

# THE STANDARD

*Bearer*

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

VOLUME XXIX

MARCH 15, 1953 — GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

NUMBER 12

## MEDITATION

### The Agonizing Cry in Utter Darkness

"Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying Eli, Eli, lama sabachtani? that is to say, My God, My God why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

—Matt. 27:45, 46

"And about the sixth hour!"

God is a God of wondrous order and precision. He inhabits eternity, but His hand and counsel rules time and the hours. And the Holy Ghost is rather specific about time: He has measured distance in the garden of Gethsemane; here He is measuring the time of the AFTERNOON'S SACRIFICE!

I am going to change one word in a beautiful song, a song which you have sung very often:

"The offering on the altar burned gives *great* delight to Thee!"

Yes, it gave great delight to God, this sorry spectacle of the AFTERNOON'S SACRIFICE.

It is well that we emphasize the time element: God is our Mentor, Teacher.

This awful afternoon, at about the sixth hour is the fulness of time. It is the moment when time is full, the time that God has reserved from all eternities. It is the time when God has shown His sweetest and most glorious manifesto: the groaning and crying Godhead on the cross. You may live to everlasting, but you will never see anything sweeter, more glorious than this spectacle: God going to nethermost hell so that you may sing, sing, sing on and on to all eternity.

Oh my God! Why forsaken by Thee Whom I love with all the love of My pure heart?

It is so that all the world may see how adorable We are!

Hour of the greatest of Divine mysteries!

At about the sixth hour!

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At about the sixth hour!

Did I speak of mysteries?

Well, what would you? I hear of desolation for Him who is in the bosom of God!

Did God forsake God? God, who is sweetest UNION Personified?

Isn't the union of two natures in the Person of the Son of God, even in this terrible hour?

Do we see the obedient Servant of God forsaken?

Why is obedience so rewarded? Even at this so supreme moment of His obedience? Is God able to forsake virtue personified in His beloved Son?

Moreover, why this questing cry? For what reason does Jesus ask this question of the Godhead, and why does He give it all this terrible publicity? The whole universe has heard, and this question has been repeated on a million tongues. Does He not know? The answer, we may as well anticipate here, the answer is: for My redemption's sake! I, the Triune God, desire to glorify Myself in Thy horrible suffering! Does the Son not know that which was determined in the secret counsels ere the world was?

The Christ of God saw, experienced the awful mysteries of salvation. He knew that obedience was to be rewarded with punishment. He knew, better than any other, that He had come to die. It was the very reason for His coming into the world. Many times He had told His disciples that He would be taken, maltreated, crucified, and, finally, that He would die.

Well, He that came to die and knew it, crying out for a reason?

Awful mysteries!

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We have read many attempted explanations of this cry of Jesus. I say: attempted explanations. And the trouble lies in that word: *explanations*. We, mortals, do little explaining of anything. I am told that an attempt to explain that two times two makes four is not as easy as it seems. And if that be true, what shall we say of one of the most exalted mysteries of God such as we contemplate at this terrible hour?

No, I am afraid that we shall not be able to explain things here.

However, although we cannot explain, fathom, comprehend, this awful phenomenon of the crying Saviour, we are able to say something about it. And we are able to do this only because God has given us His Word. That Word sheds light upon our path. Yes, and also upon the dying Christ.

And listening to that Word, we may safely say that God was not forsaken of God. That is eternally impossible. That militates against all that the Word tells us about God. That Word taught us that the very idea of the Godhead is Union, Oneness, the Covenant! God cannot be forsaken of God. The Father cannot forsake the Son. Such a terrible idea annihilates the Godhead.

Neither cannot it be that we see here a negative separation of God. God cannot forsake His creature, and Jesus is also a creature. At the very moment that Jesus cried with a loud voice: My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? at that moment the law of God was applicable to Him which saith: in Him we move and have our being. God was very near to Jesus when He uttered this cry. For Jesus was also a creature, a very man.

If I may speak in a seeming paradox, I would say: the very presence of God causes this feeling of forsakenness of our Saviour. And this awful presence, nearness of God is symbolized by the *three* hour darkness. God was very, very near to Jesus. It was an awful nearness to Jesus.

No, I cannot explain here, but this I know: Jesus tasted at this hour the bitterness of an awful cup: God withdrew the taste of His favor and experience of His blessed communion and fellowship! Remember that Jesus longed for God's communion with all the yearning of His pure soul and body. It was His very life to feel the nearness of His *loving* Father.

But what did He experience?

This: God made Him taste the vengeance of righteousness, holiness and outraged truth. God made Him taste that which devils and reprobate men will taste unto all eternity. No, God was not far away from Jesus, He was very near to Him in this woeful hour, but He was near to Him in His wrath.

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In His wrath!

O God, we must be so careful with our speech. Words are so dangerous! What shall I say?

This I must say at this juncture: God did not hate Him at this hour. When God pours out His wrath upon devils and reprobate men in hell, it is the outpouring of His hatred.

But let me say it a thousand times: God never hated Jesus. That is also impossible. For He was the faithful and loving and obedient Servant, in this hour and in all the time of His sojourning.

And when Jesus must hang there between heaven and earth in the thickness of darkness which spoke of wrath and wrath and wrath of His God, He realizes that this wrath is not *deserved by Him*. He knows that He is not the recipient of all these bruising strokes because of *His own sin*. Hence, the cry.

The cry is really the answer to God's demand: Love Me! Love Me, even when I make Thee experience My hell! Love Me! Thou standest in the room of My beloved people, and they did not love Me. Now love Me in their stead, and do it in Thy very hell in this My darkness.

And Jesus gives the answer: *My God! My God!* Oh, note that possessive pronoun. It is more than mere possession. In it throbs the love of Jesus for His Father, even while that Father makes Him taste a hell such as devils shall never taste.

May I be so bold as to add to Jesus' cry? God forgive me if I am wrong. But I understand Jesus to say: My God, My God, Thou knowest that I love Thee so. Therefore, Why forsakest Thou Me now in this dreadful hour?

Well, God might say through David: Terrible things, I will answer thee in righteousness!

And through Isaiah: In these (that is, in sin and wrath) is eternity, that Israel might be saved.

Awful mysteries of the Cross!

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Why, O My God? Why?

Shall the Divine answer come?

Well, Jesus seems to be without an answer. Time was when the heavens were rent and a VOICE came down from heaven, saying: This is My beloved Son!

But at this hour there seems to be no answer.

And yet there is. I would have you note the great, the Divine TIMEKEEPER AT THE CROSS. At about the ninth hour Jesus cried this pitiful cry. It was the last drop in the bitter cup of an eternity of death. The answer of God is heralded in the departure of the mob from the hill called Golgotha. There they go, beating their breasts. As so many whipped dogs. It is a prophetic spectacle of the judgment day. O yes, Jesus did receive His answer. Only a few moments, and with trembling voice He will say: It is finished!

Oh yes, the answer came. Objectively, for the light returned. Subjectively: it is finished!

The answer came. Ponder that answer of God.

Here is your answer:

For God's sake: justice must be satisfied. And My eternal love must find a way. Thou in all Thy misery art that way!

For Christ's sake: Thou must merit Thy choice reward; Thou must reveal the Father in all His loveliness so that heaven and earth, united, may sing of it forever.

For your sake: your damnable guilt must be borne and borne away; you must be made happy for evermore.

I am going, Lord; I am going. I am going to sing of Thee unto all eternity! Amen and Amen.

G. Vos.

#### STATED CLERK OF CLASSIS EAST

The Classical Committee of Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches announces that on its meeting held March 3 it was decided to appoint an acting Clerk, Pro-Tem, in the place of the late Stated Clerk of Classis East, Brother D. Jonker. The Rev. G. Lubbers was appointed in this capacity. All material for the next meeting of Classis East, to be held on Wednesday, April 8, 1953, in the Hope Protestant Reformed Church, should be sent to Rev. G. Lubbers, 1304 Maude Ave., N.E., Grand Rapids 5, Mich. Will the delegates from the various Consistories regard this announcement as the official announcement of the coming meeting of Classis East?

Geo. C. Lubbers, Acting Clerk, Pro-Tem.

### THE STANDARD BEARER

*Semi-monthly, except monthly during July and August*

Published by the REFORMED FREE PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION  
Box 124, Station C, Grand Rapids 6, Michigan

Editor — REV. HERMAN HOEKSEMA

Communications relative to contents should be addressed to Rev. H. Hoeksema, 1139 Franklin St., S.E. Grand Rapids 7, Michigan.

All matters relative to subscriptions should be addressed to Mr. J. Bouwman, 1350 Giddings Ave., S.E., Grand Rapids 6, Michigan. Announcements and Obituaries must be mailed to the above address and will be published at a fee of \$1.00 for each notice.

RENEWALS: Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order.

Subscription price: \$4.00 per year

Entered as Second Class matter at Grand Rapids, Michigan

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## EDITORIALS

### The Promise and Conditions According to Scripture

Some time ago we wrote about the subject of conditions in the light of our Confessions.

Then we discovered that, although our confessions are very elaborate and cover every phase of the truth, there is no trace of "conditions" in them. Our Reformed fathers, evidently, had no need of the term conditions. In spite of that fact that the term was well known, and that several Reformed writers were rather free in using it, they did not give it a place in the symbols of the Reformed Churches, the Three Forms of Unity.

It does, indeed, occur in the Canons of Dordrecht, but only in the negative part, in which the doctrines of the Arminians are condemned. The Arminians needed the term, and made frequent use of it.

It certainly may be said, therefore, that it is not a confessionally Reformed term.

Now, however, we wish to devote some attention to the subject of the promise and conditions in the light of Holy Writ.

Before we do this, however, it may not seem superfluous to define the term condition.

This is all the more imperative because, even as the term is not confessionally Reformed, so it is neither a Scriptural term. In the whole of Holy Writ, one looks in vain for the use of the word "condition." This does not mean that we may not use the term. Fact is that we use many terms in our system of doctrine as well as in our confessions that are not at all employed in Holy Writ, such as holy trinity, providence, attributes, sacraments, means of grace, etc. Nevertheless, the fact that the term is not found in Scripture at the same time makes Scriptural exegesis of it also impossible. Hence, we have to go elsewhere to define the meaning of the word in order to discover whether or not it may be, ought to be, or is at all advisable to be given a place in the expression of our Reformed system of doctrine.

First of all, we may remark that the etymology of the word "condition" cannot help us. Etymology is the science that treats of the history, origin, and primitive significance of words. It is often helpful to determine the present meaning of words. But this can hardly be said about the term condition. The word is composed of two parts, *con*, with, together with,

and *ditio* or *dicio*, which probably means to point out, to declare. Thus the term "condition" would mean a pointing out together with. And this hardly seems to throw any light upon our modern use of the term.

If we consult the dictionary we find that the very first meaning of the word is *mode or state of being*. Further, it signifies: *mental or physical strength, disposition, character, essential property, attribute*.

We see at once, however, that all these different connotations have no bearing upon the term under discussion at present. In this sense we all use the term, also in theological terminology. Who is not acquainted with the distinction we already learned in catechism between "state" and "condition"? Christ entered into the state, not in the condition of sin. State, in this case refers to one's legal position, condition to one's actual mode of existence or nature. But this has nothing to do with the term as it is discussed so frequently among us today. In this sense, it is properly translated by the Dutch term "toestand", while the term in discussion among us may be translated by the Dutch "voorwaarde."

Another definition we find in the dictionary is that condition is something which must exist as a concomitant of something else. By concomitant is meant something which exists alongside of something else, with or without any causal connection. Wind is a concomitant of an electric storm. Reproach is a concomitant of confessing Christ in the world.

However, also this is not the meaning of the term "condition" as we are discussing it at present and as it is used in theological parlance. Wind may or may not be a concomitant of a thunderstorm, but it can hardly be said that, if we understand the term as it is used in theology, the thunderstorm is a condition for the wind: there may be wind without a thunderstorm.

The definition of Schilder we already discussed sometime ago.

He wants to discard the dictionary and its definitions, and invent one of his own, or, at least, rather consult theological works to arrive at a definition of the term.

This is rather dangerous and arbitrary. Words certainly have meaning. Not only so, but they also are currently used in every day language. The latter is known by the Latin term *usus loquendi*. Now, the definitions of a word offered in the dictionary give the meaning of a word according to its original significance, its denotation and its current use. The danger is that, if we invent a definition of our own, the people will forget all about our definition, and use the term in its current meaning. And as far as the use

of the term in theological works is concerned, the danger is that we will arrive at an Arminian definition, and, by using the term, fall into the Arminian error.

Besides, the definition which Schilder offers is altogether too indefinite and ambiguous, as I have pointed out before. Cf. *Standard Bearer*, Vol. 28, p. 390.

However, for the sake of completeness, we quote it here once again: "A condition is something which God has connected with something else, to make clear to us, that the one thing cannot come without the other, and that we cannot be sure of one thing, unless we are at the same time assured of the other."

As we said, this definition is indefinite and ambiguous. The question is: what is this something which God has connected with something else? And what is the connection: means to an end, cause and effect? Besides, it ignores the *personal* element that is always present in the term "condition" as used in theological parlance. The term condition always implies that man must do something in order to receive something from God.

Hence, the term condition, also as it is used in theology, always means "that which is requisite in order that something else should take effect." This implies that a condition is *prerequisite*, i.e. "something previously required, or necessary to an end or effect proposed."

This is the meaning the term has as it occurs in the Canons, in the rejection of the Arminian errors.

We are not concerned now with the question whether or not the term is necessarily and *per se* Arminian. For the present we merely wish to arrive at a proper definition of the term.

When the Arminians speak of "conditional election" no Reformed man will adopt this terminology. Nevertheless, it is evident that the fathers of Dordt who condemned the term condition with application to election, understood the term as meaning a prerequisite, something that is required of a man before he can attain unto salvation. Canons I, B, 2.

When they teach that God chose out of all possible conditions the act of faith as a condition unto salvation, the fathers of Dordt certainly do not agree with them but condemn their doctrine. The fact remains, however, that also according to them the term condition signifies a prerequisite which man must fulfill. Canons I, B, 3.

The Arminians also understood that faith is a gift of God, and they even speak of an election unto faith. But according to them, "in the election unto faith this condition is beforehand demanded, viz., that man should use the light of nature aright, be pious,

humble, meek and fit for eternal life." On these things, as requirements beforehand, election unto faith depends, according to them. Again, I wish to emphasize that it is not the question whether any Reformed man believes in these Arminian conditions. The question is merely how our fathers understood the term. And then it is plain that they, as well as the Arminians, understood the term in the sense of a prerequisite, something that is required of man beforehand. Canons I, B, 3.

According to Canons I, B, 5 the Arminians teach "that faith, the obedience of faith, holiness, godliness and perseverance are not fruits of the unchangeable election to glory, but are conditions, which being required beforehand, were foreseen as met by those who will be fully elected, and are causes without which the unchangeable election to glory does not occur." Our fathers condemned the term election in this connection. But the very fact that they condemned its use here shows plainly that also to them the term as such only could mean a prerequisite which man must fulfill. This, therefore, is the proper definition of the term in theological usage.

The Arminians also boldly teach that Christ neither merited salvation for anyone, nor faith, "but that he merited for the Father only the authority or the perfect will to deal again with man, and to prescribe new conditions as he might desire, obedience to which, however, depended on the free will of man, so that therefore it might have come to pass that either none or all should fulfill these conditions." Of this doctrine our fathers must, of course, have nothing. But they understood very well the proper meaning of the term conditions. By the term as such they understood the same concept as the Arminians. Otherwise they would have fought strawmen when they condemned the doctrine of the opponents of the Reformed truth. "Prescribed conditions" also to them meant stipulations required of man beforehand, i.e., prerequisites. Canons I, B, 5.

Finally, according to Canons V, B, 1, the Arminians deny that the perseverance of believers is the fruit of election, and they maintain that it is "a condition of the new covenant, which man before his decisive election must fulfill through his free will." Here, too, our fathers have no dispute with the Arminians about the term *condition* as such, though they oppose and condemn its use in this connection. Also to them the term refers to something which man must fulfill beforehand.

This is also the meaning Dr. Greenway attaches to the term in "*Torch and Trumpet*", March 1953, when he writes: "What I am trying to say is that when our Form for Baptism says: 'Whereas in all

covenants there are contained two parts . . . , it certainly describes the hearer of the promise as being in a position where he can claim the first part of the covenant for himself only *if* he assumes the obligations of the second part." Man can claim something for himself (salvation!) on condition, prerequisite, that he fulfills certain obligations.

This definition, then, we must constantly bear in mind when we discuss conditions in the light of Scripture.—H.H.



#### EASTERN MEN'S LEAGUE MASS MEETING

The Eastern Men's League Mass Meeting will be held Thursday evening, March 19 at 8 o'clock in the Creston Protestant Reformed Church. This is the last meeting of this nature for the season. The board has chosen the subject "Anabaptists, We?". The speaker for the evening is the Rev. H. Hoeksema of First Church. Let's all be out to here a worthwhile address. Opportunity will be given for questions and discussion after the address. Let's be out and make this a real Mass Meeting.

The Board of the Men's League



#### FINAL ACCOUNT OF THE CONFERENCE

May 15, 1947 balance on hand at last public accounting, see Concordia, May 15, 1947.....	\$340.95
Interest received since the above date.....	17.83
Total Balance .....	\$358.78

Disbursements since that date:

May 19, 1947 late phone and travel expense account of a conferee of the 1946 conference .....	\$ 5.97
July 29, 1947 Stationery, Postage, Mimeogr. ....	1.08
Aug. 25 and 26, 1947 preparations at Sioux Falls for a conference which was later cancelled: Tel., Postage, Mimeogr., Travel Expense of the Revs. Korn and Vos .....	30.36
Total Disbursements .....	\$37.41

Balance to date: February 27, 1953 .....\$321.37

P.S.—The treasurers of this Conference Fund decided to divide the above balance proportionately between the Reformed Churches in the U.S. and the Protestant Reformed Churches, taking as a basis the amounts collected for the last held Conference in both denominations. The records show that the Prot. Ref. Churches collected \$620.99, and we received a check from the treasurer of Eureka Classis for \$200.00, so the proportion is 3 to 1. Therefore we have forwarded a check for \$241.03 to Fred LaGrange, and a check to Rev. D. E. Bosma, Eureka, So. Dakota for the amount of \$80.34.

The account of the Conference is hereby closed.

We have sent this accounting to the Standard Bearer, Concordia, Gemeindeblatt and the Witness for publication.

Respectfully, the treasurers of  
The Conference  
Wm. E. Korn and Gerrit Vos

## OUR DOCTRINE

### THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

AN EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

PART III — OF THANKFULNESS

LORD'S DAY 35

2. Image Worship (cont'd.)

The question must still be considered whether the Roman Catholic custom of placing images in the churches and bowing before them is to be justified. The Catechism treats this subject in Question and Answer 98: "But may not images be tolerated in the churches, as books to the laity? No: for we must not pretend to be wiser than God, who will have his people taught, not by dumb images, but by the lively preaching of His Word."

The Council of Trent, in its Twenty-fifth Session, composed a chapter on "The Invocation, Veneration, and Relics of Saints, and on Sacred Images." From this we quote the following: "The holy synod enjoins on all bishops, and others who sustain the office and charge of teaching, that agreeably to the usage of the catholic and apostolic church, received from the primitive times of the Christian religion, and agreeably to the consent of the holy fathers, and to the decrees of sacred councils, they especially instruct the faithful diligently concerning the intercession and invocation of saints; the honor paid to relics; and the legitimate use of images: teaching them, that the saints, who reign together with Christ, offer up their own prayers to God for men; that it is good and useful suppliantly to invoke them, and to have recourse to their prayers, aid, and help for obtaining benefits from God, through His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who is our alone Redeemer and Savior; but that they think impiously who deny that the saints, who enjoy eternal happiness in heaven, are to be invocated; or who assert that they do not pray for men; or that the invocation of them to pray for each of us even in particular is idolatry; or that it is repugnant to the Word of God, and is opposed to the honor of the *one mediator of God and men, Christ Jesus*; or that it is foolish to supplicate, vocally or mentally, those who reign in heaven."

Then, after a paragraph in which the Council of Trent teaches that the bodies of the saints must be venerated, and even their relics must be adored because many blessings are bestowed on men by God through them, the same chapter continues: "Moreover that the images of Christ, of the virgin mother of God,



and of the other saints, are to be had and retained particularly in temples, and that due honor and veneration are to be given them; not that any divinity, or virtue, is believed to be in them, on account of which they are to be worshipped; or that anything is to be asked of them; or that trust is to be reposed in images, as was of old done by the Gentiles, who placed their hope in idols; but because the honor which is shown them is referred to the prototypes which those images represent; in such wise that by the images which we kiss, and before which we uncover the head, and prostrate ourselves, we adore Christ, and we venerate the saints, whose similitude they bear: as, by the decrees of councils, and especially of the second synod of Nicea, has been defined against the opponents of images."

These images, according to the same decrees of the Council of Trent, are placed in the churches for the instruction of the people: "And the bishop shall carefully teach this,—that, by means of the history of the mysteries of our redemption, portrayed by paintings or other representations, the people is instructed, and confirmed in the habit of remembering and continually revolving in mind the articles of faith." Images, therefore, according to the Romish Church, are placed in the churches as books of the laity.

This the Heidelberg Catechism condemns.

Ursinus, in his exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism, offers eight reasons why images should not be tolerated in the churches. They are as follows: 1) It is contrary to the express command of God that images should be made and set up in churches. 2) Images placed in churches have been the occasion and means of horrible idolatry in the Romish Church. 3) God expressly commanded that idols should be removed, as well as every corruption of the true doctrine and worship of God, and in this way declared His displeasure against idolatry. 4) Our confession of the sincere worship, and our hatred to idolatry, cannot be expressed only in words, but must reveal itself in outward actions. Hence, we ought to remove all images from our churches. 5) The Scriptures speak in commendation of certain pious kings, such as Asa, Hezekiah, Josiah, who destroyed the images and idols which had been set up. 6) We must avoid all offence, and prevent all superstition and idolatry, so that the church and ignorant souls may be preserved from danger and sin, which formerly fell upon our forefathers for their idolatry. 7) The enemies of the church may not be given occasion by this spectacle which looks so very much like idolatry to be driven farther from a profession of the truth and to cast reproach upon it. And, 8) images have never re-

sulted in any good to those that had them. The history of Israel plainly reveals that images were always the cause of corruption and idolatry.

To this we may add that it is always quite impossible not only to make an image of God, but even to make an image of Christ incarnate. The Catechism contrasts the use of images in the churches with the lively preaching of the Word. And that is undoubtedly correct. Suppose you have images of all the phases of the historical Jesus, as He sojourned on earth in the years 1 to 33 A. D. Would all those images together be a true representation of the Christ of the Scriptures? They would not; and they never could be. You may make an image of the Babe of Bethlehem lying in the manger; but that image could never represent the Son of God incarnate. You can make images of all phases of the suffering of Christ on the *Via Dolorosa* in its different stages,—images that are usually set up in the Roman Catholic Churches; but can an image of the cross possibly represent the Word of the Cross, the *logos tou staurou*, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them? That is forever impossible. Such an image cannot possibly serve as a book for the laity, but can only serve to cover up the gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord. God was not only in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself when the Son of God in the human nature died on the accursed tree, but He also put the Word of the Cross in the apostles. And the apostles proclaimed that Word of the Cross. If it had not been for that revelation of God Himself, we could never have understood the cross. And that cross, arrested in one of its moments by a dumb image, is deprived of all its glory and power. And what to say of an image of the Christ in His resurrection, and in His ascension, and in His exaltation at the right hand of God? It is evident that a dumb image in wood or stone can only serve to deprive the exalted Christ of His glory and power. Hence, we must not have images in the churches, not even as books of the laity. For they can never represent the glorious gospel of God revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. But we must have the lively preaching of the Word of God, which brings unto us the complete Christ of the Scriptures, the Son of God in the flesh, conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary, Who suffered and died for our sins, and in Whom God reconciled us unto Himself, Who rose for our justification in the glory of immortality, and Who is exalted at the right hand of God, there to make intercession for all His people. Hence, the Heidelberg Catechism is certainly correct when it states in the answer to Question 98: "We must not pretend to be wiser than God, who will have his people taught, not

by dumb images, but by the lively preaching of his Word."

### 3. God's Revelation

It is evident that while the second commandment negatively forbids the worship of images, by implication it positively demands that we can and must know God only from His own revelation. When we make an image, we say who and what God is; we make a God after the imagination of our own heart. This we cannot say and may not do, but, on the contrary, we must let God say who and what He is, and worship Him according to His own Word. This is also emphasized by the Heidelberg Catechism in this Thirty-fifth Lord's Day. In Question and Answer 96 it instructs us that we shall not represent God, nor worship Him in any other way than He has commanded us in His Word. And again, in Question and Answer 98 we are taught once more that God will have His people instructed in the knowledge of Him not by dumb images, but by the lively preaching of His Word.

We can know God only from His own revelation to us.

What is this wonder of revelation? For a wonder it certainly is, that the infinite and incomprehensible God makes Himself known to the finite creature in such a way that he can have fellowship with Him in an eternal bond of covenant friendship.

Revelation presupposes, in the first place, that God knows Himself. All God's revelation in all Scripture plainly teaches us that God only knows Himself with a perfect and eternal knowledge. He is not a blind, impersonal power, but a personal, consciously knowing and willing Being, Who as the Triune God knows Himself in an infinitely perfect sense. Eternally the Father generates the Son. For as the Father has life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself. John 5:26. This eternal Son is the "brightness of his glory, the express image of his person." Heb. 1:3. The Son reflects in infinite perfection, within the Being of God, all the glory and virtues, all the delights and perfections of the Father eternally. For in the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God. And the Word was God. John 1:1. It is in this Word, the eternal Son, that God knows Himself and speaks to Himself concerning Himself in the Spirit. For the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and from the Son. He proceeds from the Father to the Son, in order as the Spirit of the Son to return to the Father. That Spirit is the divine bond of knowledge and fellowship within the divine family. For the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God, and knows all that is in God. I Cor. 2:10. And He never speaks of Himself, but eternally

witnesses of the Son, even within the economy of the Trinity, and glorifies the Son. John 16:13. And therefore, there is an eternally perfect knowledge in God of Himself. He alone knows Himself with infinite perfection. The eternal God is comprehended only by His own divine, infinite mind. And this knowledge stands before His divine consciousness eternally, unchangeably, in infinite perfection. We know in part. And even of that knowledge in part we are not always conscious. We speak of that which lies below the threshold of our consciousness at any given moment. But in God there is no unconsciousness, nor a subconsciousness. He is a perfect light also in this respect, and there is no darkness in God at all. There is in Him no difference between the scope of His Being,—if we may use this anthropomorphism,—and the scope of His knowledge, nor between His knowledge and His divine consciousness. The whole of God's infinite Being, with all His unfathomable perfection and perfect knowledge, is constantly reflected in His divine consciousness. The Lord our God knows Himself and fathoms His divine Essence eternally, and consciously contemplates His own glorious perfections without interruption.

Now, even as God knows Himself, and that too with an infinitely perfect and eternally self-conscious knowledge, so also He alone it is that is able to impart His knowledge to the creature, that is, to reveal Himself. Not indeed as if there were a creature that is capable of receiving that knowledge of God: God Himself must create that recipient of revelation. And this He did, and still does. For He originally created man in His own image and likeness, and thus made Him capable of receiving the knowledge of God. And after man fell into the darkness of the lie, He recreates him in Christ Jesus, restores the image of God in him, and raises him to a higher level of knowledge than he ever knew before. Nor, again, as if such a creature could ever be formed capable of receiving God's own infinite and eternal knowledge of Himself: for such a creature would have to be infinite as God is infinite. Revelation must needs consist in this, that God speaks concerning Himself and imparts His knowledge in a form the creature can receive, in a creaturely measure. And behind and beyond the plane of revelation there must always remain infinite depths of divine glories and perfections which we can never fathom. In revelation God comes down to us; He does not lift us up to His infinite majesty. He gives His Word a finite form; He does not communicate to our hearing an infinite capacity. Yet, while on the plane of revelation He reaches out for us and speaks to us in language adapted to our capacity, He at the same time and through that same medium of revelation



deeply impresses upon our minds and hearts that He is always greater than His revelation; that while He is revealed, He is still hid; and while He is known, He is still the incomprehensible One. If it were not so, we would still worship an image and an idol. This does not necessarily imply that revelation gives us no adequate knowledge of God, even in the sense that through revelation God reflects all His fulness: in Christ dwells all the fulness of God bodily. Col. 2:9. That we know in part must not be so interpreted that we know only a part of God. But it does mean that beyond and above the divine revelation of Himself in finite form there is,—and we are ever conscious of the reality of it,—an infinite Essence. Even when in glory we shall see face to face, we shall still forever be conscious that the face we behold is but the presence of Him Who must remain invisible in His infinite majesty.

We are accustomed to distinguish between two forms of revelation, a general revelation in nature and a special revelation in Scripture. Also our Confession speaks of this in Article 2 of the Netherland Confession: "We know him by two means: first, by the creation, preservation and government of the universe; which is before our eyes as a most elegant book, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many characters leading us to contemplate the invisible things of God, namely, his power and divinity, as the apostle Paul saith, Rom. 1:20. All which things are sufficient to convince men, and leave them without excuse. Secondly, he makes himself more clearly and fully known to us by his holy and divine word, that is to say, as far as is necessary for us to know in this life, to his glory and our salvation." A good deal has been written about these two forms of revelation, the one general and the other special. And the last word has not been said about this subject. However, we would go astray if we would consider these two forms of revelation as if they were two wholly different revelations, not only distinct, but separated from each other, so that the one is adapted to "natural light" and the other to faith. In that case the one is a revelation of God to man in general, the other to His people in Christ. The one, according to this view, provides man with the necessary material for the structure of a "natural theology"; the other is the source of Christian knowledge. But this is plainly erroneous. It speaks about general revelation, natural theology, and natural religion as if the original condition of the first paradise still existed. And it completely fails to take into account the important change that was brought about in this "general revelation" through the fall of man and the curse of God.

H.H.

## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

### Mahanaim

(II Samuel 17:27)

The people of the region where David and his followers were now encamped were friendly. Knowing that he and his people must be in a condition of extreme want for the necessities of life, they came to him in Mahanaim with an abundance of provisions. The sacred writer names three of these benefactors. With obvious delight he describes in detail their generosity toward David.

*And it came to pass when David was come to Mahanaim, that Shobi the son of Nahash, of Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and Machir the son of Ammiel of Lodabar, and Barzillai the Giliadite of Regelim, brought beds and basins and earthen vessels, and wheat and barley and flour and roasted, and beans and lentils and roasted, and honey and butter and sheep and cheese of kine, for David and the people that were with him to eat; for they said, The people (is got) hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness. 27-29.*

[The other versions render the text here: "And brought . . . wheat and barley, and flour, and parched corn, and beans, and lentiles, and parched (roasted) pulse." But the words "corn" and "pulse" do not appear in the Hebrew text. Nevertheless, their insertion may be warranted. If so, the thought that the Hebrew phrase was meant to convey is this: "And brought . . . wheat and barley, and flour, and roasted wheat and barley (grain), and beans, and lentiles, and roasted beans and lentiles (pulse)." The meaning then is that only a part of these foodstuffs were brought roasted and thus ready for immediate eating, and the rest as a store of provision. The sense of the Hebrew phrase is not clear.]

Doubtless the people had taken with them on the flight as many victuals as each could carry. But the store must have been exhausted or nearly so by the time that they had reached the plains of the wilderness. Though Mahanaim could not have been at too great a distance from the Jordan—it lay within the territory of Gad—how famished they must have been when finally they entered that place: and how weary after having been continuously under way since the moment they had left the holy city, particularly the women and the children. How welcome these provisions then. And what an abundance of everything. Surely, the Lord had not forsaken his ill-deserving servant.

The basins being of metal could be used for cook-

ing. Just as needful were the earthen vessels (Heb. vessels formed). And how thoughtful of the givers to have included also beds. As to the wheat and the barley and the beans and the lentils, having been brought roasted, all was ready for immediate eating.

Hailing, as he did, from Rabbah, the capital of the Ammonites, Shobi was an Ammonite. If his father was the diseased Ammonite king Nahash, and their are no grounds for questioning this, then Shobi was the brother of the Hanun against whom David, as sorely provoked by his insult, had waged fiercest war some ten years previous (X:1 sqq.). He had succeeded his father in the throne and was reigning, as had his father before him, in Rabbah. Taking the city, David had dethroned him. Then he had gone ahead and put all the people of the city under saws and harrows of iron and axes of iron. So did David to all the cities of Ammon. Having by these strokes completely subdued the Ammonites, he rendered them tributary and included their country in his empire.

It may therefore awaken some surprise that among the friends administering to David's necessities in his calamity was also this Ammonite—Shobi the brother Hanun. What may have happened is, that after the campaign was over, David appointed Shobi vicegerent over Ammon; thus displacing Hanun and binding Shobi to his person by ties of gratitude. And these ties may have been greatly strengthened by still other interests of a spiritual nature.

As moved by pity, Machir, the son of Ammiel, had received Mephibosheth into his home, so that he could not help but love David for his past kindness to this disabled son of Jonathan.

Barzillai is a most interesting character, who only appears on this and another occasion.

G. M. Ophoff

### Absalom Slain

(II Samuel 18:1-18)

In Mahanaim, as was stated, David was encamped with his followers in the midst of subjects who were friendly and who deeply sympathized with him in his plight. Besides supplying him and his people with bountiful provisions, they also enlisted in his service in such numbers that his followers, able to bear arms, could now be counted by the thousands. Mustering all his warriors, he divided them into bodies of thousands and hundreds, and assigned to each unite a cap-

tain. The whole army he organized into three grand divisions under Joab, Abishai and Ittai the Gittite.

*And David mustered the people that were with him and set over them captains of thousands and captains of hundreds. And David gave the people, a third under the hand of Joab, and a third under the hand of Abishai the son of Zeruiah the brother of Joab, and a third under the hand of Ittai the Gittite. (1 and 2).*

In those ancient times the king of the land went with his troops into battle and in the field he had the chief command of his army. David had always been true to that custom, and even now he was decided to go with his people. But they would not have it so. It must have been their love of him that accounts for it that in dissuading him, they talked to him as if they were his master from whom he was obliged to take orders. They said, "Not shalt thou go." They explained why they did not want him to go forth. The adversary would not care if all of them fled or half of them died in battle. He was not interested in slaying Israelites. The object that he had in view was to rid the kingdom of David. Absalom's whole army to a man would therefore be activated by the single purpose of capturing David. He was worth more to them than ten thousand of his own people. Should he then go with them? That would be suicidal. Let him abide in Mahanaim, the sight of his present encampment. He could be of help to them from out of this place. That would be well.

But they did not explain to him in just what way he could be of help to them. Some conjecture that what they had in mind was that David abide in his place with a part of the army with a view to bringing in reinforcements in the event the battle went against them. But the whole army went forth under its three generals. A part of it did not remain behind with David, as is evident from the way the text here reads. Let us take notice: "And David gave... a *third*... under the hand of Joab, and a *third* under the hand of Abishai, and a *third* under the hand of Ittai..." thus three thirds, in a word, the whole of the army. He did keep with him his body guard of a thousand men. But what could a body of warriors that small have availed, should the battle go against them? But the confidence must have been his and his people's that this would not happen, that the arms to be blessed were those of David. And in that confidence he sent forth his people to do battle with the adversary.

So it is doubtful whether the people had any such idea in their minds as that, if need be, he could assist them by bringing in re-enforcements, provided he remained in the camp. What they may have meant is simply that, if he wanted to be of real service to them,

he should stay where he was, and not insist on appearing with them in the battle. And they may have had a reason for so advising in addition to the one that they mentioned. David was already advanced in years. The battle-field was no place for one of his age. So he hearkened to their intreaty that he abide in the camp.

*And the king said to the people, Surely I will go forth, also I, with you. But said the people, Not shalt thou go forth: for if indeed we flee, not will they set upon us (their) heart; and if we die, the half of us, not will they set upon us (their) hearts: but now (thou art) as ten thousands of us. And now it is well that thou be to help us from out of the city. And said the king to them, That which is good in your eyes I will do. 3*

Having attended to the business of organizing the army, and after yielding to their importunity, his thoughts reverted to Absalom. They must not be allowed to slay him, should he fall into their hands. Thus he spake in his heart. So he took his stand beside the gate, and while the army filed out in front of him, rank after rank, he gave his final command to the three generals—Joab, Abishai and Ittai—and the captains: "Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom." He could not hate Absalom. He could only love and pity him, despite all that had happened. In thus charging the leaders of the army he purposely raised his voice to a shout in order that all the people might hear. But he was only making matters worse for himself. What would he dare to do with Absalom but inflict upon him the punishment of death, should he be delivered into his hands alive!

*And stood the king by the side of the gate, and a'll the people went forth by hundreds and thousands. And the king commanded Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Show kindness for my sake to the young man, even to Absalom. And all the people heard when the king commanded all the captains concerning the matter of Absalom. 4, 5*

As to Absalom and his people encamped between Mahanaim and the Jordan, the text makes it clear that the entire force was in the grip of a paralyzing fear and that its will to fight was gone.

First, though Absalom's army may have been the larger, even by far perhaps, yet he failed to set his troops in motion against David. It was David's people who took the offensive.

Second, as both armies were encamped on the east side of the Jordan, it was here that the conflict must have begun. Yet, according to the text, the battle occurred on the west of the Jordan in the wooded country of the tribe of Ephraim. This tells us what

must have happened. The combat had scarcely begun, when the ranks of Absalom broke and scattered. With David's people in hot pursuit, the entire mass of humans fled in terror across the Jordan and sought refuge in the dense forest of Ephraim.

God had risen, and his enemies were scattered, driven away as smoke is driven away.

But this was not the end of it. Twenty thousand of them perished in these forests. That the reference is to the adherents of Absalom follows from the statement that "the people of Israel were slain before the servants of David." In their mad effort to escape their pursuers a great many of them collided with the trees or tangled with the low-hanging branches and were killed by the force of the impact. More of them came to their end in this way than were slain by the sword. Thus even the trees of the forest fought for David. And why not, if all things are Christ's, and if Christ is His people's?

So did the wicked perish at the presence of God. Some hold that the forest of Ephraim of which the text here speaks was east of the Jordan, on the ground that nothing is said of a flight of Absalom and his people across the Jordan, and that, accordingly, it was here, on the east side of this river and not on the west, that the whole conflict took place. But the Old Testament Scriptures do not otherwise know of a forest of Ephraim east of the Jordan so that the name can rightly be taken as the designation only of the wooded mountain of Ephraim west of the Jordan, and it was here that the main conflict must be considered to have occurred.

*And went forth the people into the field against Israel; and the battle was in the forest of Ephraim. 6.*

*And were slain there the people of Israel before the servants of David, and was there a great slaughter in that day, twenty thousand. And was there the battle scattered over the face of the whole land. And multiplied the forest to consume more people than the sword devoured in that day. 7, 8.*

Making his way on his mule through this region of thick forest, mountain gorges and caves was Absalom. He was alone, it seems. He must have counted himself fortunate still to be alive. And perhaps the prospect of his yet being able to save himself from the general carnage at no time seemed brighter, when he discovered that the direction in which he was going led straight into the presence of some of David's servants. He must have heard and seen them without their having seen him. In getting away from the spot with all the speed of which his weary beast was still capable, he collided with a terebinth, and his head became solidly wedged between its low-hanging branches. His mule passed from un-

der him and there between heaven and earth the accursed one hung, suspended from a tree.

One man—servant of David—who happened to be passing by the place, saw him and reported to Joab, perhaps the only general in the vicinity. If the man expected to be thanked, he was due for a disappointment. Joab was provoked with him. He couldn't understand why he had allowed Absalom to go on living. "Behold!" he said to the man, "thou sawest, and why didst thou not smite him there to the ground?" To make the man feel what a dreadful mistake he had made, and also to cause him to regret his timidity, he told him that he would now be rewarding him handsomely, had he only shown more courage. He would be giving him ten shekels of silver, probably worth about six dollars, and a girdle.

But the man didn't relish thus being taken to task by Joab. It almost sounded as though he were guilty of a criminal neglect and had thus committed a capital crime. One would think that Joab, to hear him, was completely ignorant of the king's command regarding Absalom. The man's wrath kindled. He gave Joab to understand that he wouldn't stretch out his hand to the king's son for a thousand shekels of silver. For in the hearing of all the people the king had commanded Joab—also Joab—Abishai and Ittai that every one, whosoever he be, have a care regarding the young man Absalom. And this meant everyone without exception.

But supposing he would have smitten Absalom, the man went on to say. As no matter could long remain hidden from the king, he would be certain to learn by whose hand his son had died. And what would then happen? Despite his present fury, Joab could be depended on to be the first to join the king in condemning him for the deed.

The man was probably right. That's precisely what Joab might have done in order to satisfy David that he was entirely blameless of his son's death.

There was a sting to the man's words. That the man dared thus to lash Joab with his tongue, shows in what low esteem Joab was being held by the people. By common consent he was a great general, but they had no respect for him as a man.

*And happened to stray Absalom in the presence of David's servants riding (that is, Absalom was riding) on a mule. And came the mule under the thick branches of a great terebinth. And was made fast his head in the terebinth. And he was given up between heaven and the earth; and the mule that was under him passed on.* 9.

*And saw one man and told Joab; and he said, Behold, I saw Absalom hanging in a terebinth.* 10.

*And said Joab unto the man, the one that told him, And behold, thou sawest, and why didst thou not smite him there to the ground? And for my sake I would have given thee ten (shekels) of silver and a girdle. And the man said to Joab, Not if I should weigh upon my hand (that is, receive) a thousand (shekels) of silver, would I stretch forth my hand unto the son of the king. For in our hearing the king commanded thee, and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Have a care, whoever thou art, regarding the young man Absalom. But if I should have done against my life a falsehood (and there is no matter hid from the king), then thou wouldest set thyself against me.* 12, 13.

What the man meant was that, had he slain Absalom, he would have offended against his own soul, put his life in jeopardy. For when the king, from whom no matter could long remain hidden, would have learned by whose hand his son had died, he would be wroth with the slayer. But another reading has "His," that is, Absalom's life. But this does not change materially the thought that "the man" desired to convey.

Also the repetition of the king's command by "the man" does not quite agree with how the king is reported to have spoken it in 18:5, "Show kindness for my sake toward the young man Absalom." Either in commanding the people David did not hold himself to the same form of the words, or "the man" overstated the truth to suit his purpose. The latter is doubtless the case, as it is not likely that David would thus have threatened the people. Doubtless if the man had followed his first impulse, he would indeed have made an end of Absalom right there and then. What restrained him, perhaps, was in part his deep affection for David and in part his consideration for himself. He was afraid that, if he disregarded the king's command and smote Absalom, it might go hard with him. He may be taken as a fair representative in this respect of the rest of David's adherents. But Joab was of a different mold. He was a hard man. Though loyal to David, he kept his own counsel and did much as he pleased. Hard, practical sense told him that if the rebellion was to be effectively squelched Absalom had to be gotten rid of. And this for him settled the matter.

—G. M. Ophoff



Jesus, the spring of joys divine,  
Whence all our hopes and comforts flow;  
Jesus, no other name but thine,  
Can save us from eternal woe.

## IN HIS FEAR

### I Will Sing . . . .

By the addition of only one letter to the word "heave" we get the entirely different "heaven". What a tremendous difference in meaning there is between those two words! And by adding the three short words, "unto the Lord," to our theme of the last installment in this department we get an entirely different concept also.

To say, "I will sing", is to give expression to an activity which is very common among men. To add the three words above and say, "I will sing unto the Lord," does not merely express to whom it is that we are directing our song, it also limits very severely the contents and the manner of our singing.

If we are talented and gifted with a pleasing voice, it may safely be said that our singing is and has been chiefly unto men. If our training has been negligible, our talent a bare minimum and the tonal quality of our singing very distasteful to others, it is safe to say even then that our singing has been and is chiefly unto man. Whether we sing merely for the entertainment of men, or whether we sing merely for our own personal enjoyment, we have missed the point, we have missed the mark (which is literally the meaning of one of Scripture's words for sin) and are as the man in the parable of the talents who went and hid his talent in the ground rather than to put it in use for his master.

Indeed, we may sing *before* men. If the Almighty has given you talents above other men, He has given them to you for these others. He has given them to you that you may lead them in the enjoyment of what wonderful things the Almighty has made for His own glory. And He has given them to you that thru and with you they may then praise God for all that which He has done both in the realm of the natural and in the realm of the spiritual.

Psalms 19 is beautiful in this respect. Even a rather superficial examination of the Psalm will show you that the psalmist speaks of God's praises in both the realm of the natural and of the spiritual. Beginning with the glory of God displayed in the works of His hands, in the extent of creation as man from his position on the earth can see it, he then turns our attention to the spiritual in God's word and law. There is no spot in this wide creation where the sun, moon and stars are not visible. Yea, therefore, the psalmist says, there is no spot where they do not speak of the praise of God. And upon this earth, where the

law and word of God has been spoken by God Himself, His glory shines forth in the spiritual works of His hands. Therefore the psalmist being awed and humbled by the Spirit, cries out that the words of his mouth and the meditation of his heart may be acceptable to that great God Who is his strength and redeemer.

Can you pray that before you sing? Singing, surely has to do with the words of your mouth. Singing must come forth as the expression of that murmuring, that meditation of your heart. And when you have finished your song, you are confident that both the words and the motive were acceptable to God? You rejoiced not in the praise of men but in that you praised God and led others in the contemplation of His wonderful praises?

I will sing unto the Lord! That is a lofty resolve! It is the only proper resolve! It is the resolve of a regenerated heart. The world sings purely for entertainment. And it sings of all the evil and filth that resides in its heart. It sings its atheism. It sings its rebellion against the living God. It sings its unbelief, its superstition, its godless philosophies, its adultery and immorality, the latter both by words and rhythm!

And a regenerated child of God can revel in it? It becomes increasingly difficult to get away from it! With that miserable juke box in every restaurant, with every radio and television dealer demonstrating his wares it is well nigh impossible to get away from the songs of the world. But you do not bring them home or let your children do so, do you? WHAT?? You let the unbeliever, the immoral world, the atheist, the antichristian elements of the human race befoul your home? Still more you let them spill their garbage and filth into your mind and soul? Go stand with the psalmist and pray that the words of your mouth and the meditation of your heart may be acceptable to God! If it is a narrow-minded view to take such a stand against the world and its songs of unbelief and godless levity, then let it be narrow-minded. It IS Scriptural. And let us not be broader-minded than God! Remember that His judgment is narrow, and His judgment is final and determinative!

It is, perhaps, a little too obvious to be mentioned, but it certainly is true that much of that which passes today for singing by the world is only by the greatest stretch of imagination even to be classed as music. The coarser a woman's voice is, the rougher and more boldly she may sing her suggestive songs, the higher her praise and honor among the ungodly. Indeed, we said a moment ago that one can hardly get away from such trash! You hear enough, even tho you seek to avoid it, to turn your stomach. And the sad thing is that we all too soon become hardened even to it.



Hence these articles awaken us out of our sleep and drifting in the world and with the world. And if the psalmist said, as he did, let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable, then certainly he means also by his prayer that his ears may be open only to that which is to the praise of God. For the meditation of his heart will surely be influenced by what he hears. Remember Eve! Her whole heart and life were put in reverse when she received thru her ears and into her heart that which was not praise to God but the lie upon which all this present unbelief, atheism, philosophy, evil thinking and corruption rests.

And how many of the songs of Zion do you and your children know? The songs of the world are ringing in your ears all day long. You hum and sing them at work. Perhaps you sing them along with the ungodly man at the bench next to you or at the next counter. But do you and your children *ever* sing the songs of Zion outside of Divine services? Have you ever caught yourself humming or whistling the tune of an hymn only to check yourself when you realized that it would give you away as a believer? Shame on you! But if this never was your experience, can you and do you sing the songs of Zion at your work? Do you find such delight and joy in their truth, does your heart so murmur with these spiritual truths that you enjoy singing them even before the unbeliever?

Another thing, are you tired of singing the same spiritual songs over and over again? Are you, perhaps, clamoring for a manual of praise with more than versification of the Psalms? Is it, perhaps, so with you that you desire some new tunes? Room for that there surely is not only because tunes themselves become tiring after repeated use but also because tunes are not always appropriate for the sentiment expressed in words of the song. But let us be on our guard, lest it be the words which tire us. Let us be sure that the truth which is expressed in the song does not become so wearisome to us that it is for that reason that we clamor for a change. It is impossible that a child of God who desires to sing to the Lord would become weary of the truth expressed in the Psalms. And if we are always avoiding the Psalms to sing hymns, which are not the versification of the Scriptures but the versifications of man's opinions of the word of God and of his spiritual (?) experiences, we may well ask ourselves whether our singing is to the Lord or to men.

Many of our modern hymns are chosen and sung exactly for their tune, harmony and rythm and for NO other reason. Take such an unspiritual Negro spiritual as "On the Jericho Road." Who will deny that it has a lilting rythm and "catchy" tune? But where is

there *anything* spiritual in it? Where does Scripture attach any spiritual significance to the *Jericho* road? What praise to God does the whole song utter? The same may be said of, "Roll, Jordan, Roll!" And what Arminianism is there not expressed in such an hymn (shall we call it an hymn?) as "There's a New Name Written Down in Glory." The Scriptures declare that our names were written down in the Lamb's book of life from before the foundation of the world. The Scriptures teach sovereign and eternal ELECTION and firmly deny that in time new names are written down. And yet many Reformed circles, which profess to believe in the Scriptures and the Reformed confessions, enjoy such a song that militates against the Word of God. You cannot sing that song *unto* the Lord! You can sing it unto man, and man will love it because it ascribes something to him that rightfully belongs only to God. And then you also have such superficial, sacrilegious expressions in what passes today for hymns as the statement that we will "shake Jesus' hand" and say, "Hello" to Him, or that in heaven we want to "See my Saviour first." What will we want to see afterward? . . . We could continue and continue, but put yourself before the question, do I sing unto the Lord or unto men?

—J. A. Heys



#### IN MEMORIAM

The Protestant Reformed Men's Chorus of Grand Rapids hereby expresses the loss of our President and fellow member:

#### MR. DICK JONKER

Rejoice my soul be not cast down; bid all thy fears to cease,  
Since God will undertake for me and give His joy and peace  
He knows the present and the past, He knows what is to be,  
And I may safely trust in Him Who plans my life for me.

Menzo Brummel, Sec'y.

#### IN MEMORIAM

The Protestant Reformed Men's Chorus of Grand Rapids, hereby expresses the loss of our Vice-President and fellow member:

#### MR. LAMBERT BOUWKAMP

When my heart is filled with sadness and I'm sinking in despair,  
Jesus gives me peace and gladness in the secret place of prayer.  
In the secret place of prayer there is joy beyond compare;  
All the burdens roll from my troubled soul, In the secret place  
of prayer.

Menzo Brummel, Sec'y.

## FROM HOLY WRIT

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

#### Conclusion

In this article on this first section (verses 1-12) of I Peter 1, we wish to call attention especially to verse 12. This verse reads as follows: "*Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us (you) they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.*"

The purpose of this passage is not, just as all of Holy Writ is not, to satisfy mere human curiosity. The purpose is to edify in the faith, and to quicken, in the hope, the redeemed and regenerated saints. We must live in spiritual sobriety and see all things in the light of the Word of God that shines more and more unto the perfect day.

With this purpose in mind the Apostle called attention to the activity of the prophets in the former verses. Always the attention of the prophets is directed toward the final and glorious manifestation of the Christ of God, and to the manifestation of the sons of God in the new heaven and new earth, where righteousness shall dwell.

Concerning these prophets it should be noticed, that the object of their seeking out and searching out was always the suffering, which would come upon Christ and the glory to follow. And in connection with this searching out they desire to know the *time* and the *manner of the time* of this suffering, and the glory to follow. Thus we saw in our former article.

But now the Apostle adds another point in which he both shows us the intense interest which these prophets share in the final salvation of the church, and their being conscious of the fact that this salvation would not be realized in their own day. Says Peter: "Unto whom it was revealed, that *not unto themselves*, but unto us (you) they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel...."

Permit us a few remarks on these words of Peter.

First of all a few remarks about this *earlier ministry* of the prophets compared with the *present ministry* by the Apostles, Evangelists and Teachers.

We should notice that Peter is here contrasting the ministry in the Old Testament Dispensation with the ministry in the New Testament Dispensation. And

then we notice, first of all, that both ministries are wrought through the selfsame Spirit. It was the Spirit of Christ testifying in the Prophets in the Old Testament: and it is the same Spirit "sent down from heaven" in the New Testament, which causes the Apostles to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation in Christ Jesus. In the former the Spirit prophesied of the good things to come, of the suffering that was to come upon the Man of Sorrows, and the glory to follow for Him and all the saints; in the latter the Holy Spirit is sent from this same "Man of Sorrows" as He has entered into His glory. It is the same Spirit in both. He is the primary Author of the ministering of the Prophets in the Old Testament as well as of the preaching of the fulfilled Promise in the New Testament dispensation.

Why is sameness of Authorship emphasized here by Peter?

In the first place, because only when there is one Author in both the Old and the New Testaments is there an immutable certainty, that, what we have in Christ is real and genuine: in the New Testament Christ simply finishes through His Spirit, what He had begun and promised in the Old Testament, and both are wrought by Christ through one and the selfsame Spirit.

In the second place, because thus alone we may have the assurance that the Prophets were not the authors of cunningly devised fables, but that they spoke and wrote what the Spirit moved them to write. And thus also we may have the assurance, that the Apostles were not the inventors of a new religion, speaking against Moses and the customs in the wrong sense of the term, but that they are simply preaching to us the glad-tidings, the fulfilment of those things, which many prophets desired to see and could not, and those things, which many Prophets desired to hear and might not.

But for this very reason we should all the more be as the "violent," who take the Kingdom of heaven by force. The wisdom of God in thus performing His work through the selfsame Spirit ought to be justified in us the children. In spiritual sobriety we should hope perfectly for the grace, that is to be brought unto us, in the day of Jesus Christ. Compare Matt. 11:11-13.

It is, therefore, exceedingly important that we give good heed to this word of the Prophets and to the word of them, who preach the gospel to us.

Beware, says Jesus, how ye hear.

But there is more.

Peter also tells us, that the prophets knew, when they were searching out the time and the manner of

the suffering of Christ, that they were not ministering these things to themselves. How did they know this? Peter says: it was revealed to them. God uncovered it to them in their searching. The more they searched out by the operation of the Spirit, the more the Spirit pointed out to them the time and the manner of the time of the sufferings to come upon Christ and the glory to follow. This too adds to the glory of this hope in Christ. The prophets did not think of these things as a matter, which would not be theirs too, even though these things would not be realized in their day. It is true they all died; they died, however, in the faith that they would see Christ stand upon the earth in the latter day, when Zion would be glorious in the beauty of holiness. And they, too, rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory! Shall we, then, who see so much more of this glorious hope, then not lift up the loins of our mind, and reach out in hope for a salvation which is not simply something which must await future fulfilment, but which is "ready to be revealed (uncovered) in the last day"? Forsooth, the least in the Kingdom of heaven is greater than John the Baptist, and he is the greatest of all the Prophets.

As the babes to whom it is revealed, let us lift up our heads in the midst of the manifold trials, and rejoice in the glory to come! In the great "cloud of witnesses", who encourage us to run the race with patience, the least are not the prophets themselves. For, let it be remembered, that even though they could not minister to themselves the New Testament Covenant of Christ's blood, as yet, they did nevertheless minister to themselves this great salvation in hope! They saw Christ's day from afar and rejoiced!

But this is not the only consideration, that is forwarded by Peter: not only the attitude of Prophets ought to spur us on. There is also the attitude of the very angels of God, who do always behold the face of God.

Writes Peter: "which things angels desire to look into."

It is to be observed, that in the original Greek text we do not read *the* angels, but that Peter simply writes "angels". The absence of the article indicates, to our mind, that Peter does not wish to *emphasize* the angels as class, but that he wishes to underscore, that the class of beings called "angels" are intensely interested in the entire history of salvation, as well as in this salvation itself. These angels are created spirits of God, moral rational beings. They were created in the beginning, when God created heaven and earth. And always the angels play an important part in the history of salvation of the Church throughout the ages, both in the Old- and New Testaments.

Then, too, it should not be overlooked, that Peter says of these angels, that they are "very desirous" to look into this salvation of the saints. The term in the original Greek for very desirous is "epithumousin." The "epi" is prefaced to show intensification. The verb thumein indicates the great warmth, the deep feeling of the heart and soul. The deepest yearnings and emotion is indicated. It is feeling full of power. This verb united with "epi" indicates great and strong desire, which nothing can satisfy except the fulfilment of this desire.

What is the desire of angels?

They desire to look into our salvation, the hope of Israel and the desire of nations. Says Peter: "which things angels desire to look into." The term employed in the Greek and translated into "to look into" is worthy of special notice and is very expressive. It is a word-picture. It literally means: to stoop to a thing in order to look at it; then it suggests: to look at a thing with the head bowed forwards, to look into a thing with the body bent, to stoop to look carefully into, to inspect curiously. (Thayer). That is the picture here employed of the angels. Peter pictures the posture of the angels as indicative of their intense desire to watch all of God's great and mighty deeds in history.

Just as Peter intensely studies the linen clothes at the open grave on the resurrection morn, stooping down to look in, so the angels all through history watch in rapt attention God's great and mighty deeds in the salvation of the Church, as searched out by Prophets and preached by Apostles, Evangelists and Teachers.

The question as to the scope of the interest of angels in this salvation is here not indicated by Peter. We must not read more into this term than necessary. Peter underscores the fact, *that* angels have an intense desire to look into the work of salvation, but he does not tell us here just what their interest is. The latter we may learn from other passages of Holy Writ, such as Hebrews 1:14 and Ephesians 3:10, 11.

There is evidently a good spiritual and pedagogical reason for this single emphasis. It is, no doubt, to encourage us to match if not to excel the angels in our desire of hope. We must perfectly hope for the grace, which shall be brought unto us in the revelation of Jesus Christ. If they, who are ministering spirits, have so great a delight and interest in this work, what should not be our delight, who are the heirs of so great a salvation?!

Wherefore let us, indeed, gird up the loins of our mind, and hope perfectly for that which prophets inquired into, and angels desire to see realized.

—G. C. Lubbers

## The Voice of Our Fathers

### The Canons of Dordrecht

#### CHAPTER I

##### SWIFT DECLINE (cont'd.)

It was not long after Arminius' ordination at Amsterdam in 1588 that his erroneous views began to come to light. The occasion of this was Coornhert's agitation against the doctrine of election. Arminius, whose views were not at this time in question as yet and who was accepted as being truly Reformed, was asked to refute the views of Coornhert and to defend the teachings of his former teacher, Beza. And according to his own admission to his friend Wtenbogaert, when he began to make a study of the subject and to prepare for this defense of the Reformed view of predestination, he more and more felt himself inclined toward the view of his opponent. He began to feel that the truth of predestination must be entirely reconstructed. The divine good pleasure must not be the basis upon which it rests, but man's free will. Those who believe are the elect, those who are worthy of the divine preference. At the same time he wanted to maintain that our salvation rests upon Christ alone, and that purely through the grace of the Holy Spirit do we become partakers of faith unto the forgiveness of sins and renewal of life.

It stands to reason that the youthful minister of Amsterdam could not very well prevent his erroneous views from breaking out in the pulpit. They had become a matter of conviction with him. At the time Arminius in his preaching was busy with an exposition of the Epistle to the Romans. Already in connection with chapter one he had rather crassly stated that the Reformed people, in their condemnation of the meritorious character of good works, had also thrown the good works themselves overboard. But coming from a man who strongly emphasized sanctification of life, this could be understood. However, he is alleged to have expressed Pelagian views on the natural man in a sermon on Romans 7:14, "For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin." And still further, when he preached on the words of verse 18, "For to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not," he applied this not to the regenerated, but to the natural man, be it that he had come under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

As might be expected, the public proclamation of such views could not long remain unchallenged, even

though Arminius did his utmost to quiet the fears of the people and to pour oil on the troubled waters of public opinion. Arminius was careful in expressing himself, was an able, though not profound scholar, and seems also to have been a popular man in the pulpit. But many of his people were quite capable of recognizing heresy when they heard it, especially when it concerned the truth of predestination. And so it was inevitable, on the one hand, that when Arminius arrived at the ninth chapter of the letter to the Romans in his expositions of that book, he was unable entirely to hide his erroneous views; and it was equally inevitable, on the other hand, that the waters of the ecclesiastical sea in Amsterdam would become more turbulent and stormy the moment the wind of a false doctrine of predestination should disturb them. Nevertheless, Arminius, though he himself must have realized that there was a conflict between his views and the accepted view of the Reformed Churches, steadfastly maintained that he was in full harmony with the Catechism and the 37 Articles. This, however, did not prevent the able and brilliant Plancius, his fellow minister in the congregation of Amsterdam, from untiringly opposing him and attacking his heretical views.

It was while the trouble in Amsterdam was still unsettled that something happened which was of inestimable benefit to the heretical cause of the Arminians, but which ultimately resulted in bringing the whole controversy into the open and forcing a show-down. The very man whose views were being challenged as anti-Reformed was appointed professor of Theology at the University of Leiden. How any right-thinking authorities could ever conceive of appointing a man with such a dark cloud of suspicion hanging over his head is hard to imagine. But appointed he was. Naturally, the appointment was challenged in as far as that was possible. At Amsterdam objections were raised. And from Leiden the strong objections of Franciscus Gomarus, that champion of supralapsarianism, thundered forth. Gomarus was also professor at Leiden, and his influence at that time was still strong. However, two factors were influential in paving the way to the chair of theology for Arminius. In the first place, the university was not under ecclesiastical, but state control. And in the second place, the crafty Arminius succeeded to quiet temporarily the fears of the staunch and outspoken Gomarus concerning his orthodoxy. And so the heretic from Amsterdam was elevated to the chair of theology at Leiden. This was in 1602.

The consequences of this event were far-reaching. The position at Leiden was an ideal one from which to further the cause of Arminianism. As we said,

the school was controlled by the state. The appointment of professors and also the disciplining of professors was the prerogative of the state solely. This afforded Arminius a protected position from which to promulgate his corrupt views. For as things turned out, the government until shortly before the convocation of the Synod of Dordt was in the hands of men who were consistently pro-Arminian. And the new professor was quick to take advantage of his position. Besides, he was an adept practitioner of deceit and underhanded tactics, like many a heretic. The peace between Gomarus and Arminius was of short duration. Arminius soon began to develop his views, and to instill them especially privately in sessions with his students at his home; for he feared the wrath of Gomarus, and was very cautious in his class-room instruction at the first. Gradually Arminius became more bold, and ere long he more openly made the rostrum of his class-room the sounding-board for his heretical views. Gomarus became his strong and determined opponent. Nor could the controversy that split the school be kept secret. Soon the whole country was in turmoil. Many a conference was held in order to effect a reconciliation and to settle the dispute in a peaceable way. And even in the year 1609, when Arminius was confined to his home because of illness, these efforts did not cease. But the breach between the professorial disputants was never healed. And in October of the year 1609 the schismatic professor Jacobus Arminius died.

The die was cast!

Whether Arminius, as his friends claim, was genuinely of a meek and quiet spirit is open to question. That he was a brilliant scholar, that he was a well-educated man, that he was of pleasing personality, refined in manners and appearance, and that too in contrast to Gomarus, who was of a stern nature, sometimes crude, and not always able to control his temper,—these things can hardly be doubted. And all this made him a popular teacher, able to exert a deep and lasting influence on the hearts and minds of many a prospective minister. Honest before the church he served, either as minister or professor, he cannot be called. His methods were insidious; secretly, not openly, did he work. Against his own better knowledge, he constantly tried to leave the impression that he was in harmony with the Reformed Standards, meanwhile making good use of the added opportunity to introduce his poisonous doctrine. And of course, he led many astray. For there is no more advantageous position from which to inculcate heresy in the churches than a theological school. Not only upon the relatively few students could he exert a tremendous influence. But when these students graduated

and entered the service of the churches, it was as though so many copies of Arminius, both as to doctrine and as to tactics, were spread abroad in the churches. Also in the church there is nothing so damaging as a fifth column. This, together with the fact that the government lent protection to the Arminians, accounts for the swift decline and disintegration of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.

That their spiritual leader died did not noticeably affect the Arminian movement. Its own momentum carried it forward. And besides, a very able leader appeared on the scene in the person of the influential court preacher, Wtenbogaert. Under his leadership the forces of Arminianism were consolidated, and a well-organized party was formed in the churches. For at his instigation the Arminians came together in the year 1610 in the city of Gouda, to draw up the document which was to be known ever after as the *Remonstrance*. In it the Arminians, with characteristic craftiness, alleged that they did not at all purpose to *change* the confessions, but that they merely sought revision. They had no objections to the creeds, but they had indeed certain remarks or observations to make. However, these so-called observations were of such a serious nature that they assailed the very heart of the gospel maintained in the Reformed confessions.

But we shall let the Remonstrants speak for themselves by quoting their Five Points.

—H. C. Hoeksema

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#### IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory of the Doon Protestant Reformed Church expresses heartfelt sympathy with Rev. and Mrs. Hoeksema in the loss of their father:

MR. D. JONKER

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

The following Societies join us in this expression of sympathy:

Men's Society  
Matha Society  
Young People's Society

The Consistory

Jake Vanden Top, Vice-Pres.  
James Blankespoor, Clerk

Doon, Iowa



## Contending For The Faith

### Introduction

*Suggested by the title: Contending for the Faith.*

In this particular department of our *Standard Bearer* it is our task to call the attention of our readers to the history of dogma, or doctrine. The Lord willing, we will trace the historical development of doctrine in the history of the Church. And although it is true that the history of the Church did not begin upon the day of Pentecost, the history of doctrine is mainly confined to the history of the Church after the decease of the apostles. The decease of the apostles marked the end of infallible and direct revelation; having received the Bible from the Lord through infallible revelation the Church was now called upon to defend that truth over against all the subtle and incessant attacks of the enemy.

The title: Contending for the Faith, indicates what is meant by "doctrine" in this series of articles. This title immediately suggests two thoughts. On the one hand, we expect to trace and discuss the historical development of those doctrines which are Reformed and according to our Confessions and the Scriptures. It lies in the very nature of the case that to contend for the faith certainly implies that we contend for the truth (incidentally, the word "faith" must be understood in this expression as the object of one's faith, or believing). And the second thought implied in this title (and this is certainly emphasized in Phil. 1:27: "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."), is that *we* stand fast in one spirit and strive *together* for the faith of the gospel. To strive for the faith is an action which must occur collectively. We must be of one mind and stand fast in one spirit. The implication is that these doctrines do not represent various lines of individualistic thinking, but that they are the embodiment of the truth in the Holy Scriptures as reflected in the consciousness of the Church. You cannot separate the history of doctrine from the Church of the living God. This, too, lies in the very nature of the case.

*These doctrines are doctrines of the Church.*

It is possible, of course, to understand the word "doctrine" in an elastic and flexible sense. Viewed in a wider sense, it can also refer to the views and teachings of individuals and even of heretics. In fact,

it is well to bear in mind that everyone is "doctrinal" in a certain sense of the word. The slogan: no creed but Christ, is surely an absurdity. All men entertain their own individual conceptions of the truth of Holy Writ. This lies in the nature of the case. Equipped as we are with the faculty of reason we must be doctrinal. This, of course, must not be confused with Rationalism. The believer bows before the Word of the living God and permits himself to be led by the Scriptures. Rationalism exalts the human mind above the Word of God. According to the former the truth of God's Word speaks and dictates to us; according to the latter the human mind dictates and determines what is truth.

However, we will understand this term in its narrower sense as denoting only those doctrines that have been accepted by the Church of God. Hence, in this series of articles we regard doctrines as definitely formulated truths, reflected in the believing consciousness of the Church, from the Word of God as their source, and officially approved and adopted by the Church in general or by a certain group of churches. This leads us to an important observation. We must be careful, when discussing the historical development of doctrine, that we do not make the mistake of viewing these doctrines as merely the products of men. It is true that they were discussed and formulated by men. This, of course, none can dispute. Men of like passions as we are and characterized by all the infirmities and imperfections of sin drew up these doctrines of the Church. However, there have always been those who ridicule these formulated truths and speak of them in a derogatory manner as the products of men. We do well to bear in mind that they have been formulated by the Church, and that these men who composed these doctrinal declarations were therefore led by the Spirit of God according to the promise of Christ that He would be with His own even unto the end of the world and lead them into all truth. Hence, doctrines are definitely formulated truths as reflected in the believing consciousness of the Church. This means that through the operation of the Holy Spirit the truths of the Holy Scriptures assume definite form and shape in the believing consciousness of the Church of God, that the Word of God is therefore the source of these doctrines, and that they are officially approved and adopted by the Church.

Moreover, viewed as such an official declaration by the Church of God, a doctrine may be viewed either generally or particularly from the viewpoint of the church in general or from the aspect of a particular group of churches. It is possible, for example, that a doctrine may be the expression of the faith of the Church in general, as the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

On the other hand, it is also possible that a doctrine be the expression of a certain particular group of churches, as, for example, the doctrine of absolute predestination, of infant baptism, the Church as including Jew and Gentile, the Kingship of Christ as not merely limited to the Jews according to the conception of the premillennialists, etc. It is surely not difficult to understand that a doctrine such as Absolute and Sovereign Predestination should not have been formulated until the Church had advanced a considerable distance into the New Dispensation. We do not write this to leave the impression that this doctrine was not already under attack during the time of the apostles. Scripture certainly informs us differently. Passages such as Romans 6 and 9 surely suggest that this conception of the truth already then met with violent opposition. But, it is the doctrine of the Holy Trinity which was formulated during the first four hundred years of the Church's existence in the New Dispensation. The truth of the Deity of the Christ and of the Holy Spirit were expressed by the ecumenical church councils of Nicea and Constantinople in the years 325 and 381 respectively. It is simply a fact that the truth of the Holy Scriptures was not understood by the early Church Fathers as it is understood today. Their conception of the Scriptures, particularly with respect to the Person of the Christ, was characterized by simplicity. It could hardly be expected that the knowledge of the full significance of the Christ should dawn upon the Church of God immediately after His appearance in our flesh and blood. Besides, there is no truth more fundamental than that which concerns the Person of the Saviour. That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, is the Rock upon which Christ builds His Church. And inasmuch as the conception of the early Church Fathers with a view to this cardinal truth was characterized by simplicity, we can easily understand that the devil, brilliant strategist that he is, should launch his attacks upon this fundamental doctrine of the Word of God. And it was not until the year, 381, that the doctrines of the Holy Trinity was established. This doctrine may be viewed as a general doctrine inasmuch as it is the expression of the faith of the Church of God today in general. All churches (Christian and so-called fundamentalist) subscribe to it. There are other doctrines, however, that are peculiar to a certain group of churches. Neither need this surprise us. When the devil's attack upon the Person of the Saviour had failed, he, who is unrelenting in his attacks upon the Scriptures, continued them upon various truths of the Word of God. And, we may safely say that, as the years roll by, the Church of God will be confronted by the task of expressing itself more particularly and

pertinently with respect to the truths of the Word of God. We do well, therefore, to maintain a constant vigilance and be ever on the alert in order that we may hold fast that which we have. And it is also well to bear in mind that the attacks upon the truths of the Word become more subtle as the Church of God is led into all the truth of Holy Writ.

In these articles, the Lord willing, we purpose to discuss the history of those doctrines that are peculiar to the Reformed Churches and embodied in their Confessions. When we speak of Reformed truth we refer to that truth that is expressed in and by our Reformed Confessions: the Heidelberg Catechism, the Netherlands Confession or thirty seven Articles, and the Canons of Dordrecht. We do not, of course, purpose to treat these Confessions. That belongs to another rubric. We do expect, however, to trace the historical development of these doctrines. We need not stress, I am sure, that a rich field lies before us. On the one hand, our Reformed Confessions are replete with fundamental truths or doctrines. Besides, the end of the ages is surely upon us. We need not doubt that we live in the concluding years of the New Dispensation. All things point to this fact. The preaching of the gospel to all creatures, the great apostacy of the Church, the world-wide character of wars and their increasingly rapid succession tell us but too plainly that we are rapidly approaching the end of the ages. In fact, a startling characteristic of our present time is the fact that even the world is speaking of the possibility of the end of the collapse of civilization so that the end of the world is no longer conceived of as impossible even by the world. Even the world is becoming increasingly alarmed because of its own inventions and discoveries and stands aghast because of their potential destructiveness. They say that a third war must, if at all possible, be averted because it could well result in the destruction of civilization. What does this imply for the Church of the living God? The end of the world, we believe, will also mark the greatest knowledge of the truth in the consciousness of the Church. The end of the world will certainly occur when the wicked world shall have filled its measure of iniquity, and this certainly implies that they will also have reached the pinnacle of their attacks upon the Church and the truth of the Holy Scriptures. And this means that the historical development of the truth in the consciousness of the Church shall then have reached its apex. One can hardly doubt that the end of the ages is upon us and that we live in the dying years of the New Dispensation and the history of the world. This is all the more reason why, in our study of the history of dogma, a rich field lies before us. And we need not repeat the observation that the

truth of Holy Writ and its historical development in the consciousness of the Church is of vital importance. The struggle for the truth becomes increasingly bitter. May the struggle of the past constantly serve us and enable us to hold fast that which we have.

—H. Veldman

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## DECENCY and ORDER

### INTRODUCTION (Con't)

#### Method

In proceeding to discuss the content of our Church Order, the selection of a proper *method* becomes a matter of great importance. Several methods, good and bad, effective and deficient, are possible. There is, for example, the *legalistic method* according to which the Church Order is regarded and treated as a book of common laws in the civil sense. It is no more than a legalistic document which superimposes itself upon the body of believers. It forces a ceremonial obedience and the rulers of the church are then looked upon as those who hold office in the executive branch of any government. Against this method it may be said that it views the Church Order in an altogether erroneous light.

Then there is also the *interpretive method*. Following this method we would simply accompany the citation of the articles of the Church Order with a brief explanation in which would be set forth what is considered to be the true meaning of each article. Little is to be gained by following such a course as the practical result of it would be that there is added another opinion with which one may or may not agree as he sees fit. Believers, striving to live according to the rule of Christ delivered to His church, are in need of more than another commentary.

To this may still be added the *historical method*. Following this course could prove instructive as well as interesting. It would then be our task to study each article in the light of historical circumstances which necessitated its coming into being and then to follow the alterations which the church has made in various articles due to changing circumstances. Of course, some articles lend themselves better to such a study than others but there is a reason behind each article and that reason ought to be historically examined. Although, therefore, much might be said in favor of

this method, it will not suffice as an exclusive method. It should not be discarded entirely but in discussing church polity our emphasis should not be upon history but we must divulge into the principles of truth upon which the articles of church order are built. It is more important to see the truth expressed in any given rule for christian conduct than it is to know the historical need of that rule.

Without rejecting either of the two aforementioned methods entirely, we shall adopt the *exegetical method*. Permit us to explain what is meant by this. We have written before that "the Church Order is taken from and founded upon the principles of the Word of God" but the Word of God is not a ready made Church Order. Yet, these two are so intimately related that it would indeed be fatal to separate them. The Word of God is the blood stream of the organism of Church Order. Take the former away and the latter is dead. It is just this fatal weakness that characterizes the legalistic, interpretive and historical methods. In order then to put life into our Church Order we must constantly elicit from Holy Writ the principles upon which the rules of our spiritual government are founded. This is exegesis. In our discussion we must not say: "Thus saith the Church Order" . . . but we must repeatedly declare in every article, "Thus saith the Lord . . . thus saith Christ, the Head and sole ruler of the church" . . . and that can be done only from His own Word. With the following we may well agree: "Alles moet met schriftuurplaatsen worden gestaafd. Alles is daar rechtstreeks aan Gods Woord ontleend. De Kerkenorde dient om regelen te geven om goede orde in de gemeente van Christus te onderhouden, en het is voldoende zoo slechts aangewezen wordt, dat deze regelen in beginsel rusten op Gods Woord."

This does not mean that we infringe upon the fields of Doctrine or Exegesis. However, the importance of relating these will become evident if we remember that in the church pure doctrine and sound exegesis are always first in importance, and that no church will ever remain pure with respect to these if she is not governed according to the Word of God. Impurity in church government fosters impurity in doctrine. Heresy, which is false exegesis, results in government according to the rules of men rather than by those given by God. It follows from this that any attempt to deal with Church Polity apart from a sound exegesis of Scripture must result in disorder and spiritual chaos. We must, therefore, proceed by that method alone which places Scripture first and the Order of the Church second so that the latter may derive all of its significance from the former. The practical fruit of this method will then be that we are taught to live, not according to a set of rules, but

according to the Living Word of God. And that, we said is our goal.

#### *Our Church Order*

By *our* Church Order is meant the officially adopted Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches. This, of course, does not mean that we have composed and adopted a Church Order all our own in separation from other historically Reformed Churches. On the contrary, the origin of our Church Order dates back to the middle of the sixteenth century or a period of more than three centuries before the denomination of our churches came into existence. Interesting it is to not that the Church Order, like so many of the best products of the Church, came into being during a period of great strife. It was not born over-night but was the product of arduous toil. Without fear and with unwavering faith the leaders of the church labored to produce this monumental work. Though persecuted they feared not the wrath of the king. It was in the year 1568 that the work began and the original draft was then revised by five consecutive Synods. It was not until the well-known Synod of 1618-19, held in Dordrecht, Netherlands that it was finally approved and adopted. Indirectly, John Calvin is to be credited for the content of our Church Order. Although he was not one of its authors, for he died four years before the work on this document began, the principles found in the Church Order are based upon his "Ordinances" which were adopted by the church in Geneva as early as 1537.

It is indeed remarkable that the Church Order has undergone so very little change since its first adoption. The Reformed Churches of the Netherlands revised certain articles in 1905 and in 1914 the Christian Reformed Churches in our own land did the same. Our Protestant Reformed Churches in the beginning of their existence adopted the last mentioned redaction of the Church Order. In 1920 the Christian Reformed Churches adopted an English translation which was also adopted by our Synod of 1944. In 1946 our Synod changed the word "church" to "churches" in Article 86 and the word "consent" was made "advise" in Articles 76 and 77. The reason for these changes is that the singular "church" and the word "consent" reveal a hierarchical church polity. Furthermore, it is evident that our adoption is a better translation of the Holland which has "advies" and "kerken" in the aforementioned articles.

In 1950, in response to correspondence received from the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, our Synod made a decision expressing "that we see a need for a general revision of our Church Order." This decision was based upon the fact that: (1) With

respect to some articles there exists at present the possibility of doubtful or even twofold interpretation. A clear and unambiguous text would rectify this matter and (2) At present there are matters not mentioned in the Church Order, or merely touched upon in passing, like e. g., Missions and Evangelization. A revised Church Order might well take these things into consideration. A committee at that time was appointed to make preliminary study of this matter. This committee has corresponded with the Netherlands relative to this proposed revision but whether any definite steps forward toward the obtaining of such a revised Church Order have been taken we are not prepared to say. If they have we do not know of them. What may still develop from this action remains to be seen. The Church Order as we have it in its present form, though it has its flaws as do all products of men, is still a priceless heritage and an invaluable guide for good order and decency in the church. We believe that we should not be hasty to change this document that has weathered the test of time so ably these many years. It is questionable whether the Reformed Churches of our present generation are capable of producing another work its equal.

One of the merits of our present Church Order is its brevity. It is divided into five sections and contains a total of eighty-six articles most of which are rather brief. Lengthy rules tend to confuse. They are generally so involved that their meaning becomes ambiguous. When rules are concisely and clearly stated there can be no question as to the way we ought to go. That we may have grace to walk in that way as churches and as individuals is our concluding prayer.

G. Vanden Berg

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#### IN MEMORIAM

It pleased our heavenly Father to take from our family circle suddenly, on February 19, 1953, at the age of 61 years, our dear husband, father, and grandfather,

MR. DICK JONKER

In our sorrow we know and experience that our God causes all things to work together for good unto them that love Him, who are the called according to His purpose.—Rom. 8:28.

Mrs. D. Jonker  
Rev. and Mrs. H. C. Hoeksema  
Mr. and Mrs. C. Jonker  
Mr. and Mrs. C. Westra  
James Jonker  
Six grandchildren

## ALL AROUND US

### WHAT DOES "BROTHERHOOD" MEAN?

Such was the title of a brief editorial appearing in the Church Herald, a Christian weekly serving the Reformed Church in America, in the issue of February 20, 1953.

In this article the editor criticizes the principles of the National Conference of Christians and Jews which sponsored "Brotherhood Week" in the month of February. From the editorial we learn that this organization "reaffirms the principles in the Preamble of the Declaration of Independence" and "is founded on the brotherhood of man under the Fatherhood of God." The editor, it appears, is in favor of "reaffirming the principles in the Preamble of the Declaration of Independence", but he would protest against the "theology described in the phrase 'the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man' ". He declares that it "is not only unscriptural, it contradicts Scripture." Here follows his protest:

"God is indeed spoken of as the Father of the race, because He created man in His own image. The Bible tells us, however, that man fell from his high estate, lost the moral qualities of the image of God, is no longer the child of God but rather in rebellion against Him, and therefore under His condemnation. We are 'by nature the children of wrath, even as the rest'. Jesus told the wicked Jews who persisted in their opposition to Him, 'Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do.'

"It is time for evangelical Christians to speak out for Jesus Christ, and to insist that 'a brotherhood that leaves Him out is no brotherhood at all.' We can become children of God, and thus brothers one to another through Christ, and through Him alone. The Bible knows no other family relationship than this family of redemption founded on Jesus Christ. 'As many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name; who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' The only brotherhood the Bible knows of is the brotherhood of believers in Christ, based on His atoning death at Calvary, and the new birth through the power of the Holy Spirit. He who will not have Christ for for his Saviour cannot have God for his Father, the Bible says. It is time that Christians speak out against fuzzy thinking which takes Christian concepts and makes them meaningless."

We believe the editor is to be complimented for the

courage he displayed in this "protest", mostly because it is well-known that many of those who subscribe to his paper will agree with the principles expressed by the National Conference of Christians and Jews, and who heartily support the idea of "Brotherhood Week" as sponsored by this organization. Many of his readers whom we know are addicted to this "fuzzy thinking which takes Christian concepts and makes them meaningless." So that many, no doubt, members in his denomination, both clergy and laymen, will be not a little irked by this editorial. In the light of this, we take our hat off to the editor who at least attempts to direct his readers in the right direction.

This does not mean, however, that no questions remain after reading this editorial. I am wondering whether the editor should not be criticized for writing in a "fuzzy" manner about some of these "Christian concepts" he writes about. For example, what does he mean when he writes: "The Bible tells us, however, that man fell from his high estate, LOST THE MORAL QUALITIES OF THE IMAGE OF GOD, etc."? (I underscore—M.S.) Does he mean that man lost the image of God entirely? or, does man retain remnants of this image? Again, to whom does he refer when he speaks of "evangelical Christians"? And again, What is really the editor's conception of true 'brotherhood'? Is it one in which the basis harks back to the eternal counsel of God and His sovereign election of His people in Christ, which is realized through the redemptive work of Christ and the application of it through the Holy Spirit? Or does the editor mean to teach that our actual sonship, though merited on the basis of Christ's atoning work and accomplished through the new birth, is nevertheless contingent upon our reception of Christ and the Holy Spirit? The tenor of the editorial seems to indicate the latter, and with this we seriously disagree.

### AS TO THE BIRTH OF THE CHURCH

In the Presbyterian Guardian of January 15, 1953, page 14, 15, the Rev. J. Marcellus Kik continues an article begun in a previous issue on the question: Should the Church Train Her Ministry? Because we did not have this previous issue in our possession we do not wish to pass judgment on the main issue involved.

We simply call attention to a remark the Rev. Kik makes in column one of the article above referred to. The remark appears in the following paragraph:

"But may not and cannot the Church take over the teaching of the original languages so that ministers can rightly divide the Word and distribute it to others? John taught the Church several Hebrew ex-





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pressions. AT THE BIRTH OF THE CHURCH the Holy Spirit enabled the disciples to speak with other tongues so that the listeners exclaimed: 'Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? and how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?' Since the Holy Spirit AT THE BIRTH OF THE CHURCH taught the disciples foreign languages to declare the wonderful works of God, may not the Church teach the languages of the Bible so that her ministry may correctly interpret and declare the written Word?" (I underscore the large type—M.S.)

The Rev. Mr. Kik it appears is addicted to the view of the Premillennialist and Baptist who maintain that the Church of Christ was born on the day of Pentecost.

To us who have been trained to see that the Church of Christ is one in both the Old and New Dispensations, the phrase "as to the birth of the Church" appears a bit heretical. We believe the saints of the Old Testament were as much as we members of the Church, which is Christ's body, and therefore the Church could not have had her birth at Pentecost but as our Heidelberg Catechism expresses it in Question 54 "The Son of God from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends and preserves to himself by his Spirit and Word, out of the whole human race, a Church chosen to everlasting life, agreeing in true faith; etc."

#### THE UNBREAKABLE SCRIPTURE

"And the Scripture cannot be broken", John 10:35b. That is the text which the Rev. J. G. Vos took for the basis of an article he wrote in the *Blue Banner Faith and Life* magazine, Vol. 8, No. 1, of which he is the editor. The title of his article is the same as that we placed at the head of this section of our department.

The Rev. Vos develops this subject from various points of view, under five sub-titles, one of which is: The Scripture Cannot be Broken by Careless Neglect of Its Message. My remarks have to do especially with this part of his article which reads as follows:

"Today the attitude of most people toward the Bible is not an attitude of downright opposition, but of careless neglect. A few scientists and critics are opposing the Bible actively, while millions of ordinary folks are living out their lives without paying any attention to the Bible at all.

"This easy indifference is all around us. People do not read the Bible; they have only the vaguest ideas as to what is in it. It may be that they have a Bible in their homes, but they neither read it nor pay any attention to its teachings. It is related that a

party of American tourists in Egypt were shown by an Egyptian guide the spot where the bones of the seven lean cows of Genesis 41:19-21 were buried! The tourists were duly impressed, none of them realizing that these seven cows existed only in a dream of Pharaoh. Such ignorance of the contents of the Bible is nothing unusual today. Even among church members ignorance of the simple historical contents of the Bible is abysmal. Many a church member cannot tell whether David lived before or after John the Baptist. Many a church member cannot find a particular book of the Bible without consulting the table of contents or index. As for the teachings of the Bible, people's ignorance is even more abysmal." So far the quote.

Much of what the editor says I believe our own people can take to heart. It happens sometimes, whether we preach in our own Church or elsewhere, that when we announce to the Congregation the place of our Scripture lesson and pause for a moment or two to give our people time to locate the place where we will read, that we hear people still paging when we are nearly finished with the passage. We have even actually seen some of our people look in the index to find exactly where the particular book of Scripture is to be found of which we desire to read a portion. This is pathetic, indeed! These same people often can describe the contents of a silly novel, and relate in detail an article they read in the Reader's Digest, but when it comes to Scripture they appear to know nothing. What a pity!

These are the same people who are never present in the society meetings where the Word of God is discussed and studied. They are the same people who tire quickly of healthy controversy, and are so easily irked with faithful preachers whose desire it is to have their people well informed with the Word of God to combat the current errors in doctrine that seek to creep into the Church. May God give us more who will zealously search the Scriptures!

M. Schipper

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#### IN MEMORIAM

The Eunice Society of First Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan, hereby remembers our sister, Mrs. D. Jonker and family who were suddenly bereaved of husband and father,

D. JONKER

We commit her and her children to our faithful Father Who comforts by His Word and Spirit and strengthens in the hope eternal. "For thy Maker is thine husband".—Isaiah 54:5a.

Mrs. J. Oomkes, Pres.  
Mrs. G. Bol, Sec'y.