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MEDITATION

Innocence Attacked

"Judge me, O Lord; for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the Lord; therefore I shall not slide. Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart." etc.

—Psalm 26

Now that is a foolish thing to do. Whatever or whomever you may attack, never attack innocence. You lose before you start. Whatever you do to virtue returns upon your head a million times over. Because virtue is God.

Yet such was the case with David. David was innocent; still he was attacked. And his attackers lost their case. You cannot really harm virtue.

We do not know the historical background of this gem. It may have been the time when David had to flee from the face of Absalom, his son. It would fit this case admirably. Note the verses 4 and 10. The former verse would then paint to us the miserable hypocrites that followed Absalom. They are then the dissemblers. And in the later verse we have a word picture of the princes and rulers of the land who fell away from David and for bribes followed Absalom. Moreover, then we can also understand David's expressions in this psalm regarding the house of God. See verses 6-8. He longs for God's house.

But we cannot be absolutely sure of that historical background.

The psalm itself is clear. And the theme runs through the whole song. David is innocent, but is accused by the evil and godless that are massed around him. But he trusts in God and knows that he will be vindicated.

In the very first words of the psalm we have also the theme: Plead my cause, o Lord! For that is the meaning of the one cry: Judge me, o Lord!

David is accused. There is a case pending against him.

And he brings the case to the highest Judge, his God. Neither is he afraid of appearing before that great tribunal. He appends his grounds for coming: for I have walked in my integrity. What does that mean? It certainly does not mean that David was sinless. Such is not the meaning of the term. No, but it stresses the fact that David was a harmless man. To be a man of integrity is the very contrast of being a hypocrite. It stresses the fact that David was without guile in this case, whatever it may have been. He had walked in the honesty, the purity and the righteousness of his regenerated heart. Such people are harmless and it is folly to attack them.

But here is the point: the main thrust of his life was virtue, goodness, uprightness. His heart was pure, Matt. 5:8.

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And David knew all this. He was aware of the fact that his enemies had no case against him. How could they have? He had trusted in God. That means that David had given himself wholly in God's safekeeping. To trust is to repose on someone. As it is stated so often in Dutch prayers: "zich laten zakken en zinken op de Rots der eeuwen die van geen wankelen weet".

Surely, when that is your life, you may also say with David: "therefore I shall not slide". How could you. Sliding here does not merely mean: I shall be sinless. But it means that I shall be free from the great transgression. It means: I shall not slide from off the Rock, that is, my God.

Thereupon David comes in all the uprightness of his heart to God with the request to make trial of him. And note that he does not mention his apparent conduct, his outward behaviour. He does not say: O God, prove what I *have done*! No, he asks God to

make trial of his inward man. And he does so in asking for a threefold trial. Trial by touch, trial by smell, and trial by fire. For such are the primary meanings of these three verbs, although it must be admitted that they are often used interchangeably. It will suffice to note that David, in using these three terms, means to run the entire gauntlet of the trying and proving and examining eyes of God.

Surely, no hypocrite dares to pray thus before God.

The reins are the deepest core of the emotions and the heart is the ethical center of man. There man lives in the deepest sense of the word.

And of that heart and these reins David says that they have been always under the controlling and beautifying influence of God's lovingkindness and His truth. For that is the meaning of *to walk*. You begin your walk in the heart. From it are the issues of life. And if our life is in the truth of God's Word, we are safe. Oh yes, we will be sinners, but here is the difference: such an one wills goodness and mercy all the day long. And wherever he departs from such conduct it is in spite of that heart-life of goodness and purity. That which he does in such a case he allows not. Rom. 7:15. Throughout it all he finds that in his heart and reins he loves the law of God.

Moreover, David can prove his case by his outward conduct. He states this in various parallel phrases. But they all come down to this: Thou knowest Lord that I have walked in my integrity, because *I hate the company of the godless*.

* * * *

Powerful testimony. Anyone can investigate that. The life of God's own are as an open book. The whole world may see it that we love the company of God's people and that we do our best to have as little to do with the wicked as possible. Oh, I know it: we cannot wholly cut ourselves off from intercourse with the men of Belial. We must buy from them and sell to them; we work with them sometimes at the same bench. But as soon as possible; as soon as we can separate ourselves from them, we do so. We hate their congregations.

David denominates them by four words: vain persons, dissemblers, evil doers and wicked.

I hear a question: Must we not love our enemies? Must we not try and save them? Must we not let our light shine unto them if haply God will use us to snatch them from the brink of eternal death?

Yes, I have often heard these questions. Sometimes they are put to us in a way and in an atmosphere that makes us wonder.

Yes, we must certainly love our enemies. That is a text from Jesus' lips. And I agree that you must try and save the wicked with whom you come in contact. Of course, you are a walking Evangel. Many there are who were drawn to God by means of your Christian walk.

But always remember this: you will never be a light unto the Gentiles by becoming a boon companion with the wicked. When I wonder about such questions is when I notice that the people that question me thus live on a very friendly footing with the world. They seem never to be bothered by the vile way of the world. We do not know the heart, but it seems to us that they are of a kind.

And such conduct is damned.

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Ah, beloved, does it not set your heart on fire when you listen to David?

He certainly has solved his social problem.

I have not sat with vain persons. A vain person is one who never utters anything but vanity, wind, nothingness. Delitzsch tells us that the idea is: unreal men, not real men. And who does not know them?

Yes, you must try and draw them. But have you ever considered that you may be able to draw them by shaming them, by showing that you detest vanity, by leaving them and keeping yourself aloof from all "nothingness", vanity? Note that David does not say: I have not talked to vain persons, but I have not *sat* with them. That means that he never voluntarily would seek out their company and sit down at ease with them. You sit in order to enjoy yourself.

I will not go in with dissemblers. That is worse. A dissembler is a hypocrite. They are of all men the most miserable. They look one way and they are another. They carry a mask. They are just as worthless and wicked as the vain persons, but they mask all their filth behind a mask.

David would not go in with them, would not be jointly responsible with them for any kind of work or endeavour.

I have hated the congregation of evildoers. Yes, they are the men who are not satisfied to do evil *alone*. No, they seek one another out and band themselves together. And then evil is on the increase.

Ah, the congregation of evildoers is more evil than a mere evil person. In such gatherings evil is on the increase.

Instead of all that, David has washed his hands.

And that was necessary. David also is a sinner from his youth.

To wash the hands is innocency is symbolic language.

Innocency is God. He is all virtue. And that virtue is manifested, proclaimed, revealed. And David had seen it. And David had wrestled all his life to wash himself in that virtue of God.

When you want to read Psalm 26 in New Testament times you will say: I have washed myself in the blood of Jesus. It means that through the battle of faith you are striving to walk in purity before God's face. It means that you walk in sanctification, having been redeemed by His blood.

And your purpose is that you may be the correct image bearer. And that means that you may be to the praise of God's glory.

Such we hear from David: That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving and tell all Thy wondrous works.

There is one urge above all in David and all those like him: They want to go home. And Home is where God dwells with His people.

Some people you cannot drag to church, it seems. Very often they leave their place empty and the consistency wonders.

Something wrong: they do not want to go to heaven, that is, to God.

But David has an horror of the place where all people will be gathered who hated God and would not be gathered in His home. And that place is hell. Oh God, says David, do not gather my life with sinners.

No, beloved, if you hate the congregation of the wicked here, you certainly do not fit in hell.

David has gathered courage in this prayer. The end is calm.

He will continue to walk in the uprightness of his heart. God tried him and exonerated him in this case that was pending.

David may have had his enemies around him even after the uttering of this prayer; they may have continued their insinuations and accusations.

Never fear, David. He is encouraging his soul. The time will come that he is publicly exonerated.

In the meantime, as far as his inmost soul is concerned: he walks in an even place. That is, he walks on the way of truth and sincerity of heart, those wonderful gifts of grace.

And he found the purpose of all flesh: he will bless the Lord.

Do not ask what that means; you know it. It is that we may tell God how inexpressibly wonderful He is.

Incidentally: that is heaven in our souls.

—G. Vos

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EDITORIALS

How the Guardian Defends Heresy

At this juncture it seems advisable and, indeed, necessary to interrupt my exposition of the heresy preached by the Rev. De Wolf in order to call the attention of our readers to the second issue of a paper that calls itself the "Reformed Guardian" and which is purported to be published in the interest of truth and justice.

The paper, however, is neither Reformed nor a guardian of truth and justice.

It is not Reformed as is immediately evident from the fact that it is published with the avowed intent to defend heresies which are expressly condemned by our churches.

That it is not published in the defense of truth and justice but rather to deceive our people will be evident to all who read the two testimonies by two eye-and-ear witnesses that were published by the consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Mich. And it will become further evident from the present article in which I discuss the contents of the second issue of this so-called Reformed Guardian of truth and justice.

First of all, I want to call attention to a letter by the Rev. A. Petter. This letter was first sent to the consistory of which undersigned is one of the chairmen, and is now published in the "Reformed Guardian."

First of all, I want to call the reader's attention to the corrupt way in which Petter (the Guardian of truth and justice) quotes undersigned. He quotes me as having written:

"If the Rev. De Wolf said '*I preach*' (Underscoring A. P.) to every one of you that if you believe you shall be saved' he would have spoken the truth.... But he preached something entirely different. God on His part is willing to save every one.... But whether the promise is realized depends on an act of man. God is willing, if man is willing." p. 6.

When I first read this quotation I felt like passing it up. It might have been a mere slip of the pen on the part of the Rev. Petter. But on page 10 he once more makes the same quotation. It was, therefore no mere slip of the pen, but a deliberate falsification of what I actually wrote. There he writes:

"In connection with this, I must also make a remark about the distinction emphasized by the Rev. Hoeksema, between the expression, *God promises* and

I preach, saying, 'Had Rev. De Wolf said, *I preach* etc, it would have been the truth,'"

Now, I never wrote this. What I did write in my protest was the following:

"It is *God* that promises. The Rev. De Wolf did not say: 'I preach to every one of you that, if you believe, you shall be saved.' *This might pass, even though it would not be the whole truth.* But it is *God* that promises salvation to every one in the audience." (I now made the underscoring in this paragraph).

Again, I wrote:

"God promises to *every one of you*. Who are the "every one of you"? All in the audience, of course: strangers as well as members, righteous and wicked, believers and unbelievers, elect and reprobate. Again, the Rev. De Wolf did not say: 'To every one of you I preach the gospel,' but: 'To every one of you God promises salvation.' This is worse than a general well-meaning offer of salvation."

This I wrote in the context of the paragraph from which Petter quotes. And in the paragraph itself I wrote as follows:

"But perhaps, you say: 'there was a conditional clause attached to this promise: if you believe; hence, after all, he preached that the promise is only for believers.' This I deny. I say once again: if the Rev. De Wolf had said: 'I preach to every one of you that, if you believe, you shall be saved,' he would have preached truth, though not *the* truth. Or if he had said: "God promises to every one of you that believes eternal life,' he would have preached the truth. But he preached something radically different. He did not preach as we always maintained, and as I defended in my pamphlet "Calvin, Berkhof, and H. J. Kuiper" and from which the Rev. De Wolf erroneously quotes to sustain his own heresy, the truth of a general preaching of a particular promise, but he preached that *God* promises to every one, head for head and soul for soul, if they believe. What does this mean? This:

"(1) God, on His part, is willing to save every one. It is He that promises to all. The promise is as general as possible.

"(2) But whether this promise is to be realized depends on an act in the part of man. God is willing, if man is willing."

All this the Rev. Petter read.

He read that *it might pass* if the Rev. De Wolf had preached "I preach", etc. but that *it would not be the whole truth*. He read that, in that case it would be truth, but not *the* truth. He read all the rest.

Yet he puts in quotation marks that I wrote: "Had the Rev. De Wolf said, *I preach*, etc. it would have been the truth."

Twice he quotes me thus.

This I consider intentional and deliberate falsification of my statements. In other words: Petter is dishonest.

Much worse is his quotation from one of my meditations in the *Standard Bearer*, a quotation that is supposed to prove that I also taught once upon a time that our act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

In two paragraphs he strings together a list of separate quotations from my meditation, which even then cannot possibly prove what Petter, in this crooked way, declares that they do prove: that our act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter into the kingdom of heaven, or even that our act of conversion is a prerequisite for our daily entering into that kingdom. In order to make clear to our readers how Petter quotes I will put in parentheses that which Petter failed to quote and leave his quotations outside of the parentheses. Then we obtain the following (I translate from the Dutch, which Petter also did, a fact which he failed to mention):

("And for that reason it is necessary that we go into that kingdom.

("Go into in such wise that we go out of the "world."

("Go out and go in with all our heart and all our powers.

("Go out and go in *once*, when it comes with us to a principal breach with the kingdom of this world and to a being translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son; but also) 'a continual entering, a daily entering' ... (as long as, in this our flesh, we are *in* the world and not of the world. A constant fleeing from the "world"); 'a constant seeking and choosing and finding (Petter: to find; incorrect) of the kingdom of heaven.' (Going out and going in) 'with our thinking and willing, with our desires and longings, with our head and heart and hand;!... (that we may speak and act as children of the Kingdom, and witness in word and work against the "world" that lieth in evil.'

("For while the kingdom of heaven is not of this world, we are indeed of this world!")

Here follows a rather long paragraph which the Rev. Petter omitted entirely, and which I will not quote. Thereupon, still stringing his list of quotations still in the same paragraph, he continues:

"'From that kingdom of darkness we must go out deliberately and consciously, by a choice of heart. In order to enter into the kingdom of heaven where God is all in all...'"

Here the Rev. Petter skips a whole column of the *Standard Bearer*, and then, still stringing his quotations as if it all belongs to the same paragraph and ev-

en to the same sentence, which we quoted last, he quotes:

"'always again going out of the world and entering into the kingdom of heaven.'"

In the next paragraph of quotations Petter follows the same method:

"'Entering as children. Another way of entering into the kingdom of heaven is not conceivable. Even the gate whereby we enter admits no one but him who has *humbled himself* as a child.' (For that gate is the righteousness of God in the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. The ground demand of the kingdom of heaven is righteousness. Without righteousness which is valid before the Most High, a righteousness, which exceeds that of the Pharisees and Scribes, no one enters into that kingdom. But we come out of the world and lie in the midst of death, guilty and miserable, children of wrath as also the others. The gate of God's righteousness is opened only through the blood of Him in whom God was reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.) 'For through that gate he alone can enter by faith, and by faith everything that is of ourselves is *laid aside*.' (All your own righteousness, all your own work, your name, your honor, your imaginary greatness, your fancied nobility, your piety, all remains behind. For through the gate of the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ only the contrite and broken of heart, who is nothing else anymore than sinner before God) 'who *sees and acknowledges* no other possibility than that of grace ... he that *humbles himself* ... and has become as a little child.'"

Talk about quoting someone out of context!

But all this is supposed to prove, according to Petter, that we have "prerequisites unto entering the kingdom."

Now in the first place, either Petter utterly failed to understand my meditation, or he wilfully distorts its meaning.

And in the second place, it is also evident that, like De Wolf, he does not understand the relation between our conversion and entering the kingdom of heaven.

As to the first, in my whole meditation I emphasize very strongly that our act of conversion is not a prerequisite to enter the kingdom of heaven, but that only the grace of God, the grace of regeneration and conversion both, causes us to enter in. In one of the paragraphs which Petter conveniently omits I write: "And this translation we make only if we *become*, not make ourselves, as little children." And in another part of my meditation I write: "Tremendous change! If you do not change ... Or, as the original word certainly can be translated, and also is translated in our

English Bible: if you are not converted! What a radical change and conversion it is whereby we become as little children....Wonder of God's mercy! For this and nothing less it is when this spiritual conversion of the big sinner to the little child takes place. No man is capable of this. This change the natural man can never effect, will not undergo, and he cannot will it. O, to be sure, man converts himself! When God calls him, and when he hears the Word of the Almighty, then he changes himself and becomes like a little child. But not before the irresistible Spirit of God in Christ Jesus poured life into his soul and regenerated him by almighty grace, can he ever do this. He cannot do this before the efficacious Word of God pierced this resurrected soul, enlightening, opening his ears and eyes, terrifying, heart-breaking: I, I am the Lord, and there is no god besides me: the greatest, the only great, and the eternally glorious; therefore turn and become like a little child. Then, and only then, follows the act of conversion! Not once, but always again! And always in the same order! First the Lord, His Word, His Spirit, His grace; and as fruit our act of conversion!"

It will be evident to all that can read that this is Reformed, that our act of conversion is never a prerequisite to enter the kingdom of God, whether principally or repeatedly, but that the only prerequisite is the grace of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And it will also be evident to anyone that is willing to understand, that Petter utterly distorts my meaning as it was very clearly expressed in my meditation.

— : — : —

The above may serve as an example of "the truth and justice" of what is called the *Reformed Guardian*, as well as of the unscrupulousness of the way in which Petter handles the material of my writings.

But there is something more important in this second issue of the *Reformed Guardian*, to which I wish to call your attention. I refer to Petter's arbitrary distinction between promise and promises. He tries to make this distinction in order to defend and to justify De Wolf's statement to his audience on April 15, 1951: "God promises everyone of you that, if you believe, you shall be saved."

In this connection Petter's argument runs as follows.

First he reflects on the fact that we, the Rev. Ophoff and myself, who protested against the sermons of the Rev. De Wolf, proceed from the assumption "that the idea of the promise always implies a gracious in-

tent, a loving purpose, a desire to bless. And so they identify it with the great oath-bound promise of salvation for Abraham and his seed." And without any proof, or even any attempt to gainsay our contention, which, by the way, we still maintain, he expresses the apodictical judgment that this is "purely arbitrary."

Thereupon he turns to Webster's Dictionary, which he finds very instructive in regard to the promise. From the dictionary he quotes as a definition of the promise: "One's pledge to another to do or not to do something specified; narrowly a declaration which gives to a person to whom it is made, a right to expect or to claim the performance or forbearance of a specified act." And again, without any proof, in a purely apodictical judgment Petter claims that "in this definition there is no suggestion of an attitude of any kind, and hence not of love or favor or benevolence." We claim, of course, that even a promise by one man to another certainly presupposes a certain attitude of friendship or benevolence and faithfulness.

Further Petter quotes from Webster's Dictionary a definition of the oath-bound promise God made to Abraham. Webster defines this promise as follows: "The oath which God made to Abraham that his descendants should be multiplied...possess the land of their enemies...be a source of blessing to all nations. The last is interpreted by New Testament writers to be fulfilled in Christ."

And then, after Petter quotes still another definition, he makes the remark: "These distinctions which Webster makes are very instructive for our purpose. For they show us that the ready identification of the expression 'God promises' with *the* Promise, (the oath-bound promise to Abraham and his seed) is wholly unjustified."

Now, in the first place, we deem it very unbiblical and superficial to try to prove anything in relation to the promise of God from Webster's Dictionary only, rather than go to Scripture. It might be necessary, indeed, to turn to the dictionary for a definition of the term "condition", for that term is not found in all Scripture. But the term as well as the idea of the promise is used so abundantly in Holy Writ that we certainly do not have to turn to Webster's Dictionary to arrive at a Biblical concept of promise. Secondly, I must remark that all this has certainly nothing to do with the statement which the Rev. De Wolf made concerning the promise in the sermon he preached on April 15, 1951. For in that statement he certainly referred to the promise of salvation, and to nothing else. And finally, I emphatically and utterly deny that in Scripture the promise of God ever stands unrelated

to the promise of Christ, to the promise made to Abraham and his seed, and to the promise of salvation.

Petter attempts to show us that in many cases in Scripture the promises of God have nothing to do with the promise of Christ and salvation. He does so in the following paragraph:

"That God promises in many other senses is abundantly evident from the Bible. For example, we certainly cannot object to saying that God promised to Solomon (I Kings 9:4-9) and to Jeroboam that he would give them a specific part in the kingdom of Israel if they would walk in his ways (I Kings 11:30-39) or again that God promised the Israelites that if they would be willing and obedient they would eat the good of the land (Isa. 1:18) or once more that if they would bring the designated tithes into the temple their barns would be filled to bursting (Mal. 3:10) or again, it certainly would be folly to object if anyone would say that Christ promised the disciples that they would find a donkey and foal tied ready for their use (Mk. 11:3) or that they would find on the street a good man of the house where they would celebrate the Lord's passover (Mk. 13:10) or once more who could possibly object at the saying that God promised Paul that all the lives of the men with him on the Rome bound ship would be saved for him, or even that God promised them their safety only if they remained on the ship (Acts 27:24, 31). So we can speak of a promise to Ahab of life (I Kgs. 21:39) and to Jehu of dominion (II Kgs. 10:30)."

From all these illustrations or passages of Holy Writ Petter draws the conclusion that God's promises are not always related to the promise of salvation, and moreover, that the promises that are put in a conditional form declare nothing about the attitude of God, whether favorable or unfavorable.

Now, I have seldom read anything more superficially void of any exegesis, and therefore, more unbiblical.

Petter does not exegete, although exegesis is implied in his statements. And it is exactly because of his lack of exegesis that he grossly errs in regard to the promise of God. Certainly, I did not teach Petter when he attended our school thus to deal with Holy Writ. I always taught him and showed him by example that any passage of Scripture must be exegeted not only by itself, but in its context; and not only in its context in the narrower sense, but as such a passage stands related to the whole of Scripture as an organism. It is, however, very evident that I taught Petter nothing.

I will not go into all the illustrations and passages which Petter here quotes, but just refer to one or two of them, and explain them as they ought to be inter-

preted, in order to prove what I maintained above, that Petter's exposition of promise and promises is utterly superficial, unbiblical, and untrue.

Let us look at the text in I Kings 9:4-9. There we read: "And if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments; Then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel. But if ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments and my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them; Then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all people: And at this house, which is high, every one that passeth by it shall be astounded, and shall hiss; and they shall say, Why hath the Lord done thus unto this land, and to this house? And they shall answer, Because they forsook the Lord their God, who brought forth their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have taken hold upon other gods, and have worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath the Lord brought upon them all this evil."

(To be continued)

H.H.



The elect were betrothed to Christ from everlasting, in the covenant of the grace; they are actually married to Him, and join hands with Him, in conversion; but they are not taken home to the Bridegroom's house until death dismisses them from the body.

All God's children are stillborn. They come spiritually dead into the world. And dead they continue till they are born again of the Holy Ghost.

All the promises of man to man, ought to be conditional. It is only for God to make absolute promises; for He alone is unchangeable and omnipotent.

We should be in a bad condition indeed, if our salvation was suspended on conditions of our own performing.

—From Toplady

OUR DOCTRINE

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

AN EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

PART III — OF THANKFULNESS

LORD'S DAY 37

1.

The Place of The Oath in the Kingdom

The question is not at all whether anyone, whether the natural man, can swear an oath, or whether the natural man can place someone under oath. It is true, of course, that this is frequently done because the law of the land demands it. An ungodly and unbelieving magistrate, therefore, is frequently required to put someone under oath, although he does not know and believe in the name of God as He has revealed Himself in Christ Jesus our Lord. And one who takes the witness stand swears an oath, although he is not conscious of the seriousness of performing such an act, except in as far as perjury is punishable by law. But this is not the question here, in the thirty-seventh Lord's Day of the Heidelberg Catechism. The Catechism is not treating the law of God as an external code, outward compliance with which is sufficient for anyone in the eyes of the Most High, but as the law of perfect liberty, written in the regenerated heart of the believer, and performed by him in the love of God. Obedience to the precepts of the God of our salvation is for the believer a covenant act, profoundly spiritual. The Triune God has sovereignly and by mere grace in Christ Jesus our Lord, and through the Spirit of Christ, received him into His everlasting covenant of friendship. And not as a condition which man must fulfil in order to be received or to remain in that covenant of God, but as the fruit of the realization of that covenant with him as a rational and moral creature, the believer loves the Lord his God, cleaves to Him, and trusts in Him with his whole heart and mind and soul and strength.

It is in this light that the Heidelberg Catechism discusses the oath.

That this is indeed the viewpoint is evident already from the first question of Lord's Day 37: "May we then swear religiously by the name of God?" The term *religiously* may be somewhat in bad taste in our time, because it is so often generally applied. Anybody is religious. But in the sense in which the Hei-

delberg Catechism employs the term here, it is applied only to the believer in Jesus Christ our Lord. This is also evident from the answer. The question is certainly not whether anyone may or is capable of swearing an oath, but whether it is possible to swear an oath to the glory of God. And this is possible only in the truly "religious" sense of the word from the regenerated heart, in the fear of God, and from the motive of a living faith.

An oath, therefore, for the Christian, for the believer in Jesus Christ, is a profoundly spiritual and covenant act. An oath is a declaration on the part of him that swears it that he stands before the face of God, that he stands consciously in the presence of the living God, and that too as His friend, as being of His party, and as representing Him in the midst of a world that lieth in darkness, and that thus standing in the presence and before the face of his covenant Friend, he calls upon Him to witness that he speaks the truth. Such is the character of an oath. This it is to swear religiously by the name of God. All that is beyond this is profanity indeed.

Now the question is: is this possible, or is it always profane thus to call upon the living God as the witness of the truth of our testimony?

There have always been those, like the Anabaptists and the Mennonites and the Quakers, that claim that to swear an oath is *per se* sinful. But outside of these sects the Christian church generally held that to swear an oath is quite proper, provided it is done in the fear of God and to His glory, and that this is based upon the Word of God. This stand is even maintained in some of the Reformed confessions. Not only in the Heidelberg Catechism, but also in some of the other confessions the propriety and Scripturalness of the oath is positively asserted. The Lutheran confession, the Formula of Concord, condemns, in Art. 12, the Anabaptists, which teach:

"I. That the office of the magistrate is not, under the New Testament, a condition of life that pleases God.

"II. That a Christian man cannot discharge the office of a magistrate with a safe and quiet conscience.

"III. That a Christian man cannot with a safe conscience administer and execute the office of a magistrate, if matters so require, against the wicked, nor subjects implore for their defense that power which the magistrate has received of God.

"IV. That a Christian man cannot with a safe conscience take an oath, nor swear obedience and fidelity to his prince or magistrate."

The Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, in its final chapter, Article 39, speaks "Of a Christian Man's Oath" as follows:

"As we confess that vain and rash swearing is forbidden Christian men by our Lord Jesus Christ, and James his apostle, so we judge, that Christian religion doth not prohibit, but that man may swear when the magistrate requireth, in a cause of faith and charity, so it be done according to the prophet's teaching, in justice, judgment, and truth."

And in the Second Helvetic Confession, in chapter 30, which speaks of "The Magistracy," we read:

"We condemn the Anabaptists, who, as they deny that a Christian man should bear the office of a magistrate, deny also that any man can justly be put to death by the magistrate, or that the magistrate may make war, or that oaths should be administered by the magistrate, and such like things."

Those who refuse to take an oath or to impose an oath upon another proceed from the assumption that the oath is *per se* sinful. This question, therefore, must be answered first of all. If it is true that the oath in itself is contrary to the will of God, then, of course, it is absurd to ask whether we may swear religiously by the name of God. Those who take this stand, appeal, of course, to the passages of Scripture we already quoted above, namely, Matt. 5:33-37 and Jas. 5:12. If this position is correct, then it is impossible to swear religiously by the name of God under any circumstances, even before the magistrates. There often appears to be a notion that the oath as such is sinful, but that nevertheless the magistrates may demand an oath of us, and that in that case we may comply with the demand. But this is evidently an error. If it is *per se* sin to swear an oath, the demand of the magistrate cannot possibly make it good.

The question therefore is: does Scripture teach that to swear an oath is *per se* sinful?

This question must surely be answered in the negative. First of all, it may be pointed out that according to Scripture God Himself swears an oath. This is the case, for instance, in Ezekiel 33:11: "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel!" And in Hebrews 6:13-17: "For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, Saying, surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath." Moreover, an oath in the old dispensation was, under cer-

tain circumstances, demanded by the law. Thus, for instance, we read in Ex. 22:10, 11: "If a man deliver unto his neighbor an ass, or an ox, or a sheep, or any beast, to keep; and it die, or be hurt, or driven away, no man seeing it: Then shall an oath of the Lord be between them both, that he hath not put his hand unto his neighbor's goods; and the owner of it shall accept thereof, and he shall not make it good." Thus also in Numbers 5, in the case of a woman that is suspected of adultery by her jealous husband, we read that the priest shall put her under oath: "And the priest shall charge her by an oath, and say unto the woman, If no man have lain with thee, and if thou hast not gone aside to uncleanness with another instead of thy husband, be thou free from this bitter water that causeth the curse: But if thou hast gone aside to another instead of thy husband, and if thou be defiled, and some man have lain with thee beside thine husband: Then the priest shall charge the woman with an oath of cursing, and the priest shall say unto the woman, The Lord make thee a curse and an oath among thy people, when the Lord doth make thy thigh to rot, and thy belly to swell; And this water that causeth the curse shall go into thy bowels, to make thy belly to swell, and thy thigh to rot: And the woman shall say, Amen, Amen." Abraham caused his servant to swear: "And Abraham said to his elder servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: And I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I dwell." Gen 24: 2, 3. And again: "And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son thither again. And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning that matter." Gen. 24:8, 9. Nor is this true only of the saints of the old dispensation, as the Anabaptists allege. For also in the new dispensation we read frequently of the oath that is sworn "religiously by the name of God." Christ Himself was put under oath by the high priest in the night in which He was betrayed; nor did He refuse to swear the oath that was demanded of Him. Thus we read in Matt. 26:63, 64: "But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Even the term, "Verily, verily," with which the Lord so frequently introduces important parts of His

speech, in reality assumes the character of an oath. Moreover, we read repeatedly that the apostle Paul does not hesitate to swear an oath, even on occasions when it is difficult to see the immediate and grave necessity of it. Thus we read in Romans 1:9: "For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers." To call God as our witness is tantamount to swearing an oath. Again, in Romans 9:1, 2 the apostle writes: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart." There is certainly no difference between this form of speech and swearing an oath. A very solemn oath is also expressed in the following words of II Corinthians 11:31: "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not." The same is true of Phil. 1:8: "For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ." All these passages prove without a shadow of doubt that it certainly is not *per se* sinful to swear an oath, whether before the magistrates or otherwise. And how could it be? Why should it be sinful for a believer, on special occasions, to declare that he stands before the face of God and calls Him to witness of the truth of his testimony? How could it possibly be wrong for the believer in Jesus Christ to express that he is filled with a deep sense of the presence of God's majesty, and that he rejoices before His face that he may give testimony to the truth?

But, you say, does not the Word of God emphatically forbid any form of swearing in the words of the Saviour Himself, also quoted by James: "Swear not at all?"

Usually these words have been interpreted to mean that Scripture here has reference only to rash and unnecessary and hypocritical oaths. Thus Ursinus, in his "Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism," explains these words as follows: "But that these declarations do not forbid all oaths, but only such as are rash and unnecessary, is evident both from a comparison of other passages of the Old and New Testaments, and especially from the design of Christ, who in the first passage referred to, removing the corruptions thrown around the law, and giving its true sense, and at the same time removing the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, teaches that the third commandment of the Decalogue does not only condemn perjury, but also such oaths as are unnecessary and rash; and among these not only such as are direct, in which there is an express mention of the name of God, but also such as are indirect, in which, when creatures are named, the name of God is dissembled and under-

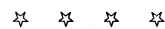
stood thereby; which those who were in the habit of using these indirect forms of swearing, such as swearing by the temple, by the altar, by heaven, etc., excused these oaths, as if they did not profane the name of God when they swore in this way, in as much as they did not expressly mention the name of God; and did not suppose that they had perjured themselves, if they violated the oath which they had taken in this indirect form. Christ, now, in the passage referred to, shows that men swear also by the name of God, when heaven and earth are named; because there is no creature, nor any part of the world, upon which God has not stamped some mark of His glory. And when anyone swears by heaven and earth in the sight and hearing of his Maker, the religious character of the oath which he takes is not in the creatures by whom he swears, but God Himself alone is called upon to witness what is said, by the mention of those things which are the signs of His glory."

—H.H.



Some people hear the gospel, as a butterfly settles upon a flower; without being at all the better for it. Others hear the gospel, as a bee settles upon a flower; they enjoy its fragrance, they imbibe its honey, and return home richly laden with its sweets. And some hear the gospel as a spider visits a flower: they would, if possible, extract poison from the Rose of Sharon.

—Toplady



Wrap up ever so good a flint, in silk or satin, and not a spark of its latent fire will appear. But bruise it with a hammer, or strike it with a steel, the dormant sparks will show themselves.—In prosperity, the graces of a saint too often lie hid. In adversity, they shine forth with light and heat like a flint in collision with a steel.

—Toplady



Inward holiness, and eternal glory, are the crown with which God adorns and dignifies his elect. But they are not the cause of election. A king is not made a king, by the royal robes he wears, and by the crown that encircles his brow: but he therefore wears his robes, and puts on his crown because he is a king.

—Tolpady

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Later Prophets

The undersigned intends for a while to discontinue his expositions of the second book of Samuel with which he has been occupied in these articles and take up the treatment of the four great and the twelve minor prophets. However what will now be appearing under this rubric, "The Days of Shadows", is not to be regarded as a commentary in the accepted sense of this term. The purpose is rather to give the thread of the argument of the prophet and to supply brief explanations as frequently as this may be necessary for the understanding of the argument.

A word on these discourses as a whole.

The discourses of the prophets of the Old Testament Bible is Gospel, good news. Indeed there is certainly as much reason to speak of the Gospel according to Isaiah and Amos for example as there is reason to speak of the Gospel according to Matthew or Paul or Peter. For the theme of the New Testament Scriptures is the very theme of the prophets of the Old Testament Bible. And this theme is the redemption of the Church of the elect by the triune Jehovah through Christ in His Spirit. Hence, in their totality the Old Testament prophets dealt in their prophecies with every element of truth, redemptive fact:—sin and grace, Christ, His incarnation, atonement, resurrection from the dead, ascension into heaven, exaltation at the right hand of God, His reign in the midst of His enemies, His headship over all things in the church, the new heavens and the new earth, the Church in glory.

But there is a difference.

The Old Testament Scriptures set forth the good things of the Gospel by promise. On the other hand, the New Testament Scriptures are the Scriptures of the promise fulfilled. When Christ cried out on the cross, "It is finished," it was finished indeed. Redemption was an accomplished fact in that very moment. And so Christ arose from the grave and was exalted to the highest heavens with His church destined to appear with Him in glory at His coming. The promise is fulfilled indeed. Old things have passed away and all things have become new.

Characteristic of the prophecies of the Old Testament prophets is that they were progressively fulfilled. What this means will become clear when we have these prophecies under our eye.

The prophets were pastors in Israel. They spake

and wrote with a view to the spiritual needs and conditions of the church of their day. But in doing so they produced a universal Gospel—or rather Christ did so through them—thus a Gospel, a glad tidings of salvation for the church of all ages. These needs and conditions must be known, if the discourses of the prophets are to be rightly understood.

The Lord created the prophets orientals. He endowed them with a lively imagination and with a liking for type and symbol. They come not with reasoned truth as does the Apostle Paul in his epistles for example but they hang before us pictures of the realities of the Gospel.

Peculiar to the prophets of the Old Covenant is that by their mouth Christ usually speaks to us in the first person. "Thus saith the Lord," is an expression with which their discourses abound, followed by, I the Lord will do so and so. Unbelieving men say that what this shows is that the prophets put their words in Christ's mouth. But we know better. It is Christ that puts His word in the mouth and heart of the prophets.

Ecstasy was characteristic of several of the prophets, but not all of them. Their literary style borders on poetry. It is dignified and elevated.

The events that they foretell, though widely apart in time, crowd up close behind each other and often flow together. Almost imperceptibly do the prophets in their discourses glide from the event that is typical to the corresponding heavenly reality. But often the transition is abrupt.

In studying the discourses of the prophets, we perceive that the Lord by their mouth declares that He had done with His people and will cast them away from Him on account of their sins and make a complete end of them, and on the other hand that He loves His people and in His love forgives them and will save them unto Himself.

One example: Hosea 1:6: "And the Lord said unto him (Hosea), Call her name Loruhamah; for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel, but I will utterly take them away."

Yet at verse 10 we read: "Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered."

It raises the question whether the Lord is now resolved to destroy His people utterly and then again, undergoing a change of heart, is decided to save them, yet never really knowing just what to do with them. This certainly cannot be, to be sure. The solution is this: There are two Israels: the Israel according to the election, and the Israel according to reprobation. The former he will save, though by themselves apart from Christ's grace they are no better than the others.

The latter He will destroy, the primary reason being His sovereign reprobation and the secondary reason their sins, which He wills to set before Him just because He wills. Thus the promises, though addressed to the whole nation, are only for the elect; and the messages of doom, though likewise addressed to the whole nation, are only for the Israel according to reprobation.

Thus if in dealing with the discourses of the prophets we refuse to work with election and reprobation, we can do nothing with them except misinterpret them.

The Four Major and the Twelve Minor Prophets

Pre-exilic Prophets		Contemporary Prophets	
Joel	875-865 B.C. 10 yrs	Amos	
Jonah	825-784 B.C. 59 yrs	Jonah	
Amos	795-785 B.C. 10 yrs	Isaiah, Micah and Obadiah	
Hosea	785-725 B.C. 60 yrs	Hosea, Micah and Obadiah	
Isaiah	758-697 B.C. 39 yrs	Hosea, Isaiah and Obadiah	
Micah	745-700 B.C. 50 yrs	Hosea, Isaiah and Micah	
Obadiah	742-726 B.C. 16 yrs	Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Ezekiel	
Jeremiah	627-586 B.C. 41 yrs	Jeremiah and Nahum	
Zephaniah	626-621 B.C. 5 yrs	Jeremiah and Zephaniah	
Nahum	623	Jeremiah	
Habakkuk	608-600 B.C. 6 yrs		
Exilic Prophets			
Ezekiel	592-570 B.C. 22 yrs	Jeremiah	
Daniel			
Post-Exilic Prophets			
Haggai	520 B.C.	Zechariah	
Zechariah	520-475 B.C. 45 yrs	Haggai	
Malachai	433 B.C.		

From the above arrangement we learn the following: 150 years intervened between the beginning of the prophetic labors of the first of these prophets—Joel—and the fall of Samaria and the dispersion of the ten tribes, and 289 years between the beginning of the labors of this prophet and the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of Judah. After the fall of Samaria the kingdom of Judah continued for 136 more years.

Jonah was a contemporary of Amos; Hosea of Isaiah, Micah, and Obadiah; Jeremiah of Zephaniah, Nahum, Habbakuk, Ezekiel; Haggai of Zechariah. The last of these prophets was Malachi.

The three heathen kingdoms or powers that successively menaced Judah during those 289 years (from Joel to the exile of Judah) were, a) Syria with Damascus as its capital. b) Assyria with Nineveh as its capital city. By this power Syria was overcome and absorbed. One of its kings was Tiglath-pilezar. He conquered Damascus. Sargon, another of its kings, captured Samaria in 722. c) Babylonia or Chaldea with Babylonia as its capital city. The founder of this kingdom was Nabopolezer 625-605. Its last king was Nebuchadnezzar. By him was Jeru-

salem captured. This was the power to overcome and supercede Assyria.

Isaiah

His prophetic labors began 172 years before the exile of Judah and 36 years before the fall of Samaria.

The kings of Judah during whose reigns he prophesied were Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. .

The Prophetic Discourse of Isaiah

It divides into six parts or sections.

- I. The three-fold introduction.
 - a) The first introduction, Chapter 1.
 - b) The second introduction, Chapter 2-5.
 - c) The third introduction, Chapter 6.
 - II. The prophecies occasioned by King Ahaz' (of Judah) distrust of the Lord in connection with the seige of Jerusalem by Rezin of Syria and Pekah, King of the Israel of the ten tribes, Chap. 8-12:6.
 - III. Prophecies against individual nations of Israel and Judah's limited world, Chapters 13-23. These nations are the following:
 1. The first prophecy against Babylon, Chapter 13-14:23.
 2. Prophecy against Assyria, Chap. 14:24-27.
 3. Against Philistia, Chapter 14:28-32.
 4. Against Moab, Chap. 15, 16.
 5. Against and for Damascus, Ephraim, Chap. 17.
 6. Ethiopia in the present and the past, Chap. 18.
 7. Egypt in the present and the past, Chap. 19, 20.
 8. The second prophecy against Babylon and prophecies against Edom, Arabia, Jerusalem and the chamberlain Shebna, Chapters 21, 22.
 9. Prophecy against and for Tyre, Chapter 23.
 10. Culmination of these 9 discourses in prophecy predictive of the end of all things, Chap. 24-27.
 - IV. Israel and Assyria in the time of Hezekiah, Chap. 28-33.
 - V. Judgments on all nations and on the reprobated Edom as typifying the whole; Israel's salvation and return to God's country, Chapter 34, 35.
 - VI. Historical section. Jerusalem besieged by the Assyrians and delivered. Hezekiah's sickness and restoration and his reception of the envoys from Babylon, the new and rising power to supercede Assyria, Chapter 36-39.
 - VII. Prophecies that imply Judah's exile to Babylon and promising complete salvation to begin with Judah's redemption from the Babylonian exile and concluding with the creation of the New Heavens and the New Earth, Chap. 40-66.
- Let us now trace the thread of the argument of this prophecy.
- The Threefold introduction, Chap. 1-6.
- a. The first introduction, Chap. 1.
- This first chapter is an introduction to the whole

prophecy, to the entire collection of prophecies that form the prophecy of Isaiah. This is evident from the first verse that reads, "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amos, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah." The prophet goes on to describe the mournful present. Judah is a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity. Accordingly their cities are burned and their country is devastated by strangers. The daughter of Zion—Jerusalem—alone is left as a cottage in a vineyard. All around her is desolation. But the Lord has left Him a remnant. Except for this remnant they would be like Sodom and Gomorrah, utterly destroyed, ver. 2-9.

But there is a means of escape out of the present misery, not outward ceremonies that were an abomination to the Lord, seeing that their hands were full of blood, but genuine fruits of repentance. This is the right way, and if followed, they shall find pardon and the good of the land they shall again eat. But if they refuse and rebel, they shall be consumed by the sword, ver. 10-20.

But if God's sinful people are to be saved, He must do it, which He also promises. First the prophet looks back to what the people formerly were. They were a city full of judgment in which lodged righteousness. Then he says, Look at what they are now: a profligate nation in which injustice and unrighteousness hold sway. But the Lord will turn His hand upon His people in a twofold way. Through judgment he will purge away the dross, that is, destroy the transgressors and the sinners. On the other hand, He will restore to His people good judges and counsellors. And they will be called the city of righteousness and the faithful city. So will Zion be redeemed with judgment that finally will be made to concentrate itself on Christ the head of the body of the elect, and her converts with righteousness. The reference is in the final instance to the suffering and death of Christ upon the cross. The converts are the spiritual seed, the 7000 always present in the church. Ver. 21-31.

b. The second introduction, Chap. 2-5.

—G. M. Ophoff

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"Get grace—get faith—get an interest in Christ," say the Arminians. When, in truth, grace is not of man's getting, but of God's giving; nor is faith of man's acquisition, but of God's operation.

A man's free-will cannot cure him even of the toothache, or of a sore finger; and yet he madly thinks it is in its power to cure his soul.

—From Toplady

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of I Peter 1:13

In our former article on I Peter 1:13 we noticed that the Apostle exhorts the pilgrim strangers unto hoping perfectly for the grace to be brought unto us in the revelation of Jesus Christ, that is, in the day when Christ shall be revealed fully to be the Son of God in power and glory. Then shall the dead be called forth from the grave; they who have done evil shall go forth unto the resurrection of damnation, and they who have believed and hoped in the mercies of God in Christ Jesus shall go forth unto the resurrection of life and immortality. Our bodies shall be manifestly redeemed from the graves's corruption, death shall be fully swallowed up of life, and it shall be forever evident that all the labors of God's people in the midst of this world were indeed not vain in the Lord!

All the eyes of God's people should be riveted in hope upon the grace that is brought unto us in that day. Such were the eyes of the prophets who prophesied of the sufferings to come upon Christ and of the glory to follow. And this very salvation is such in nature and intent that it is all in readiness to be revealed in that day. Wherefore our hoping for it must not be imperfect, incomplete, but it must be wholly perfect in intensity and nature, and thus be a hoping even to the very end. We must hope perfectly in the very power in which we are kept by faith unto that day.

There are still a few elements in the text that call for our attention.

In the first place there is the peculiar construction in the original Greek which we must notice. We refer to the phrase "the grace *being brought* unto you in the revelation of Jesus Christ." There are those who would see in this sentence construction the expression of the fact that this bringing in of the final grace is a *continued process*. The present grace of regeneration, calling, justification, sanctification is such that it culminates in the final grace, so it is asserted. This is true in itself; it is a very Scriptural thought. We prefer, however, to explain the use of the present passive present participle as expressing the viewpoint of the living hope of the Christian. In this hope we are already saved and possess this final grace. It is being brought to us. We live now as if we were in that day. Always in hope our heart reaches out for the final glory now while we are spiritual strangers and pilgrims. And we say: it is being brought to us

in the revelation of Jesus Christ in His final glory. It is ready to be revealed and in hope we see it brought to us, even as we are kept unto that day by the almighty and saving power of God.

Such is the viewpoint and the aspiration of hope!

And in this hoping we are to be perfect; nothing may be lacking in it.

This brings us to the second observation concerning this text.

Let it be clearly understood that the perfection here spoken of is in no wise the perfection of works of law that we perform. It is, on the contrary, simply the perfection of the living hope in the entire scope of our lives unto which we have been born again through the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The text speaks of the perfection of the hope of righteousness which is ours in the blood of Christ, as He was delivered for our offenses and raised for our justification. In this hope all old things have indeed passed away; we no more live in ourselves, but what we now live we live by the faith of the Son of God who loved us and gave His soul a ransom for our sins. In this hope our longing hearts look for this same Lord Jesus Christ to return in the last day to finish the work of our justification finally and publicly, and to glorify us with His own glory.

As to the idea of the term "perfectly" we should notice that perfection is here akin to maturity, that which has reached the limits of the possibility and development of anything. Thus the plant of wheat can go no farther than the harvest. When the harvest has come that is the end, the *telos*, the perfection of the season. An apple may be free from sickness, blight and rottenness and yet not be perfect in development. And so we might go on. But the point that we would make is clear. A perfectly hoping is living exclusively for the things above, is a complete and an exclusive setting of our affections on the things above, the things that are heavenly. While we are strangers and pilgrims here below we must set all our affections on the Jerusalem above. As a holy nation, a royal people, a peculiar treasure unto the Lord in all the earth, we are to walk the footsteps of the faith of Abraham, who saw the day of Christ and rejoiced.

The requisite of such a perfectly hoping upon the grace of Christ is that we "have the loins of our mind girt up, and be sober."

The figure of the "loins girt up" is taken from the dress of the oriental. Their clothing is such that it hangs long about their bodies and that shall they walk they must gird their clothing up so that they may be able to walk and be in readiness. They must be ready for action. This figure of the loins girt up is here applied by Peter to the "mind". It is worthy of

notice, that Peter does not speak here of the loins of the "heart" or the loins of the "soul". He speaks of the loins of the mind. That we call attention to this distinction between "heart", "soul", and "mind" should not seem strange. For Jesus enumerates all of these in Matt. 22:37 where we read "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God with all thy *heart*, with all thy *soul*, with all thy *mind*". Now certainly this is an important and an instructive passage, shedding a good deal of light on the question of having our mind's loins girt up.

Now it is surely true that just as we believe with the *heart* so also we hope with the *heart*. And it is equally true, that we also hope with all of our "soul" waiting for the salvation of our "souls". Yet, heart, soul and mind are not to be identified, but are clearly to be distinguished. When we see the difference and relationship of these concepts it will aid us in understanding why the "mind" must be girt up!

Our *heart* is the spiritual center of our being controlling both soul and mind. In our hearts we either hate or love God; God sheds His love abroad in our hearts. From the heart are the issues of life. Here we are to love God with all of the heart. And this means that in Christ Jesus we are to hope in God with *all of our hearts*. Only thus can there be perfect hope in God when we do so with all our hearts, having the law of God written in our hearts.

Then, too, we must love God with all our soul. In our soul we have our pains and disappointments, as well as our joys. And our whole soul must be lifted up to God; Him alone we are to extol with our whole soul. In grief and sorrow, in perplexity and trials, always our soul is to overflow with thankful and hopeful trust.

Our *mind* is the penetrating insight and knowledge of the will of God. Our serving the Lord in hope is a question also of the *mind*. To be sure this "mind" is more than bare abstract intellect, and it is also more than the bare power of natural analysis and synthesis, the ability to discern natural things in a natural way. The mind here is that of the spiritual man who has the mind of Christ, since he is illumined by the Spirit of Grace and revelation. It is the mind that is able to see and perceive the Kingdom of heaven; the mind of him who is born out of God from incorruptible Seed by the Word of God that liveth and abideth forever. Such is the mind in Scripture. It is never to be separated from heart and soul. For this mind is a matter of the entire man with all his thoughts and longings. And this mind is thus in both the regenerated and the unregenerated. In the latter this mind is darkened because of the perversity of the heart! It is ethical blindness; it is the blindness of

stubborn unbelief. Connected with the evil heart and soul the mind is in every reprobate. Wherefore we say that he is of a reprobate mind! But also the mind is inseparably connected with soul and heart. In our text the *enlightened mind* is rooted in the regenerated heart.

Peter is here speaking of the mind of the regenerated.

He admonishes the reborn church to walk in her rebirth, to walk according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh. In this case walking according to the Spirit is the walking in perfect hope. For only he who has the hope of everlasting life in God will walk in the purity of God's commandments. Wherefore we read in I John 3:3 "And everyone having this hope in Him *purifies* himself as he is pure". The admonition here to the Churches is rooted in what they have been made in the regeneration in Christ; standing in the "status quo" in Christ we are to walk in this newness of life, saved in hope!

Now, we must gird up the loins of that new mind in Christ!

Someone may say: but man cannot gird up the loins of his mind. He is dead in trespasses and sins! I say: hush up! You are speaking beside the point and are beclouding the issue! The point here is that the *regenerated church* must gird up the loins of *her mind*. And she can do all things through Christ who strengthens her! Oh, it is true: by nature the church cannot do this. But the people of God are principally not "by nature" anymore, but have been made alive with Christ and set with Him in heavenly places. Hence, we joy in God with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And this joy of the hope of salvation must become a full cup each day in hope.

Again someone may object and say: God's people do hope and therefore must not be told "what they must do". I answer: the former is true, but the latter *may be* very fallacious, though not necessarily. The truth is that in my text the Apostle is really speaking of an abounding more and more in hope. All the longing, joyful expectation of the soul must be upon this hope. This hope is not always perfect; fact is that it often is very imperfect. Then the Lord Himself revives us to hope in Him by the exhortations and precepts of the *preaching* of the Gospel, efficaciously working the grace of hope in our hearts by this Gospel. And then we do hope and hope more perfectly; yet, we do this because God works this hope in our hearts by calling attention in an efficacious way to what He has done for us in Christ and what we have become unto Him in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

G. Lubbers

IN HIS FEAR

Afraid of the Gospel

Oh, No!

How could one ever be afraid of the gospel?

Why should we ever be afraid of it?

Even Webster tells us that the word gospel means good news, glad tidings.

How right he is, for the word used by the Scriptures and translated in our english by the word gospel literally means good news, glad tidings.

That a man is afraid to open the envelope containing a telegram, that he has inward fright when the telephone rings in the wee hours of the night is to be understood. These things often bring evil tidings, sad news. But the gospel is glad tidings. Why should we be afraid of it?

Did not the angel declare to the shepherds in the fields of Ephrata that their fear was out of place? Fear not, he said, for I bring you the gospel. That is literally what he said.

What is that good news? It is this that unto us is born a Saviour. It is this that all our sins were blotted out by His blood on Calvary's brow. It is this that while we were *yet sinners* Christ died for us. It is this that He arose the third day for our justification, ascended to the right hand of God, received the Spirit and is working in and through all things to prepare the way for His own glorious return when He shall glorify all those given Him by the Father and gathered by Him out of every nation, tongue and tribe. It is this that no matter how unfaithful we may be, God will never let His faithfulness fail. It is this that we are saved by grace and not by works. It is this that nothing, not even the sins we shall yet commit in the future *can* separate us from the love of God in Christ. It is this that the God of our salvation is an unchangeable, almighty and eternal God. It is this that God is for us and nothing, absolutely nothing and no one can be against us.

Afraid of such a wonderful message?

Afraid that it is not true?

Oh, No!

Not one of us is afraid that this is not true.

Or are we?

There are those who are afraid, actually afraid of that gospel!

You say, Impossible!?

Wait a moment. Listen to this!

Are you afraid to preach that gospel? Are you afraid to have it preached to the Church of the Living God? Are you afraid to have it preached and taught to your children?

There are people who are exactly afraid of the gospel in that sense. And they are not a mere handful of people who have left no mark upon the pages of the history of the Church of God in this world. They are legion.

The Apostle Paul was troubled by them in his day. They opposed the gospel when he preached it. They ridiculed such a gospel and said that by it you encourage man to walk in sin. The only logical conclusion of such a gospel, they said, is that we should continue in sin that grace may abound. Paul, they said, that doctrine will only give us a good reason for sinning against God. It will never make better men and women out of us. And Paul did not dig out of his own soul that evil slur upon the gospel of free grace and complete salvation through the meritorious work of Christ alone. In his wide experiences he had often met with such a reaction to the gospel which glorifies God as the God of our salvation.

Did the Apostle agree that there was a danger in preaching that being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ? Did he agree that you have to be careful when you preach that by a free gift, by the grace of God and by it alone we have eternal life? Nay, he gives the answer of faith. He is not afraid of that gospel, for he has the fear of the Lord. We hope to come back to that presently, but let us state it now that to be afraid to preach the gospel is not the fear of the Lord. Nor is it by any stretch of the imagination, living in His fear. We hope to make that plain presently. But let us first turn to that marvelous answer of the Apostle. He says, in effect, be not afraid of such a wonderful message. God forbid that we should. Such a doctrine will not encourage the true child of God into continuing in sin, for that true, regenerated child of God is dead to sin. That is part of the good news of the gospel. That child of God for whom Christ died and through whose Spirit he has been regenerated is dead to sin, so that he cannot live any longer therein. Paul has no fear at all to preach so glorious a gospel. He is afraid to preach anything else. He knows that to preach anything else is to bring man back to the thunderings and earthquakes at Mt. Sinai and take from him all the good news that a Saviour has been born, died, arose and is exalted at God's right hand for the taking away of the sins of those given Him by the Father from all eternity.

O, but that did not put an end to this fear. Some

still continued to find a certain morbid joy in remaining in the first chapter of the Heidelberg Catechism, which instructs us in the misery of man, and refused to go on to the second chapter which holds before our eyes that gospel, those good tidings of which the angel sang to the shepherds at the Saviour's birth. Or if they did continue into this second chapter, they still could not get rid of the fear that if they said no more, men would become awfully careless and indifferent about serving the Living God.

That is why the fathers of our beloved Heidelberg Catechism also ask in question 64, "But doth not this doctrine make men careless and profane?" And they can hardly wait to shout out the answer, "By no means: for it is impossible that those, who are implanted into Christ by a true faith, should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness." Afraid of the gospel? Some are. But rest assured that to preach it with all your power and convictions, to preach it in all its purity and *strength* will not make one believer careless and profane. A regenerated child of God may for a time live a careless and indifferent life. But you do wrong if you ascribe it to the preaching of the gospel. In the measure that he does *not* hear the gospel, in that measure he will be careless and profane. Man is *by nature* careless and profane. He is that way before he ever hears the gospel. And the gospel never encourages him to continue in it. When he is careless and profane it is because he is following his old carnal nature, not because he is following the truth of the gospel. And even when regenerated children have this fear of preaching the gospel of a *full* and *free* salvation that fear is due to the fact that they are following the dictates of their old carnal natures rather than the truth of the gospel. They are allowing their old carnal natures to tell them something about the gospel rather than to let the gospel speak to them. The gospel can no more move the new man in Christ to carelessness and indifference than a telegram to the effect that her son is alive and is returning home in good health can move a mother, who had been grieving because of a former message stating that her son had been missing in action in bloody Korea, could move such a mother to cursing and resentment at this new turn of events. Her grief and love for her son would not allow that. The regenerated child of God's grief and sorrow for his sin and his love for God will not allow him to walk in carelessness and profanity when he hears the gospel of free and full salvation in Christ. The God Who speaks that gospel to him also works in him that sorrow and love.

But there is something harder, more painful to write.

That fear of preaching the gospel is in *our* midst.

It is dangerous, so some among *us* say, to preach that gospel without making it *conditional*. You will make men stocks and blocks and take away their responsibility. You will preach a passive doctrine. You are going to make man careless. You need *prerequisites*. You need conditions to preach a full-orbed gospel. The undersigned has been told personally that the behaviour of some of our young people is to be ascribed exactly to that fact that we hold no *prerequisites* before them, our preaching is not conditional. It tells them that while they are *yet sinners* Christ died for us and that ALL our salvation is in Christ and that God is always *first* in every phase of our salvation, that we never move till God moves us. That doctrine is dangerous, for it makes men careless and fatalistic. So they say.

Still more.

The occasion of this and the following article(s) in this department is exactly that a brother, in conversing with the undersigned about conditions and man's responsibility, expressed this fear of the gospel by stating that he would not dare tell his children that all the sins of God's people which they shall yet commit in the future are already paid for by the blood of Christ. He was afraid of that good news of the gospel. Other remarks which followed indicated that he was afraid that if he would tell his children that truth, then he would no longer be able to admonish them. Then their carelessness and disregard of God's laws would increase, and he would be helpless to train them. They would not have the proper *fear* of the Lord. Then he could no longer teach them that they had a responsibility before God.

The brother is wrong! Oh, so wrong! And he, no doubt, does not object to these lines, nor to what follows, the Lord willing in the next article. For he did display a sincere desire for a clarification of this thing that troubled his heart. The theory of conditions confused him. It deceived him. It took away from him the cross and the joy of the gospel.

You may say that it is an extreme case? Not at all. This is the direction in which all this conditional theology is headed and where it will surely land. And the leaders of this conditional theology are going to find themselves helpless in trying to stem it and in trying to restore the joy of a free and full salvation in Christ.

You say, that is an exception! The undersigned would sincerely like to have it that way, but he knows of other evidences that some of our people have lost the joy of the gospel. These he will, if space permits, reveal next time. But let it be said that we must all bear in mind that God *cannot* be mocked. And when

we begin to try to defend statements which in our better judgment ought not be defended, the tragic result is that we begin to believe them ourselves and begin to be ruled by the lie.

Only the pure, unconditional gospel gives joy and peace.

Be careful, lest you lose the cross!

—J. A. Heys

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The Voice of Our Fathers

The Canons of Dordrecht

PART I — HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

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

Hence, the *Canons* came into existence alongside our other two standards in a natural way, occasioned by an attack against the truth contained in those standards. And the position which the *Canons* occupy as a confession must be considered in this light. Their confessional authority and rank is, of course, the same, so that together the three creeds constitute our Three Forms of Unity. But as far as their content is concerned, the Three Forms are not at all coordinate. Rather do the *Canons* occupy the position of a further explanation and elaboration of truths that were already posited in the *Catechism* and the *Confession*. And this fact is of the utmost importance. It means that the *Heidelberg Catechism* and the *Netherland Confession* must indeed be maintained, *but always in the light of and in harmony with the further interpretation given at Dordrecht*. And this means not merely that when a sermon on election is preached or when a minister is up to Question and Answer 54 of the *Catechism* that the explanation of Dordrecht is binding. It implies that whenever any of the matters treated in the Five Heads of Doctrine (and that covers the entire gospel, the whole of the work of salvation) is involved in the preaching, such preaching must take place only and always in the light of the expressions of Dordt. Only then can the name "Reformed" be justly claimed.

Still more.

Especially since Dordrecht, a Reformed man is not only positive. If he is at all realistic, he cannot be,

A sound Reformed man,—and the more he values his Reformed heritage, the more diligent he will be in this respect,—a Reformed man will also be disposed especially to reject all the errors rejected by the Great Synod. And he will also be disposed to refute and contradict those errors, and to exert himself in keeping the church free from them. Mark you well, he will *exert* himself to do this! Allow me to quote in this connection from the *Formula of Subscription*:

"We the undersigned, professors of the Protestant Reformed Churches, ministers of the Gospel, elders and deacons of the Protestant Reformed congregations of....., of Classis....., do hereby sincerely and in good conscience before the Lord, declare by this, our subscription, that we heartily believe and are persuaded that all the articles and points of doctrine contained in the Confessions and Catechism of the Reformed Churches *together with the explanation of some points of the aforesaid doctrine, made by the National Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-'19, do fully agree with the Word of God.*

"We promise therefore diligently to teach and faithfully to defend the aforesaid doctrine, *without either directly or indirectly contradicting the same*, by our public preaching or writing.

"We declare, moreover, that we *not only reject all errors that militate against this doctrine and particularly those which were condemned by the above mentioned synod, but that we are disposed to refute and contradict these, and to exert ourselves in keeping the Church free from such errors....*" (Italics mine, H.C.H.)

From the above it is quite clear what specific position the *Canons* occupy in a Reformed church. It is evident too that according to this oath of office it has since 1618-'19 been one of the chief elements in the calling of officebearers to maintain the teachings of Dordrecht, and that too, overagainst the Arminian errors. And it will, of course, be understood that what is binding by oath upon the officebearers of the church is in its essence binding as well upon every member of a Reformed church.

Nor is this at all out of date. Ever since Dordrecht the chief struggle of the Reformed churches has been against that same Arminian ogre. And that church which failed to maintain in their full force the pronouncements of Dordrecht soon fell victim to the same enemy which threatened more than three centuries ago, and lost its distinctive Reformed character. Such has been and still is the case both in America and Europe. Still today the battle of the Reformed churches is against those who would tamper with the truth of sovereign predestination, the heart of the church and the heart of the gospel. And still today, whether the

enemy be Arminian or Barthian, our *Canons* are very pertinent. Armed with the truth of Scripture as contained therein we need fear no foe!

But methinks,—and history will bear me out on this score,—the trouble is, not that our *Canons* are out of date, but that Reformed churches in general have become so woefully weak that they are no more disposed to "teach and faithfully to defend the aforesaid doctrine." Nay, methinks the trouble is that it has become unpopular to "reject all errors that militate against this doctrine and particularly those which were condemned by the above mentioned synod," and that it is considered old-fashioned "to refute and contradict these, and to exert ourselves in keeping the Church free from such errors."

And let us learn from history's lesson. It is as though God Himself were speaking to us. You must not heed those who would dissuade you and rob you of your Reformed heritage. You must not turn from the battle. Grow not weary and faint. Nor must you be deceived by those who still promulgate Arminianism under the name of Reformed truth! But rather must you bend every effort to know the truth, the Reformed truth. You must arm yourself with it, for it is the sword of the Spirit! And you must be prepared to battle to the death for it!

"Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or by epistle." II Thess. 2:15.

—H. C. Hoeksema

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MEETING OF CLASSIS WEST

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches meets in Oskaloosa, Iowa, Sept. 2, 1953.

ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting of the RFPA will be held Thursday, Sept. 24th at the Creston Prot. Ref Church, at 8:00 P.M. Rev. H. Veldman will be the speaker. Annual reports will be given by the secretary, treasurer and business manager. Four board members are to be chosen from the following: T. Van Eenenaam (First); J. King, P. Vanden Engel, N. Kunz (Creston); G. Pipe (Fourth); H. Brands, J. Kalsbeek (Second) and A. Langerak (Hope). Please reserve this date and plan to attend.

THE BOARD—R.F.P.A.

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

EARLY VIEWS OF THE CHURCH (Cont'd)

Bishops and Bishop of Rome-its historical background.

This is indeed a most interesting subject. We can distinguish, as far as the government of the Church is concerned, between the episcopal and presbyterian forms of church government. Incidentally, we have the presbyterian form of church government. It is surely worthy of note that the episcopal form of church government characterized the life of the church of God until the Reformation. What do we mean by these two forms of church government? The presbyterian form of church government is characterized by the rule of or by the elders, the consistory. The word "presbyterian" or "presbyter" is derived from the Greek word which means "elder." The episcopal form of church government is characterized by the rule over the church by the bishops or bishop. We probably recognize the word "bishop" in the word "episcopal." The word "episcopal" is derived from the Greek word "episkopos," and this word means "overseer." Also this word appears in Holy Writ as designating the elders of the church. The apostle, Paul, addressing in Acts 20 the elders of the church at Ephesus upon the island of Miletus where this meeting of the elders with the apostle occurred, calls them overseers, using this word, and we quote: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood."

At the outset or beginning of the Church of God in the New Dispensation when churches were being organized through the labours of the apostles, the organization of the churches was very simple. The officers or office bearers of the churches were simply the elders and the deacons, the elders, of course, being entrusted with the rule over the church. Sometimes these elders were simply called "elders" in Holy Writ, inasmuch as the older members were generally elected to this office. In other passages of the Bible they are called "presbyters" or overseers, inasmuch as this really constituted the essence of their office or labors in the church. They must be overseers over the church of God, have the rule over the people of the Lord. At the outset or beginning of the Church of God in the New Dispensation, we have already observed, the or-

ganization of the churches was very simple. Churches were organized and the office bearers (the elders and deacons) were duly elected. Of this we read in a passage such as Acts 14:22-23, and I quote: "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed."

However, this soon changed. The presbyterian form of church government was soon replaced by the episcopal form of church government. The rule over the church by the elders was soon substituted by the rule of one of the elders. Terms such as: monarchical bishops, diocesan bishops, and metropolitan bishops, soon became common in the early New Dispensation Church. In the early Church, we will remember, the presbyters, or elders, were all of the same rank; the one did not stand higher in authority than another. At a very early time, however, one of the elders assumed the lead and was recognized as having authority over the others. He would be president of the consistory, lead in worship, and do the preaching. We have already made the observation that these elders of the Church are also called "overseers" in the Bible. The word "overseer" is the Greek word "episkopos," and from it our word "bishop" is derived. The title of bishop was given to the overseer who in course of time became the leader of the board of presbyters or consistory. So the other presbyters gradually became subordinate to the presbyter who was their overseer or bishop, and this bishop soon ruled over the church of God alone. It is for this reason that these ruling overseers or bishops came to have all the authority in the church and were therefore known as: monarchical bishops. We recognize the word "monarch" in the word "monarchical" and readily understand why these ruling bishops assumed this name.

The rapid development from monarchical to diocesan bishop, once the office of monarchical bishop had been established, is easily understood. We realize, of course, that churches were first established in the cities. As long as the various congregations were limited to the cities, the office of monarchical bishop was not expanded. From the cities, however, Christianity spread among the heathens, or pagans, into the country. Consequently these Christian communities thereby developed and expanded from city to district communities. At first the various members of the congregation would attend the church in the city. This, we understand, expanded the authority of the monarchical bishops. Later these members in the rural

communities would become separate congregations, but they would continue to recognize the authority of their city bishop. And thus, we understand, the monarchical bishop had become a diocesan bishop, a bishop who exercised authority, not only over a city church, but over a district or diocese as well. He thereby became a diocesan bishop, a bishop whose rule and authority extended over a district rather than over merely a city.

A third development in this rise of the episcopal form of church government is expressed by the term: metropolitan bishop. The word "metropolitan" speaks for itself. The metropolitan bishops were those bishops in charge of the churches in the large cities or metropolises. These were five in number, namely: Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople and Rome. We will not at this time discuss the rise to power of the bishop of Rome, the development of the papacy. We will have opportunity to do this in a later article. It is not difficult to understand why the bishops of these metropolitan communities became such great powers in the early Christian Church (the reader will understand that when I speak of the early Christian Church I refer to the Church of God, which has existed from the beginning of time, in the days of its New Testament infancy). The development of this episcopal form of church government was principally made when one elder assumed authority in a consistory over another. The rest of this story follows automatically. We can certainly understand why the bishop of the church at Jerusalem should be recognized as one of the leading bishops in the early Church. Jerusalem was famous for its historical background. That had been the City of God throughout the Old Dispensation. There Christ had been crucified, the Spirit had been poured out into the Church on Pentecost, and the Church of God as of the New Dispensation had had its beginning. Jerusalem had been the mother church. There the Christians had first been persecuted and there the first church council had been held. The church in Jerusalem had something no other church had. It was surely unique among all the churches.

Another metropolitan bishop resided in Antioch. Antioch (in Syria) was also famous because of its unique history. This early Christian church had been the first missionary church. Antioch had been the place of the labours of Barnabas who was later joined in that city by the apostle, Paul. And from Antioch they had been sent out by the church on their first missionary journey. Besides, returning from their missionary journeys the apostles would always return to the church at Antioch and submit their reports concerning the wonderful things which the Lord had done

through the instrumentality of their preaching. Moreover, Antioch had many notable bishops, and it had also become famous because it had become the seat of an important theological school. Finally, next to Alexander, Antioch was the largest and most important city in the east. Hence, that the bishop residing in Antioch should be recognized as having considerable authority is easily understandable. The strategic location of this city and the fact that all other churches looked upward to this church as their mother church must, of course, not be minimized.

A third metropolitan bishop resided in the city of Alexandria. The church which had been established here had also become famous in its own right. In the first place, it was the second largest city in the Roman Empire, next to Rome. The city bore the name of that famous conqueror, Alexander the Great. Alexander the Great was completely "in love" with Greek art and learning and Alexandria became the greatest seat of learning and culture. In fact, for many centuries it was far more splendid than Rome itself. There, too, a famous theological school flourished, a school in which Origin, the greatest scholar of the Church up to that time, had taught. This city, too, occupied a most strategic position and it is not difficult to understand why the bishop residing in it should be regarded with considerable veneration and esteem.

The last of the great Eastern cities to which we would call attention is Constantinople. This great metropolis certainly could not claim the antiquity which the other metropolises could rightfully claim. However, it was later to become the seat of the Eastern Empire. In fact, its name was changed from Byzantium to Constantinople in honour of Constantine the Great whose right to the title: "the first Christian emperor", may be seriously disputed. This emperor had changed or removed his residence from Rome to Constantinople. And we can easily understand that the very fact that Constantinople was the residence of the emperor contributed to the high esteem in which the bishop of the church there was held.

We will have occasion to refer to Rome in later articles. We simply purposed to trace, briefly, the rise to power of the bishops of the early Christian Church. In our following article, the Lord willing, we will attempt to explain this rise of the episcopal form of church government already present in the post-apostolic period.

—H. Veldman



DECENCY and ORDER

The Lawful Calling

THE CALLING OF A CANDIDATE

The last time we were discussing the first part of the fourth article of our church order. We wrote about some of the methods that are employed in nominating and calling a minister of the gospel. It was observed that our churches do not follow the letter of the church order in this matter. The latter, because of historical circumstances, advocates that the candidate be chosen by the consistory and deacons and then submitted to the members of the church for approbation. In our churches a nomination of suitable candidates is made by the consistory and deacons which is then submitted to the congregation for approbation after which the members of the church choose one from the approved nomination. This method is not in violation with the spirit and principle of our church order which in this matter certainly maintains the rights of the congregation but we must acknowledge that it is a departure from the method that is prescribed. We must remember, however, that our church order does not impose certain methods upon the churches but rather its aim is to set forth fundamental principles of church government and sanctified conduct. This is very important for as long as these principles are maintained, the method used becomes a matter of secondary importance. Thus we also suggested that our present practice could be still further modified and improved by the addition that the congregation also be given a voice in the matter of making the nominations though the deciding choice be left to the consistory. We now will continue our discussion of the other important steps which the congregation follows in the procedure of obtaining a minister.

The fourth article mentions three more elements: "An examination, the approbation, and the public ordination." A few things may be briefly stated concerning the approbation first of all because this element is no longer required in the method followed in our churches. Approbation is an act of approving, sanctioning, commending. In the present connection, therefore, it merely means that the members of the calling church put their stamp of approval upon the candidate whom their consistory has chosen to become their minister. At that time the consistory would simply submit their choice to the congregation and inform them that after two weeks, unless lawful objections were raised, a call would be extended to him

to become the pastor of the flock. According to our present method this act of approbating takes place before the election of the candidate. The consistory submits the entire nomination to the congregation for approval and then after two weeks, if there are no lawful objections raised, the election is held and the one chosen is immediately sent the call.

The congregation, however, is not the only body that approbates the nomination. This is also done by the Counselor of Classis who, representing the Classis in which the calling church resides, serves her with necessary counsel. This indicates that the matter of calling a minister is not only of significance to the congregation that is actively engaged in this task but it is of great importance to all the churches represented in the Classis and Synod. This follows because when a candidate is chosen and ordained in the office in a particular church he receives the right to preach the word and to administer the sacraments not only in that one church but also in all the churches of the denomination as he may be requested by the consistory. Furthermore, he will also be delegated to major assemblies and have a voice in deciding matters that pertain to the churches in general. Hence, no candidate may be chosen (or placed on nomination) without the approbation of the counselor of the Classis or of Classis itself.

In this connection then we may also note what is the particular function of the counselor. When a congregation is without a minister, the Classis, upon the request of the consistory, appoints another minister to serve them as counselor or advisor. For economic and practical reasons the minister of the church which is geographically nearest the vacant church is usually appointed although this is not a hard and fast rule. It is conceivable that in a locality where there are several churches and the distance between them is negligible, anyone of the ministers could be appointed and that Classis (or the Classical Committee) would consider such things as the size and amount of labor in each pastorate in making its selection of a counselor.

The counselor's function is purely an advisory one. In case of difficulty or trouble in the congregation, he may be of invaluable aid in directing things in the proper way. He may also be called to meet, if necessary, with the consistory and decide over that body though he never has a decisive vote there. If the consistory is confronted with weighty and difficult problems, she may consult her advisor for assistance. In the matter of calling a pastor, the counselor must see to it that all things are done according to the proper ecclesiastical regulations. He must approve the nomination. When the election takes place, he must

supervise the composition of the call-letter to which he then also affixes his signature. If at all possible, he should be present at the congregational meeting where this election takes place. And when a call is accepted the counselor usually leads the congregation in the ordination service though not infrequently he is assisted by others. He may also be called upon to conduct funerals, install office-bearers, administer the sacraments, etc., although again these labors may be performed by others. The vacant congregation must not feel obligated to call on their counselor for everything. His chief function is to be of help to the vacant church in as far as they may need and request his advice and assistance.

When then the church has complied with these ecclesiastical stipulations, extended a call to a candidate for the ministry, and received his letter of acceptance, she may not as yet proceed with the final step of ordaining him to the office. He is required to first be examined by the Classis. This is called the *peremptory examination*. It must be remembered that in our churches before one is made a candidate for the ministry he is required to complete a course of study in our seminary and to successfully answer to a thorough examination before the Synod. In view of this the peremptory examination would seem to be quite unnecessary. Rev. Ophoff in his "Church Right" evaluates this matter as follows:

"In a communion of churches with a seminary of its own and under its sole and strict control, the peremptory examination is superfluous. It is obviously unnecessary. Further, if the synod decides that an aspirant is qualified for the office, a classis cannot decide otherwise without militating against Article 31 (D.K.O.), for according to this article whatever a major assembly agrees upon by a majority of votes shall be considered settled and binding unless it be proved to conflict with the Word of God or with the articles of the Church Order. Finally, it must be considered strange that an aspirant should be examined with a view to determining his fitness for the office after he has received a call. Examinations for this purpose should proceed and not follow the call."

The Rev. Ophoff also explains why the church order requires a double examination in the following quotation:

"In the beginning of the Reformation, the Reformed Churches had the custom of examining the aspirants but once and this was after he was called. The result was that too many persons unfit for the office were receiving calls, and because this examination was not conducted with sufficient thoroughness, installed into office. The Reformed fathers thought to remedy this evil by instituting the preparatory examination,

which they did while retaining the peremptory examination."

The practice of examining the candidate twice is observed by our churches today. Although we can agree that in most instances this second examination is rather superfluous, we hasten to add that there is certainly no harm or wrong in the practice as such. As a precautionary measure and a safeguard to the office of the ministry it may prove advantageous that the church continues this practice. The second examination may prove very necessary especially when a long period of time intervenes between one being declared a candidate and his receiving and accepting a call from the churches. Surely no candidate sincerely seeking the office of the ministry of the word will object to submitting to both examinations. Besides, there is the advantage that in the peremptory examination the candidate is subject to analysis by all the churches of the Classis as well as the Synodical deputies whereas in the preparatory examination the seminary professors and the limited delegation of Synod do the questioning. Unless, therefore, very cogent reasons are presented we would not advocate abolishing this practice.

The examination itself consists of many things. The candidate is requested to deliver a sermon by which his ability to handle and preach the Word is judged. He is questioned regarding his knowledge of Reformed Doctrine, The Holy Scriptures, The Confessions and the Church Order. He is called upon to exhibit his ability to defend the truth overagainst false doctrines and heresies. Inquiry is also made into such practical qualifications for the ministry as his personal spirituality, his motives for seeking the office, and his insight into pastoral practical labors.

Upon completion of his examination the Classis proceeds to deliberate in closed session. Thereupon voting by secret ballot regarding his admittance into the ministry takes place and if the outcome is satisfactory the candidate is given a certificate from the Classis declaring that it judges him qualified for the ministry of the Word. He is then asked to sign the formula of subscription and the church to which he has been called is advised by Classis to proceed with his ordination.

But what happens if the candidate fails? Does this mean that all his preparation and labor was in vain? Not necessarily so. If the congregation continues to desire him he is given opportunity at the next Classis to be re-examined in the branches he appeared unsatisfactory. When all is successfully accomplished he may be ordained *Minister Verbi Deum!* This ordination, D.V., we will discuss next time.

G. Vanden Berg

ALL AROUND US

First Protestant Reformed Church Splits

In his rubric "Other Churches in the News", the Rev. Peter Van Tuinen gave the readers of the *Banner* of July 31 a rather distorted and biased picture of the history that has been made recently in the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids when he wrote under the above caption.

I do not know the source of his information, nor do I know whether the information was distorted at its source, or whether the Rev. Van Tuinen distorted it. From the concluding paragraph of his article it would appear that the Reverend had made up his mind long ago that the position of the Rev. Hoeksema has always been a dangerous one, and would ultimately lead to the split now taking place. And from his remarks in this paragraph we gather that he agrees with the Rev. De Wolf and his supporters and exonerates them whom the Classis had charged with making and supporting heretical statements.

Let me quote that last paragraph: "The Rev. Mr. Hoeksema's position in this dispute seems to exemplify a danger that is always present in our theological thinking. That danger is the supposition that our limited human understanding must be able to resolve all the mysteries of the revelation of the infinite God, with the resulting notion that all divine truth must be forced under the limits of human reason. Arminianism, by such rationalism weakens the divine initiative in the salvation of the soul. Mr. Hoeksema and his followers, by a similar rationalism, make meaningless the human factor in the soul's salvation."

I take it that Rev. Van Tuinen makes his conclusion on the basis of the fact that Rev. Hoeksema and his followers are averse to the two statements of the Rev. De Wolf. Mr. Van Tuinen concludes that anyone opposing those two statements must of necessity deny "the human factor in the soul's salvation." And this he says is just as bad as the Arminian rationalism which "weakens the divine initiative in the salvation of the soul." They both, the Hoeksema position and the Arminian position, are rationalistic, a product of pure reason apart from the revelation of Scripture. They are both dangerous theological thinking.

But is this so? I would like to ask the Reverend this question: Would you subscribe to the statement: "God promises everyone of you that if you believe you shall be saved"? If you do, you take a much stronger position than your own Churches dared to take in 1924 when they said virtually in the First Point:

"God offers salvation to all in the preaching of the Gospel." Your Church did not dare to say, "God Promises." They evidently understood the implications of this statement, that it is contrary to all Scripture.

I have another question: Who is rationalistic, Hoeksema or De Wolf and Van Tuinen? Isn't it characteristic of rationalism that it places reason above Scripture? Can Rev. Van Tuinen find any passage of Scripture that in the least sustains the statement which De Wolf has made? He cannot. Who is rationalistic? Rev. Hoeksema or Rev. Van Tuinen? Rev. Hoeksema's position is that God promises salvation to the believer, i.e., the elect. Will Van Tuinen disprove this with Scripture and our Reformed Confessions? He cannot. Hence Hoeksema's position is not rationalistic, but the doctrine of the Scriptures.

There are other statements in his article that are not exactly stated and which leave the impression that Rev. Van Tuinen got his information from a wrong source. He writes for example: "Classis East, embracing the Churches in the eastern section of the Church, concurred in this judgment (namely that the Hoeksema faction insists that "these statements of De Wolf are unequivocally heretical"—M.S.) and advised deposition of Mr. De Wolf and of elders who supported him." Now this is not stating the matter correctly and leaves a wrong impression. The fact is that the Classis sustained the protestants (Hoeksema and Ophoff) and declared, "In our opinion both statements which the protestants condemn are literally heretical regardless of what the Rev. De Wolf meant by them, regardless of how he explains them, etc."

Classis further advised the consistory of First Church to demand that the Rev. De Wolf make a public apology for having made the two statements in question and that the consistory apologize for having supported the Rev. De Wolf with respect to the two statements in question.

And further the Classis advised the consistory of First Church that in case the Rev. De Wolf should refuse to apologize, the consistory proceed to suspend him, and that in case any elder or elders should refuse to apologize for supporting him in these statements they should be deposed.

The point I make is that Van Tuinen leaves the impression that Classis in a hierarchical way advised deposition without anything more. While the fact is that Classis advised this only after it advised the consistory to plead with the Rev. De Wolf and his elders with the help of a Classical committee and ask them to apologize.

Rev. Van Tuinen also writes "But deposition proved difficult to execute because of the division of opin-



ion in the consistory." "The consequence was that the act of deposition was legally questionable to such a degree that the De Wolf supporters were able to continue to occupy the Church's facilities." The facts are that De Wolf was not deposed but suspended. Only the elders were deposed that supported De Wolf. The latter's deposition waits the advise of Classis. This Van Tuinen ought to know. The fact that the De Wolf faction continue to occupy the Church's facilities was not due to the questionableness of the legality of deposition, but to the fact that the De Wolf faction ruthlessly took over the Church's facilities, even to the extent as rumor has it of changing the locks on the Church to keep the Hoeksema faction out. The Hoeksema faction was determined from the time of suspension and deposition proceedings not to cause trouble over the Church property, the whole matter could be disposed of in an amicable way at Classis.

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The Reformed Guardian.

This is the name of a pamphlet sent to all subscribers of Concordia and written by the Revs. H. De Wolf and A. Cammenga. Because this pamphlet was such a masterpiece in the art of deception and telling of half-truths, I felt it my duty to inform my own congregation in two and a half mimeographed sheets, bulletin size, of the abundance of deliberate falsities it contained and gave them at the same time an accurate statement of facts. I do not have space enough in this department to give all the material to the readers of the Standard Bearer. But here are a few examples.

On page 5, paragraph 1 we read: "The Rev. Hubert De Wolf was suspended from office by part of his Consistory." The truth is that Rev. De Wolf was suspended by the legal Consistory of the First Prot. Ref. Church. When De Wolf and his elders failed to maintain the advice of Classis, they were automatically out. They were condemned, and therefore could have no voice in the suspension or deposition proceedings.

On page 5, paragraph 5 we read: "However serious the implications of deposition may be, the Rev. H. Hoeksema saw fit to press deposition action against his former student and associate pastor, etc." Not the Rev. Hoeksema but his Consistory did this. The attempt is made here to blacken the name of Rev. Hoeksema. It is deplorable how the De Wolf faction, and this goes for others in our Churches, has slandered this man and his colleague, G. M. Ophoff.

Page 6, para. 2—It is said: "All suspension and deposition proceedings, according to the very testimony

of Classis East, rest on but two statements, and even those lifted from their context." The truth is that Classis said it made no difference how you explain them, or what you meant by them, they are per se heretical. The truth is that Rev. De Wolf will not admit they are heretical, and he insists he can give them a good interpretation.

Page 6, para. 4—"And all their insinuations that the Rev. De Wolf in his preaching belittled God's counsel of election and reprobation . . . is a wicked and wilful perversion of the truth on the part of the protestants, etc." Here are some statements De Wolf is said to have made at the same time he made the first heretical statement, and I have never heard of him denying this: "You have nothing to do with election and reprobation; your responsibility is to believe. If you will believe, you will be saved." "Election and reprobation have nothing to do with the Gospel." "Some of you carry Protestant Reformed on the lapel of your coat, you are proud of being Prot. Reformed. Don't think you go to heaven because you are Prot. Reformed." Surely De Wolf "belittled God's counsel of election and reprobation," and the Prot. Ref. Churches that maintain these doctrines, and the Prot. Ref. people who live by these doctrines. He should not deny this.

Page 7, para. 4—"By this illegal action a schism of such proportions has been caused, etc." That has to be proved that there was any illegal action. There was nothing illegal about it. The "schism" is the responsibility of De Wolf and his elders, no one else.

Page 7, para. 5—"It is unnecessary at this time to enter into the doctrinal dispute." Why is it? Is that not exactly what the whole trouble is about? Striking it is that De Wolf and his supporters never want to talk about the issue, but they bring in all kinds of unrelated matters, such as personalities, illegalities, etc. The same may be said about those who oppose the Declaration of Principles.

Page 8, para. 1—De Wolf maintains he made an apology, and he quotes it for you. The truth is he apologized for nothing except that the Revs. Hoeksema and Ophoff did not have wisdom enough to interpret him correctly. For this he is sorry. I suppose he would have to say the same thing about the Classis. "I'm sorry Classis, but you do not seem to be able to understand that when I made those two statements I was teaching Prot. Ref. doctrine." Bah!

I told my congregation much more than this. I'm sorry there is no more space now. If you would like a copy of that which I gave to my Church, send me your name and address. Glad to oblige.

—M. Schipper