

THE STANDARD

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MEDITATION

The Lowest Room

"...go and sit down in the lowest room;..."
Luke 14:10b

The words which we have chosen for this meditation were spoken by our Lord Jesus at the occasion of a visit which our Lord paid to one of the chief pharisees.

It happened on a sabbath day.

And when our Lord observed that they which were bidden chose the chief rooms, He warned them, and admonished His hearers to humility. At the end of His discourse He emitted the fundamental law of the Kingdom of Heaven: "for whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Indeed! The Lord's own life is a commentary on that law of the Kingdom. You may say that this Kingdom of heaven is founded on humility. Read Phil. 2.

It was a very homely occasion which prompted the Lord to His admonition, but you may be assured that the underlying purpose was to point us to the law of the Kingdom of God.

Read the Gospels, and you will note that the Lord Jesus often began with an earthly symbol, but in the end He was speaking of the Kingdom of heaven. For instance, when He asked the Samaritan woman to give Him a drink of water out of the well of Jacob. In no time at all the Lord shifted from the water of this well to the water of life. The woman thought that Jesus was still talking about natural water, when He really spoke about His Spirit and grace.

So also here. Go and sit down in the lowest room!

In these words you hear Jesus' proclamation of the law of the Kingdom of heaven.

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Go and sit down in the lowest room!

Well, you cannot do anything with this advice in our world. There another law reigns: Everybody for himself! You can't keep a good man down! In the Netherlands they have a proverb that says: "Een brutaal mensch heeft de helft van de wereld!" Which means in our language: "A rude person owns half of the world!" And such practice is excused by the term ambition.

The result is that those who choose the chief rooms are successful. And the lowly and humble are crushed.

But wait! The viewpoint of Jesus' preaching is the Kingdom of heaven. He is not laying down a rule for success in the world. He is speaking of room in the Kingdom of heaven, as it appeared in His coming, and as it dwells subjectively in the hearts of His people. And it is well that He tells us to so act, for we are inclined to do as the world and secure for us the chief rooms, even in the church and in the Kingdom of heaven. John and James wanted a chief room in that kingdom: to sit at the right and the left of Jesus when He would be enthroned on high.

And we are all inclined to so act.

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In that Kingdom then: go and sit down in the lowest room!

There is room in that Kingdom. God be blessed, there is room with God, and that for a multitude that no one can number, on a new heaven and a new earth where the righteousness of God shall dwell.

And in that kingdom there shall be chief places, places very near to the heart of God. And there shall be places, not so chief. Jesus spoke of the least in

that Kingdom and of the greatest in that Kingdom. There is a great variety. Some will shine as the sun in the firmament. Some are in Abraham's bosom. Ah, yes, some shall be called great in that Kingdom.

You see something of that variety already in the church. There are Doctors and Professors, Pastors and teachers, elders and deacons. There are outstanding members in the church that shine in virtue, virtue of God. And Paul spoke of some who were least esteemed in the church.

There are some who have built with precious stones, gold and silver, and they shall receive a reward for such building. Others of God's people built hay, straw and stubble, and they shall suffer, even though they will be saved.

Ah, yes there is a difference.

But I would caution you.

About these differences as they appear here below, Jesus said: many of the first shall be last, and some that are last shall be first in the Kingdom of heaven.

To be a minister of the Gospel does not reserve for us a chief room in His Kingdom.

I tremble as I write.

Many a so-called layman shall receive a greater and more beautiful place in heaven than many a minister.

O God! have mercy!

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Wonder why?!

Because this Kingdom of heaven is built on truth, righteousness and all virtue.

There lies all the difference.

In the world? Listen to Mark 10:42. In the context we saw how James and John coveted a place on the right and on the left of Jesus in His glory. But Jesus warned: "But Jesus called them to Him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever shall be great among you, shall be your minister. (And mark you well, that the word "minister" here does not mean "dominé, but servant. G.V.) And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."

There you have the reason for Jesus' teaching in my text.

In the world the chief men and women exercise authority. The weak and humble are trampled under

foot. Shredness, guile, power of money, etc. are instrumental in the struggle for mastery.

Not so in God's Kingdom. Greatness in that kingdom depends on virtue. Listen: Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? And here is the answer: the man who is pure, clean, substantial and true. And all this because this Kingdom is a Kingdom of virtue.

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Look upon Jesus.

Go and sit down in the lowest room!

He did. And such doing amounted to the downward journey to hell. Finally there was no more place for Him. It was prophesied in His birth for there was no room for Him in the inn. At His death the place was called the place of a skull: Golgotha. The angels said: Come see where the Lord lay. The place was a grave.

Oh, Jesus must have been thinking of His own deep humiliation when He spoke the advice to His people in my text: go and sit down in the lowest room.

Finally there was no more room for Him: He hung between heaven and earth. The Castaway!

I ask you: if Jesus hangs on that cross before your wondering eyes: how can we then be proud? If the ever recurring theme of the everlasting Gospel of God is: Jesus Christ and Him crucified, how then can we be proud? Pride in the face of Golgotha is horrible.

Go and sit down in the lowest room.

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And what is the fruit of such humility?

See it in Jesus. Paul will tell you. "He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. WHEREFORE God also hath highly exalted Him...."

There is the fruit.

He became great in the Kingdom of heaven

He sat down in the lowest room. We shudder when we write this down.

And Jesus' humiliation is a lesson for His church, for us.

Golgotha is a wonderful example for us unto humbleness of mind. Jesus' humiliation is a wonderful incentive for us to be lowly in mind and heart. He bids us learn of Him.

Because Jesus humbled Himself such as no one has ever humbled himself, nor can humble himself, God gave Him a name that is above every name. He humbled Himself and was exalted.

And that is a law of the Kingdom. It is the fundamental law of that Kingdom.

And that fruit is seen in Jesus' sheep. Through the miracle of grace in our inmost heart.

Grace in the heart is the same thing as having Jesus in your heart, and if you are intimately united to Him in regeneration and conversion and faith, you will surely experience obedience to His Word, even the Word which comes to you in my present text.

Jesus comes to you and me and says: go and sit down in the lowest room! And as surely as Jesus lives in you, you are going to practice such humility. It is the fruit of His wonderful work in you.

Jesus says to you and to me: My brethren, be not many masters! And to those of His people who are given to self righteousness, He spoke the parable of the pharisee and publican. Listen to the verse immediately preceding this parable: "And He spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others...."

That's the spirit of the world.

But unto us He says: go and sit down in the lowest room!

Come to think of it: what have we deserved? I tremble as I write this. We have deserved that the little place and room which we still occupy be taken from us, and that we be cast into the place where there shall be room indeed, but room only to suffer, to weep and to wail.

Oh God! have mercy!

—G. Vos

IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory of the Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, Illinois, hereby expresses its sincere and heartfelt sympathy to its fellow-deacon, Peter Zandstra, in the loss of his mother,

MRS. JOHN ZANDSTRA SR.

We commend him to the God of all comfort and grace in this hour of sorrow.

Rev. M. Schipper, Pres.

John Van Baren, Clerk

South Holland, Illinois

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EDITORIALS

How the Guardian Defends Heresy (Continued)

We must still treat the so-called conditional sentences in the passages concerning the promise we discussed thus far.

In I Ki. 9, the passage to which Petter erroneously refers as having nothing to do with *the* promise, we read in vss. 4, 5: "And if thou wilt talk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments: Then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever" etc. And in vss. 6, 7: "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," etc.

Also in II Sam. 7 we find the same conditional sentences. In vs. 14 we read: "If he commit iniquity I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with stripes of the children of men." And also in Ps. 89 we read the same conditional sentences or "if clauses." In vss. 30-32 we read: "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes and keep not my commandments; Then I will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes."

Now what do these "if clauses" mean?

Do they mean that the promise of God is dependent or contingent upon something man must do?

Is there, in these "if clauses" or so-called grammatical conditional sentences really a condition in the dogmatical sense of the word?

Does the Lord here say to David and his seed: I promise you an everlasting covenant and kingdom *on condition* that you keep my statutes and judgments, but if you do not keep my law, My promise is withdrawn, is nul and void? Or, to put it differently, does God say to His people: You must do something (keep the law, walk in my ways, believe, etc.) before I keep my promise or in order that I may fulfill my promise?

Turn the term *condition*, in the dogmatical sense of the word, whatever way you will, but that is always the meaning. Man must do something before God will realize His promise unto him. Man must live up to certain prerequisites *before* God will translate him into the kingdom of heaven. Man must believe *before* God will save him. Man must walk in the

way of God's statutes *before* God will realize His promise.

Always the term condition means *prerequisite*.

And always prerequisite means something required beforehand.

And this is exactly what Petter c.s. want.

That this is true is evident from the sermon I heard by De Wolf in which he boldly stated: "Now you can call this condition or prerequisite, but the text teaches that our act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter into the kingdom of heaven."

If they do not mean this, let them state clearly what they do mean.

This they never did.

But, once more we ask: is that the meaning of these "if clauses" in connection with the promise?

It very definitely is not!

Let me first of all emphasize that the original little word in the Hebrew that is translated by our equally little word "if" does not properly express the idea of condition at all. It has several different meanings, but the meaning which, according to the Hebrew lexicon, comes closest to what is expressed in our idea of condition (a word that is never used in the Bible), is *supposing that* (Gesenius). Dr. Aalders translates it by "gesteld dat" which we can probably translate by "in case that."

Now there is a world of difference between saying: supposing that anyone keeps God's statutes" and "on condition that anyone keeps the law of God." Or between saying "supposing that anyone believes" and "on condition that anyone believes."

In the last instance it always expresses something that anyone must do before he can expect to receive something from someone else.

In the first instance, it simply may denote a distinguishing characteristic of those to whom something is promised.

Thus it is with the promise of God and the heirs of the promise.

Applying this to the text in I Ki. 9 we obtain the following result:

"Supposing that thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, . . . then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom for ever upon Israel . . . But supposing ye shall at all turn from following me . . . then I will cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them."

In New Testament language: "Supposing that thou believe in thine heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

And if we interpret this distinguishing clause (supposing thou walk in integrity of heart before Me, supposing that thou believe) in the light of all Scripture,

it means: "Supposing that by His grace God has given thee the faith so that thou believest, thou shalt be saved;" or: "Supposing that God has given thee grace to walk before me in integrity of heart, the promise is thine."

The opposite, of course, is also true.

"Supposing that God has not given thee grace to walk in integrity of heart, so that thou walkest in sin, thou shalt be cursed;" or: "Supposing that God has not given thee the grace of faith so that thou believest, thou shalt be damned."

Thus the promise of God is always addressed by God to believers only, and is only for the elect.

Faith and sanctification, walking in integrity of heart, sorrow over sin and repentance, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, seeking, asking, knocking, forgiving one another even as God has forgiven them,—all these are no conditions or prerequisites which man must fulfill, as the Arminian would have it; but they are, both objectively and before their own consciousness, so many distinguishing marks between those to whom the promise is addressed and those to whom it is not addressed, between the believer and the unbeliever, between the elect and reprobate.

This is Scripture, as you will readily understand if only you read and interpret it in its own light.

This is Reformed in distinction from all Arminianism.

If you understand this, you can never get it over your tongue to say: "God promises to every one of you that, if you believe, you shall be saved." For to preach thus exactly erases God's distinguishing mark of faith, and transfers it to the power and free will of man.

Nor can you, if you understand Scripture and the Reformed truth, ever preach that our act of conversion is a condition or prerequisite to enter the kingdom of heaven. For to humble ourselves and become as a little child is a characteristic distinguishing mark which God placed upon those that are in the kingdom and do enter it. But De Wolf, in that particular sermon, transferred God's distinguishing mark to the power and free will of man, corrupted the Reformed truth and robbed the people of God of every vestige of comfort.

But we must make one more observation.

We must not fail to distinguish between the old and the new dispensation.

This failure also characterized Petter's writing in the so-called Reformed Guardian.

In the old dispensation the heirs of the promise were, for a time, put under the law. Did this mean that, for a time at least, the promise was conditioned by the law? By no means. That this is not true is

taught us in so many words in Gal. 3:15-19: "Brethren, I speak after the manner of men: Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels into the hand of a mediator."

The promise was first.

And although, for a time, the law was superimposed upon the promise, the latter never was conditioned by the former. Always the promise of God is unconditional.

What then?

Did not the Old Testament saints keep the law?

My answer is in the first place: not if you regard them individualistically, apart from Christ. In and by themselves they could not keep the law of God at all, and they knew it. The daily sacrifices, and especially the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement, reminded them continually of this fact.

Secondly, and in connection with the foregoing, they could never keep the ordinances of the Lord perfectly. Frequently, when carnal Israel was reigning supreme, as was so frequently the case, when the temple was defiled, when Israel was in captivity, far from the holy place, they could not even keep these ordinances and statutes of Jehovah outwardly.

Thirdly, however, if you regard the Old Testament saints as the elect in Christ, they certainly fulfilled the law in Him. Christ was in their loins. From all eternity they were in Christ. Christ is the promise. He is the end of the law. He fulfilled the entire law.

Hence, for the Old Testament saints the law was a taskmaster, a pedagogue to Christ. Unto Him they looked in hope as the sure realization of the promise of God.

And that the covenant and promise of God were absolutely sure and unconditional, even so that the transgressions of the people of God could never disannul them, is very plain from Ps. 89. For in that Psalm, after the glorious promise of the everlasting kingdom and covenant was described, mention is made of the sins of the people in these words: "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; If they break my statutes, and keep not my command-

ments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes."

Now, does that mean that God will not keep His covenant and fulfill His promise?

The very opposite is clearly stated in the text. For in the immediately following verses we read: "Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips."

In spite of the transgression and iniquity of the people, the covenant of God stands and His promise is sure.

The conclusion of this part of my discussion is twofold:

1. The promise of God is always one and the same.
2. The promise of God is always sovereign and unconditional.

H.H.



What Happened in the West

By this heading I am not referring to the very foolish decisions of Classis West, with which, by this time, we are all acquainted, but to the immediate consequences and results of their absurd actions.

Briefly I will relate these.

The same week that classis had met I received a very urgent call from the people of Edgerton and Hull to come over and help them.

The Rev. Ophoff and undersigned responded to this call.

We met with them, and inquired of them in what respect they needed help. After learning from them what they wanted we advised them to present the following document to their respective consistories:

I. We request that the Consistory reject the decisions of Classis West in re the suspension of Rev. De Wolf and the deposition of the elders without delay.

II. If this request is denied, we, the undersigned, declare that the Consistory:

1. Is guilty of schism.
2. That by this action they have separated themselves from the communion of the Protestant Reformed Churches.
3. That the undersigned are the true consistory and members of the Protestant Reformed Church of, and will function as such.

III. Grounds:

1. By this stand you have principally adopted the heresy

condemned not only by the First Prot. Ref. Church of Grand Rapids, but also by Classis East of the Prot. Ref. Churches. These heresies are:

a. That God promises to all men, head for head and soul for soul, that if they believe they shall be saved.

b. That our act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

2. You have taken sides with those:

a. That were legally suspended and deposed as officebearers by the Consistory of the First Prot. Ref. Church of Grand Rapids, Mich., with the advice of the Fourth Church of the above-named city, and on the basis of the previous advice of classis.

b. Who, after they were suspended and deposed, illegally presumed to function as officebearers, thereby lost all right of appeal, and placed themselves outside of the communion of the Prot. Ref. Churches.

3. The action of Classis West in re the suspension and deposition of officebearers must be condemned:

a. Because it is illegal, seeing that it was not even on the agenda of the Classis, which it should have been by classical decision.

b. Because it is contrary to all Church Order:

1) Art. 36: "The Classis has the same jurisdiction over the Consistory as the Particular Synod has over the Classis and the General Synod over the Particular."

2) Art. 84: "No church shall in any way lord it over other Churches, no Minister over other Ministers, no Elder or Deacon over other Elders or Deacons."

c. Because the action is schismatic, seeing that they support doctrines that according to the decisions by the Consistory of the First Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and according to the decision of Classis East, are contrary to Scripture and the Confessions, and besides, are directly contrary to the Declaration of Principles, which has been legally adopted as the expression of our Confessions by the Synod of our churches. Besides, by their action the Classis West supports schismatics.

d. Because the action of Classis West was premature, because Classis East had not even finally decided on the matter.

IV. Hence, we declare:

1. That what calls itself Classis West has broken with the fellowship of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

2. That the churches of are the only faithful remnant of Classis West.

3. That we beg the Synod to take the same stand with us, and therefore:

a. That they refuse to seat the schismatic delegates.

b. That they recognize the delegates which we elected and sent to Synod.

(Note: The above was used in toto by Edgerton, was adopted by Doon's Consistory in as far as it applied to the local situation and Doon's relation to the former Classis West; and was used by Hull with the exception of IV and with the addition of a time limit, Sept. 16, 1953)

The same evening the consistory of Edgerton met (Sept. 10). They refused to accede to the request mentioned in Point I of the above document, and also to rescind a former decision by which they had already taken a stand in favor of De Wolf and his schismatic group. The faithful minority of the consistory, the brethren J. Dokter, J. Van Nieuwenhuizen and J. Verhey, declared themselves the legal consistory and

personally delivered the following letter to all the members of the congregation:

Sept. 11, 1953
Edgerton, Minnesota

Dear Members of the Congregation:

By this time you are all acquainted with the recent decisions of Classis West concerning the suspension of Rev. De Wolf and the deposition of his apostate elders. You also know that the same Classis West upheld the deposed officebearers, illegally maintaining that they are the legal Consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and thereby separating themselves from the communion of the Protestant Reformed Churches. You also know that previously, even before Classis West had taken this stand, the majority of the Consistory (consisting of G. Mesman, M. Mesman, H. Gunnink, and J. Tempelman) as well as the president of the Consistory (the Rev. P. De Boer) took the same action of supporting the suspended pastor and the deposed elders, a fact that was announced from the pulpit last Sunday. At the Consistory meeting of last Thursday evening, Sept. 10, this entire matter was once more presented by the minority of the Consistory to the afore-mentioned majority, with the request that they retract their former decision and refuse to be responsible for the decision of Classis mentioned above. Already at the Consistory meeting in which the former decision was taken the three minority members of the Consistory pleaded with the Consistory not to take a stand immediately, but rather to wait until Classis East had spoken. But all this was of no avail. And at that last Consistory meeting, Sept. 10, the majority refused to retract the former decision of the Consistory, and upheld the stand of the Classis.

On the basis of the foregoing the minority of the Consistory (J. Docter, J. Verhey, and J. Van Nieuwenhuizen) maintained that the Consistory was guilty of schism, and declared themselves instead to be the only legal Consistory of the Edgerton Protestant Reformed Church, as they stand on the basis of Scripture and the Confessions, as they have always been interpreted by the Protestant Reformed Churches, and as their interpretation had been legally adopted by the Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in the "Declaration of Principles."

The Consistory also announces that at the Consistory meeting of last Thursday, Sept. 10, there were 15 protests, most of which asked for a congregational meeting about this matter in the near future. The legal Consistory will take care of these protests as soon as possible.

We also wish to emphasize that the majority of the congregation stands back, not of the schismatic members of the Consistory, but of the legal Consistory.

We have decided to inform all the members of our congregation of these facts by way of the present letter. And we wish to announce that the services next Sunday, D.V., Sept. 13, will be under the direction of the legal Consistory, and that they have invited the Rev. H. Hoeksema and the Rev. G. M. Ophoff to preach for them.

Hoping that every one of you give this matter his prayerful attention, and that you may preserve peace and unity, we remain

Yours in the Lord,

The legal Consistory of the Edgerton Protestant Reformed Church,

(signed) J. Docter, J. Nieuwenhuizen, J. Verhey

The result was that on Sunday, Sept. 13, the Rev. Ophoff and the undersigned preached for the congregation of Edgerton and that, too, in the church building at the regular time.

In Hull the brethren ran into a little difficulty, due to the fact that the consistory there decided on the evening of Sept. 10 to postpone indefinitely to adopt the decisions of Classis West.

Therefore, at our advice (the Rev. Ophoff's and mine) they sent the following letter to the consistory:

Sept. 12, 1953
Hull, Iowa

Mr. P. de Leeuw, Clerk
Boyden, Iowa

Dear Sir:

We understand that at your last consistory meeting you decided to postpone indefinitely to decide whether or not to adopt the decision of Classis West in re the suspension of De Wolf and the deposition of the apostate elders of the First Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Therefore:

1. Seeing, that according to Art. 31 of the Church Order that decision of Classis is nevertheless settled and binding upon you as long as you do not publicly renounce it;

2. Seeing that by your decision the congregation also falls under the binding decision of Classis West;

3. Considering, moreover, that we, the undersigned, cannot be bound by such a decision for reasons we have explained to you in detail in our former communication to you;

4. We inform you that from September 16, 1953, we will consider ourselves the legal consistory and congregation, and function accordingly until you publicly announce and inform us that you will no longer be responsible for, and consider yourselves bound by the above-mentioned decision of Classis.

You will understand, further, that as the legal consistory and congregation of the Hull Protestant Reformed Church we also claim the right to the church property, even though temporarily we must meet separately.

Respectfully,

The legal consistory and congregation of the Hull Protestant Reformed Church.

The result is that also the legal congregation of Hull will have services by themselves from now on.

The Rev. H. Veldman will preach and labor in Edgerton, the Rev. M. Schipper in Hull.

Another urgent call I received the moment I came home from the middle West. This time it came from Redlands, California. At the time of this writing I am busily engaged getting ready to go there, the Lord willing.

All this is the immediate and logical result of the very foolish decisions of the former Classis West.

—H.H.

OUR DOCTRINE

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

AN EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

PART III — OF THANKFULNESS

LORD'S DAY 37

2.

The Oath in the World

In the kingdom of heaven, so we explained in our last chapter, the oath properly has no place, and should not be necessary, for the simple reason that the believer always should stand consciously before the face of God, and that therefore in the communion of saints the yea should always be yea, and the nay, nay.

Also when the believer makes a vow and is required to make a pledge, he does not swear and is not required to swear a special oath, by raising his right hand and saying, "I solemnly swear that I speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. So help me God." The reason for this is not that the oath as such is sinful, as we have shown, but rather that the swearing of a special oath presupposes the lie, or the possibility of the lie, and therefore is based on distrust, which should not have a place in the kingdom of heaven and in the church in the world. When, in presenting their children for baptism, the parents are required to pledge that they will bring up their children "in the doctrine that is taught here in this Christian church," they are not required to make of this pledge a special oath, for the simple reason that the parents in making this pledge stand consciously before the face of God, and therefore are expected to speak the truth. The same is true for the occasion of the ordination of a minister or the installation of elders and deacons in the church of Christ. One that is to be ordained as minister of the Word of God is required to answer whether he feels in his heart that he is lawfully called of God's church, and therefore of God Himself, to the holy ministry; whether he believes the Holy Scriptures to be the Word of God, and promises to reject all heresies repugnant thereto; and whether he pledges faithfully to discharge his office, and to submit himself in case he should become delinquent either in life or doctrine to ecclesiastical discipline. And when he answers, as is the custom, "Yes, truly, with all my heart," he does not

have to put that answer in the special form of an oath, for the simple reason that the church in which he is ordained, the minister that reads the form, and he that is ordained stand before the face of God, and therefore live in the perfect confidence that he that pledges speaks the truth and that his yea is yea indeed. Also the Formula of Subscription that must be signed by all officebearers for that same reason does not assume the form of a special oath. Nor does the "Public Declaration of Agreement with the Forms of Unity," that is always read at the opening session of our Synod. Even those who make confession of faith in our churches are required to make a pledge that they agree with the doctrine of the church, and that they will submit to Christian discipline if they should become delinquent. But all these pledges and declarations do not assume the form of a special oath because the church stands in the covenant of friendship with the living God, and therefore is supposed to live and act and speak always in his presence.

Mark you well, the oath as such is never sinful if it is sworn for the cause of the truth and to the glory of God. Under certain circumstances it may even be necessary in the church to demand an oath of someone. I do not say that this is always to be avoided. In the course of my ministry it happened once or twice that the consistory deemed it necessary to place someone under oath, because the party of whom it was required had repeatedly shown in his life and walk that he could not be trusted. Nevertheless, this certainly should not be the rule in the church of Jesus Christ. And when the exception to the rule becomes necessary, it is always an occasion for grief to the saints in Christ Jesus.

But how about the oath in the world?

May the magistrates, for instance, also proceed from the assumption that all the citizens stand before the face of God and therefore speak the truth?

To ask this question is to answer it. The magistracy, its purpose and function, and the calling of believers in relation to it are described in the well-known words of Romans 13: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute

wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake." And from Article 36 of the *Confessio Belgica* we quote: "We believe that our gracious God, because of the depravity of mankind, hath appointed kings, princes and magistrates, willing that the world should be governed by certain laws and policies; to the end that the dissolutions of men might be restrained, and all things carried on among them with good order and decency. For this purpose he hath invested the magistracy with the sword, for the punishment of evildoers and for the protection of them that do well."

It is not our purpose here to offer a dissertation on the institution, and purpose of government, but only to show that the oath certainly has a proper place in the government of the world. It is evident that the worldly magistrate has the rule over a mixture of citizens, good and evil, righteous and unrighteous, children of light and children of darkness. In fact, according to Article 36 of the Netherlands Confession, it is because of the depravity of mankind that God has instituted government, in order that the dissoluteness of men might be restrained. From this it should be very evident that the government cannot function on the assumption that everyone of its citizens stands before the face of God and speaks the truth, as is the case in the kingdom of heaven. It cannot even proceed from the principle that there is a certain general operation of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of all its citizens, whereby that dissoluteness is spiritually restrained, as the theory of common grace and the Second and Third Points adopted by the Synod of the Christian Ref. Churches in Kalamazoo, 1924, have it. The dissoluteness of men is not restrained by a certain common grace, but by the power of the sword. This dissoluteness certainly implies the lie. The government, therefore, may not assume that everyone of its citizens speaks the truth before the face of God, as is ideally true of the citizens of the kingdom of heaven. But rather must it presuppose the possibility of the lie. And presupposing this possibility, assuming the dissoluteness of its citizens, and knowing that they do not all stand before the face of God and speak the truth to His glory, the Christian magistrate must require the oath. Whenever his subjects are called to testify to the truth, the magistrate, therefore, must solemnly remind them that they stand before the face of God, that He is witness of their testimony, and that He will punish them if they do not speak the truth. Moreover, seeing that the magistrate bears the sword for the punishment of evil-doers, it is quite proper that it impose a heavy penalty upon perjury.

The Christian must be subject to the higher powers, also when they require of him an oath. When he stands before the worldly judge, he may not indignantly assume an attitude of self-righteousness and insist that no worldly judge can demand of him an oath because he is a Christian, and the judge therefore may assume that he speaks the truth, that his yea is always yea, and his nay, nay. This was the attitude of the Anabaptists and other sects. But this is a fundamental mistake. In fact, it is only the Christian, the believer in Christ Jesus, that can properly swear an oath religiously and to the glory of God. The natural man, although for various reasons and out of different motives he may speak the truth under oath, yet before God he always sins, because his act of swearing an oath does not proceed from faith and to the glory of the Most High. But for the believer in Christ Jesus even his swearing an oath before the worldly judge should be an act of faith, and should proceed from the love of God and to His glory.

All this does not mean that the magistrate necessarily always properly functions and functions religiously when he demands of the citizens an oath. What is true of the one that swears an oath is no less true of him that demands it. Just as only a Christian citizen can properly and religiously swear an oath, so only a Christian magistrate can function properly in putting the citizens under oath. It is also true of him that is demanding an oath of anyone that his act must be an act of faith and to the glory of God. And it is to be feared from the thoughtless and profane manner in which an oath is frequently rattled off, that the principle of faith and the motive of God's glory are often wanting with the worldly magistrates.

In the thirty-sixth Lord's Day, Question and Answer 99, the Catechism also speaks of perjury and rash swearing as sins against the third commandment. It stands to reason that perjury is a heinous sin. For an oath is calling upon the name of God as the One who knows the heart, that He will bear witness to the truth of our statements or of our pledges. Hence, one who commits perjury calls upon the name of God to give testimony to the lie. And this is a most horrible form of taking God's name in vain, punishable indeed by law, but also directly falling under the threat of the Third Commandment, that the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

But what is meant by rash swearing? In the first place, we may say that under this head must be classified all oaths that are sworn with levity, without sufficient reason, for all kinds of trivial matters. There

are indeed people that are always ready to swear an oath. They call upon the name of God for all kinds of insignificant things. Usually people like that are untrustworthy, just like people that always need the testimony of someone else to corroborate their statements. In the second place, rash oaths are also such as swear to things contrary to the Word of God. About these Ursinus writes in his "Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism" as follows: "Only such oaths are lawful as are evidently not opposed to the Word of God, and which are made concerning things true, certainly known, lawful, possible, weighty, necessary, useful, and worthy of such and so great a confirmation, or of such things as require a confirmation for the glory of God and for the safety of our neighbor. It is only in reference to such things, that it is lawful for us to make an oath. Unlawful oaths are such as are plainly in opposition to the Word of God, and are made in reference to things which are either false, uncertain, unlawful, impossible, or light and trifling. Of such things no one should make an oath: for he who makes an oath in reference to things which are false, calls God to witness a lie. He who swears things uncertain, makes oath with an evil conscience and with contempt of God, inasmuch as he has the presumption to make God a witness of which he has no certain knowledge whether it be true or false. He who swears in this way, has but little concern whether he makes God a witness of what is truth, or falsehood; and yet at the same time he desires that God will either give testimony to a lie, or if he will not be a witness of what is false, that he will punish him making an oath. He who makes oath concerning things unlawful, calls upon God to approve and sanction what he has forbidden in his law, and makes God contradict himself; because he desires that God may punish him if he does what he commands, or if he does not do what God has forbidden. And still further, he who swears in this way, either purposes to act contrary to the command of God, or if he swears sincerely, he calls God to witness a falsehood. He who swears in reference to things impossible, is either beside himself, or else trifles with God and men, since he cannot have a sincere purpose to do what he takes an oath to, or he swears hypocritically concerning a lie, namely: that he will do that which he neither will nor can do. Lastly, he who swears with levity, is devoid of all proper reverence to God, and he who swears readily and thoughtlessly, also readily forswears or takes oath to what is false. The principle cause of an oath should be the glory of God, and the public and private safety of our neighbor."

Under this head a word may be said about oath-bound societies in the world, whether lodges or un-

ions or other associations. Such societies no Christian can possibly join, whether it is required for membership literally and verbally to swear the oath or whether the oath only appears in the constitution of such a society. And again I say that this is impossible for a Christian, not because he cannot swear an oath: for the oath as such is not sinful. But the Christian cannot allow himself to be oathbound to lodge or worldly union for two reasons. In the first place, because a so-called neutral union is ungodly, and therefore the very requirement of an oath is a profaning of the name of God. But what is of even more importance is that the contents of such oaths are themselves contrary to the Word of God, and the believer in Christ can never swear them. I do not have to call attention to the dreadful oaths that are required of one that wants to become member of a lodge. But even the oaths required for membership in many a union cannot possibly be taken by the Christian. I have before me the Constitution of the International Typographical Union, membership of which is contingent upon the swearing of the following oath:

"I hereby solemnly and sincerely swear or affirm that I will not reveal any business or proceedings of any meeting of this or any subordinate union to which I may hereafter be attached, unless by order of the union, except to those whom I know to be members in good standing thereof: that I will, without equivocation or evasion, and to the best of my ability, abide by the constitution, by-laws and the adopted scale of prices of any union to which I may belong; that I will at all times support the laws, regulations, and decisions of the International Typographical Union, and will carefully avoid giving aid or succor to its enemies, and use all honorable means within my power to procure employment for members of the International Typographical Union in preference to others; and that my fidelity to the union and my duty to the members thereof shall in no wise be interfered with by any allegiance that I may now or hereafter owe to any other organization, social, political or religious, secret or otherwise; that I will belong to no society or combination composed wholly or partly of printers, with the intent or purpose to interfere with the trade regulations or influence or control the legislation of this union; that I will not wrong a member, or see him or her wronged, if in my power to prevent. To all this I pledge my most sacred honor."

— H.H.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Prophecy of Isaiah

b. The second introduction, chapters II-V.

vers. 1-4—With the second chapter a new prophecy begins as is indicated by the first verse: "The word that Isaiah the son of Amos saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem."

The prophecy sets out with a description of the glorious future of the church of the elect. In the last days the mountain of the house of the Lord will be exalted above all mountains. All nations shall flow to it in order to be instructed in the law of the Lord to go forth out of Zion. By His word the Lord shall cause all strife among nations to cease so that there will be no more war.

The prediction is that of the calling of the gentiles through the ages of this dispensation of the Gospel and of Christ's reign of peace in the hearts of His redeemed and glorified people on the new earth.

Vers. 5-22:—This being the high destiny of God's people according to the election, the house of Jacob is exhorted to walk in the light of the Lord's promise. The Lord has forsaken His people because they corrupted their way before Him by sins various and great. "Forgive them not," so the prophet prays, and he bids them to hide themselves in the dust and to enter into the rock for the glory of His majesty. For His day shall be upon every one that is proud and every earthy eminence shall be cast down, that the Lord alone may appear as the High One. In that day a man shall cast his idols to the animals and creep into the clefts for fear of the Lord.

Chap. III:1-15:—The whole stay of bread and the whole stay of water shall be taken away. And the places of authority in the nation shall be filled by women and boys instead of by competent rulers, and the result will be anarchy and oppression.

Chap. III:16-IV:1:—Also the pride of the women shall be humbled. The Lord will smite them with scab. He will take away from them their splendid garments and replace them by wretched ones to correspond. Their husbands shall fall by the sword in a short time. Desolate they shall sit upon the ground. Seven women shall attach themselves to one man without demanding his support, but only to be allowed to bear his name to take away their reproach.

Chap. IV:2-6:—But all these judgments the house of Judah will not be utterly destroyed. For in that day will the scion of the Lord be beauty and glory and the fruit of the earth excellent for them of Israel that

escape, for the remnant in Zion and Jerusalem. They shall be called holy, whose names are written in the book of life, when the Lord shall have purged away the filth of His people by the Spirit of judgment and the Spirit of burning. And as in the wilderness the pillar of cloud by day and the appearance of fire by night was over the tabernacle, so shall every house and the whole assembly be marked as the holy abode of the Lord by the signs of His presence, warding off every hostile storm.

Chap. V:1-7:—By the employment of the allegory of the disappointing vineyard the prophet fully justifies the judgments with which the Lord will overtake Judah and Israel. According to the prophet the allegory is a song—a lamentation—that originated with his wellbeloved, the Lord, and that he will now sing to the Lord.

The vineyard was planted on a sunny slope with fat soil. And so its site was good. The owner assisted nature as much as possible. The spot he fenced, gathered out the stones and planted it with the choicest vine. He made provision for the protection of the vines and for putting the fruit to use. Such were the watchtower and the winepress. What could have been done more to the vineyard? And so the Lord looked for grapes, but it brought forth wild grapes. The Lord will say what he will do to His vineyard. He will lay it waste. For the vineyard is the house of Israel and the men of Judah. And he looked for judgment and behold oppression; for righteousness and behold a cry.

Vers. 8-30:—The Lord names several such wild grapes, atrocities of His people, and against the perpetrators of each species of evildoings a separate woe is uttered. The cause of all their calamities is certainly their sins and the purpose of their woes is the exaltation of the Lord of hosts and the sanctifying of the holy God in righteousness and the debasement of the proud. They shall be devoured and consumed because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. Therefore the Lord hath smitten them, and His hand is stretched out still. He will bring upon them nations afar off by which is to be understood the Assyrians and the Chaldeans.

Chap. VI:—The sixth chapter forms a distinct discourse and it, too, introduces the total of prophecies that follow. The prophet describes his calling to the prophetic office that took place in a vision. The time was the year of Uzziah's death. He saw the Lord upon a lofty throne with His glory filling the temple. Above the throne stood seraphims that cried the one to the other, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory. The pro-

phet was afraid and thought that he must die. For his eyes had seen the glory of the Lord, and he was a sinful man that dwelt among a sinful people. But he was told that his sins were purged. When he expressed his willingness to be the Lord's prophet, he was commanded to make the heart of the people fat and their ears heavy and to shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and be healed. This hardening process implying the destruction of the hardened, would continue until the land be desolate. The reference was to a series of judgment that would culminate in the exile of Judah. But the substance of the nation is a holy tenth that shall return and not be consumed.

Part II. Chapters VII-XII. Prophecies occasioned by King Ahaz' distrust of the Lord in connection with the siege of Jerusalem by Rezin king of Syria and Pekah king of the Israel of the ten tribes.

Chapter VII:1-16:—Ver. 1 begins a new discourse of which the song of thanksgiving of chapter 12 is the conclusion.

Rezin king of Syria and Pekah king of Israel lay siege to Jerusalem their purpose being to cast Ahaz king of Judah from his throne that he might be replaced by the son of Tebeal. But the Lord by the mouth of His prophet tells the king that the plan of the invaders shall come to nought. The fearful king receives the liberty to choose a sign that the word of the Lord shall surely come to pass, but he refuses in his unbelief. But he is given a sign nevertheless. *The virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Immanuel.* Before the child attains to the age that it can refuse the evil and choose the good the land (of Judah and Israel) shall be forsaken each by its king, meaning that both kings and their people shall be led into captivity. Predicted is the dispersion of the ten tribes and the exile of Judah to Babylon. This shall have to take place before the promise of Immanuel can go into fulfillment.

Vers 17-25:—But Ahaz will not be warned. In his unbelief he looks for help to Assyria the new and rising power. He sends costly gifts to Tiglath-pilezer king of Assyria, even going so far as to declare himself his servant and hoping thereby to induce him to come to his rescue, which he does by making war against Damascus the capital city of Syria and thereby compelling Rezin and Pekah to lift the siege and to return each to his own place. But Judah shall be devastated by the very heathen—the Assyrians—in whom Ahaz is putting his confidence, and spoiled also by the Egyptians for later on soliciting their help against the Assyrians.

Chapter VIII:1-4:—A like judgment will be upon

the Israel of the ten tribes and Syria their ally. The riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away by the king of Assyria. And to prove that it is the Lord who does all these things the exact time when it shall come to pass is specified: even before Isaiah's new born son, whom he must name *Mahershalal-hashbaz* meaning "hasten to the spoil," shall have knowledge to cry, My father, my mother.

Vers 5-8:—Another prophecy to the effect that the Israel of the ten tribes and Judah shall be spoiled by the Assyrians.

Vers. 9, 10:—But it is God's country whom the heathen lay waste. the land of Immanuel. Let the nations that continually take counsel together against His people beware. Let them associate themselves. In the end they shall be broken to pieces. For the Lord is with His people.

Vers. 11-22:—The Lord is with His servant the prophet. For he puts his confidence in God, who shall be for a sanctuary to all such that trust in him, but a stone of stumbling to the unbelieving and the ungodly. But the prophet shall wait upon the Lord, he and the (spiritual) children that the Lord gave him for signs and wonders in Israel. All such he admonishes to give no ear to them that advise to seek them that have familiar spirits, but to cleave to the law and the testimony, and to consider that the light is not in all such who speak not according to this word, and who therefore behold trouble and darkness and the dimness of anguish.

Chapter IX:1-7:—Yet the people that walked in darkness—particularly the northern tribes (two of which are mentioned by name—Zebulun and Naph-tali), who because of their location had first to endure the wrath if the heathen nations marching in upon Israel from the north—the Assyrians—have seen and shall see a great light. For the Lord shall break the rod of the oppressor so that his incursions into God's country shall cease. For unto God's people a child is born upon whose shoulders the government shall be, and his name shall be wonderful, counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the prince of peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom to order it, and to establish it with judgment and justice, from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of host shall perform this.

Vers. 8-12:—All the people shall know particularly the Ephraimites and the inhabitants of Samaria, who do not repent, but who in their rebellion and the pride of their hearts and in defiance of God's judgments are addressed to the task of rehabilitating their devastated land even on a grander scale. They shall build

but the Lord will throw down through the agency of the Assyrians now collaborating with the Syrians and the Philistines.

Chapter IX:13 - X:1-4:—For the people do not turn to the Lord that smites them. Therefore His anger continues to burn. He will remove the men of prestige and influence and the prophets. But this will be no real loss as all of them are apostates. He will take no pleasure in their young men, nor will He have mercy on the fatherless and the widows, for every one in a hypocrite. The Israel of the ten tribes, against whom this prophecy seems especially directed, will be torn by internal strife and discord. No man will spare his brother. The old feud between Ephraim and Manasseh will revive and both will be against Judah. But even for this His anger is not turned away. Other judgments will follow. Still more devastations will come from afar off—from the valley of the Euphrates, the home of the Assyrians and the Chaldeans.

Chapter X:5-19:—A prophecy against the king of Assyria and all the great ones in the earth comprehended in his empire and upon whom he leans saying, "Are not my princes altogether kings (ver. 9)?" and in their totality here set forth under the image of a towering forest. The Lord sends him—this king—against the hypocrites of His people so that he is but a rod—the rod of God's anger. God uses him to lay His strokes upon His people. This is the purpose of God that he serves. But he meaneth not so. He will not make this purpose his own and allow himself to be activated by it. In the point of view of his own intention he is in the service of self. He plunders and destroys nations as he chooses and his sole aim is the enrightment of self and the promotion of the ends of his own kingdom to his own glory. And his boast against the Lord is that he achieves by his own might and wisdom, while the fact is that he has his being in God and that by His power he lives and moves. And therefore the glory of his forest shall be consumed by a fire kindled under it by the Lord.

Vers. 20-27:—The remnant of Israel shall return to the Lord and not any longer put their confidence in their adversaries by whom they are being smitten. And they must not be afraid of the Assyrian. True, they will be smitten by his rod, but after a little his yoke will be destroyed by the anointing.

Vers. 28-34:—A dramatic description of the march of the Assyrians against Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah. Upon entering the land of Judah they hasten on toward their chosen destination. The inhabitants of the cities that lie on their route take to flight at their approach. When they are near Jerusalem, they shake their hand (fist) at the holy city. But

their pride shall be humbled. The high ones of stature shall be hewn down.

Chapter XI:1-9:—The destruction of Assyria is followed by a description of a new flourishing of the house and kingdom of David. This house will be reduced to a stump, signifying that its royal glory will be made to depart from it completely so that it will find itself in the meanest circumstances just at the time when Assyria will be at the summit of its power. But the stump will sprout a scion. From its roots a shoot will bear fruit. On Him, the Messiah, the Spirit of God will abundantly rest so that He will be eminently and gloriously qualified as God's king and judge in Israel. He shall practice strict justice. In His court the poor and the meek of the earth shall receive impartial hearing and full justice will be done to their case, but the wicked shall be smitten by the breath of His lips.

His kingdom will be one of true peace even to the extent that the wild beasts of prey will be filled with its spirit so that they no longer shall do any harm in all God's holy mountain. For deep knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth as completely as the bottom of the sea is covered with waters,

Vers. 10-16:—And after the root of Jesse, standing as a banner of the people, the gentiles shall inquire.

And for a second time the Lord shall set His hand to acquire the remnant of His people in every place that they are found.

And setting up a banner—the Messiah—for the nations, he shall gather the outcasts of Israel and of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

The adversaries of Judah shall be cut off. Ephraim and Judah shall be at peace with each other, and together they shall conquer their common enemies.

And the arm of the Egyptian (Red) Sea, will be dried up and thus destroyed, and with His mighty wind the Lord shall dry up the river (Euphrates) so that it will separate into seven rivulets, which Israel may walk through. And there shall be a highway—a formed road—for the remnant from Assyria, that will be as passable as the highway on which Israel returned out of Egypt.

Remark. All this has reference to the work of the glorified Christ whereby He gathers out of the world the church of the elect in this Gospel period. Of this work of Christ the return of the remnant from Babylon was the type, the preindication.

The prophet concludes his prophecy against Assyria, representative and typical of the Anti-Christian world-power of this present dispensation of the world, with a song of praise for the mercies of Jehovah upon His chosen people. Chap 12.

—G. M. Ophoff

Just a Word of Explanation

This time I shall not use the space commonly occupied by the rubric "From Holy Writ" for that purpose. Rather I shall take this opportunity to give an account of myself and of my stand as a member of the "Majority Committee" in the matter of the protests against the "Statements of Rev. De Wolf."

It is not that I choose to write on this subject. Had it been possible I would never write about it. But Scripture teaches us that there is not only a time for silence, but that there is also a time to speak. And this time is now.

The reason?

It is this: the Rev. A. Cammenga insinuates very strongly in the Vol. I, No. 4 issue of the "Reformed Guardian" that the undersigned has capitulated or faltered in the fray when he openly stated on the floor of Classis that the stand taken in the Majority Report was wrong.*

He writes this before the entire public of our Protestant Reformed Church world. It occurred to me to write him a personal letter about this matter, but that is not possible. For I have been misrepresented in the open forum, and in the *open forum* I shall make this word of explanation and refutation.

In the first place I would like to say just a word about that "capitulating" and "faltering" in the "fray". The Rev. A. Cammenga here clearly insinuates that I was overrun in the battle, lost courage and made an ignoble surrender to the enemy. The reader must understand that the Rev. Cammenga employs the metaphors of the battle-field. To capitulate means: to surrender on stipulated terms, just as Germany capitulated to the armies of the allies. It is a conditional surrender. And that is what the undersigned did, so the Rev. A. Cammenga insinuates. But probably the undersigned was not quite that militaristic. Probably he was not a General signing the terms, but was simply a buck-private who faltered, wavered and tottered when the battle was set in array on the floor of classis. At least that is the way it looked to the Rev. Cammenga sitting in classis. I had quaked with fear as did the heart of Saul when mighty Goliath of the Philistines had defied the armies of the living God. I had not dared to sally forth into the fray in the Name of the God of Israel. No, I had surrendered to the foe, made terms with them, or had fought bravely for a little season, and then lost heart and had been overrun by the enemy.

The trouble with this imagery of the battle-field

*That is on the question of "pre-requisite" in Statement II. The Committee never said De Wolf's Statement I was orthodox!

is that the contestants are not clearly identified as to their nature. It is not clear whether he had in mind not the battle on the small and mean scale of a battle of personalities, or the battle on the grand plain of the "battle of all ages". In the latter the battle is not against flesh and blood, but it is against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness and usurpers of this world. (Ephesians 6:13) Here it is the gates of hell as they would prevail against the Church. Here it is Satan and all his hosts, and the church as she manfully fights against sin, the Devil and his whole dominion.

In this battle I had made terms, had capitulated with the enemy, the forces of evil as they expressed themselves in the flesh and blood of the Revs. H. Hoeksema and G. M. Ophoff! The battle is against them in their capacity of not thinking the things of God, but of man; as they are an offence to Christ, and that, too, in such a way that Christ says to them: Get thee behind me Satan, for thou art an offence, a stumbling block to me! And in this battle I had faltered and not done the right thing by stating openly that I believed that the majority report erred; a report of which I was the composer. I had made "conditional" terms with the enemy!

The Rev. Cammenga must remember that in this battle of the ages it is the great battle to build the walls of Jerusalem, and that her bulwarks and palaces may stand; that the truth in Jesus may be confessed by the living stones in the spiritual temple of God. And in this battle for the building of the walls of Jerusalem the "sword" is not the chief concern, but rather the "trowel". The builders on the walls of Jerusalem only carry the sword for defense against those who make the building of the temple and the walls of Jerusalem impossible. Their chief concern is to build and not to fight. They do not fight for the love of fighting, but are peace loving souls, who fight only because they *must* build. Their work is more positive than negative. The builders must be workmen that need not be ashamed.

On the floor of Classis the undersigned certainly did not show himself a man, who loves to fight simply for the sake of fighting, or who had a chip on his shoulder that he dared another to touch. The undersigned is a peace-loving man. He was that too on the floor of Classis. But he does not want a peace at any price. He would not sell Jerusalem for a few "erroneous Statements" to make an ignoble peace, to capitulate to the hosts of Hell who would prevail against the Church. He will not knowingly put hay and straw in the temple of God's truth, where the stones of the truth of the Architect must be placed. Rather than do such an ignoble thing, he will fight any workman

that would so build as to put to shame, and he will do all that is in his power to keep his "fellow-laborers" in the Gospel from being such workmen that need be ashamed! That was the deepest motive in the undersigned on the floor of Classis!

It was not the sentimental pity for the underdog that motivated the undersigned, but it was the desire to give honor for one's work's sake, where such honor is due. As long as he could not see that the "statements" were wrong, that the "statements" were bricks of straw that did not fit in the building according to the plumbline of Scripture, he was not going to call the "statements" heretical. That was fighting the battle with manly strength. But as soon as it became evident that the "Statements" did not fit in the frameworks of Reformed Theology, more particularly into the Ordo Salutis of Reformed Theology, but rather in the framework of Roman Catholicism, then it was no longer possible to work constructively on the building of truth with those who would not build according to the plumbline!

It took manly courage to take that stand, brother Cammenga!

It took courage to stand overagainst the inclination of our own sinful hearts to be slothful workers! It took courage to say to a dear friend: you are not building according to the plumbline. Especially when so many would-be builders, who could even recite the first question of the Heidelberg Catechism, insisted that the "Statements" were according to the "blueprint" of the Confessions, and tried to show this to others with specious arguments. Then it requires resolute courage to take a stand, and to have the grace to say: my judgment of the building of this fellow-workman was in error! No, that was not capitulating to the enemy, Satan, but it was deep concern for the flock of God and for the truth as it rests on that Foundation beside which there is none other. That was not faltering in the fray, but it was simply resetting the sights on that enemy which is an offense to Christ in His Church.

The undersigned did not capitulate, make an ignoble surrender to the foe on certain stipulated conditions, but he agreed that the older workmen in God's church, who had more experience in reading the blueprint of God, were right when they insisted workman De Wolf was not sticking to the plumbline in his building activities. And there was the plumbline of Biblical, Reformed truth! It was as clear as the day. Oh, the undersigned was not so sure that the older workmen should not have been a little more easy on their younger co-laborer, but then the truth of the beauty and strength of the temple as designed by the Architect and Builder of the temple surely filled their

soul, so that they said: woe is us, if we do not remove the offense of this departure from the plumbline from the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

You will notice, dear reader, that the undersigned has no personal gripe with Rev. Cammenga. He is simply deeply interested that all of you understand the reason for his stand, and where he stands as a workman in Sion. He wills to be a workman that needs not to be ashamed. He is a little ashamed of that "majority report". You may tell that to your neighbors when you find the opportunity right.

Then I would also like to have the "Reformed Guardian" tell all of its readers that the undersigned was greatly strengthened in the conviction that the "Statements" are a departure from the Reformed plumbline. The undersigned was quite convinced about the error of Statement II. At the time of Classis East sessions, on the evening of May 23, 1953 he wrote the following brief personal memorandum:

2. The Statement "our act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter the Kingdom" is, in the light of the Confessions, heresy.

a. Strictly and confessionally speaking our sorrow for sin is godly sorrow and is conversion. And the joy in God through Christ is Kingdom-joy, and it is conversion, and not a prerequisite to conversion. Lord's Day 32:89, 90.

b. This conversion is a requirement (not a prerequisite) for us as Kingdom children. This requirement is: that we crucify our old nature, forsake the world, and walk in a new and holy life. (Baptism Form) This requisite the Holy Spirit works through the preaching in our hearts in such an incomprehensible way, that we believe (convert ourselves) and love our Savior. Canons III, IV, 13.

c. Practically psychologically the "pre-requisite" notion does not square with the Reformation teaching concerning the Ordo Salutis, but belongs to the ascetic moralism and legalism of Rome and all Pelagianism: it leads to the chains of penance rather than ever anew to cause us to rejoice in our liberty in Christ Jesus; it places one under the law rather than under grace.

d. And it (the prerequisite notion) does not really make God the Savior of us in our hearts and through us; it robs the Lord our God of His grace and glory in the saints, and of His superabundant power to us who believe.

Thus the undersigned wrote on Saturday, May 23.

And now on Friday, September 18, the undersigned reads a confirmation of this "memorandum" in Bavinck's Gereformeerde Dogmatiek, Deel III, Paragraphs 420-422. There Bavinck speaks of the school that is known in Dogma History as the School of the Neonomist, who makes faith a new law, a certain condition what must be fulfilled. The question is not what some mean with the term "faith is a condition", the question is what is its implication in the history of Dogma. Read this part in Bavinck, fellow-workmen.

Then you shall see whether the undersigned capitulated and faltered in the fray or not!

G. Lubbers

IN HIS FEAR

Afraid of the Gospel

(3)

Seeds germinate.

Such is the process of life.

And if you do not root up or choke that which sprouts forth from the seed, the plant will soon come to that degree of growth that you can distinguish the plant from other types of plants.

You plant your flower seeds, and they grow. But in the soil are also the seeds of several obnoxious plants, the seeds of weeds. They also germinate. And as both that which your flower seeds send forth grows and that which these seeds of the not-wanted plants send forth grows, you are for a brief period of time at a loss to decide which must be uprooted.

So it is with the seed of the truth and the seed of the lie.

Both grow, and at certain stages, when that which the lie has brought forth first begins to make itself manifest, you hesitate to root it up, and you cannot always with definiteness brand it immediately as the lie rather than as the flower of the truth.

That has been our experience with those seeds of conditional theology which have troubled us and led many of our people to be afraid of the gospel.

When that conditional theology first appeared in our midst, after the seeds were sown from a foreign soil, we had a rather general discussion of conditions in the covenant. Soon enough faith was presented as a condition of salvation. Naturally, as the plant grew and thrived in our soil, we heard defenses of conditional promises. We were assured, by those who loved this plant, that although the plant had the name of a weed it was really a pretty flower. By now we could see the plant clearly. We could see the leaves, the stem and even the flowers, and were therefore clamoring for these plants to be uprooted and choked out of our garden, our Protestant Reformed garden. So those who cherished this imported plant decided to give the weed the name of a flower. And so it was called "Conditions in the Reformed Sense." Well, now that ought to warn anyone not to try to uproot such a lovely plant!

We pleaded! We asked and waited for a definition of those "conditions in the Reformed sense." Naturally such a condition is one taught and defended by the Reformed Confessions. In that catalogue we

could find no such flower. Neither could those who drew up this name for the weed.

But now we know!

By a united defense and persistent refusal to deny it, we know that by "Conditions in the reformed sense" are meant "prerequisites". Even the cautious reference to "conditions which we by God's grace fulfill" is no more heard, but the key word now is "prerequisites". That word must be maintained and be defended, so they now say. Now what is defended is not merely that as covenant children we have a calling, that there are things which we must do as heeding the precepts of the gospel. Now what is defended is that we must do something **BEFORE** God bestows the next installment of our salvation. Understand it is not requisites but **PRE**requisites that are being defended. We are told that our act of conversion is required *before* we enter into the kingdom of God.

Do not say, "O, but we mean that we perform that act of conversion only and entirely by God's grace. We are speaking of those already in the kingdom." Listen! You put that grace of God before our act of conversion and you have taken the "pre" away from your requisite. It is misleading doubletalk to speak of prerequisites we fulfill by God's grace. The moment that God gives you that grace to perform the act of conversion, you have already entered into His kingdom, entered consciously into the enjoyment of that kingdom. Why, do you not see that the moment God gives you that grace to convert yourself you **ARE CONSCIOUSLY ENJOYING** one of the wonders of that kingdom? One is conscious of his act of conversion, is he not? You must enjoy *the grace of that kingdom* before you can convert yourself.

Then too, conditions must be preached, so it is claimed, lest we deny the responsibility of man. Come, now. You mean that? Then why do you, when your doctrinal soundness seems to be questioned, quickly add, "Which we fulfill only by God's grace." Are you not afraid to add that too? By such an addition have you yourself not done damage to the idea of man's responsibility? Are you not afraid that you will make man a stock and a block by telling him that he fulfills those conditions only by God's grace? Have you not fallen again into that dreadful thing of preaching a passive doctrine? Come, let us throw away that prerequisite business! Let us uproot all that conditional theology that has crept into our Protestant Reformed "flower garden".

It was not ever thus. It was not even thus with those who hold so tenaciously to this error today in our circles. Those who condemn the conditional theology have changed????? What will you say then of

these lines below written only ten years ago? They were written by one* who today wants the men, who taught him the Protestant Reformed truth, expelled from their position as professors in our Theological School. Why? Because he has changed his views from the Reformed truth to Conditional Theology.

(The italics are ours in every instance.) Writing about Art. III of the second half of the first chapter of the Canons of Dordt, we come across this amazing paragraph which we quote in its entirety. "They say here (the Pelagians, J.A.H.) that God elected certain conditions. God, they say, could have maybe made it so that nobody would ever be saved. But it pleased God to say: 'Whoever will meet My conditions, him will I elect unto salvation.' That is their conception. Hence according to them, salvation rests on the question of whether we meet the conditions. This is what we call 'Conditional Election.' *Many people also speak this way about accepting the terms of the Covenant.* (There, brother, you have the controversy that is raging in our churches, and what do you say of that? J.A.H.) *We do indeed believe in Covenant obligations and privileges, but never as conditions.*" That, if you please, was only ten years ago. Frankly, brother, NEVER is longer than ten years, is it not?

A little later in the same vein we read in regard to Article II of the second half of chapter one of the Canons, "Which states that there are really two kinds of election. One is election unto faith and the other is election unto salvation. One can be elected unto faith but not unto salvation. In other words, one has to go two miles, but it may be we get only one mile. Hence we are not saved. The whole of election is therefore dependant upon the question whether man keeps on believing. On this error much of that so-called Revival preaching is based. *Of course we must keep on believing, but that is not a condition. It is rather the Grace of God which gives power to keep on believing. And that grace flows forth from election.*"

That, brother, is Protestant Reformed language. That is what the men, you now want relieved of their position as professors in our seminary, taught you. That is where you get it. Now you do not want them to teach that to our present students? Are you afraid of the gospel now, when ten years ago you boldly published it in this book of yours, which we once wrote you, we enjoyed?

Return, return, the undersigned pleads with you, return to that stand. Go back and preach that again from the housetops. Be another testimony in Classis West of that Protestant Reformed Truth.

*) The Rev. M. Gritters in his work "The Testimony of Dordt," written in 1943 at Sioux Center, Iowa.

Classis West, Consistories, members in the congregations, who is it now that has changed? This conditional theology you have been hearing so much these last years from your pulpits, is that what these same men taught you ten years ago? Urge them to come back to the Protestant Reformed Truth.

O, indeed, some of you have a problem of interpretation. You have been frightened by these loud cries of making men stocks and blocks, of preaching a passive doctrine and of denying man's responsibility. You have been made afraid of the gospel, so much so that one can read the amazement upon your faces when from the pulpit the Scriptural and Protestant Reformed truth is declared that God loves His people even while they walk in sin. It is because election has not been preached to you, and you have not been reminded that God *always* looks down upon His people in Christ and therefore sees them as righteous and holy in Him? Have you forgotten that the Scriptures say that *while we were yet sinners* God manifested His love in sending His Son to die *for sinners*? Has it not been held before your eyes that "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon those that fear Him", Psalm 103:17, so that all prerequisites of fearing Him *before* that mercy comes are ruled out? That mercy which begins in eternity, surely was upon them *before* their first act of fearing Him.

We will concede that our regenerated minds must see the fruits of the Spirit in our lives in order for us to have the consciousness of our salvation. But that is a far cry from prerequisites and conditions. My regenerated mind (which is then already in principle saved and therefore desires assurance of the forgiveness of sins) cannot have this assurance unless and until I can see repentance in my life. But then repentance, conversion, my act of faith are not conditions God demands me to fulfill before He will give me the consciousness of my forgiveness. Instead they are His signs to me through which He speaks the comforting words that I am Christ's and that I may know it by these *fruits of the Spirit*. Then my act of conversion is not something that God must see *before* and in order to give me the consciousness of entering His kingdom, but it is that work of God which *my regenerated mind* (for God deals with me as a rational moral creature) *must see and demands* in order that I may have this assurance. Why should we want anything more than that? The rest is Arminianism.

—J. A. Heys

Nothing but the lancet of God's law, in the hand of the Spirit, can let out the pride of a Pharisee, and reduce the swellings of self-righteousness. —Toplady

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

EARLY VIEWS OF THE CHURCH (Cont'd)

The reader will recall that we, in our previous article, were calling attention to the development of the episcopal form of church government in the early period of the New Testament Church. We noticed the rise to power of the monarchical, diocesan, and metropolitan bishops.

I do not believe it difficult to understand this development of the episcopal form of church government, the rise to power of the bishops in the Church of God. I believe that three elements or factors contributed heavily toward this development of Episcopalianism rather than Presbyterianism.

In the first place, the Apostolic Fathers were called such because the apostles had been their fathers and they had been their disciples. There is little reason to dispute this. Their writings certainly indicate that they had been very intimate with the apostles and had received instruction from them. Hence, in connection with this, these Apostolic Fathers were regarded by many as the successors of the apostles of the Lord. Is it surprising, then, that these men, themselves disciples of the apostles, should be regarded as their successor? I realize that not every elder who became a monarchical bishop in a local congregation was a disciple of the apostles. But the very fact that these Apostolic Fathers were regarded as the successors of the apostles certainly lent considerable impetus to the development of the episcopal form of church government. This development is surely perfectly understandable. We must bear in mind that the Church of God, one throughout the ages, now stood upon the threshold of the New Dispensation. The knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus was very limited. And the fact that these Apostolic Fathers had been disciples of the apostles gave them considerable distinction. In fact, it would have been a truly amazing thing had the early Church been characterized by the Presbyterian rather than the Episcopalian form of Church government. This rise to power of the individual elders and bishops is exactly what one would expect under the circumstances.

Another heavily contributing factor in this episcopal development is the undeniable fact that these leaders of the early Church must have been able men. It is true that many speak slightly of these men. One cannot deny the fact that their writings are not

characterized by the profundity in thought which is true of the sound exposition of the Word of God in our present day. Much in their writings is highly allegorical and their language is strongly figurative. It is also true that these early leaders of the Church of God are characterized by simplicity and indefiniteness. Consequently, many speak slightly of them. However, we should try to be honest and fair in our appraisal of them. We must never overlook the time in which they lived and were called of God to labour. It must never be forgotten that they stand upon the threshold of the New Dispensation. The full Bible was not at their disposal. The Old Testament was the only canon which had been officially adopted. It is true that the apostles had written several epistles, but these epistles were not canonized, officially recognized as the inspired New Testament in addition to the Divinely inspired and canonized Old Testament until the New Dispensation was well under way. This is not all. We must also remember that these Apostolic Fathers labored without the aid of creeds and confessions. We, who live in the twentieth century, have an exceedingly rich heritage. The saints of God have sealed the truth of the Word of the Lord with their own blood, and have left for us rich and beautiful creeds and confessions. Our advantage is indeed that we may reap what the Church of God has sown throughout the ages. Fundamental creeds which confirm truths such as the Divine Person of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, the amazing and wonderful union between the two natures of the Christ in one Divine Person, the sovereignty and unconditionality of election and reprobation, the complete and utter depravity of the human nature, the particular and vicarious character of atonement, the irresistible character of the grace of God, the certain perseverance of the saints, the wholly particular character of the grace of God are now at our disposal. And, as Protestant Reformed Churches we might build upon the truth of the wholly particular grace of the Lord and therefore proclaim that the promise of the Lord is strictly and exclusively unconditional. All these wonderful truths, we say, are now at our disposal. However, the Apostolic fathers lacked all these advantages. They stood strictly upon their own. Besides, we must surely not overlook the fact that the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ into our flesh and blood was for them an event of very recent occurrence. How little the coming of Jesus Christ was understood at the time of His appearance among us! Anyone acquainted with the New Testament gospels will attest to the earthly conception which the disciples entertained of the kingdom which Christ came to establish. In addition to all this, we are also acquainted with the relentless

attack of the Jews upon the Church and the apostles' presentation of the truth. How bitterly the apostles were withstood wherever the Lord sent them to proclaim the gospel of the crucified and risen Lord! Is it not, in the light of all this, a truly amazing thing that these Apostolic Fathers, be it oftentimes allegorically and vaguely, upheld the truth of the Word of God as revealed in Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, our Lord? It is indeed remarkable that they were as sound as they were. And is it, therefore, surprising that the Church of the living God should look up to them for leadership and guidance in those exceedingly difficult times and recognize their episcopal authority? Had they not been taught personally by the apostles? Were they not recognized as the successors of the apostles? Did not the people of God in that day have a very limited conception of the truth? It is surely natural, therefore, and indeed expected that the form of church government should be episcopal rather than presbyterian. Everything certainly cooperated to bring this state of affairs about in the life of the Church.

However, even this is not all. There is a third contributing factor which must be borne in mind. Besides being disciples of the apostles and personally taught by them and also themselves very able, they led the fight against heresies. These heresies soon developed. Of course, they were always present, and they were surely present during the time of the apostles. We need not dwell upon this. But we must remember that, when the apostles lived, their word was final. They were infallibly led and directed by the Holy Spirit into all the truth. Soon after the close of the apostolic era the enemies of the truth launched their relentless attacks upon the Church of God. In fact, the recognition of the authority of the monarchical bishops was occasioned exactly by the appearance of two heresies, known as Gnosticism and Montanism. Both these heresies arose and became real threats before A.D. 160. Gnosticism comes from a Greek word which means knowledge. These Gnostics claimed they had the knowledge. They claimed that they understood the world, its makeup, operation, and destiny, and that knowledge was what saved those who possessed it. They also had their own conception of the Christ. The Gnostics worked very largely with the contrast between good and evil. They called matter evil and spirit good. This means, of course, that, entertaining such views, they could not recognize the God of the Bible, the Creator of heaven and earth, as the only true God. Neither could they believe in the truth that the Lord Jesus Christ had assumed our flesh and blood, inasmuch as matter is necessarily evil and Christ, therefore, could not have assumed our flesh

and blood. This, we understand, was a very dangerous heresy. If Christ did not assume our flesh and blood salvation does not exist. Then He was never born, did not suffer and die and rise again in our human nature, and that for the simple reason that He did not take upon Himself our human nature and therefore could not have been born, suffered and died, risen again in it. More can be said about this heresy but this can suffice. Montanism was an entirely different kind of heresy. The Montanists taught that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit had really not occurred upon the day of Pentecost. This outpouring of the Spirit whereof the Scriptures speak really referred to later times and was actually being fulfilled in them. Hence, to learn and know the truth the people should listen to them rather than to the apostles. This, too, of course was a very serious heresy. We understand that if this were maintained, all the apostles must be regarded as imposters. Then they never received the Holy Spirit. Then they never proclaimed the truth. This implies that we have, then, no New Testament, no revelation of the Christ, inasmuch as the apostles are surely the writers of the New Testament. These were the heresies with which the Apostolic Fathers were forced to cope.

These heresies were condemned, even as all heresies have been condemned by the Church which received the promise of the risen Lord that He would lead it into all the truth. But it is worthy of note that these Apostolic Fathers and the Church Fathers who succeeded them led the Church in this fight against these heresies. And this struggle was fiercely and bitterly fought. Hence, it is not difficult to understand that the Church should ascribe special authority and powers to these bishops who led them in their fight against these departures from the truth. And we know that this recognition of their authority grew as the years rolled by. The Lord willing, we will call attention, in subsequent articles, to the high esteem in which these bishops were held by the early Christian Church.

—H. Veldman

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Errata: On page 494 the second column the last sentence of paragraph 3 should have read: "By the efficacious preaching of the gospel of His love God works love for Himself in the hearts of his regenerated children." Our copy had "regenerated" where "unregenerated" appears in the above line. J.A.H.

DECENCY and ORDER

The Lawful Calling

THE PUBLIC ORDINATION

A. Its Meaning

The public ordination of a candidate to the office of the ministry of the Word and the Sacrament is, indeed, a solemn occasion. Dr. H. Bouwman says that the ordination is the *crown* upon the calling. For the minister-elect it means the realization of his heart's desire and the entrance upon his life's calling. To the church the ordination of her minister marks the answer to her prayer, "Come over and help us". There is then abundant reason for solemn joy and sanctified gratitude when the act of public ordination takes place in the church of Jesus Christ.

We are at present concerned only with the ordination of candidates to the ministry although there is also the ordination of ministers who are called from one congregation to another and, likewise, the ordination of elders and deacons. Of the latter we read in Acts 6:3, "Look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may *appoint* over this business." Although it is said that these men were *appointed* as deacons, yet, it may be noted that the same word is used here as we find in Titus 1:5 where Titus is commanded by the apostle "to *ordain* elders in every city of Crete."

Two things are rather striking in this connection. The first is that the Revised Version of our Bible has changed the word "ordain" in every instance where it appears in the King James Version to read "appoint". Although we prefer the King James Version and see no reason why the word "ordain" could not also have been used in such passages as Acts 6:3, Heb. 2:7, 5:1, 7:28, Rom. 5:19 and others, yet, this change of words does not effect the essential meaning. Ordination certainly implies appointment. Christ, through the church, appoints men to the offices and this appointment by Christ is essentially ordination.

The second striking thing is that we do not find this word used in Scripture with reference to the ordination of ministers of the Word. This does not mean that they are not to be ordained or that an ordained ministry is wrong as some aver. On the contrary, their ordination is surely implied in that of the elders for they are "elders who labor in the word and doctrine". (I Tim. 5:17) Furthermore, it is expressly stated that "God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers..." I

Cor. 12:28 and "He gave some... pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry." Eph. 4:11 This act of God is in the highest sense their ordination for except God Himself sets a man in the office of the church, no man is rightfully and really ordained.

The candidate, therefore, who has been properly called and approved by the church and in his examination has revealed himself capable and worthy of the office of the ministry, is to be ordained in the presence of the congregation according to the appropriate stipulations of the church. When this takes place he receives, as it were, the prize for which he has long been striving, the crown of his arduous labor. His ordination means that Christ, through the church, places him in the office of the ministry of the Word. From Christ, therefore, and not from any man he receives the right to open his mouth and say, "Thus saith the Lord" and to "Feed His beloved sheep".

Furthermore, whereas there is no man who of himself is sufficient unto these things, the ordination also implies that Christ Himself qualifies the one ordained with the necessary gifts and powers to perform the spiritual labors unto which he has been appointed. This is signified in the laying on of hands which we will discuss presently. This assurance that his supply of gifts and power is alone in Christ is the strength of the minister in all his labors.

B. The Service

The minister is ordained in a public service in the presence of the congregation. Usually this service is conducted on a week day evening enabling as many of the neighboring ministers, friends, and relatives to be present. There could, of course, be no objection to ordaining the minister in a regular Sunday service as the elders and deacons are frequently ordained. (In many churches the latter is done on New Year's morning). It is for practical, rather than for principal reasons that this is done during the week.

The entire congregation assembles. The auditorium is unusually full on this occasion because there are many from neighboring congregations who have come to witness the event. The service is simple. There is no pomp or elaborate rites. The minister (usually the counsellor of the church) ascends to the pulpit and preaches the Word appropriate to the occasion. Thereupon, either he, or one of the visiting ministers, proceeds to read the Form for Ordination of Ministers. The questions are asked of the candidate. This is followed by the ceremony of the laying on of hands. Then both the newly ordained minister and the congregation are charged and admonished by one of the ministers present. Prayers are offered and

the service is concluded with the newly ordained minister speaking the benediction.

C. The Ordination Form

We cannot write in detail about this form in the space of this article nor is that necessary. Our readers may find and study it as it appears in the back of our Psalter. The first part of the Form contains a circumscription of the institution or office of the minister of the Word. It is well that we are all thoroughly acquainted with this so that we may know what to expect from our minister in these days when that holy office is so widely misunderstood. We will have occasion to write in detail on this in connection with Art. 16 of our D.K.O. What is implied in this office is expressed in the following sentence taken from the form: "What this holy office enjoins may easily be gathered from the very name itself; for as it is the duty of a common shepherd to feed, guide, protect and rule the flock committed to his charge; so it is with regard to these spiritual shepherds, who are set over the church, which God calleth unto salvation and counts as sheep of His pasture." This exalted duty is further defined in a fourfold way. (1) He must preach the Word. (2) He must publicly bear the church to the throne of grace in prayer. (3) He must administer the Holy Sacraments. (4) He, with the elders, must keep the church in good discipline. From this it is plain that his duty is to be a prophet, priest and king in the church; an undershepherd of Christ, to teach, sanctify and rule the people of God. Indispensable to the performance of this task is the Divine calling and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

D. The Interrogations

Upon hearing this circumscription of his office, the minister is asked in the presence of all to answer three important questions. To them he replies, "Yes, truly with all my heart", thereby expressing most emphatically his readiness to take upon himself these solemn duties. The questions are: (1) Do you feel in your heart that you are lawfully called of God's Church and, therefore, of God Himself, to this holy office? (2) Do you believe the books of the Old and New Testament to be the only Word of God and the perfect doctrine unto salvation, and do you reject all doctrine repugnant thereto? (3) Do you promise faithfully to discharge your office, according to the same doctrines as above described, and to adorn it with a godly life: also, to submit thyself, in case thou shouldest become delinquent either in life or doctrine to ecclesiastical admonition, according to the public ordinance of the churches?

E. The Laying On Of Hands

Since 1856 this custom has been practiced by Reformed Churches. It is used only in the case of those who have not previously served in the ministry of the Word and that because the ordination is properly regarded to be for life. According to this custom all the ministers present at the service for ordination place their hands upon the head of the candidate while the officiating ministers utters a prayer for the enlightenment and gifts of the Holy Spirit in behalf of him who is ordained. The significance of this rite, therefore, is as Dr. Bouwman expresses it "a symbolic act whereby it is signified that the brother concerned has received the necessary gifts of office (through the Holy Spirit) and that these gifts are now dedicated to the service of the church. Further, it is a solemn, public declaration on God's part, before the congregation that the elected brother is lawfully called of God Himself, and is to be regarded by the congregation as His servant, whereas the office bearer himself is urged by this solemn exercise, to develop the gifts allotted to him and to use them for the glory of God, and the welfare of the congregation." (Kerkrecht, Vol. I, p. 410)

This ceremony also has the sanction of Holy Writ. Although it is sometimes objected that Jesus did not use this rite when He ordained His disciples (Matt. 10:1ff), yet, as Dr. Bavinck points out, it had a place in connection with the miracles of healing (Acts 9:17), the outpouring of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17), the appointment of deacons (I Tim. 4:14, II Tim. 1:6) and according to Heb. 6:3 it belonged to the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. (Gereformeerde Dogmatiek, Vol. 4, p. 418). Further, we may note such passages as I Tim. 1:18, 4:14, Acts 13:3 where it is associated with the office of the ministry of the Word.

We must, therefore, be careful that we do not attach some mystical or magical significance to this rite or that we do not elevate this to a sacrament as the Romish Church does. Bearing in mind that it is only a symbolic act, its use is proper indeed.

The next time, D.V., we will conclude our discussion of the ordination by calling attention to the charge or admonitions which are spoken to the candidate and to the congregation.

G. Vanden Berg

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God's people are travellers. Sometimes they are in dark lanes and deep valleys; sometimes on the hills of joy, where all is light and cheerful.

—From Toplady

ALL AROUND US

The Promise Conditional or Unconditional?

In his rubric "Trends in Religious Thought", professor Louis Berkhof, in the Banner of August 21st, treats the subject: "The Unity of the Covenant of Grace."

It is not my purpose to reflect on his article as such in which he seeks to combat the views of the Dispensationalists by setting forth what he conceives to be the correct Scriptural view on this subject. Rather, I call attention to two statements in his writing which in my humble opinion appear to be quite contradictory, and for which I should like his explanation.

The professor will pardon me for singling out these two statements without putting them in their proper context. I could not help noticing them because one of them was so similar to others I have heard in our Churches of late, which our Churches have condemned. They have to do with the question is the promise of God conditional or unconditional? In my own mind I am satisfied to believe that it is always unconditional both in its pronouncement and in its realization. I was instructed in this doctrine in our seminary, and in my ministry I have always taught it. How some of our ministers can now embrace conditionality can only be explained by the fact that they have imbibed a doctrine other than that wherein they were instructed in our seminary. If it is any encouragement to them that professor Berkhof also speaks their language, at least in the one statement of his, they may have this encouragement. But then they must not blame me for accusing them of being Christian Reformed and no longer Protestant Reformed.

But now to those two statements. Berkhof first makes this literal statement: "The promise of free grace, that is, unmerited favor, was made to Abraham. And the only condition for receiving the promised blessings was faith in the coming Redeemer." Toward the close of his article the professor writes: "The promise, once unconditionally given by God was not made conditional by the law." And I suppose the professor means to say in regard to this last statement, "but it is conditioned by our acceptance by faith." I am confused when I look at the bare statements. In the first place there seems to be no doubt at all in the mind of the professor that the promise of God is conditioned by our receiving it by faith. But when I look at the second statement where he speaks of "the promise, once unconditionally given

by God", I am confounded. Do you mean, professor, that the promise is given unconditionally while its realization is conditioned by faith? Or do you mean that what you said in your first statement is not truth after all? Is it your contention that the promise is absolutely unconditional? I am confused, professor. Will you kindly enlighten me? You see, what confuses me still more is the fact that I was aware that for some thirty years now you have taught that God, due to His "common grace" OFFERS salvation to all who hear the gospel. But I was not aware that you would teach that God PROMISES salvation on condition of faith. I always thought your Churches were afraid of that term "promises" in 1924 because you understood the implications of this concept, and therefore you preferred to use the term "offer". Am I now to understand that these two concepts are to be used interchangeably? I am really confused and need light.

I am not confused about some of our Protestant Reformed ministers. When they say: "God promises to everyone of you that if you believe you will be saved", I understand immediately that they are not talking Protestant Reformed language. Or, when they say: "I believe in UNCONDITIONAL election, and in CONDITIONAL salvation", even though this is nonsense, I understand them. For they are bent on confusing the minds of those who have to listen to them. And when they say: "faith is a condition to salvation", though I am convinced that they cannot sustain this with Scripture and our Confessions, I still understand what they are driving at. They simply desire to repudiate our Protestant Reformed doctrine. You see, professor, with our doctrine that God is everything and man nothing our Churches don't become big. Yea, we get smaller and smaller. And some of our ministers and people are getting tired of this. They like a name for themselves in the Church world. We also had a chance to become big once by associating with the Schilder group in the Netherlands and with the immigrants in Canada. But we didn't snap up that chance because there was an element in our Churches that loved our Protestant Reformed truth so much they were willing to remain small. But some of us don't like it, and so there is the attempt to talk the language of others outside our Churches. That is what is back of our present struggle, professor. This I understand clearly.

But I don't understand those statements of yours. And the reason is, as I stated, you appear to contradict yourself. I will be satisfied if you will only tell me whether the promise is conditional or unconditional. You seem to say both and this is confusing indeed.

The Present Debacle in the Protestant Reformed Church.

On the same page of the Banner above referred to, the Rev. John Weidenaar writes on: "Recipe for Christmindedness." He is writing a series of articles on the epistle to the Philippians, and in this article is reflecting on what Paul wrote to the Philippians in chapter 2:5. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." After he had shown his readers what is the mind of Christ according to Paul in 2:6-11, he proceeds to show the recipe for Christmindedness.

He calls attention to the address the apostle makes to the Philippians in vs. 12 where he calls them "my beloved" and he tells us that "this is in accord with the opening address in which Paul called them saints. "In our attitude towards others of the household of faith we must do the same. We must be done with suspicion. The arrogance which leads me to call into question the orthodoxy of anyone who differs from me is a pernicious evil which has wrought havoc in the Church. Recently a Dutch author wrote a book on a century of strife within the Church on baptism and the covenant. During my first pastorate I became involved in a raging battle in a very small group concerning the covenant. Some were devotees of Dr. A. Kuiper and others sharply opposed his views. The proponents of the one view were sure that the others were downright heretics. The history of our own Church has been woefully marked with similar battles. The present debacle in the Protestant Reformed Church may serve as a warning to all of us. Any minister or member who starts out with the assumption that he has a corner on the truth and is obsessed with the messianic delusion that he alone is able to set things straight is doomed to fail. He has forgotten the elementary truth that we are fellow-servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. What a tragedy and what a fearful waste of effort and time that might have been better spent in working together for the upbuilding of the Church of God."

Rev. Weidenaar felt he said a little bit too much when he wrote this and so, in an attempt to patch up a little, he continues: "That does not mean that we are to be indifferent to sound doctrine. But the alleged devotion to the truth that is not obedient to the Christ and that fails to show this obedience by genuine love for the brethren as well as love to all men is itself by that very token the clearest evidence that it is not devotion to the truth of God! Truth is never abstract or impersonal and the moment you make it such you have sold out to speculative idealism which withers in the presence of the Christ Who said, 'I am the truth'." So far the article.

Maybe I have misunderstood the reverend. If I have he may correct me. But it seems to me that in alluding to the controversy in the Protestant Reformed Churches which he deigns to call our "present debacle", he concludes that the whole thing is rooted, not so much in a doctrinal dispute, but in evil suspicions we have over against certain of our brethren. Now certainly Rev. Weidenaar knows that evil suspicions do not make ministers make heretical statements. But the truth is that you become suspicious of those who make heretical statements when they maintain them. And when they maintain them you are no longer suspicious of them, but you condemn them. I'm afraid if we had to follow Weidenaar's advice we would have to say to those who make heretical statements: "Well, brethren, you and we know those statements as such cannot stand. But we also know and believe well enough in one another that you do not mean to teach heresy. None of us has a corner on the truth, and so we will just forget about the whole thing." Mr. Weidenaar, I do not like your advice. I don't believe this is a good recipe for Christmindedness either. Neither do I believe that is the mind of Christ. If your Church had a real leader, or men who dared to say what they think, your Church would be cast into the throes of controversy as well as ours. Because you have no real leaders, the best way to boldly face the difficulty is to pass on and give your people a little soft soaping.

—M. Schipper

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The man who once has found abode
Within the secret place of God
Shall with Almighty God abide,
And in His shadow safely hide.

I of the Lord my God will say,
He is my refuge and my stay;
To Him for safety I will flee,
In Him my constant trust shall be.

The Lord with His protecting care
Shall keep thee from the hidden snare;
When fearful plagues around prevail
Thy life the scourge shall not assail.

Thou shalt beneath His wings abide,
And safe within His care confide;
His faithfulness shall ever be
A sure protection unto thee.

Psalter 248:1-4

CONTRIBUTIONS

Dear Editor,

Will you please put this in the Standard Bearer?

A WORD FOR IT

The Dutch has a word for it. I discovered this the other day, when I read the Report on Synod in Concordia Thursday, Aug. 27, 1953 by the Rev. W. Hofman, when he writes about the Redlands cases. He writes and I quote, "This was literally quite a mass of material and consumed several days of synod's time in discussion and decision. In general these protests concerned the same matter. It seems that difficulty developed in the Sunday School since the S. S. was having difficulty procuring teachers."

Where did the Rev. W. Hofman get this? That the Sunday School had difficulty procuring teachers? Not from the documents at Synod. That is not true what the Rev. Hofman writes. We did not have any difficulty in procuring teachers, but the consistory refused to OK the list sent them.

Please get this straight. The Dutch has a word for it, brother Hofman which is 'de dingen verdraaien.' Why don't brother Hofman tell the people the truth. Also about the slanderous grounds the consistory of Redlands sent to Classis in regard the S. S. case, and about all the corruption of Redlands' Consistory. Why don't you tell the people also how corrupt classis west was, when they tried to cover up the corruption of Redlands consistory. Why don't you do this, Rev. W. Hofman. You were there on Synod. Yes, the Dutch has a word for it 'de dingen verdraaien' but I like the English better, PLAIN LIES.

Thys Feenstra
219 W. Lugonia
Redland's, Calif.

A QUESTION

Rev. Hoeksema, Editor of Standard Bearer:

In your editorial of Standard Bearer of Sept. 1, 1953 you made a statement that the term condition is not found in all Scripture.

I have both the American Revised Version and the Authorized King James Version and I find the term condition in both.

You may read it in I Sam. 11:2 and also in Luke 14:32.

Will you please correct this in your next issue of the Standard Bearer ?

Submittingly yours,
Gysbert Ryken
Oskaloosa, Iowa

REPLY

I wish to thank brother Ryken for his manifest interest as well as for his careful reading of the *Standard Bearer*.

I also wish to thank him for his questions. If there is anything to be corrected in what I write I am glad that my attention is called to it.

Yet, in this case, there is nothing to correct. For I still maintain the very term condition does not occur in the Bible.

As far as I Sam. 11:2 is concerned, brother Ryken could have known this even without knowing anything about the original Hebrew, for the word condition is printed in italics in our English Bible which always indicates that the term does not occur in the original. Nevertheless, I checked the text in the original and there it reads literally: "In this (BeZOTH) will I make a covenant with you."

In Luke 14:32, it is true that the English bible does not print the word condition in italics, but it should have done so, for in the original we simply read, instead of "conditions" *the things* (ta). So that the text literally reads: "he desireth the things of peace."

But I admit that my statement that the word condition does not at all occur in Scripture is rather sweeping (though I still maintain it) and, therefore, if brother Ryken should find some more instances where the term occurs, I will be very glad to check up on them.

H.H.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Classis East will reconvene on Tuesday, October 6, 1953 at 9 o'clock A. M. in the Fourth Protestant Reformed Church. This is the same Classis as that of April, 1953, and will meet to finish the agenda. Will the delegates of the April Classis please take note.

Rev. Geo. C. Lubbers
Stated Clerk

NOTICE:—Mr. G. Pipe, 1463 Ardmore St., S.E. Grand Rapids, 7, Michigan has been appointed business manager of the Reformed Free Publishing Association. All matters pertaining to subscriptions, notices etc. should be sent to him at the above address.

The Board

Report of Classis West . . .

MET IN OSKALOOSA, IOWA—SEPT. 2-5, 1953

Rev. James Howerzyl calls the meeting together and opens with announcing a psalter number, reads Rom. 12 and offers prayer. All churches except Bellflower (Rev. L. Doezeema was hindered from being present) are represented with proper delegation. Rev. M. Gritters becomes chairman for the day and Rev. S. Cammenga keeps minutes.

There are communications at the table from Bellflower, Pella and Oskaloosa churches regarding the matters which have transpired in the First Church of Grand Rapids namely the suspension of Rev. De Wolf and deposition of eleven elders. Said documents are mimeographed and given into the hands of a committee composed of Revs. J. De Jong, W. Hofman, J. Van Weelden and elders M. Flikkema and G. Mesman, to serve Classis with advice. Classis decides to express "that we cannot recognize the suspension of Rev. De Wolf and the deposition of the elders supporting him, but on the contrary must consider Rev. De Wolf with his consistory and congregation as the legal and proper continuation of the First Prot. Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Mich." A footnote is appended as the expression of the Manhattan delegates as follows: "That we cannot recognize the suspension of Rev. De Wolf and the deposition of the elders supporting him. Since this action of suspension and deposition was taken at an illegal consistory meeting, since many of the legal office-bearers of that consistory were not notified of this meeting." And the delegates of Manhattan would have the Classis know that they consider the balance of the first quotation (above) as being premature since they consider neither faction to be the legal and proper consistory of the First Church in Grand Rapids, Mich. Classis likewise receives the advice of said Comm. of five in re the documents of Pella and Oskaloosa, that namely we in general concur with the documents but adopt the expression of the Committee of five, above, rather than the expressions of either Pella or Oskaloosa. So received. Bellflower consistory sends a document concerning the church political aspect of the First Church affair with which Classis substantially concurs. Bellflower also enters into the material of the two statements upon which Rev. De Wolf is judged. The Document states: "That the minority group of Fuller Ave., Consistory and Classis East erred in its decisions of the case 'Hoeksema-Ophoff vs. De Wolf.' The judgment is that the two statements of De Wolf are literally heretical regardless of what the Rev. De Wolf meant by them, regardless of how he explains them". Concerning the church political aspect Classis concurs in stating that "This action of suspension and deposition was taken at an illegal consistory meeting since many of the legal office bearers of that consistory were not notified of this meeting and, 2. The Revs. Hoeksema and C. Hanko and the elders following them failed to follow church political order of appeal when: a. The Rev. Hoeksema deserted the legal consistory meeting discussing this case, and b. The Revs.

H. Hoeksema and C. Hanko with the consistory members following them severed themselves from the rest of the congregation and organized separate meetings and activities." Classis decides to answer Bellflower that in respect to entering into the material (or doctrinal implications of the two statements, and the condemnation of these two statements) "It is not necessary that we enter into this since we are convinced that the moral issues, as revealed in the church political actions, are the basic consideration and that these must first be rectified before we can enter into the material aspect". It is decided further to send the pertinent documents, with Classis' decisions and a letter of admonition to Classis East and to all churches of Classis West.

There are at the table four protests from members of the Hull church against their pastor and consistory. These are read. Given into the hands of committees of pre-advice. Upon advice and after long discussion the Classis decides to sustain the Hull Consistory over against the various protestants.

Rev. P. De Boer, upon advice of doctors and by permission of his consistory asks for emeritation. It is granted and the Stated Clerk is to notify the Emeritus Committee of our Churches concerning these matters. Classis sends letters to Revs. De Boer and Rev. Peter Vis, the latter still hindered by his continued illness. Rev. Hofman is appointed moderator for Edgerton. Revs. Doezeema and Vermeer are appointed church visitors for Calif. For the Iowa-Minn. district Revs. Gritters and Howerzyl are appointed with Revs. Cammenga and Van Weelden alternates. Classis passed also this motion that "If it becomes necessary in the opinion of at least two churches that a classis meeting is necessary before the next regular session, the classical committee should be so informed and set the time and the place". Next Classis meeting in Rock Valley. Rev. Cammenga is elected to membership in the Classical Comm.

Classical appointments as follows: **Lynden:** two Sundays in Sept., Rev. Vermeer; two Sundays in Oct. Rev. Doezeema; two Sundays in Nov., J. Howerzyl; two Sundays in Dec., M. Gritters; two Sundays in Jan., J. De Jong and two Sundays in Feb., W. Hofman. **Manhattan:** Two Sundays of the named months; Oct., J. Van Weelden, Nov., S. Cammenga; Dec., Vermeer; Jan., Doezeema. **Edgerton:** Sept. 6, Hofman; Sept. 20, Van Weelden; Oct. 4, De Jong; Oct. 18, S. Cammenga; Nov. 8, M. Gritters; Nov. 22, J. Howerzyl; Dec. 6, W. Hofman; Dec. 20, Van Weelden; Jan. 3, De Jong; Jan. 17, S. Cammenga; Feb. 7, M. Gritters; Feb. 21, J. Howerzyl.

Classis decides to request of each minister that he compose and mimeograph three sermons and send them to the various consistories before the next Classis in March.

Classis adjourns Fri. noon. Rev. Howerzyl closes with prayer.

M. Gritters, Stated Clerk, Cl. West