

# THE STANDARD

*Bearer*

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## MEDITATION

### The Agony of Jesus

"And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down and prayed, saying, Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Thine be done. And there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." —Luke 22:41-44.

It was not long before this hour of woe that Jesus walked and talked, He spoke and washed the feet of His disciples. 'Twas night, and Judas was not there: a bargain must be kept, a bargain foul, a handful of silver must be earned. But on that silver cleaves a stain, a stain so deep that endless ages shall not cleanse that spot in nethermost abyss of hell. The flames rise high, the pain, the suffering is so deep and night is dark, 'tis called the outer darkness of a place especially created for all the damned.

'Twas night, and Judas was not there.

And when the little band of lovers of the Son of God came near with Jesus to the garden of the olives, it seemed as though a special gust of wrath struck our Redeemer. A change came over Him who spoke so calm and sweet in upper chamber, where all would eat and drink of lamb and wine. 'Twas ended; they stood and sang a hymn belov'd from age to age by lovers of Jehovah. They went into the night and soon they saw the brook, the Cidron of Gethsemane.

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I spoke about a gust of wrath that struck the Saviour. The signs, the outward signs are there: I hear of agony of soul and stark amazement. The favored three were there; their story came to us who live so far away from scenes described in Holy Writ.

They told us of that agony, that dread and sorrow of the Lord.

But even when the band of lovers was diminished, and only three were there, it was too much: the Lord craved solitude, He will withdraw Himself and be alone. Oh yes, He was alone in all His suffering.

The Holy Spirit tells us of a distance such when rock is thrown by strength of a mere man. And there the Saviour sank in shadows of the night, 'neath silent olives. Hark, be still. We hear the Saviour's words, and see the tears that stream, and thicken, fall, are swallowed up by ground that is thrice holy. If Moses stood on holy ground where God would speak of faithfulness and love, what shall we say of this green grove, this holy place where Jesus suffered cried in agony of soul and spirit? What shall we say of blood-drops heavy, blood that is so precious that it bought and purchased countless sinners and a whole new world? Oh yes, we heard of blood-drops, and of agonizing prayers and supplications, thrice repeated: the Son is praying to His Father, so well belov'd. So hark, and be now very still. We'll listen to our Substitute. For He, though separated from His church the distance of a rock when thrown by man, is very near to us in this dread hour. Why weeps the Lord, I ask, why does He shed this precious blood that glistens on His forehead? Why does He groan and pray and spend His soul in nameless grief? It is because He has you in His arms, His heart, His breast; He's one with you and all that are foreknown by loving Father of the sheep. 'Twas not for sin and guilt that He did own that blood was pressed from Him. It was the guilt of His known flock that Father found and saw, and visited with stroke on stroke, till Jesus lay in dust of death, eternal death.

We see the tears of God, the sweat of blood of God: strange mystery of salvation.

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He knelt and prayed and asked His God and

Father if this dread cup of awful death and hell might pass.

He asked and prayed and turned to His disciples. But they were weary, oh so weary and they slept, the sleep of utter sadness and amazement. Events had been so strange, so unforeseen, so unexpected.

Yes, Peter, James and John had fallen asleep. While Jesus prayed and groaned in agonizing pain of hell. No, Jesus, no, the church cannot keep pace with Thee when Thou art treading such dark ways of awful retribution. They sleep when Jesus went to hell. "One solitary hour you cannot watch with Me? With Me who am thy Friend, thy Goël, thy Redeemer? You cannot watch with Me while devils rage about Me and the Father is so far, so far away?"

And Jesus went His way to solitude anew, a solitude that is so absolute, so strange to ways of men, that no one understands or grasps to tell his fellow. To understand the poet you needs must know his land, his ways and life. But Jesus is the wholly Other, He's God Supreme, but God who suffers in the frame of man. And, no, I cannot understand such tears, that blood, these agonizing prayers, in darkness of a night that shall be celebrated in the heavenly city, when this pure Lamb of God shall stand 'mid angels and the host of men made perfect.

He went His way, and prayed again the selfsame prayer: O Father, hear! Is there an other way in which I could redeem Thy sheep from death and hell? This way that is before Me is so dreadful; the monster of this death that stands before Me I must swallow, and I'm afraid and dread the fires that glow and do consume Me. Is there an other way, dear Father?

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O, do not say that Jesus did not want to be obedient to His Father! The very thought may perish with the thinking. It was not possible that Jesus would rebel. It was His very meat and drink to do the will of Him who was His life. And He *did* show us in the selfsame prayer. Oh, no, not only at the end of this thrice dreadful cry, not only when He would negate His own desire and will, but at the very start of crying to His God. Before one word is uttered of these supplications, except the sweetest word of Father, He bends His will, negates His own desires and cries: "If Thou be willing!" It is the victory of purest love, of wonderful obedience, of oneness with the Father. It sets the tune of a sweet melody that grows and sings even while 'tis sung in awful depths of fear and trembling.

"If it be not Thy will, dear Father, then let this

monster come and take Me in his claws of death unspeakable, in horror of forsakenness from Thee, when soon I shall be stretched on the accursed tree, where all may see and gaze upon the mystery of Thy adored salvation, where devils led by Lucifer and mobs of men shall mock and spit, shall laugh and taunt, but where the angels shall be silent. 'Twill be the hour of all the forces of corruption and deceit. But I shall then be silent, except to open doors of love to all My own, forced open by My prayers for murderers of God. I shall be silent, Father, if it's Thy will I die this cursed death which I do fear and dread."

Oh no, the Saviour's will is at the very start in harmony with His God.

But He's afraid of this stark night of terror: reaction of His holy Soul against a state of those that have deserved to die the death that is eternal.

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And so, the distances are great in this sweet garden. A stone's cast hence? O no, but countless miles away. I may not even speak of earthly measure, mark or span.

The distances are measured by my God: He knows the depths of this Vicarious suffering. The stone's cast grows into the lengths of an eternal way, a *via dolorosa*. There lives no man who ever measured death, the distances of death that are eternal, and least of all the solitary way to hell along which Jesus trod.

He prayed alone, so far away from Peter, James and John, so far away from you and me, and from the church He bought with His own blood.

And He went farther still; in this sweet garden we saw His kneeling form. Few hours from then He is in awful darkness; and we see no more. From very far away we hear the groans, while drops of blood fall heavily upon the place called Golgotha.

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And yet, seen from another focal point, He was not far from you and me. In that dread hour He held you in His arms and bears you safely Home.

You're washed by by blood, you're purified by all this woe, for He stood in your place, dear lovers of the Lord! He took you in His arms from all eternity. This garden and this blood, pressed from His holy forehead, is foreknown and loved before. It is the thought of peace, of wondrous peace, that is now realized.

No, Jesus, no, there is no other way: this is the way that Thou must go. It's wisdom of the Father. Thou wert in counsels sweet, before the earth was born, and there we measured all that way, that *via dolorosa*. 'Twas then that all those drops of bloody sweat were counted, their preciousness established, their fruits were willed, and all the songs engendered by that blood were sung from everlasting, within the heart of God.

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But hark, what means that rustle and that shining light in yonder grove of olives? It is an angel of the heavenly host. The Father heard the prayers of Jesus, and strength of God is sent, is come with this loved messenger of light of heaven. He hovers above the prostrate form of Jesus, and strengthening powers lift the Saviour now. He wends His way to sleeping men, so weak, so weary. He speaks to them in accents low, in measured words that tell a wondrous story: Sleep on, My own, sleep on and take your rest! It is enough; the hour is come when I shall be exalted and lift from this so sorry earth. But God shall be exalted in this My work, this labor to redeem. Sleep on, and take your rest. And rest they did and do, and ever will. The work is done: my Saviour died and rose again and went to heaven. And all the sheep, bought by this blood, shall follow Him to halls of joy in God.

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And so the words of David ended. The echo of those agonizing words grew still. The garden rests, will rest with all reborn creation. And men, with angels, sing, will sing till moons shall shine no more.

The prayers of David ended; they ended in a sob, but O, the songs that grew from this so throbbing heart of Jesus!

G. Vos.

The steps of those whom He approves  
Are ordered by the Lord;  
And though they fall, held by His hand,  
They yet shall be restored.

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## EDITORIALS

### The Promise According to the Confessions

We must still call attention to the thanksgiving at the close of the Form for the Administration of Baptism. There we read the well-known words:

"Almighty God and merciful Father, we thank and praise thee, that Thou hast forgiven us, and our children, all our sins, through the blood of thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, and received us through thy Holy Spirit as members of thine only begotten Son, and adopted us to be thy children, and sealed and confirmed the same unto us by holy Baptism."

This is strong language indeed!

True, it does not literally mention the promise.

But the rich contents of the promise is expressed here in no uncertain terms: the forgiveness of sins, reception into the fellowship of Christ, so that we are His members, adoption unto children.

Moreover, all this is presented as an indubitable fact. It is all accomplished: God *has* forgiven us all our sins, He *has* received us through His Holy Spirit as members of His only begotten Son, He *has* adopted us to be His children. It is all finished.

And of whom is this said here? Is it, perhaps, for conscious believers, that fulfilled the "condition" of faith? Or is the promise here necessarily presented as unconditional?

The latter is, evidently the truth. For, in the first place, this thanksgiving does not only speak for those that utter this thanksgiving, but also for their little children. God has forgiven little infants, that certainly cannot consciously perform the act of faith, that are wholly incapable of fulfilling any conditions, all their sins; through His Holy Spirit He made them members of His Son, before they knew anything about it. And through the same Spirit He gave them the adoption unto children and heirs. Here we have again the same language we met in the doctrinal part of the Baptism Form: "for as they are without their knowledge partakers of the condemnation in Adam, so are they again received unto grace in Christ." Hence, in the thanksgiving the promise is surely presented as unconditional.

But a second reason why this thanksgiving, evidently, means to present the promise as unconditional, is that it mentions the gift of the Holy Spirit as the Author of our having become members of Jesus Christ. And the ingrafting into Christ as His members by the

Holy Spirit is surely prior to any possible act of faith on our part, and, therefore, unconditional.

Our fathers, therefore, surely maintained that the unconditional promise was signified and sealed unto us and to our children in baptism.

But how could our fathers speak so positively? How could they give thanks that God *has* forgiven us and *our children* all our sins, that He *has* made us *and our children* members of Christ through the Holy Spirit, and that He *has* adopted us *and our children* unto His children?

Is this true, then, after all, of all the children that are baptized?

Or, is this, perhaps, all presumed, and based upon a presupposition?

I well remember the case of a certain minister in Classis Pella, who had conscientious scruples to pray this thanksgiving of the Baptism Form in his congregation. He appealed to classis and revealed his objections. This classis, however, did not explain the problem to him, but, nevertheless, insisted that, in baptizing children in his congregation, he would have to use the Form including the thanksgiving.

He tried to get light on the subject from others, even in Grand Rapids.

I know that he came to Prof. Heyns. And the professor explained that he must understand the language of this thanksgiving as merely an objective bequest, which God, on His part, granted to all the children that are born under the dispensation of the covenant, but that would be subjectively granted to them and realized in and for them on condition of faith and obedience. But the brother that had the conscientious objections was not satisfied with this. He pointed to the very positive language of that thanksgiving, and insisted that, according to it, the children as well as the adults were really partakers of all the blessings of salvation in Christ.

I know, too, that he approached Dr. Van Lonkhuyzen with his problem. He believed in presumptive regeneration, and explained to the brother that the thanksgiving does, indeed, refer to all the children that are born under the dispensation of the covenant, but that we must simply presume or presuppose that they all have the blessings of the covenant. Whether this is really the case will not become apparent until the children grow up and reveal themselves as real and spiritual children of the covenant. But again, the objecting brother pointed to the very positive language of the Baptism Form, and remarked that this language could never be interpreted as presumptions or presuppositions.

Evidently, the brother was right as far as the language of the thanksgiving is concerned.

But what then?

What did our fathers mean?

There is only one possible explanation. The Baptism Form has in view the believing Church and her spiritual seed. It is that believing Church that confesses, prays, pledges, and gives thanks. And that believing Church includes her spiritual seed, the children of the promise. To that Church and her spiritual seed are all the promises of God. And only in that light can we understand that, in the thanksgiving it can say: "Almighty God and merciful Father, we thank Thee that Thou hast forgiven us, and our children all our sins, through the blood of thy beloved Son Jesus Christ."

In other words, our fathers believed and maintained that the promise is unconditional and for the elect only. —H.H.

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## The New Bible

In the *Agenda* of Classis West there occurs among other items, such as two protests against the Declaration of Principles, two protests against sending delegates (as visitors) to the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, an overture concerning the new translation of the Bible as follows:

"The consistory of Sioux Center comes to you with the request that Classis West overture Synod to appoint a committee to study the newly published Revised Standard Version of the Bible, which committee is to report to the Synod of 1954, in order that Synod may advise our membership in regard(s) to the new version."

I do not know, at the time of this writing, whether or not Classis West will adopt this overture and send it through to Synod.

As I see it, it can never do any harm. It offers Synod something positive to think and deliberate about.

But, in the first place, I would suggest that, in case Synod receives and adopts this overture, it does not appoint a committee to study the matter and report to the Synod of 1954, but give in the hands of one of the committees for preadvice to report to the present Synod that meets, D.V. in June, in order that the Syn-

od may make a decision immediately. My chief reason for this is that, by the time Synod meets, the delegates, at least the majority of them, are or should be acquainted with the new version of the Bible and be able to judge of the character of the new translation. It can, of course, easily be purchased. Every one of the delegates can read it for himself. Nor is it necessary to read it through from cover to cover in order to be able to judge of its contents. Many papers have been written about it. A pamphlet has even been published by Carl McIntire, president of the International Council of Christian Churches, under the title: "The New Bible—Why Christians should not accept it." In this pamphlet all the salient errors of the new version are exposed and discussed. Anyone, therefore, may be able to judge for himself. It surely will not require a whole year of study to determine whether or not the new translation should be recommended to our people. I dare say that it will be almost a foregone conclusion that the result of such an investigation will be negative.

But for the same reason, I am also of the opinion that this is hardly a synodical matter. It might be if the overture advised the official adoption of this new version for use in our churches. But why should Synod advise our people what to read or not to read, even a new version of the Bible? Our people can read for themselves and are able to judge for themselves also of the new Bible. They can read the literature that is published about it just as well as the delegates to Synod. And if they are not sufficiently interested to read, it certainly will not help them that Synod pass a decision on the matter and have it printed in the Acts of Synod, for those same people surely will not read those Acts.

Hence, it seems to me that, if people need more light on the matter, let them read whatever is published in papers or pamphlets, and for the rest pastors, elders, or leaders in our societies discuss the matter.

This will be far more effective than any decision of Synod that is printed in the Acts.

And it also will look much better, for it will recognize the office of believers, according to the Word of God in I John 2:20: "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things."—H.H.

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The law that the Lord has ordained  
Is perfect, the soul to restore;  
His truth makes the simple most wise,  
The truth that is sure evermore.

## OUR DOCTRINE

### THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

AN EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

PART III — OF THANKFULNESS

LORD'S DAY 35

#### 2. Image Worship

The first commandment emphasized the truth that God is God alone, and that there is no God beside Him.

The second commandment presupposes the principle that God is a Spirit, invisible, and infinitely glorious.

Hence, while the first commandment deals with the question *who* and *what* God is, the second rather gives an answer, in negative form, to the question *how* God is.

The negative or prohibitive form of this commandment is: "Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them."

Now, what does one do who presumes to make an image or representation of the invisible, incomprehensible, infinitely glorious God? He looks about himself in the visible universe. From that visible creation that exists in time and space, that, therefore, is strictly finite, limited, he derives his idea. He looks at the heavens above, at sun, moon, and stars; at the things in the earth beneath: man, beast, and creeping things; or at the creatures that are "under the earth," below the surface of the earth, in the waters: the fish of the sea, and all sorts of sea-monsters. Of them he makes an image, of silver or gold, of wood or stone. And he declares that the image he made is a very true representation of God, that God is like unto the image he made.

This was the sin Israel committed at Horeb, a sin which they never overcame, the consequences of which pursued them all through the desert and throughout their whole history, until, finally, they were rejected as a nation, and the kingdom of God was taken away from them. They wanted to see their "gods" that brought them up out of the land of Egypt and that would go before them. For thus they spoke to Aaron: "Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him."

For these visible gods they were willing to offer their gold for, when Aaron told them to "break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters. and bring them to me," they willingly complied with his request. And after they had so done, Aaron "fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf." Then the people said: "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." This god, which was supposed to be a representation of the living God, they worshipped. For it Aaron made an altar, and proclaimed: "Tomorrow is a feast unto the Lord." Unto it they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings and "sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play."

Such is image worship.

It is the making of a lie about the invisible God, and worshipping that lie. The image worshipper wantonly deprives God of His glory.

For the living God is the Creator, but an image is always the representation of a creature. God is a Spirit and essentially invisible, but an image is always the representation of a creature. God is a Spirit and essentially invisible, but an image is always material and visible. God is the eternal One, but an image is the representation of a creature which drags God into the limits of time. God is immense, omnipresent, immanent and transcendent, but the image worshipper deprives God of His greatness. God is infinite in all His glorious virtues, but the image worshipper declares of a dumb image, which has neither knowledge nor understanding, which can neither hear nor speak, that it is a true representation of the God of glory. God is independent and exists of and by Himself; He is Jehovah, the eternal I AM, with whom there is no change or shadow of turning; but the image worshipper represents Him as a changeable creature, dependent on the one that made it, and that can be carried about according to the fancy of him that formed it. Image worship, therefore, is the heinous sin of dragging down the glorious Creator of heaven and earth to the level of the creature, and of depriving the Lord of glory of all His adorable virtues.

Nor must we imagine that this sin is committed only by pagans, and that it is inconceivable in the civilized, Christian world. Fact is that this sin is deeply ingrained in our sinful nature. By nature, we are all image worshippers. We are always inclined to lie about God, and to deprive Him of his glorious attributes. No, indeed, we do not carve or chisel a representation of God in wood or stone, in gold or silver, as do the heathen. But we do make images of Him in our mind, in our false conceptions of him. Many are the images of the living God formed by modern the-



ology and philosophy. Whenever we form a conception of God that is not according to His own revelation in the Holy Scriptures, we lie about God and make an image of Him. When we conceive of God as a Being that is so filled with love that he condones sin, we deny His righteousness and make an image of Him. When we imagine of God that is so merciful that He cannot possibly cast the sinner into eternal desolation as punishment for his sin, we deprive Him of the glory of His immutable justice, and form an image of Him in our mind. When, in our prayers, we attempt to approach God without seeking forgiveness in the blood of Christ Jesus our Lord, we are worshipping an image just as really as the Israelites at Horeb worshipped the golden calf. When we conceive of God as a sort of a Santa Claus, that exists to bestow all kinds of good things upon us, to fight our wars and give us our victories; as a God that must solve the problems we create in our sinful world, as One to whom we cry when we are in trouble, but for the rest forget Him, Whom we do not care to glorify and in Whose way we do not care to walk, we simply worship an image of our own making. When we deny the Scriptural truth of election and reprobation, deny that He is merciful to whom He will be merciful and whom He will He hardens; when we represent God as, in saving the sinner, being dependent on the will of man, so that the latter must open the door of his heart before God can enter; or when we conceive of Him as being gracious, in the preaching of the gospel, to all that hear, head for head, and soul for soul, we deny His absolute sovereignty, and fashion an image of God just as really as the pagans carve one in wood or chisel one in stone. If we entertain the dualistic notion that God is the Lord of all good but not of evil; that He sends us health, but not sickness, prosperity but not adversity, peace but not war, plenty of work but not times of depression, life but not death; we deny that God is the Lord of all the earth, and we worship our own lie.

Thus we could continue. But let this be sufficient to convince us that the sin of image worship dwells in our own sinful flesh, and that, according to the inclination of our evil nature, we are always inclined to worship our own lie and to deny the God that has revealed Himself in His Word in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The second commandment puts its finger on a very sore spot in our sinful nature when it warns us: "Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image..."

No, indeed, this does not mean that we may not make any representations of the creature as such. It certainly does not imply that the second commandment forbids all work of art, such as sculpture or painting or photography. This is not the implication

of the second commandment. Works of true art are not forbidden in the second commandment. Of course, even in this respect we must clearly discern between the true and the false, and not at random characterize every work of art as a beautiful product of "common grace." So-called "lovers of art" are apt to walk around in old Athens and admire the beautiful remains of sculpture produced by the old Greeks. They reveal, according to some, the marvel of God's "common grace." But the apostle Paul viewed these same works of art with a different eye, and "his spirit was stirred within him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry." The same judgment I would pass on much of modern art, such as e.g. cubistic painting. Nevertheless, the second commandment certainly does not forbid to make representations of creatures, or of anything at all in creatures. When, in our homes, we have paintings or photographs we are not violating the second commandment. What is forbidden is to make any image in order to represent God. This is also the teaching of the Heidelberg Catechism in question and answer 97: "Are images then not at all to be made? God neither can, nor may be represented by any means: but as to creatures; though they may be represented, yet God forbids to make, or to have any resemblance of them, either to worship them or to serve God by them."

In his commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism, Ursinus himself, in expounding this question and answer, writes:

"We must now proceed to the question itself, in regard to which we may remark, that this commandment does not absolutely forbid us to make, or to have images, likenessess and statutes, because the art of painting, sculpture, casting and embroidery, is reckoned among the gifts of God which are good and profitable to human life, and God himself had certain images placed in the tabernacle; (Ex. 31:3; 35:30) and Solomon had upon his throne images of lions, and had figures of palm-trees and cherubims carved upon the walls of the temple by the command of God. (I Ki. 6:23,29; 10:19,20). The reason for this is plain and easy to perceive, inasmuch as writing and painting are profitable for reviving a recollection of something done, for ornament and for the enjoyment of life. The law does not, therefore, forbid the use of images, but their abuse, which takes place when images or pictures are made either for the purpose of representing or worshipping God, or creatures. Hence all images and likenessess are not simply and wholly forbidden, but only such as are unlawful, among which we may include, first, all images or likenessess of God, which are made for the purpose of representing or worshipping God. That these are positively forbidden in the

commandment may be argued, 1. From the design of this commandment which is the preservation of the worship of God in its purity. 2. From the nature of God. God is incorporeal and infinite; it is impossible, therefore, that he should be expressed or represented by an image which is corporeal and finite, without detracting from his divine majesty, according as it is said: 'Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand; and meted out heaven with a span,' etc. 'To whom then will ye liken God, or what likeness will ye compare unto him?' 'To whom will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.' 'Who changes the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.' (Isa. 40:12,18, 25; Rom. 1:23). 3. From the command of God. 'Take ye, therefore, good heed unto yourselves, (for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire,) lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female; the likeness of any beast that is,' etc. (Deut. 4:15,16,) 4. From the cause of this prohibition, which is that these images do not only profit nothing, but also injure men greatly, being the occasion and cause of idolatry and punishment. In short, God ought not to be represented by any graven image, because he does not will it, nor can it be done, nor would it profit anything if it were done."

The objection has often been raised that Scripture itself, nevertheless, induces us to make an image of God, or at least, to form a human and creaturely conception of Him, by the frequent occurrence of the figure that is known as *anthropomorphism*. Often indeed, creaturely, and especially human characteristics and virtues are ascribed to God. God ascribes to Himself a face, the psalmist expects to behold God's face in righteousness. It is the angel of God's face that saved His people. Frequently, the Bible speaks of the eyes of the Lord, and even of His eyelids. Scripture makes mention of the apple of His eye, of His ears, mouth, lips, nose, neck, arm, right hand, His finger, heart, bowels, bosom, foot. He is said to rejoice, to be afflicted, to grieve, to fear the wrath of the enemy, to love and to hate, to be merciful and to be angry, to be jealous and to repent, to forget and to avenge Himself. He sits and stands, He works and rests, He comes down and looks down, He comes and goes, He walks and meets men, He passes by and forsakes, He writes and seals, He heals and binds up the wounds of the broken hearted, He laughs and mocks, He speaks, hears, inclines His ear and sees, He kills and makes alive. He is described as a man of war, a king, a lawgiver, a builder and artificer, a sun and a

shield, a rock, a strong tower, a lion, an eagle, a consuming fire, a fountain of living water. Yea, so close is this similarity, and so intimate this affinity, that, in the fulness of time, God assumed human flesh, the Infinite unites Himself with the finite, the Eternal with the temporal. For "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1:14.

Does, then, the Word of God not induce us by these anthropomorphisms to make a creature image of God?

Not at all.

To be sure, all these Scriptural passages ascribe to God human virtues and passions and members of a human body. But there is an essential difference between a material image or even a concept of the mind and a picture in human language. An image, carved in wood or chiseled in stone, simply stands there with all its limitations. It can leave only one impression, that of a limited being. It is material, limited by space and time. But this is not the case with the figure of speech in the Bible that is called anthropomorphism. No one can possibly receive the impression from this figure that God is physical and finite. For the whole of Scripture clearly reveals that God is a Spirit, that He is the Eternal One, infinite in all His glorious perfections. When Scripture speaks of God's eye, no one thinks of a physical organ of sight, but all know that it refers to God's absolute omniscience, and to the fact that nothing is hid from the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do. When the Bible speaks of God's arm or right hand, all understand that this is a figure of speech, that it does not refer to a physical organ, limited in power, but to God's omnipotence, according He does whatsoever He pleases. In other words, Scripture reveals God to us, or rather God is able so to reveal Himself to us in creaturely forms and creaturely language, that we may know Him, that we may, indeed, understand His speech, while at the same time, we do not confuse Him with the creature, but know that He is infinitely greater than the creaturely form in which He is pleased to reveal Himself. While we understand and know His revelation, we know, at the same time, that in Himself He is the incomprehensible One. This is the wonder of God's revelation of which we will treat, the Lord willing, in the next chapter.

With the formation of a material image, or even with a false and limited conception of God this has nothing in common.

Also Ursinus in his well-known commentary referred to above, mentions this objection. Writes he:

"The Holy Scriptures attribute to God the different members of the human body, and thus declare



his nature and properties. Therefore it is also lawful to represent God by images." Such is the objection.

And this objection he answers as follows:

"There is a difference between these figurative expressions used in reference to God, and images; because in the former case there is always something connected with those expressions which guards us against being led astray into idolatry, nor is the worship of God ordinarily tied to those figurative expressions. But it is different in regard to images, for here there is no such safeguard, and it is easy for men to give adoration and worship to them. God himself, therefore, used those metaphors of himself figuratively, that he might help our infirmity, and permits us, in speaking of him, to use the same forms of expression; but he has never represented himself by images and pictures; neither does he desire us to use them for the purpose of representing him, but has, on the other hand solemnly forbidden them."

Yet, these anthropomorphisms are not to be regarded as mere empty figures without any basis in fact. On the contrary, they are based on the truth that all things are made and sustained by the Word of God, and so made that they are reflections of the nature and glorious virtues of the Most High. God is not only transcendent, but also immanent in the world. He is very near us. In Him we live and move and have our being. The whole creation is a creaturely reflection of His adorable virtues.

H.H.



#### IN MEMORIAM

The Board of Adams Street Protestant Reformed Christian School, Grand Rapids, Michigan, hereby expresses its heartfelt sympathy with our brother board member Cornelius Jonker, in the loss of his father,

MR. D. JONKER

May our God abundantly comfort the bereaved by His Word and Spirit and powerfully strengthen them in the hope of the saints.

Protestant Reformed  
Christian School Board

Mr. H. Meulenberg, Pres.  
Mr. J. Heys, Sec'y.

## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

### Mahanaim

Having heard what Ahithophel and Hushai had to say in the way of advising how to proceed against David, who had fled the city, Absalom and the elders had exclaimed as by one voice that the advice of Hushai was better than the counsel of Ahithophel. But might not Absalom, after calm reflection, revert to the counsel of Ahithophel? Only God knew, and He was silent. It was as activated by the fear that Ahithophel's counsel might still be followed that Hushai hurried to instruct the high priests in waiting to tell David that by all means he must remove across the Jordan that same night, lest he be overwhelmed by Ahithophel's superior forces. He must also be told just what Ahithophel advised and what he, Hushai, counselled in order that he might see for himself how urgent it was that he bestir himself without a moment's delay.

*Then said Hushai to Zadok and Abiathar and the priests, So and so hath Ahithophel counselled Absalom and the elders of Israel, and so and so counselled I, even I. . . And now, send speedily and tell David saying, Not shalt thou lodge this night in the plains of the wilderness, but thou shalt pass over by all means, lest t'c king be consumed and all the people that are with him. (15, 16).\**

The sacred writer states indeed (17:14) that "the Lord had commanded (that is, ordained) to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel." But this was to become clear, and hence it became clear to our writer, only from the course of subsequent events. At the moment there was no revelation to that effect. This explains Hushai's great concern for the safety of David. He was ignorant at the time of the Lord's purpose.

It might be asked why David, when the report of the revolt first reached him, did not inquire of the Lord, as had always been his custom in the past. A few examples: When he had received tidings that the Philistines were fighting against Keilah and had robbed the threshingfloors, "he inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go and smite the Philistines?" And God immediately returned answer: "Go and smite the

\*The translation that appears in these articles is of the undersigned. His aim is a rendering that literally reproduces the Hebrew text even as to its word order, except when this would be doing too much violence to the English idiom. The readings of the versions such as there be—King James and the American Revised—will be added as inclosed in brackets, but only in all such cases in which the departure from these readings is more or less radical.

Philistines and save Keilah." I Sam. 23:1, 2. During this same time and in response to a second inquiry, he received a revelation to the effect that he was to go down to Keilah in that the Lord would deliver the Philistines into his hand. (4). Yet a third time he earnestly prayed: "Lord God of Israel, thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah, to destroy the city for my sake. Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? Will Saul come down as thy servant hath heard? O Lord God of Israel, I beseech thee, tell thy servant." The Lord answered: "He will come down." His final request was: "Will the men of Keilah deliver me up?" The Lord replied also to this entreaty of His servant: "They will deliver thee up." When Saul had died in battle, it was by the direction of God that David went up to Hebron. "And it came to pass after this, that David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And the Lord said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said unto Hebron." (II Sam. 2:1, 2).

Why did David not inquire of the Lord in this crisis? He could have. He could have said to the Lord: "Will the inhabitants of Jerusalem deliver me up into Absalom's hand? Shall I flee the city?" Or, later: "Has Ahithophel's counsel been truly defeated? Shall I cross the Jordan or abide this night here in the plains of the wilderness?" But no, he forbore. The priests came to him there in the plains of the wilderness. But instead of asking them to inquire for him of the Lord, he besought them to return to Jerusalem and take back the ark of the covenant that they had brought with them.

David's conduct can be explained. First, he knew the Lord's will well enough. Had not Nathan said: "The sword shall not depart from thy house"? That sword was now striking at him as wielded by his own son. It was God's will. So He had determined. For David had sinned grievously, and was but reaping what he had sown. Should he then now be making inquiries? That would be like asking the Lord to save him from that sword and restore him to the throne. But what right had he, vile sinner that he was, to life and the throne? He felt it, and felt it deeply. So he kept silence. He humbled himself. He wept and had his head covered and went barefoot. And to his companions in the flight he said: "Let the Lord do with me what seemeth good in his eyes." That was better than crying for his throne in that hour. Humbling himself under the mighty hand of God, He would again exalt him in due time.

Besides, though the sword of which Nathan had spoken was now suspended over his own head, he knew that he could not perish by it because of the

word of the Lord that had come to him some years previous (II Sam. 7:12). According to this word, David would die a natural death and not a violent one by the hand of a usurper and when his days were full, thus in a good old age. And having slept with his fathers, he would be succeeded in the throne by a seed whose throne the Lord would establish forever. That seed was not, certainly, the godless Absalom. Such then was the promise to David. And as resting in that promise, he left the Holy city and ascended mount Olivet and worshipped there. He didn't have to enquire whether it was the Lord's will that he should flee Jerusalem. For it was too evident that it was His will.

It was now the turn of the two highpriests—Zadok and Abiathar—to act and act speedily. But their problem was how to get Hushai's message for David to Enregel, that is, to a well by this name near the outskirts of the holy city, where Jonathan and Ahimaaz, the two sons of the highpriests, were waiting to relay to David any or all information regarding the progress of the insurrection that was to come to them from the highpriest. Jonathan and Ahimaaz, it will be recalled were among the priests who had joined David in his flight. On their return, they had been stationed at this well, as they could not have left the city again, had they re-entered it, without arousing suspicion. For Absalom's spies were everywhere. And for this same reason, the two highpriests could not go out to the well. Absalom would be informed. And he would be certain to conclude that their purpose was to contact David. So they sent a woman, their own trusted maidservant. That it was thought that her going would attract little or no attention might have been due to her having burdened herself with a bundle of soiled clothes. Every one who saw her would conclude that her reason for leaving the city was that she had a wash to do at the well. For as its name signifies (Enrogel: well of treading) it was at this well that the women of the city did their washings. In those ancient times this task was performed by treading with the feet and not by rubbing with the hands.

But the purpose of the subterfuge was only barely achieved. The woman did reach the well, where she communicated her message to the waiting priests. But the three of them were observed by one of Absalom's spies. To the mind of the spy the presence of the two priests at this well in conversation with the maid-servant of the highpriest could have but one explanation. The three of them were co-operating in the business of keeping David informed regarding the state of affairs in Jerusalem. He quickly reported his discovery to Absalom. And he was but a na-ar, a lad, a teen-age youth. What this helps to establish

is that the Absalom revolt was to a large extent a youth movement.

Well aware that they had been spied upon and feeling certain that Absalom would send his servants in pursuit of them, the two priests quickly went away in quest for a place to hide. A man in Bahurim, evidently friendly to David, allowed them to conceal themselves in a dry well in his yard. When they had gone down into it, the man's wife obligingly replaced the cover, over which she then spread some ground corn, so that no one could tell that the man had a well there in his court.

*And Jonathan and Ahimaaz were standing by Enrogel. And the maid-servant,<sup>1</sup> [a wench], came and told them, that they might go and tell David. [And they went and told David<sup>2</sup>], for not might they be seen to come into the city. Nevertheless a lad saw them and told Absalom. And went the both of them away with haste, and came to the house of a man in Bahurim, and there was to him in his court a well, and they went down there.*

*And the woman took and spread the covering over the surface of the well, and spread thereon ground corn, and not was the thing known. 17-19.*

Soon thereafter the servants of Absalom made their appearance. It was the woman who took it upon herself to handle them. Evidently she had prepared herself for this moment. For in reply to their question: "Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?" she says instantaneously and with spirit, it may be imagined: "They have passed over the brook of the water," probably a small creek in the vicinity. But didn't she have them with her there in the pit? The woman can be forgiven that lie. As misdirected by the woman, the servants may have sought for a long time. Despairing of finding the fugitives, they returned to Jerusalem.

*And came the servants of Absalom unto the woman to the house. And they said, Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan? And said to them the woman, They have passed over the brook of water. And they sought but could not find (them). And they returned to Jerusalem." 20.*

When the servants had again passed through the vicinity on their way home and were out of sight, the two priests left their hiding-place, went to David, and delivered their message. "Arise and pass hastily over the waters: for thus counselled against you Ahithophel." But they didn't report what Hushai had advised. That could wait. To their minds all that mat-

tered at the moment was that David was still encamped in the plains of the desert.

It was night. And David and his people were weary. For they had been on the way perhaps since early dawn. Besides, the company included women and children. Yet, the priests were right. The Jordan must be crossed that very night. David was agreed. So the trek across the river began. It lasted all night. But when the day dawned, the whole company had passed over to a man.

*And it came to pass after they were gone, that they came up from the well, and went and told David and said to him, Arise and pass hastily over the waters: for thus counselled against you Ahithophel.*

*And arose David and all the people that were with him, and they passed over the Jordan: by the morning light (that is, when it was morning) there lacked not one of them that was not gone over Jordan. 21, 22.*

Having crossed the Jordan with his people, David pushed on to Mahanaim, the former capital-city of Ishbosheth (II:8), a fortified place and suitable for gathering an army.

In the meantime, Absalom had raised his army. No numbers are given, so that we do not know its size. But it could not have been the numberless host that he had imagined. But this seems not to have discouraged him. Crossing the Jordan with his troops, he pitched in the land of Gilead, and thereby carried the war to David.

But his army still had to be organized. To this task he now addressed himself. Amasa was made captain of the host instead of Joab. He was a cousin to Joab and a nephew to David.

*Then David came to Mahanaim. And Absalom passed over Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him. 24*

*And Amasa did Absalom make captain of the host instead of Joab: and Amasa was the son of a man, and his name was Ithra an Israelite, that went in to Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister to Ueruah Joab's mother. 25*

*So Israel and Absalom pitched in the land of Gilead. 26.*

Ver. 25 raises questions to which no conclusive answers can be given. Who was Ithra. At I Chron. 2:17 he is called Jether the Ishmaelite." Doubtless he was an Ishmaelite, a stranger, for to designate that he was an Israelite would be superfluous.

Was Abigail his lawful wife? If not, Amasa was an illegitimate son of Abigail.

Is Nahash the name of a man? And must the

<sup>1</sup>Maid-servant with the definite article *the*; not: a wench—English King James Version.

<sup>2</sup>It is obvious that this rendering is in conflict with the statement of verse 18: "And went both of them away in haste."

word "sister" be taken in apposition with Abigail? If so, then Jesse, David's father, was twice married. And then Nahash was David's step-father and Abigail and Zeruiah his step-sisters.

According to another view, Nahash was a surname of Jesse.

There are still other possibilities that need not be mentioned.

G. M. Ophoff

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Gracious Lord, remember David,  
 How he made Thy house his care,  
 How he vowed to seek no pleasure  
 Till Thy house he should prepare.  
 Lord, remember his devotion;  
 Restless in his courts he trod  
 Till he found a habitation  
 Fit for Israel's mighty God.

Far away God's ark was resting;  
 It is with His people now;  
 We will go into His temple,  
 At His footstool we will bow.  
 With the ark Thy might revealing,  
 Enter, Lord, into Thy rest;  
 Let Thy priests be clothed with justice,  
 Let Thy joyful saints be blest.

Let the king behold Thy favor  
 For Thy servant David's sake,  
 Unto whom a sacred promise,  
 Sure and faithful, Thou didst make.  
 If His children keep Thy covenant  
 And Thy testimony own,  
 Then, as Thou, O Lord, hast promised  
 They shall sit on David's throne.

— : — : —

Established in the highest heavens  
 The Lord has set His throne,  
 And over all His kingdom rules,  
 For He is God alone.

Ye angels that excel in strength,  
 Bless ye the Lord, your God;  
 Ordained to hear and do His will,  
 Proclaim His praise abroad.

## IN HIS FEAR

### I Will Sing . . . .

The gifts and talents which the Almighty has given are numerous and varied. To one He gives the ability whereby that one is able by a deft blow of the hammer applied to his chisel to carve out an amazing likeness of another creature. Again we find one gifted with the critical eye and well controlled hand wherewith to guide a brush dipped in the proper color and hue to portray upon the canvas a likeness of man or of landscape. Then, again, we see the blur of swiftly moving fingers gliding over an ivory sea which flows between the ebony cliffs while beautiful melodic tones and rich harmonies come from pipe or string. Or we may marvel at the glorious and lyric sounds which flow forth from the opening and closing mouth of one gifted with that much-to-be-desired power to express by word, rather than by form, line, color, shape, suggestion or imitation, what resides in the soul. Truly, the Almighty has filled creation with glory and beauty and given to man, the highest of His earthly creatures, many wonderful and glorious talents wherewith man might praise and magnify Him. For that purpose alone they were given, and man has his calling with these to glorify his Creator. This truth resided in the soul of the psalmist and came to expression by him when he said in Psalm 104:33, "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being."

But have you ever paused to reflect upon the fact that all of these abilities and powers which men call the "fine arts" there is only one of which Scripture states that it will enter into the new creation? That blessed realm shall be filled with music both instrumental and vocal, but chiefly vocal music shall glorify that realm of perfection. All in that realm shall be accomplished musicians. All shall be gifted with voices that shall immeasurably overshadow anything heard here below, whether it be from the voice of man or from the sweetest warbling of the nightingales of our feathered friends. Scripture says nothing about such creative arts as painting and sculpture entering the new creation. Surely it says nothing of dramatics. How shall we before the face of Him Who is Truth even dare to behave untrue to our natures which He gave us? But Scripture does speak repeatedly of the music of heaven and of the new creation. The angels are presented as singing constantly before the face of the Thrice Holy God. When the Lamb receives the book with the seven seals, we read that the four and

twenty elders (representing the whole Old and New Testament Church) fall down before the Lamb and sing a new song. The one hundred forty and four thousand upon Mt. Zion in Rev. 14 likewise sing a new song before the throne. In Revelation 15 those who have gotten the victory over the Beast sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb.

To be sure, instrumental music, whatever form or shape it shall assume we know not, neither need we consider that now, shall also enter into the New Jerusalem, for each of these four and twenty elders have their harps of gold to accompany themselves in their singing. And the one hundred forty and four thousand are accompanied by "harpers harping upon their harps." It ought, however, to be plain that such instrumental music occupies and ought to occupy a secondary place. They accompany. They serve the singing, while singing is the chiefest work of praise to God.

This is in perfect harmony with both God's work in creation and in recreating His people in Christ Jesus. Made to be God's friend-servant, man's loftiest praise is the praise he speaks and sings. In fact he was the loftiest of God's creatures here below exactly because God made him to be a rational, moral creature one that could know God and could love Him. Thus created he was able, willing and active in coming to God and by word of mouth and song from the heart to tell God that He is great and good and glorious. Being conscious of all his works he could praise God. Not only does he exist to the praise of God, but he exists to praise God. There is a vast difference. All things exist, are made and continue to exist for the praise of God. The psalmist declares that the heavens declare the glory of God and that the firmament showeth His handiwork. All things point to God and declare in that way that He is God. But man was made to perform the *deed* of praising God. And he was saved by the blood of Christ also for that very purpose. The Apostle Peter says in I Peter 2:9, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." And though man during his earthly sojourn may, surely, practice those other fine arts of painting, sculpturing, etching, carving and writing of poetry, yet these will all be left on this side of the grave and will perish with this present world.

We had planned to limit ourselves in this present and the following article merely to the gift of vocal music, but we do wish, before we go on, to make a few practical remarks about instrumental music in our lives. We are not at all condemning instrumental

music any more than we in the above lines condemned painting, sculpturing, etching, carving or the making of poetry. But our purpose in these articles is to hold before your eyes the fact that at the top of all the talents God gives to His people is that ability by word and song to praise Him.

As far, then, as instrumental music is concerned the Scriptures show clearly that when it is rendered by the believing child of God and done to His glory, it is not only permissible, but it is also pleasing in His sight and in His holy ears. We hear the Church of God exhorted to praise God in Psalm 150 even with the clanging and high sounding cymbals. In Psalm 33:2, 3 we read, "Praise the Lord with harp, sing unto Him with the psalter and an instrument of ten strings. Sing unto Him a new song; play skillfully with a loud noise." When Samuel sent Saul home after anointing him as king over Israel, he told him that he would meet a company of prophets with psalter (a wind instrument), harp, lyre, tabret and pipe. David was a cunning player upon the harp. Even though these instruments have their inception in the inventions of godless Jubal, the Scriptures certainly make it plain that God's people may make use of these things to the glory of His name.

That does not mean at all that we may play any style of music, nor by any means does it put the stamp of approval upon all kinds of music to be played in the divine services as an offertory. It does not mean that we may play anything we please in the prelude and postlude to our divine services. No more than every piece of vocal music is suitable for use in our divine services is every piece of music composed by believer or unbeliever proper for prelude, offertory or postlude. We do not even hesitate to state that not *every* arrangement of an hymn or Psalter tune is suitable for these occasions even though they might be permissible at a program, or at home.

In the house of God before the services and during the services the music ought to be slowly and softly played. God's people come from various environments to the house of prayer and meditation. As we gather there we are gathered at Jesus' feet to be taught by Him. Anything that would by its lilting rhythm, its boisterous character or its levity would tend to destroy the solemnity and reverence of the occasion ought to be kept off the music rack of piano or organ. Indeed, there may well be the joy of salvation surging thru the souls of God's people as they congregate and especially as they hearken to the word of God preached. At times the auditorium may ring with resounding praise to God. And the organist may often desire to have at his disposal double the volume of which his organ is capable to cope with this joyful burst of



praise to God. Those thrilling experiences are often the greatest inspiration the organist has for his work. But, nevertheless, this does not at all detract from the fact that as the congregation assembles or as the congregation renders its offering it behooves the holiness and solemnity of the occasion that the music itself be of such a nature and that it be played slowly and softly so that the congregation is not led into earthly meditation and excitement but instead is prepared psychologically to listen to the Word of God.

In the home there is more freedom with our instrumental and vocal music, but there is no license to all kinds of either of these. About these things we will write in our next installment. We will then strive to complete our thought, for the title above in full is, "I will sing unto the Lord." Is that so with you? You sing. You play. But do you sing and play to the Lord? Or is it to men that you play? It will make quite a difference in what you choose to play and also in what you would rather not sing or play. Think so? Be with us next issue then.

John A. Heys



From the depths do I invoke Thee,  
Lord, to me incline Thy ear;  
To my voice be Thou attentive,  
And my supplication hear.

Lord, if Thou shouldst mark transgressions  
In Thy presence who shall stand?  
But with Thee there is forgiveness,  
That Thy name may fear command.

For Jehovah I am waiting,  
And my hope is in His Word,  
In His Word of promise given;  
Yea, my soul waits for the Lord.

For the Lord my soul is waiting  
More than watchers in the night,  
More than they for morning watching,  
Watching for the morning light.

Hope in God ye waiting people;  
Mercies great with Him abound;  
With the Lord a full redemption  
From the guilt of sin is found.

## FROM HOLY WRIT

### Exposition of I Peter 1:10-12

#### (I)

In the next two articles we wish to give our attention to an exposition of the verses 10-12 of this first Chapter of I Peter.

The passage reads in full as follows: "*Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace, that (should come) unto you searching what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow them. To whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto you they did minister these things, which now have been announced unto you through them that preached the Gospel unto you by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven; which things angels desire to look into.*"

We ought to remember that Peter is constantly yet speaking in this first section of his letter to the churches addressed, of the great salvation that is ours through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Into this salvation we have been brought and caused to share through the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of Sanctification. For we have indeed been born again unto a lively hope in Christ's resurrection. Old things have passed away, and all things have become new.

We are saved in hope. We do not yet see this final salvation. Christ Jesus, the glorified Lord, we do not see, and have never seen. Yet, we love Him. We rejoice in Him with an immense and unspeakable joy, which is full of glory and which shall be fully manifested in the elect and redeemed saints in the day when Christ shall be revealed.

Such is our *status quo*!

Thus it is written in the statute books of the Lord of lords and the King of kings. And thus we have noticed this salvation to be the great theme of Peter.

Peter would bind upon our hearts the magnitude of this salvation, and its certainty. It is not merely something of recent date; a passing fancy, something that will die as soon as its proponents go the way of all flesh. It is not a message of man at all. It never arises in man's heart. This salvation belongs to the things that were never narrated to kings. It is that which eye hath not seen and ear hath not heard. They are the things that God in His inscrutable wisdom has thought out and planned as the Architect and Builder

of our salvation. It is wholly of God. And thus it was ever believed in the days of yore.

Notice, that Peter asserts that this salvation was the great *theme* of all the Prophets. Writes Peter: "Concerning which salvation (the) prophets sought and searched diligently . . ." None less than "prophets", who stand in the presence of God, and speak His word, have busied themselves with this theme. They did it emphatically in their capacity as "prophets". The emphasis in the text does not fall on their being a class of men in distinction from others, but on the fact that they are prophets, who are engaged in speaking that which is "pointed out to them" by the Holy Spirit. To say "prophets" is to say "thus saith the Lord".

Peter gives us a remarkable insight into the deepest yearnings of prophets.

We notice, first of all, the remarkable statement of Peter that the *subject* (het onderwerp) the *all-inclusive and central theme* of the Apostle is Salvation. And then not salvation in general, but salvation as to its ultimate and final manifestation. We repeat: according to Peter that was the subject of all the inquiry and seeking of the prophets. When we say that a man writes a book on a certain subject we say he wrote *on* the subject. Thus it is here. All the prophets were engaged in speaking, teaching, writing on this subject. That was the only subject that engaged their attention. And then it engaged their attention not simply as a theoretical subject, but it occupied their whole souls as a throbbing question of salvation and glory; their eyes searched the prophetic skies. And always the longing is concerning the final salvation.

To emphasize this thought Peter writes in the original Greek (*peri hees sooteerias*) "concerning which salvation". The preposition *peri* (concerning) is employed in the Greek both of the Classics and of Patristic literature to denote the writings on a certain subject. If they would write on the subject of the three persons and the one essence of God they wrote the title: *peri etc.* Thus also Peter writes of the prophets. They too had a great subject.

And no one less than Jesus Himself calls attention, be it then indirectly, to this great subject which is indicated by the preposition *peri* (concerning).

In John 5:46 we read the following from Jesus' mouth: "for that one wrote concerning (*peri*) me". As is evident from the context, Jesus does not mean to say, that Moses besides writing in the first five books of the Bible (the pentateuch) on many other subjects and personages, also wrote concerning Jesus! That is not the thrust of this passage. How weak it

would then become as a refutation of those who would not believe in Jesus, against those who played out Moses over against Christ! Jesus means to say, in effect, the whole subject of all Moses' books (Genesis to Deuteronomy) is the Christ. Moses did not write on this and that; he was not simply a law-giver, saying, the man that doeth the same shall live thereby—Moses wrote the Gospel. The law was added to be a Pedagogue to Me, the Son of God in the flesh. Moses wrote on one subject! He wrote on the Gospel of God in Me, the Christ. He wrote (*peri*) concerning Me. I am the great subject of Moses' writings.

And, again, in Luke 24:25-27 we read the account of Jesus' reproof and instruction of the two travelers to Emmaus. These men could not reconcile the accounts and reports of the women and certain others that Jesus was risen from the dead, with the necessity of Christ's dying. And the reason for this? They were slow to believe all that which had been spoken by the prophets concerning (*peri*) Christ. For Jesus, we are told by Luke, beginning from Moses and all the prophets interpreted unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning (*peri*) Himself. This entire Old Testament Scripture was Christ's Self-portrait.

What is the title of Moses' writings: it is concerning Christ's person and work of salvation. Again, what is the title, the real subject of every prophet: it is concerning Christ, and the final manifestation of the salvation in Him in the day when He shall be revealed as the Lord of glory. It is (*peri*) concerning this salvation that prophets are engaged.

Let every one, then, give heed, when Peter speaks of this same subject. It is surely worthwhile. It was a matter of passionate and unabated searching on the part of Prophets. Their central theme it is. One has never really preached the subject of the prophets, who has not preached the final salvation they speak of. All the details of the Prophecies fit into this scheme; all things are subsumed to it, and are means to bring this message to our attention. The prophecies are truly eschatological.

Such is the implication of Peter's "concerning which salvation . . ."

However, Peter tells us more about the activities of prophets. Writes he: "*sought and diligently searched.*" Literally we read in the original Greek "concerning which salvation the prophets *sought out and searched out* . . ."

Two things they did.

They sought out concerning salvation. There is a distinction between the notion "sought out" and "searched out". This is already evident in the order in which they are given in the text. "Sought out" is

given before "searched out". It is really first; one must first *seek out* before one can *search out*. The former indicates the motive of finding; the prophets desired to find this salvation as the pearl of great price. They would lay hold on it. But when they once find it, they are not simply satisfied with its possession. They also desire to know its content, its various aspects, they must know all that it stands for.

That this is the proper distinction between the terms "seek out" and "search out" is also evident from the fact, that Peter in the next clause repeats the "searching" but not the "seeking". Yes, they still seek salvation, but in order to attain it they must be busy searching it out.

Two points are searched out. They are both concerned with the proper God-appointed time of the suffering of Christ. They would know what the time (season) is. And, again, shall this be known, then they must understand the characteristic features of the time. What the state of the world will be, what Israel's place will be in that world, how it will be in every sense the "fulness of time", a time of the restitution of all things, they must know. Of this they spake. And they spoke of this because they searched it out diligently.

We have a good case in point in Daniel. We read of him in Daniel 9:1-2: "In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, who was made king over the realm, in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years whereof the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah the Prophet, for the accomplishing of the desolation of Jerusalem, even seventy years."

Here we see Daniel seeking out and searching out concerning the redemption of Jerusalem. How he diligently prayed with his face toward Jerusalem is well known to us. He is interested in the return of the captives to Jerusalem. He searches out the prophetic word. He stands, as it were, on the shoulders of Jeremiah. But his prophetic interest is really not in the historical rebuilding of earthly Jerusalem. He looks beyond this city to the eternal and holy city, the heavenly Jerusalem. But, his interest will be in the time and manner of the times in which this shall be accomplished, in order that Israel and all the people of God may read the "times".

(to be continued)

Geo. Lubbers

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## The Voice of Our Fathers

### The Canons of Dordrecht

#### CHAPTER I

#### SWIFT DECLINE

The third of the Three Forms of Unity commonly adopted by Reformed churches of Dutch extraction is usually known as the *Canons of Dordrecht*, or the *Five Articles Against the Remonstrants*. The full original title of this symbol reads as follows: "Judgment of the National Synod of the Reformed Churches of the united Netherlands: held in Dordrecht in the year 1618 and 1619. Which was assisted by many excellent theologians of the Reformed Churches of Great Britain, the Electoral Palatinate, Hessian, Switzerland, Wetteraw, Geneva, Bremen and Emden: Over the well-known five heads of doctrine, concerning which difference appeared in the Reformed Churches of said United Netherlands. Expressed on May 6, 1619."

Whether, therefore, you judge from the shorter, more commonly used names of this confession, or from the complete title as given above, it is clear that, as is usually the case with the official standards of a church, there is a history involved in the formulation and adoption of our *Canons*. And here too, as again has frequently been the experience of the church in the past, the history is one of a very severe, lengthy, oft-times dark, life-and-death struggle for the "faith of the gospel". To understand the *Canons* properly it is necessary briefly to review the history of that struggle which gripped the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands in the years preceding the famous National Synod of Dordrecht.

We are wont to call the heresy condemned in the *Canons* after the name of that learned but undeniably crafty and deceitful Hollander, Jacob Harmsen, or, as his better known Latinized name has it, Jacobus Arminius. The Remonstrants are Arminians, and their error is known as Arminianism. However, we do well to understand that Arminius was not the originator of the Arminian heresy, on the one hand, but that he was led by and learned from others. And on the other hand, it was not even Arminius personally who was condemned by the National Synod: for by the time our fathers served the antidote to the poison of Arminism in 1618-19, the man who gave his name to the errors of the Remonstrants had long since passed from this earth into the realm of the dead. And yet, as we shall see, it is not without reason historically that the errors rejected in our *Canons* are popularly known as Arminianism.

The Reformation in the Netherlands, which coincided with the liberation of the Lowlands from the Spanish dominion, bore a distinctly Calvinistic character. This does not mean that all the Netherlands was Reformed, however. The Lutheran Reformation had its adherents also in the Netherlands, though few in number; and there were as well small numbers of other sects, such as the followers of Menno Simons. Besides, there were many so-called "crypto-Catholics" and Libertines, men who wielded influence in high places in the Dutch government. Nevertheless, the Reformed Churches occupied the center of the ecclesiastical stream in the Netherlands. And, while one could hardly call them the State Church, nevertheless they existed with the blessing of the government, were financially supported by the government, and were also partly under the control of the political authorities as far as their church polity was concerned. It was this latter relationship that gave rise to much of the trouble in which the churches were involved during the period before 1618. For the Arminians found much support and protection from the government, while for a time the faithful officebearers and membership of the Reformed Churches were actually persecuted by the state and local authorities. Nevertheless, the Reformed Churches, as we said, represented the cause of the Reformation in the Netherlands, and were decidedly Calvinistic, both as to doctrine and as to church polity. And long before the adoption of the *Canons*, the *Heidelberg Catechism* and the *Confessio Belgica* had been recognized by them as their official standards.

It was not long, however, before the old bogey of Semi-Pelagianism made its appearance once more, now in the very churches whose existence had largely been occasioned by a desire for the sincere milk of the Word instead of the diabolical poison of the free will of man. In fact, it is amazing how soon after the beginning of the Reformation the churches fell away from the pure truth of the gospel to which they had sworn allegiance when the tie with Rome had been cut. Think of it: it was only a century after Martin Luther had nailed his theses on the door of the church at Wittenberg, and not even a hundred years since the undaunted Genevan Reformer had flaunted Rome's power, when the Arminian errors appeared not only sporadically, here and there, upon the scene of Dutch Calvinism, but threatened seriously to split both state and church wide open, and necessitated a National Synod, which should with bold strokes cut down the devils of heresy which assailed the precious heritage of the truth from their very ranks! For remember, it was no minor affair that necessitated the Synod of Dordrecht. Certainly, the truth itself

was at stake; and from this point of view the struggle between Remonstrants and Contra-Remonstrants is of fundamental importance. But the very life of the Reformed Churches hung in the balance in the years preceding the famous synod. Shortly before the synod gathered, there were at least a hundred ministers in the Reformed Churches who, having themselves fallen victim to the Arminian wiles, were victimizing the sheep of God's flock and deceiving the simple. Numerous cases there were,—due to the fact that the Remonstrants enjoyed the protection and favor of the government,—in which whole congregations were denied official standing before the state, were dispossessed of their property, and were forbidden to gather in meetings for public worship under penalty of fines, imprisonment, or banishment. Thus was the gold of the Reformation quickly bedimmed in the land of our forefathers. Or thus it seemed at least. For all that glitters is not gold. And God's purpose was to refine the real gold, and cause it to shine with still brighter luster.

It is not our purpose to give a detailed account of the development of Arminianism in the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands. Whole volumes have been written on that subject<sup>1</sup>, and besides, this is not the place for such an account. We merely mean to focus the attention on the highlights.

And then it stands to reason, paradoxical as it may sound, that Arminius was not the first Arminian. For, in the first place, the errors which plagued the Reformed Churches in those years undoubtedly may be traced back to Rome. There can be no question about the fact that the Reformation movement was not entirely pure in the Netherlands. Just what the occasion and motivation of such impurity was we need not discuss here, except that a study of the history indicates that the admixture of national patriotism and religious zeal appears in many ways to have worked to the disadvantage as well as the advantage of the Calvinistic movement in the Lowlands. This latter fact, it seems to me, partly occasioned the appearance, at a very early date, of leaders in the Reformed Churches who had never made a clean doctrinal break with Rome and who soon, flying under the Reformed flag, manifested in their preaching and writing that they were not at all rid of the poison of Semi-Pelagianism. Some of these men were ex-priests or erstwhile monks who had, due to circumstances, been rather readily received into the ranks of the Reformed clergy. Especially men like Johannes Anastasius Veluanus and Hubert Duifhuis were influential in preparing the way for the Remonstrance.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. L. H. Wagenaar's outstanding work "Van Strijd en Overwinning."

But to Coornhert (1522-1590) belong the highest honors on this score. He very sharply opposed Calvin's presentation of the doctrine of predestination, and, in fact, at that early date was proposing only a very broad confessional basis, like the Apostles' Creed, upon which the churches might untie and avoid a multitude of denominational divisions. It was a study of Coornhert's views which later on became the occasion for Arminius' defection from the Reformed line. Other outstanding men among the forerunners of Arminius were Caspar Coolhaas, Herberts, Wiggerts, Sybrandi, and Adolph Venator.

Nevertheless, to Jacobus Arminius belongs the questionable honor of having united these erring elements and having formed them into a party in the churches which soon became powerful. And of his person and works we must say a bit more.

Arminius was born in 1560 at Oudewater. Early in life he was left fatherless, but won the favor of two Reformed ministers, Taffin and Petrus Bertius, who sponsored his education at the then small Academy of Leiden. At the age of twenty-one he had finished his studies at Leiden, and now he was sent, under the sponsorship of a merchants' guild at Amsterdam, to study at the University of Geneva. There he came under the influence of Beza, Calvin's successor, and heard that theologian's explanation of the Epistle to the Romans, as well as his views on election and reprobation. History shows, however, that he never absorbed the teachings of Beza. It was also at Geneva that the young Arminius became the bosom-friend of Wtenbogaert, whom we shall meet later in our account of the Remonstrance. After a brief visit to Italy, where if anything Arminius' inclination to a very broad concept of Christianity was strengthened, he returned to Geneva for a time, but soon made his way back to Amsterdam, where he passed his classical examination and was admitted to the ministry by unanimous vote.

H. C. Hoeksema

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Blest be the Lord, my rock, my might,  
My constant helper in the fight,  
My shield, my righteousness,  
My strong high tower, my Savior true,  
Who doth my enemies subdue,  
My shelter in distress.

## Contending For The Faith

### Introduction

*Introducing this rubric.*

It was in the summer of 1947 that the undersigned was asked to fill the rubric "Our Doctrine" in our *Standard Bearer*. Our readers will undoubtedly recall the circumstances which occasioned this request: the sudden and wholly unexpected incapacitation of our editor, the Rev. H. Hoeksema. How thankful we were and should be that the Lord has restored him so that he again might resume his labors among us to a large extent! Little did the undersigned suspect that he would still be contributing to this rubric as of this moment. I can honestly say that this work has given me a great amount of pleasure and satisfaction. Of pleasure because I have always considered it a privilege to contribute articles to the periodical through which we may give public utterance to our unique calling, as Protestant Reformed Churches, not only in the midst of the world, but also amongst the many churches of our present day and age, among whom our only safety lies in an uncompromising uniqueness lest we be swallowed up and be no more. This calling, to emit a clear and no uncertain sound, also over against the many deviations from the truth which characterize our present day, is also the calling of the *Standard Bearer*. We, therefore, fail to understand how anyone, who professes to be Protestant Reformed, can withdraw his or her support of this periodical. This writing for our *Standard Bearer* has also given me a great amount of satisfaction. This is not due to a feeling of satisfaction because of the articles I have contributed, but because of the benefits which I have received in the performance of this work.

Asked to fill this new rubric, "The History of Dogma", I gladly comply with the request. Not, I assure you, without considerable trepidation. I do not claim familiarity with the field of the history of dogma. However, it is a very attractive field. The Lord willing, I will do the best I can, and trust that these contributions may serve the interests of our Protestant Reformed Churches.

*Its fascinating feature.*

The history of dogma will fascinate us if doctrine fascinates us. Doctrine and the history of doctrine are, of course, inseparably related. Our interest in doctrine will be determined by our interest in doctrine itself. It lies in the nature of the case that our



love for the truth determines our interest in its historical development.

To this we may add—and, incidentally, this should fill us with true and genuine concern—that our modern age, as far as the church-world is concerned, cannot be labeled as a truth-loving and seeking age. Neither need we travel far from home to discern those signs which ought to alarm and distress us. If it be true that our modern lukewarmness toward the truth is often attributed to the spirit of our age, this may never serve as an excuse to condone and tolerate a general attitude of indifference to doctrinal fundamentals which is undeniably characteristic of the time and age in which we live. On the contrary, it should be for us an added incentive to watch and pray and be spiritually sober in the midst of a church-world which is rapidly apostatizing. And we must never cater to a desire to be less doctrinal and more practical (incidentally, although we can distinguish between “doctrinal” and “practical” we must never separate them).

Unbelievable as it may sound, there are churches and peoples who are openly disdainful of the history of doctrine. The struggle of the Church of God throughout the ages holds very little interest for them. It was especially not too many years ago that this attitude was proudly manifested and a banner was defiantly hurled aloft which read: “No creed but Christ.” The Scriptures alone were their guide and they spoke very disdainfully of creeds and confessions as the works and productions of men. They refused to become involved in any discussion or controversy about the truth which would revolve about these creeds or confessions. We may add the observation that their “Scriptural” discussions of fundamental truths were hardly worthy of the name and not characterized by thoroughness and profundity. Their appeals to Holy Writ consisted largely, almost exclusively, of mass quotations and unsupported by sound interpretation of the quoted passages or by the honest attempt to interpret Scripture with Scripture. And, they openly revealed their disdain of creeds or confessions. This, we should understand, does not reveal a great desire to understand the truth. Of course, we do not wish to leave the impression that Scripture is not our only criterion of what is true or false. The Word of God is the sole standard of the truth, the only infallible rule of faith and life. But, in the first place, it is simply a fact that we are not instructed in the truths of Holy Writ directly from the holy Scriptures. We will say more of this, the Lord willing, in due time. Each member of the body of Christ is instructed in the truth of God’s Word by the Church, and the Church instructs us through the confessions. In fact, our earliest instruction was given us in our homes by our

parents and according to the doctrine as taught “in this local Christian church.” Secondly, the slogan: “No creed but Christ,” simply ignores the blood of the saints, the struggle of the ages, the bloody efforts by the Church of God to defend the truths of the sacred Word as embodied in our creeds and confessions. The Church of God has been led by the Spirit of Christ Jesus to see and grasp the fundamentals of the Word of God, and we are enabled to study the Word exactly in the light of these sacrifices of the saints of God in ages past. Hence, the slogan: “No creed but Christ” is not nearly as innocent as it sounds. We do well to be on our guard against it. History verifies that a church that loves the truth loves its confessions and its creeds. Such a truth-loving Church does not ignore the history of the development of doctrine.

This leads us to another observation. Anyone acquainted with the history of doctrine will readily acquiesce with the undersigned when he makes the remark that an outstanding feature of this history has been and is that of struggle. The Church of God has been compelled to fight every inch and step of the way. Never was it permitted to relax its vigilance. The enemy of the truth was continually on the alert to undermine the fundamentals of Scripture. The Divine record itself is full of such notices. In the Old Dispensation the Israel of God was continually harassed by these enemies from within who demanded that a word be preached which would be more acceptable to the flesh. A passage such as Is. 30:10, 11 strikingly illustrates this truth. The Old Testament is replete with the efforts of carnal Israel to silence the testimony of the Lord and to shut the mouths of the prophets who proclaimed unto them the word of Jehovah. The Church’s greatest danger, also then, did not threaten from without but from within. This struggle of the church for the preservation of true and sound doctrine becomes more acute and intense with the coming of the New Dispensation. In Matt. 16:12 the Lord warns His disciples against the doctrine of the pharisees and sadducees, and we quote: “Then understood they how that He bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.” Well-known to us is the word of the Saviour in Mark 13:22: “For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.” In Ephesians 4:14 the apostle warns the Church of God to be on the alert against every wind of doctrine, and ascribes these deviations from the truth to the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, and I quote: “That we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning crafti-

ness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." In Acts 20:28-30 we hear the same apostle utter these solemn words in his farewell address to the elders of Ephesus, and we quote: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." And in II John 10, 11 the apostle, John, delivers this uncompromising admonition, and again we quote: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds."—it is well to bear in mind that the apostle identifies in these words the bringing of another doctrine with an evil deed.

Indeed, the history of doctrine throughout the New Dispensation has vindicated these warnings of Christ and His apostles. Unrelentingly the enemy has hurled his forces against the bulwarks of the truth. And the Church of the living God has been compelled to maintain a sharp and constant vigilance. It has been forced to maintain its watchmen upon the walls of Zion day and night. The world knows no compromise in its savage opposition to the truths of the Word of the Lord and the Church must ever be on the alert that the sound of its trumpet is continuously clear and certain. That trumpet must not emit a vague, indefinite sound. The sound of that trumpet must not be of such a nature that it can be welcomed by friend and enemy alike. It must be such that it attracts only those who love the truth of God's Word as it once has been delivered to the saints and to the church of the living God. The sound of that trumpet must not confuse but strengthen and enlighten. And this receives all the more emphasis if we continually bear in mind that the enemy is ever lying in wait to deceive and to lead the people of the Lord astray. Hence, it lies in the very nature of the case that the history of doctrine should be of the greatest importance and interest to us. The word of the Lord in Rev. 3:11 is surely applicable today, and we quote: "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." And we do well, in our fighting of the good fight of faith, ever to retain in view the struggle of those who have appeared in this arena before us. It will sharpen us in our ability to discern the lie from the truth. It will quicken our appreciation of the tremendous efforts put forth by the people of God in their defence and maintaining of the fundamentals of Holy Writ. It will gladden our hearts to know that the

Lord has also privileged us with a name and place among the ranks of those who, throughout the ages, have engaged in the struggle for the preservation of the Word of God, which, being fought uncompromisingly throughout the ages, is sure of victory because of Him Who leads His Church into all truth, and will be with her even unto the end of the world.

H. Veldman

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## DECENCY and ORDER

### *Introduction.*

The branch of study that is denoted by the above caption is one that is extremely wide in scope. The average reader undoubtedly thinks of Church Polity in terms of the eighty-six articles of our own accepted Church Order. The scope, however, of this subject is far broader than this. Properly speaking it would comprehend a study of all the various Ecclesiastical Polities that have been and are now found in the church world. To mention a few of the most outstanding ones we may cite the following: The Monarchical System found in the Roman Catholic Church, the Aristocratic System found in the Eastern Church, the Episcopal System of the Church of England, the Congregational and Presbyterian Systems. The study of these different systems then includes even more than defining the principles and details of government prevailing within the several church bodies mentioned for to each of these movements there is an intricate history that must also be taken into account.

In this rubric it will not be our intention to delve into all these systems of polity. We shall confine ourselves to the system of government which is found in our own Prot. Ref. Churches and from time to time bring out certain characteristic features of others by way of contrast. Various considerations motivate this choice of procedure. *First of all*, our approach must always be positive, and whereas we are of the firm conviction that our own system is sanctioned by the Word of God, it follows that the principles embodied in that system alone can be further developed from *The Word*. The truth is always positive and seeking it must be our main objective also in the field of Church Polity.

*Secondly*, the majority of our readers, we trust, are primarily interested in that system. Under it they are governed as members of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Just as the citizens of any given

country are more concerned about matters pertaining to their own government than they are about things that concern some foreign nation, we believe, members of the church ought to be and rightly are primarily interested in the Polity of the Denomination with which they are affiliated. That, of course, does not preclude interest in other systems. They may be profitably studied, much the same as the people of one country inquire into the mode of civil government in another land. But that interest in secondary while that in one's own system is primary. We suppose that our readers also possess that primary interest for citizens disinterested in their own government make poor citizens, and church members who are indifferent to Ecclesiastical Polity make poor members. It is no more than part of our solemn duty to be interested!

*Thirdly*, by confining ourselves to a discussion of our own polity, we can also limit our discussion to the eighty-six articles of our own D. K. O. in which the basic principles of our polity are defined. If there are some of our readers who do not have in their home the little "green book", we strongly urge you to purchase one from the Synodical Stated Clerk. This little book contains in addition to the Church Order much other valuable information, including Synodical decisions pertaining to different articles. Every Protestant Reformed family should have one. It is this little book that will serve as our *text* in our future discussions.

#### *The starting point.*

It is rather important that we, from the very outset of our discussion, make clear what our specific objective in perusing this field shall be. We must have a goal and purpose. This goal must be clearly and constantly before our minds and from the very beginning we must make sure that we are on the right road or we will never reach the desired destination. Starting point and purpose are closely related. The latter determines the former. That is true in all things. Only when one has a purpose is he prepared to determine his starting point and then, too, one that has no purpose is also without a starting point.

This principle is worthy of illustration. If a man, for example, purposes to become a doctor he does not begin by studying book-keeping or farming, but his point of departure is in the field of medicine. Or, to use another illustration, if a man desires to establish a hardware business, he does not begin by ordering a supply of dry-goods. So, too, in determining our starting point we must face the question: "What end do we have in mind in writing on the various phases of Church Polity?"

Our answer to this question will in turn be de-

termined by our conception of the subject before us. Some seem to think (at least practically) that the Church Order is merely a compilation of rules governing the procedure of Consistory, Classical and Synodical meetings and that, therefore, only the office bearers of the church need to have knowledge of it, just as a competent lawyer must know the rules of procedure in the civil courts. This idea is not only erroneous but from it emits the detestable stench of Romanism which is obnoxious to every child of the Reformation. Others regard Church Polity as a science to be studied only in the Seminary, but this conception is also fallacious.

If either of the above were true there would be no purpose in the undersigned assigning himself to the task of writing. The limited few that would then be concerned with this subject could most profitably consult the sources that are now available and there would be no point in writing more. We could stop here. However, that is not the case. Our conviction is that the Church Order is taken from and founded upon the principles of the Word of God and as such *it is the expression of the will of Christ, the King and Head of the Church, concerning the regulation of the conduct of all who belong to the church.* It is true that the Church Order is not Scripture in the sense that the latter is infallibly inspired and can never be changed whereas the former is composed by men and may under varying circumstances be altered, but that does not take away the fact that the principles of the one are elicited from the other. If this were not the case the Church Order would have no significance whatsoever.

The point, however, that we are primarily interested in here is that whereas the principles of our Church Order express the will of Christ, they are binding upon the consciences of all who belong to His church. The believer promises before God and His church that he will submit himself to the rule of the church. He binds himself to these rules of church government. He promises that by the grace of God he will regulate all his life according to these rules. That must not be regarded lightly for it is a very serious matter. It means certainly that our Church Order is the rule for our daily conduct and by it we are to be governed not only in relation to the office-bearers in the church but also in relation to our brothers and sisters of the household of faith. Our Church Order then is certainly no abstraction but, on the contrary, is a matter of greatest practical concern to every member of the church.

From this we are now ready to express our purpose and to find our proper starting point with a view to that aim. Before we wrote that our main objective in

the field of Church Polity is to seek the Truth. To this we may now add that it is not truth as the object of scientific dogmatics that we seek but rather it is the truth in its practical application to our life as saints. We must know the rules of Christian conduct. These rules we must study in all their intricate implications which are as complex as life itself. We must know "how we ought to behave ourselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." (I Tim. 2:15). In the church the Lord has commanded that "all things be done decently and in order." Calvin remarks on this passage that "it is a rule by which we must regulate everything that has to do with external piety." C. Hodge writes: "The apostle here not only condemns any church acting independently of other churches, but also any member of a particular church acting from his own impulses, without regard to others. The church as a whole, and in every separate congregation, should be a harmonious, well organized body." A. T. Robertson makes this remark: "That is surely a good rule for all matters of church life and worship." In conclusion, therefore, we may express our purpose as the attempt to elucidate upon the principles of Church Order so that the order of the institutional and organic life of the church may be preserved and maintained. If, in some small measure, we succeed in this, our efforts will have been abundantly rewarded. With this goal before us it is almost needless to say that our starting point will be the Word of God so that in its light we may be led to walk according to the proper rules and order of the Church.

Next time, D. V., we will have a few more introductory remarks to make before entering our subject proper.

G. Vanden Berg



Zion, founded on the mountains,  
 God, thy Maker loves thee well;  
 He has chosen thee, most precious,  
 He delights in thee to dwell;  
 God's own city,  
 Who can all thy glory tell?

Heathen lands and hostile peoples  
 Soon shall come the Lord to know;  
 Nations born again in Zion  
 Shall the Lord's salvation show;  
 God Almighty  
 Shall on Zion strength bestow.

## ALL AROUND US

### Book Reviews

It is not the purpose of this department to give a review of books recently published. We can leave this safely in the hands of the editor of the Standard Bearer. But since the books reviews we refer to are those relative to an Exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism, written by his own hand, we feel we know him well enough to say he would not blow his own horn. So we take this opportunity to call attention to what others are saying about Rev. H. Hoeksema's most recent publications.

The editor of Blue Banner Faith and Life, the Rev. J. G. Vos, writes the following regarding Baptized Into Christ in Vol. 7, No. 2, page 105 of his periodical: "The present column is the sixth in a series on the Heidelberg Catechism by a well-known minister and theological leader of the Protestant Reformed Church. It discusses the means of grace, preaching, regeneration, the idea of the sacraments, baptism, the covenant relation between God and man, the ground of infant baptism. For the most part of its contents, the book follows the recognized highway of the Reformed Faith. The teaching is sound, clear and helpful." He then quotes from the chapter on Preaching as a Means of Grace (p. 29) to give an example of what he means by the last statement. The review continues: "A considerable portion of the book is devoted to a discussion of different views of the covenant relation between God and man. The author refers to the Westminster Confession of Faith VI. 1-3 (evidently an error for VII. 1-3) and says: 'Here we meet with the idea of the covenant as . . . a means to an end.'—an idea which the author rejects, among other reasons because Scripture speaks of it as an 'everlasting' covenant." He then quotes Hoeksema: 'A means is not eternal: when the thing to be effected by it has been attained, the means has served its purpose. An everlasting covenant, therefore, is not a way or a means, but is the destination, the end itself.' (pp.142-3). Rev. Vos continues: "The text cited is Jer. 32:40 where the word for 'everlasting' is the Hebrew OLAM, a word translated 20 times in the King James Version as 'perpetual', which need not have the strict meaning of absolute eternity. Thus in Gen. 9:16 the covenant made 'between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth' after the Flood is called 'the everlasting (OLAM) covenant', yet it can hardly be regarded as eternal in the strict sense; compare Gen. 8:22, 'while the earth remaineth'." Referring

to page 140 of the book, the Rev. Vos deems Hoeksema's remark "a rash assertion" when he "rejects as 'pure fiction' the idea that God promised Adam eternal life as the reward for obedience to the command not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." He asserts "Surely the promise of eternal life as the reward for obedience in the Covenant of Works was implied by the presence of the tree of life in the garden of Eden." The reviewer likes the interpretation of his father, the late Geerhardus Vos, better, as he quotes from his *Biblical Theology* p. 38. He closes his review with the remark: "It is clear that though much of the teaching of this book is acceptable, it needs to be read with some discrimination."

Interesting it was to read another review of this same book in the latest issue of *Torch and Trumpet* (Vol. 2 No. 6) by the hand of the Rev. Frederick W. Van Houten. This reviewer offers his comment and criticism in a chapter by chapter review. Regarding chapter 2, the Rev. Van Houten says: "Preaching as a Means of Grace—impressed us as one of the best in the book. We heartily recommend its reading to every thinking Christian. The argument is clear, the thesis worthy of careful consideration—even if one may not agree with its conclusion." A little further on the reviewer continues "with unkindly severity the writer denounces the revival type of meeting characteristic of current Fundamentalist groups. No doubt much of this type of activity is justifiably criticized, but nevertheless the author has missed an excellent opportunity to bind upon the heart of the church the urgency of the Great Commission. Such a call would have given fine balance to this otherwise most excellent chapter." Commenting on the references which the author expounds to establish the immediacy of regeneration the reviewer continues: "Very little is said, however, concerning those who are externally called, that is, who come under the hearing of the gospel. We believe that this omission was not intentional, but this reviewer wishes that an explanation of Romans 10:14,15 and especially verse 17... would have been included." At this point we noticed an asterisk referring to a foot-note by the Editorial Committee which reads as follows: "In fairness to the Rev. Mr. Hoeksema it ought to be stated that these passages are treated in his collection of sermons on Romans 9-11, privately published some years ago." Perhaps the author of this foot-note would be so kind as to let the Rev. Van Houten and others of his colleagues read that book of sermons. It would be most enlightening to them. Respecting Hoeksema's conception of the covenant, the reviewer remarks: it "is rigidly one-sided, with very little emphasis on the

responsibility of the second 'part' as described in the formula for baptism as used in the Christian Reformed Churches." And after making a few comments on the chapters dealing with Baptism and Infant Baptism in which the reviewer contends that in respect to the latter (Infant Baptism) the author's "argument would have been more complete, we feel, had the writer explicated the passage which calls covenant children 'holy' children (I Cor. 7:14)", the Rev. Van Houten concludes with the following paragraph: "The reviewer recommends this book highly. This does not mean, of course, that he agrees with the author at every point, as we have indicated above. However, the sound and clear emphasis upon the sovereignty of God and the preciousness of Reformed truth is needed today! It is our prayer that the author may be allowed to complete this series of thorough expositions of the Heidelberg Catechism."

Most interesting of all is the review appearing in the same issue of *Torch and Trumpet* by the hand of the Rev. Leonard Greenway on the latest of Rev. Hoeksema's books, entitled: *Eating and Drinking Christ*.

Rev. Greenway remarks: "In this exposition of the Catechism (Lord's Day XXVIII-XXXI) the author lives up to his enviable reputation for solid, substantial treatment of Scripture truth. I have yet to read something from his pen that might be described as 'light' or superficial. He is an exegete of unusual ability, a theologian par excellence, and certainly a lover of the Reformed Faith."

"There have been in the past unfortunate developments in connection with certain emphases in his preaching and teaching which led to situations where animosities prevailed in place of brotherly discussion. Had the Rev. Herman Hoeksema been willing to remain in the Christian Reformed Church, where his theological scholarship is still admired by many, and to submit his views to a more prolonged discussion and examination, it is quite possible that the Protestant Reformed Church would never have come into existence, and the Christian Reformed Church would be the stronger for having him and his fine people in her constituency. It is not unreasonable to cherish the hope that a reunion may be some day effected."

We could not escape the question when we read this last paragraph: What does this have to do with the review of Hoeksema's book? It seemed to us that the reviewer forgot for a moment his task, and became so overwhelmed with the thought of the evil treatment the author received by the hands of his Church leaders that he could wish they would sincerely repent and pray for the return into their fold of "him



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and his fine people." Was not the reviewer not a little conscience smitten when he penned these words? And will not his colleagues be a little aggravated by the boldness he evinced when he also accuses them of animosities they allowed to prevail in place of brotherly discussion? One who is a little acquainted with the history asks himself a lot of questions when he reads a paragraph like this.

But brother Greenway appears not to be too well acquainted with the history. Does he not know that Hoeksema and others were allowed no brotherly discussion? Does he not know that Hoeksema was not even consulted by the committee of pre-advice that had his case, nor by the Synod that finally followed their advice? Does he not know that only once was Hoeksema allowed to speak in his defence, and that after he had pleaded for just one opportunity? Does he not know that Hoeksema appealed to the Synod of 1926 and that that Synod plainly ignored him? Has brother Greenway forgotten the Pantlind Conference where Hoeksema challenged his fellow ministers to continue brotherly discussion and that in the presence of the late Dr. Schilder who came to this country to seek for such a reunion? Does not Rev. Greenway know that as far as Hoeksema is concerned, it was not a question of being willing or unwilling to abide in the Chr. Ref. Churches, but that he was ruthlessly cast out? Does the Rev. Greenway not know that under no considerations could the Rev. Hoeksema and "his fine people" have remained in the Christian Reformed Churches as long as the unScriptural and unConfessional Three Points of Common Grace were maintained? And does he not know that in view of the spiritual condition of the Church in 1924 the split was unavoidable because it was a reformation? And finally, does not brother Greenway have a wrong understanding of reformations to "cherish the hope that a reunion" by our returning to the Christian Reformed Churches "may some day be effected"? Yes, we too hope for a reunion, but it must be one in which Rev. Greenway and his people will come to us in sorrow and repentance and walk with us in the way of truth. In our opinion he must do more than deplore the past conduct of his Churches, he should protest against it until his Churches repent, or cast him out also as they did the author of the book he was reviewing, whom he describes as "an exegete of unusual ability... a lover of the Reformed Faith".

Besides the complimentary aspects of his review, the Rev. Greenway has especially two criticisms to offer. He notes that Rev. Hoeksema's presentation of the Lutheran doctrine of consubstantiation is "a bit out-of-date", since according to the information the

reviewer has "the term 'consubstantiation'... is no longer in vogue". And, "more emphasis is being placed" in the Lutheran Church "on spiritual eating."

A more serious criticism, however, the Rev. Greenway gives to Hoeksema's discussion of the question: What is the promise of the Gospel? Rev. Greenway, it appears, is not yet ready to accept Hoeksema's presentation of an 'unconditional' promise. Hoeksema "from his rigid standpoint" has created for the reviewer a problem, and that problem appears to be this: What to do with man's responsibility! The same problem which his colleague the Rev. Van Houten has. It seems to us that their 'problem' will dissolve as soon as they look at the truth without the colored glasses of the First Point of the Synod of 1924.

We also have a problem. Briefly it is this: What would the editor of the Banner say if he received some book reviews like the two appearing in *Torch and Trumpet* to be published in the *Banner*?

M. Schipper



Who shall the Lord's elect condemn?  
'Tis God that justifies their souls;  
And mercy, like a mighty stream,  
O'er all their sins divinely rolls.

Who shall adjudge the saints to hell?  
'Tis Christ that suffered in their stead:  
And the salvation to fulfil,  
Behold His rising from the dead.

He lives! He lives! and sits above,  
Forever interceding there;  
Who shall divide us from His love?  
Or what should tempt us to despair?

Shall persecution or distress,  
Famine, or sword, or nakedness?  
He that hath loved us, bears us through,  
And makes us more than conquerors too.

Faith hath an overcoming pow'r,  
It triumphs in the dying hour:  
Christ is our life, our joy, our hope;  
Nor can we sink with such a prop.

Not all that men on earth can do,  
Nor powers on high, nor powers below,  
Shall cause His mercy to remove,  
Nor wean our hearts from Christ our love.