacred trust. They have no rights inherent in themselves. They are undershepherds under Christ. They are servants who are mandated to feed His flock and to have oversight over His heritage. They can only speak that which He commands saying always, "Thus saith the Lord." They can only do what He orders. They must carry out His will in all things as those who must give account not only of themselves but also of the souls over which they are called to watch. Indeed, it is a great privilege to so serve Him in those offices but it is also a most solemn responsibility for "Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture, saith the Lord". (Jer. 23:1).

G. Vanden Berg

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As the bullion of which money is made, is the king's property, even before it is struck into coin, and before it visibly bears the royal image and superscription; so the unregenerate elect are God's own heritage, though they do not appear to be such, until the Holy Spirit has made them pass through the mint of effectual calling, and actually stamped them into current coin for the kingdom of heaven. —Toplady.

ALL AROUND US

CHANGES HIS MIND ON UNIONS

In the editorial department of the *Banner* of May 1, 1953, the Rev. H. J. Kuiper gives a "review" of an article appearing in THE CHRISTIAN CENTURY of January 21, 1953, written by a reputed liberal, Dr. C. C. Morrison. The latter wrote on the subject: "Re-examine the Social Ideals."

Rev. Kuiper considered the article worthy of editorial comment, and intends in future articles to reflect on the views of Morrison in as far as they have reference to the problem of unionism confronting his own churches. In the above mentioned editorial he attempts only to review the stand of Dr. Morrison.

We, too, consider the revised stand of this liberal leader on unionism worthy of note. We are sorry we do not have the original article of Morrison in our possession, and will have to rely on the accuracy of Rev. Kuiper's review. Accordingly it is reported that this liberal leader, who for 39 years was editor of the CENTURY, has in the past supported the cause of unionism most vigorously. Dr. Morrison believes in and evidently preaches a "social gospel." But of late he has changed his mind with respect to one phase of it as it pertains to the cause of unionism.

Dr. Morrison maintains that, to quote Kuiper, "the changes in our economic life during the last fifty years 'call for a reorientation of the church's economic ideals' ". There was a time when "the evils of that capitalistic system, such as long hours, low wages, child labor, sweat shops, and other abuses moved churches to champion the cause of labor and labor unions. But now the pendulum has swung to the opposite extreme. Most of the injustices of the capitalistic system 'have been corrected or are on the way to correction.' Today labor has become 'the most powerful bloc in our democracy.' Its political influence is great. 'The union is able to and, under its autocratic leadership, appears to be willing even to disrupt the national economy in order to gain ends which, many believe, are not good for the country as a whole and thus, in the long run, not good for labor itself.' In their 'partisan' support of the unions the churches have failed to take into account—thus Dr. Morrison—the change in the status of labor. They still assume that 'whatsoever the union demands is good.'

"Morrison's first indictment against unionism is based on its entrance into the political arena. It wields a tremendous influence there and abuses its power. 'Any proposed law to limit the autocratic power of

their leaders in the interest of the nation as a whole is fought relentlessly.' The leaders are no longer content with being on a plane of equality with management; they demand 'the whip-hand in industry.' But that, says Morrison, would spell the end of the system of free enterprise which they profess to uphold."

"The churches should realize that 'the union today has become a prodigious concentration of power wielded by a few leaders' and that if the union yields to the temptation to use that power in an irresponsible way it 'may become an enemy of labor itself as well as of the nation.'

"The old capitalism, according to Morrison, is gone However, the system of capitalism still stands and will stand as long as the right of private property is maintained and business enterprise still remains competitive. At the same time, the writer asserts that our form of economy is no longer merely capitalistic, for one-half of its power is now claimed and exercised by organized labor."

Dr. Morrison mentions only two evils on which the churches should focus their thought, but adds that there are others which call for correction.

The first evil mentioned is the strike. 'The churches must condemn as morally and socially vicious the alleged right to strike.' It turns the economic stage into a battlefield. It is 'inherently immoral.' 'The persistence of this brutal and uncivilized struggle will inevitably lead to a government-planned and -controlled economy which neither labor nor capital, but only socialists and communists, want.' The second evil mentioned is 'the irresponsible power now wielded by the official leadership of the labor unions.' These unions claim to be democratic but in reality bear a close resemblance to facism or sovietism. They are controlled by a small group of persons responsible only to themselves. The churches should become aware of the danger of such autocratic control of the great masses of men."

There is more in this editorial which we do not have the space to quote. But this will suffice to show how this erstwhile advocate for the labor masses has changed his mind with respect to unionism as it has in late years taken on power.

We end with a few observations and questions:

1. We are thankful for the stand our Protestant Reformed Churches have taken almost from their inception with respect to union membership. We believe the stand is correct that membership in the so-called neutral unions and in the church is incompatible. Hence one's membership in these unions makes it necessary for the church to initiate discipline. We question whether our Churches are consistent in their thinking and acting with respect to all phases of



unionism and worldly associations. For example, I have never been able to understand the consistency of disciplining union members and at the same time allowing to go untouched those whose livelihood depends on hiring union help. Neither do I see the consistency of advocating membership in the so-called Christian Labor Association and disciplining those who belong to the A.F.L. or C.I.O. But perhaps some day we will get around to cutting off these fuzzy edges.

2. We are also curious to know what the editor of the *Banner* is going to comment on this article of Dr. Morrison, especially as the union question confronts his churches. Is he going to advocate a new approach to the question of union membership in his Churches? As it now stands, we understand the matter of union membership rests solely with the local churches. And around where we live many of the members of his churches who are members of the worldly unions go unmolested. And when you approach them regarding their union affiliation, they leave you with the impression that when you object you are a flea-brain, or a man from Mars or another world.

3. We also were wondering how the Christian Labor Association is going to react when it reads this editorial in the *Banner*. We have especially in mind that part in which the "strike" has been denominated as "inherently immoral." Are they going to pass it up with a shrug of the shoulder and say perhaps 'well we never did believe in the strike in the same way as the worldly unions.' Or are they going to still maintain as the president of a furniture local said in my presence several years ago when it was suggested that the C.L.A. remove the word "strike" from its constitution: "Not by a long shot! — if you take that word out, we have nothing left. The strike is our only weapon." As I see it, unless the C.L.A. changes its constitution and attitude, in my book it's no different than the C.I.O., except that it has the name "Christian".

4. Finally, it seems so strange that a big man like Dr. Morrison, after some 39 years pulling for the unions, now suddenly wakes up to the fact that the baby he once cuddled is become a ferocious gorilla. We have told our people for years that any one who supports the so-called neutral unions is cutting his own throat. I remember several years ago when I made a study of the constitutions of these unions that I learned that some 40 percent of the dues paid went to headquarters to pay for strikes. Of the most of the remaining 60 percent I supposed that the racketeers who run the unions got fat. The fact that J. L. Lewis and others of his ilk can pull down the salaries they do bespeaks the racket that it is. And the labor man who sees only shiny pennies is made to think he is going places.

ANOTHER DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

In the latest issue of *Torch and Trumpet* (Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 30-32) we came upon the first in a series of articles written by the president of a newly formed organization which calls itself: The Calvinistic Culture Association. Since our space is about used up, we will have to be satisfied simply to say that the organization has a: Declaration of Principles and Work Program.

We note in its Declaration of Principles that the association "accepts as the foundation for its existence the unchanging Word of God, which it understands in the sense of the Reformed or Calvinistic confessions. Further, the C.C.A. acknowledges the principles of Calvinism to be valid for all the cultural life of mankind."

Besides declaring certain principles as its aim, one of which is the Second Point of 1924 "God in his common grace checked sin and corruption in its effect, by which means, notwithstanding the element of wickedness in the heart of man, a development of the world could take place," the association adopts certain viewpoints respecting the following: Marriage and Family, Rearing and Education of Children, Social organization, Science, Literature, Art and Sports, Christian Press, International Relations, Authority and Liberty, etc. The president claims that the association is growing; its membership is "steadily increasing."

We will watch for further developments, and perhaps give a clearer picture of the Declaration of Principles next time, D.V..

—M. Schipper

CONTRIBUTION

EEN NOODKREET UIT REDLANDS

Zal de a.s. Synode nu ook geblinddoekt worden door antipathie tegenover een broeder in "good standing"? en zal men ook van de Synode terug keeren, gelijk de afgevaardigden van Classis West, met de triumfante-lijke uitroep "we won"!!!! Als dat zal geschieden, dan zie ik nog donkerder wolken aan den kerkelijken hemel van Redlands dan er ooit zijn geweest. Als men tracht onder den schijn van recht een broeder uit antipathie zedelijk onschadelijk te maken dan struikelt het recht wel op de straten.

Daarom zou ik vanuit Redlands de broeders willen toeroepen, verwacht zaken niet met personen, onderzoek de protesten biddend, en indien ge geen voldoende licht kunt verkrijgen onderzoekt dan de zaak *in loco*: het gaat om het welzijn van Redlands' gemeente in het bijzonder, en om al onze kerken in 't algemeen.

J. R. Vander Wal

CALL TO SYNOD

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

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

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

Consistory of the

First Prot. Ref. Church