

THE STANDARD

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MEDITATION

Remember Me!

"And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." —Luke 23:42

Everyone mocked the Christ when He hung on the Cross.

The people stood beholding.

The rulers derided Him, but also with them, that is, the people.

The soldiers mocked Him.

Even the written word meant to deride Him. The superscription on the cross was meant as a taunt of the ruler, the governor: This is the King of the Jews! Imagine: a King on a Cross??!!

Yes, and even a man who was in the same judgment with Jesus mocked Him, saying, If Thou be the Christ, save Thyself and us!

Everyone derided and mocked Jesus.

But wait! There is one solitary exception: the other murderer.

He turns his tortured body toward the other murderer and after chiding him for mocking Jesus, he turns to Jesus and says: Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom!

Marvel of marvels!

There is one in the whole universe that believes in the crucified One!

And he is a murderer.

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I love that murderer.

No, not as a murderer. A murderer is an ugly person. He takes the life of his fellow. And that is horrible. There is only One who can do that, namely

God, who killeth and maketh alive. He is the Great God who is the Creator and Sustainer of life. He speaks and there you are! He speaks again and you stop breathing. You are dead.

Man may not kill man.

And this man was a convicted murderer. Also, he sustains the judgment and condemnation. Just a minute ago he admitted that before the whole world. And since then the whole world, wherever this Gospel is preached has heard his assent to the just condemnation of himself. He said: "And we indeed justly!"

But I love him because he is my representative. Indeed, he is the representative of all God's elect people. We all are by nature murderers. Jesus said that whoever hates his brother is a murderer. And I admit that many times I have hated where I should have loved my brother. Yes, we all are murderers.

But this murderer is a converted murderer. Thru the ages the church has given him a beautiful name, he is called the penitent.

That he is penitent is evident. The whole world knows that. Penitence begins by admitting our sin. And he has done that in the preceding verse. We indeed justly.

Moreover, he said to the other, mocking, murderer: Dost thou not fear God? And that surely implies that he feared God even though the other did not. The fear of God was implanted in his heart. And he showed it.

He is penitent. He is sorry for his sins.

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But there is more.

He does what no one thinks of doing in this dreadful hour when the church and the world combine to crucify the Saviour of the world: he is going to confess Him.

He calls Him Lord!

I do not know how much this poor sinner knew of Christ's Lordship. He is a little premature too. We

know that God made Jesus both Christ and Lord, but that was after, or, rather, at His glorification at the Father's right hand. But this man calls Him Lord when He hangs on the accursed tree. Did I say too much when I cried out: Marvel of Marvels?

Lord is He Who has the regiment over the whole Universe. I do not think that this murderer was present when Jesus said: You call Me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. No, I do not think that he heard those words. It was not necessary: God must have told him later, later, perhaps on the cross. Flesh and blood had not revealed it to him. But you may be sure that he knew. His very little speech carries conviction: Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom! What a little speech, but how fraught with beautiful conviction! Jesus, Thou art my Lord!

Oh, I am sure that God told him in his heart. He hung in the light, in the dazzling light of the everlasting Gospel. And when you hang in the light, even though you hang on the cross, you see clearly: you recognize God, and God's Son.

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When Thou comest into Thy Kingdom!

How utterly marvelous! This man is talking of a Kingdom while his addressee is hanging on the accursed tree! If anyone seemed to be far from dominion and royal majesty it surely was Jesus at this dreadful hour. Dominion? He is bound hand and feet, and what bonds! He is *nailed* to the tree! He cannot move.

But this penitent knows: Jesus is on the way to His Kingdom of light and glory.

How did he know? I do not know. Perhaps he was instructed by a godfearing mother or father. Maybe he had heard of the coming of Goel, of Shilo, of the Messiah. And now that God gave him life and light, perhaps all that knowledge was applied to his heart. But I do not know. Perhaps he had enough of the Word of God in that little wooden board above the tortured form of Jesus. You know, that board that read in three languages: This is Jesus the King of the Jews. Maybe that was enough. God needs very little to preach His Gospel. He is the Almighty.

But he knows.

Jesus, my Lord, Thou art on the way to inherit a glorious Kingdom!

Here on this cross, the cross that clearly reveals what kind of man I have been and am, I feel the urge to confess Thee. Thou art the Lord of the Universe, and Thou art the King of God's Zion! Thou art on

the way to unspeakable glory and honor. Yes, Lord, and Thou art also on the way to wondrous dominion. All things testify now that Thou art bound, nailed, tortured, dying, but this is the way to the Kingdom!

I know, Lord, that all appearances are against Thee having either Lordship or royal majesty, but I know that Thou art both Lord and King!

Marvellous faith of the penitent!

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But Lord, my Lord and King, I have a little petition, a very little petition: remember me! When Thou art in Thy Kingdom, surrounded by honor and majesty; when Thou art on the great throne, the great white throne in the heaven of heavens, then, o Lord, remember me!

Two words: remember me!

What a little prayer!

But, dear reader, what an immensity of blessedness is asked for.

In case Jesus would give him his petition he will have everything that is blessed and lovely. If Jesus remembers him he is safe, safe for the little time he has, and surely for all eternity.

O, all we need, really need is to be remembered by God, by Jesus.

There is a hymn, but I do not know the correct reading of all the stanzas. It must have been composed with an eye to this beautiful story, for there is a line: And when Thou sittest on Thy throne: o Lord, remember me! It is the penitent murderer's song.

It was a little prayer, but how dared he utter it?

Remember *him*? A foul murderer?

If a poll would have been taken at the very spot, I am sure that the unanimous verdict would have been: No, he is not worthy to be remembered by Jesus the King. Everyone, both the church and the world had decreed that he was worthy of death, and so he found himself on the cross.

Yes, and note the little detail, little but important: he voted for his own condemnation. Verse 40, and 41.

He was worthy of death, physical and eternal.

And now: remember him? With all that it implies?

What are the implications? This: he would be forgiven all his sins. He would be justified before God's tribunal. He would receive the beauty of heaven and heaven's God in heart and soul and body. He would be changed into a fit companion of the angels, of Christ and of God. He would receive all the happiness of heaven unto all eternity.

That, my friends, is contained in this little petition: remember me!

Was it not presumptuous to pray for all that?

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No, my brother. It was not.

Jesus, the Crucified One, fits such penitent murderers.

That is exactly why He came on the cursed earth. It was His mission to seek out and find all those murderers, thieves, adulterers, idolaters and corrupters. No, not all. He came and wrought salvation only for those evildoers that were written in the book of life. But all those written in that book deserve such terrible names as I wrote down. That is our natural name.

We thought this man presumptuous for asking for so much blessedness, while we all know that he deserved so much cursedness. And no wonder. Instinctively we feel that it is not correct to reward the murderer with heaven.

But we must remember that Jesus came and willingly stood in the place of all His beloved people who in history became murderers, thieves, adulterers, idolaters and corrupters.

And God treated Jesus just as though He Himself had done all that abomination.

That is the everlasting Gospel.

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It is not in my text, but I better tell you anyhow. This man's little petition was heard.

Remember you? Yes, I will remember you. I have paid, I am now paying for your entrance into the same Kingdom toward which I journey.

I will precede you by a few hours. But even today, this very day, shalt thou be with Me in Paradise!

And it came to pass. Both Jesus and this murderer are now, while I write this, in God's Paradise.

Some day we will see him there.

I do not think that we marvel so much that *he* was taken to that beautiful Kingdom of God.

When the light of the Gospel shines in our hearts, discovering all our terrible sins, *we* softly sing to *ourselves*: And when Thou sittest on Thy throne, O God, remember me!

Trembling: o God, remember me!

G. Vos.

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EDITORIALS

Chronicle

Our readers are, no doubt, interested to know what is happening in our churches in connection with the split which is now an accomplished fact. And since neither *Concordia* or what calls itself the *Reformed Guardian* can be trusted to inform them of the truth of even the bare facts, *The Standard Bearer* will, from time to time, try to bring them up to date.

We are making history fast in our little denomination!

In this I can but see the hand of our God, Who cares for His Church and always preserves His faithful remnant, the seven thousand that refuse to bow their knees before Baal.

O, the purification and reformation of a church is, indeed, always a very painful process. We experienced this in 1924 when we were ejected from the communion of the Christian Reformed Church because we would and could not, before God and our conscience, subscribe to the notorious Three Points nor even promise to keep silent in regard to them. But this process is still more painful, especially for the undersigned, in the current division and split in our churches. In the first place, consider the fact that we as churches belong to the very smallest of all the denominations in the world. It is true, no doubt, and we have always preached it that the Church of God cannot be estimated by numerical strength; it is also true, however, that, according to our human feeling, we always like to see the Church of Christ grow also in numbers, and that it is suffering for the flesh when those whom we considered as standing on the same basis of faith with us forsake that basis and corrupt the truth. I say this is painful, especially for me and must be for the Rev. Ophoff, because the very men that now depart from us and forsake the truth, have all been instructed by us so that it appears as if our labor has been partly in vain. Add to this, that I have labored for over thirty three years in the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids (including my labor among them when they were still the Eastern Ave. Christian Reformed Church) and that now, under the influence of De Wolf, especially since my illness six years ago, a large part of them have forsaken the truth in which I have always instructed them, and you will understand it when I say that the purification and reformation of the Church is always a very painful process.

Nevertheless, we are also confident that in the present split we, and not our opponents, are walking in the way of the Lord. We, and not our opponents, maintain the Protestant Reformed truth, which is the truth of the gospel, the truth of the Word of God. We, and not our opponents, have and may have the confidence that God is for us and that, therefore, nothing and no one can ever be against us.

Of this we have always been convinced.

And of this we become all the more convinced when we read the arguments by which our opponents attempt to bolster up their position.

The more they try to defend their position, the more they evince very clearly that there is no love for the Protestant Reformed truth in their hearts. I am afraid that many of them never were Protestant Reformed, at least not in their hearts.

Who would ever have thought in 1924 that less than thirty years after Protestant Reformed ministers would belittle the doctrine of election, would preach and defend the Arminian error of a general-conditional promise, and would maintain that before we enter into the kingdom of heaven we must convert ourselves?

The *Reformed Journal* writes that our opponents, by their new doctrine, have taken a step back to the Christian Reformed Church.

Personally, I think they did worse than that, the Christian Reformed Church, in 1924, announced the doctrine of common grace in the general well-meant offer of salvation. But those that, for the last years, have tried to corrupt our churches maintain that God promises to every one salvation, if they believe. And God promises surely in His love and grace. The Christian Reformed Church, in 1924, maintained that the natural man, outside of the kingdom of God, can do good in this world, so-called civic righteousness. But they never yet taught that the natural man, outside of the kingdom of God, can convert himself.

These are the errors our opponents maintain, and for these we will hold them responsible, till they openly repent.

But I am going off on a tangent.

I say that I can see the good hand of God over us in the fact that we are making history fast.

And I say this because the recent fast development of things in our churches is for us a God-given opportunity to cast off the impurity and corruption in our church-system before it is too late. I have no doubt that the opponents of our Protestant Reformed truth would have liked to have more time to see their Arminian corruption infiltrated into our churches. But the Lord opened our eyes just in time.

Hence, the split is come before the wood is so rotten that it cannot be split anymore, as Dr. Machen once expressed it.

A tremendous step in this direction was taken when the Lord made Classis West so foolish as to make their last schismatic decisions.

Then followed the correct action of Doon, Edgerton, and Hull. In all these congregations the Protestant Reformed truth was maintained and they declared themselves the legal consistories and congregations, after they had requested their consistories to repudiate the schismatic action of Classis West.

Recently, Redlands followed suit. They have, at present, according to latest reports, twenty families that stand with us. The Rev. H. Veldman, who has received a call from Edgerton, is laboring there at the time of this writing.

What happened at the recent meeting of Classis East was already reported to you in the last number of the *Standard Bearer*. There were two sets of delegates from the First Church of Grand Rapids, and Classis had to decide which were the legal delegates. Communications were read from the group that followed the Rev. De Wolf, from the consistory of the First Church, and from the classical committee that served in advisory capacity to bring the matter to the attention of the consistory of the First Church and, on the latter's request, was present at all the meetings of the consistory from June 1 to June 23. The result was that the delegates of the De Wolf group were unseated and the delegates that were sent by the Consistory of First Church were received as the only delegates. The Revs. Kok, Blankespoor and Knott refused to recognize the delegates of the First Church as legal, preferred to recognize the De Wolf faction, and thereby also became schismatic. They were declared to be such, and left the meeting of Classis East.

The result was that the congregations in Holland and Grand Rapids II were split, or rather, they were both re-established as the legal Protestant Reformed Churches, the former with fourteen, the latter with over forty families.

For your information of what happened in both those churches I can do no better than copy a letter which was sent to the members of the congregation in Holland by elder Kortering, the only faithful elder in that consistory. The letter here follows:

LETTER TO ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION
FIRST PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH

Holland, Michigan

Dear Members of the Congregation:

The undersigned hereby informs you that the following request was presented to your consistory:

Holland, Michigan
October 9, 1953

To the Consistory of the
Protestant Reformed Church
of Holland, Michigan

Dear Brethren in the Lord:

I, the undersigned Elder of said Consistory, request that the Consistory immediately repudiate the stand taken by our Pastor, the Rev. B. Kok, at the session of Classis East, Oct. 8, 1953, whereby he recognized as the legal consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Mich., the Rev. H. De Wolf and his deposed elders, thereby severing his connection with the fellowship of the Protestant Reformed Churches, because Classis East upheld the legal Consistory of the above named church, of which the Rev. C. Hanko and the Rev. H. Hoeksema are pastors, and Mr. G. Stadt is clerk.

I as elder also request that the Consistory immediately refuse the Rev. B. Kok the pulpit and declare him worthy of suspension on the ground of Art. 79 and 80 of the Church Order, and thereupon proceed to his actual suspension from office with the advice of the nearest neighboring consistory.

Should this request be denied, which God graciously prevent, I the undersigned, will declare myself the legal consistory of the 1st Prot. Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan and will function as such.

Grounds:

1. By this action you support and condone heresies that have been condemned by Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches.
2. By this action you will give support to and agree with those that were legally deposed as officebearers from the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, which deposition was maintained as legal by the classis above mentioned.
3. Hence by this action you have become guilty of schism and severed yourselves from the fellowship of the Protestant Reformed Churches, in which fellowship the undersigned wishes to remain.

Respectfully submitted

Your Brother

Elder J. H. Kortering

Executed in 3 copies

1 copy to the Consistory above

1 copy to the Consistory of the
Hudsonville Prot. Ref. Chr. as evidence
of this notice, 1 copy for file.

Hence we inform you that on the evening of Oct. 9, 1953 the original copy of the above document was presented to the said Consistory of the 1st Prot. Ref. Church of Holland, Mich. and all the Elders, Ralph Bouwman Jr., B. Stegink, J. Knott, and J. H. Kortering being present at this meeting; the undersigned elder J. H. Kortering made the motion to initiate the proper proceeding to suspend the pastor, Rev. B. Kok from his office, on the grounds shown in document above. Rev. B. Kok was present as chairman and three deacons, were present. And the Consistory refusing this request by failing to support the said motion above, has become schismatic and does no longer belong to the fellowship of the Protestant Reformed Churches, while the undersigned is the sole legal consistory.

Functioning as such we have decided to conduct services of the 1st Prot. Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan, next Sunday, the Lord willing, at the place shown herein below at the

regular times. At this temporary place we will meet, the Lord willing until such time as the final disposition of our church property is made. By this you will understand that as the legal consistory and congregation of the 1st Prot. Reformed Church of Holland, Mich., we claim the right to the Church property including the parsonage.

Hoping that all of you may give this matter their prayerful consideration and that you may preserve peace and unity in the bond of faith, we remain,

Yours in the Lord

Elder J. H. Kortering
The legal consistory of the
1st Prot. Ref. Church of Holland,
Mich.

Attached to the letter, was a notification concerning the services that were to be held on the following Sabbath, the place and time of meeting and the preachers that would conduct the services, as also the following announcement: "A special congregational meeting will be held D.V. on Tuesday evening, Oct. 13th, for the purpose of electing new elders and deacons."

This meeting was duly held and the consistory and congregation were re-established as the legal consistory and congregation of the Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, Mich.

A similar procedure was followed in the Second Church of Grand Rapids. At a congregational meeting, held in the Hope Protestant Reformed Church, new elders and deacons were elected, and immediately installed in the presence of the entire congregation.

Let me add to this, that as in the First Church of Grand Rapids that meets for the time being in Christian High, so also in the re-established congregations of Holland and Grand Rapids II there is a new manifestation of joy and love because they are freed from the spirit of corruption and slander that pervaded these churches.

I also want to add to this one of the letters that was sent to all the members of the congregation by the former consistory of the Second Church of Grand Rapids, which was most probably composed by the Rev. Blankespoor himself. I copy this letter because it reveals clearly how they evade the issue, and, instead, try to play upon the feelings of the people, without, however, having any effect upon them. Here is the letter:

Grand Rapids, Mich.
Oct. 15, 1953

Dear Members of the Sec. Prot. Ref. Church:

According to rumors we as Consistory at our meeting of Friday, Oct. 9, 1953 "kicked out" the two deacons Engelsma and Swart. We want to assure you that the contents of these rumors are not true.

Here are the facts.

At that meeting the brethren read their letter of ultimatum

before the vote was taken. Notice how they come with threatenings. The Consistory had to **immediately** repudiate the stand taken by our pastor, and immediately deny him the pulpit and declare him worthy of suspension. If the Consistory would not do this they would consider themselves the legal Consistory of the Second Prot. Ref. Church of Grand Rapids, Mich. The idea was: do this, immediately . . . or else. After this letter was read and some more discussion followed the vote was taken. Isn't it clear that these men severed themselves from the Consistory?

After the vote was taken some more discussion followed. To our joy it was kept on a spiritual level with no bitterness manifested. Finally our chairman asked the two brethren if they realized that by this action they no longer belonged to the Consistory. This question they answered in the affirmative. Later Mr. Swart said: "Well, I guess we're through," "I guess so," said the chairman. After some more discussion the brethren left the meeting. None of this, surely, in any sense reveals that they were "kicked out."

It is also very difficult for the Consistory to understand how people can change so suddenly and turn against us and the preaching of our pastor, and say that he is **worthy of suspension**. And being worthy of suspension also means that he is worthy of deposition and excommunication from the kingdom of heaven, and that he can no longer be considered to be a christian. This the two deacons have said. Facts are that not once during Rev. Blankespoor's pastorate with us did anyone protest against his preaching. Not once did the two deacons refuse to give the hand of approval after the services. A short time ago one of them had a child baptized thereby answering that he would instruct his child in the doctrine taught in this christian church. And now they turn against the pastor and the Consistory. Now it is possible for people to have an awakening. It is also possible that they weren't fully satisfied with the preaching. But how people can turn against us and the preaching of the pastor and approve of **condemnation and refutation** of what has been preached from our pulpit is beyond our comprehension of ethics. Neither can we understand how our pastor, because of his stand taken at Classis, be worthy of **immediate suspension**, one day after Classis.

Neither can the Consistory understand this in respect to some of our members. How is it possible to **condemn** us now before the face of God because of what we believe and preach, never having expressed any disagreement with the preaching? Fact is that many who left us often expressed satisfaction with the preaching, on a whole, until the time they left us. And now approve of condemnation of the same? How can they do it?

That all our people don't understand all the issues involved we can readily understand. However, as long as people don't understand fully, and still have many questions and problems they surely cannot honestly turn against us and the preaching of the pastor. One of the big questions for our members is whether the preaching in our church is and has been Prot. Reformed. If so, one must surely be very hesitant before he can leave us and turn against us.

Brothers and Sisters in the Lord, we urge you all to continue to meet with us. We haven't changed. We still want the Prot. Ref. truth. Neither do we want this separation. It grieves us.

Yours in the love of Christ,
Consistory of the Second Prot.
Reformed Church,

J. Blankespoor, Pres.
S. Bouma, Clerk

Let me add the following notes to this letter:

1. What else could the faithful members of the consistory do than to demand that the consistory repudiate the stand of the pastor at the classis, according to which he made common cause with a schismatic consistory, took, by implication, full responsibility for heretical statements condemned by classis, and separated himself, by these actions, from the Protestant Reformed Churches. What else could they do than to demand that the consistory declare the pastor worthy of suspension, and that, too, immediately. Could they permit (this was on Friday evening) the pastor, with his schismatic position to occupy the pulpit on the following Sabbath? They could not. Hence, they were perfectly correct and right in their demand.

2. The consistory and Blankespoor complain that they cannot understand how people can all of a sudden so turn against the pastor that they demand his suspension. There never was any protest against his preaching. Even the two deacons that now demanded his suspension never refused to shake hands with etc. etc. I consider this nothing but a sob story, a sentimental attempt to play upon the feelings of the people. The consistory and Blankespoor here entirely evade the issue. For the issue is simply this: a. The Rev. Blankespoor, at the classis, took sides with the illegal group that claimed to be the consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, and claimed that they were the legal consistory. b. He refused to recognize the delegates of the First Church that were declared the legal delegates by the classis. c. Although he did not express this literally, he took position in favor of the heretical statements by De Wolf, condemned by classis. d. He thereby separated himself from Classis East and, of course, from the Protestant Reformed Churches. Let the consistory and Blankespoor explain these things to the people, and they will "understand the issues involved."

And here I close my chronicle with the promise that, as soon as there are new developments, I hope to inform you, D.V. — H.H.



My steadfast heart, O God,
Will sound Thy praise abroad
With tuneful string;
The dawn shall hear my song,
Thy praise I will prolong,
And where Thy people throng
Thanksgiving bring.

OF BOOKS

HOSEA (in "Commentaar op het Oude Testament") by Dr. C. van Gelderen and Dr. W. H. Gispen. Published by J. H. Kok, N.V. Kampen, the Netherlands. Price f.16.90.

In a preface to this commentary we are informed that its original and chief author is Dr. van Gelderen, but that he could not complete it because the Lord took him away. His work on this commentary extends to ch. 10:3. From there on it is the work of Dr. Gispen who, at the request of the family of Dr. van Gelderen completed the work.

Heartily we recommend this commentary to all our readers who are able to read the Holland language. It is, indeed, a very good work, characterized by thorough and sound exposition of the text, and written in a very lucid and attractive style.

Interesting to read is the exposition of the text in 1:2ff. concerning the marriage of the prophet Hosea and the conclusion of van Gelderen about this marriage.

I cannot agree with the interpretation of 12:3 by Dr. Gispen. He grants that the translation "he took his brother by the heel in the womb" is most probably correct instead of "he deceived his brother." And with this we certainly agree. But in his further exposition of the text he, nevertheless, explains the meaning as probably referring to Jacob as a deceiver from the womb. This, to my mind, is contrary to the entire context. The fact that Jacob had his brother by the heel in the womb was, to my mind, a God-given sign that Jacob, in distinction from Esau, was principally spiritual, elect, and fighting with his carnal brother for God's covenant. The rest of vs. 3 certainly harmonizes with this idea: "and by his strength he had power with God."

But, as has been said, we heartily recommend this commentary. —H.H.

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HEBREEN (the epistle to the Hebrews) by Dr. P. W. Grosheide. Publisher: J. H. Kok, N.V. Kampen, the Netherlands. Price f.5.50.

This belongs to the very popular series *Korte Verklaring* (Brief Commentary). That this series of commentaries is popular in the old country is evident from the fact that some of its volumes already enjoy their third print. This is also the case with the volume of the epistle to the Hebrews by Dr. Grosheide. We think that this commentary certainly is worthy of its popularity. The style is clear and the exposition of the text sound.

In the interpretation of 6:4ff. we would have liked to have an answer or, at least, an attempt to an answer to what is, to my mind, one of the most important questions of the entire passage: *why is it impossible* to bring those of whom the text speaks again to repentance? Impossible for man? But man can never bring anyone to repentance. Impossible for God? If so, why and in what sense?

To all that can read Dutch we recommend this volume. —H.H.

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I AND II TIMOTHY, TITUS, PHILEMON, by Dr .C. Bouma.
Publisher: J. H. Kok, Kampen, the Netherlands. Price f. 6.25.

This commentary also belongs to the series *Korte Verklaring*, and this particular volume enjoys its second print. Also this volume we gladly recommend to the reader that still reads Dutch. Especially would we, in this particular case, recommend study of the introduction in which the author treats various subjects of interest, particularly the historical background, the ecclesiastical organization, and the errors which the apostle combats in these epistles. I have reference, particularly, to the introduction to the first three epistles mentioned.

In a popular comentary of this kind the interpretation is naturally somewhat brief and uncritical.
—H.H.

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HEDEN ZOO GIJ ZIJNE STEM HOORT (Today, if you will hear His voice) by twelve different authors. Published by J. H. Kok, Kampen, the Netherlands. Price f. 4.95.

This book contains a series of very brief meditations on various passages of Scripture, designed to be read one at a time for every day of the year, somewhat like the meditations on the old Dutch *scheurkalender*. Although they naturally vary, not only in style and content, but also in value, and although I personally would not subscribe to every statement in this book, yet, on the whole, I also recommend this book to the reader that cannot only read Dutch, but who also is able to read critically and with Reformed discernment.
—H.H.

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Had not the Lord been Israel's help
When angry foes assailed,
Had not the Lord been on our side,
Our righteous cause had failed.

OUR DOCTRINE

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

AN EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

PART III — OF THANKFULNESS

LORD'S DAY 38

Q. 103. What doth God require in the fourth commandment?

A. First, that the ministry of the gospel and the schools be maintained; and that I, especially on the sabbath, that is, on the day of rest, diligently frequent the church of God, to hear his word, to use the sacraments, publicly to call upon the Lord, and contribute to the relief of the poor, as becomes a christian. Secondly, that all the days of my life I cease from my evil works, and yield myself to the Lord, to work by his Holy Spirit in me: and thus begin in this life the eternal sabbath.

1. The Idea of the Sabbath

Even as the principle of the First Commandment is that God is One, and that there is no other god beside Him; and the Second Commandment is based on the underlying principle that God is a Spirit, and infinitely glorious; while the Third Commandment emphasizes that God is holy, and that therefore His name is holy; so the Fourth Commandment teaches us that God as the Triune is in Himself a covenant God, and that therefore His people enter into His rest, the rest of His everlasting tabernacle.

It is very important that from the outset we grasp this main idea of the commandment concerning the sabbath of the Lord our God, lest we fall into the error of failing to understand that even in regard to the Fourth Commandment we are not under the law, but under grace, and that we are bound to esteem one day above another and consider the abstaining from our daily work on the first day of the week as having particular religious value and merit. Also the Fourth Commandment we must not treat as part of an external code, but rather as an integral element in the law of perfect liberty, according to which we walk from the principle of regeneration and of the law written in our hearts according to the Word of God revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord, in the midst of the world.

That this is the idea of the exposition of the Fourth Commandment in Lord's Day 38 of the Heidelberg Catechism is evident from its language. Superficially considered, the exposition of the Catechism would seem rather far-fetched and arbitrary: for the command-

ment emphasizes rather strongly that on the seventh day we shall cease from all labor. Six days we must labor and do all our work, but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath of the Lord our God, we may not do any work, neither personally nor on the part of anyone in our employ. But the Catechism does not speak of this whatsoever, and instead mentions several things that appear to have nothing to do with the Fourth Commandment, such as the maintenance of the ministry and the schools, frequenting the church of God, care for the poor, cease from evil works all the days of our life, and enjoy a foretaste of the eternal rest. Yet, the exposition of the Catechism is no doubt correct. It proceeds from the thought that in the new dispensation one day is not holier than another day, and that to refrain from work is in itself no religious exercise whatsoever. Hence, the idea of the Catechism is that the God of our salvation in Jesus Christ our Lord has given us one day of the week which we may empty of all earthly cares and labors, in order to fill it with the things that pertain to the kingdom of God and of His eternal tabernacle.

This idea of the Fourth Commandment as part of the law of perfect liberty was also maintained by Calvin and the early reformers. It is true that there seems to be a discrepancy between such early confessions as the Heidelberg Catechism and the Second Helvetic Confession, on the one hand, and the Westminster Confession of Faith, which dates from 1647, on the other hand. The latter confession appears to teach that the observance of a day as such has moral and religious value. For in chapter 21 it speaks of the sabbath day as follows: "As it is of the law of nature, that in general a due proportion of time be set apart for the worship of God; so, in his Word, by a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment, binding all men in all ages, he hath particularly appointed one day in seven for a sabbath, to be kept holy unto him: which, from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, was the last day of the week; and, from the resurrection of Christ, was changed into the first day of the week, which in Scripture is called the Lord's day, and is to be continued to the end of the world, as the Christian sabbath." One cannot fail to observe a different conception of the sabbath in this Westminster Confession from that of the Second Helvetic Confession, which in chapter 24 speaks of the sabbath as follows: "Although religion be not tied unto time, yet can it not be planted and exercised without a due dividing and allotting out of time. Every church, therefore, does choose unto itself a certain time for public prayers, and for the preaching of the gospel, and for the celebration of the sacraments; and it is not lawful for anyone to overthrow this appointment of the church at his own plea-

sure. For except some due time and leisure were allotted to the outward exercise of religion, without doubt men would be quite drawn from it by their own affairs. In regard hereof, we see that in the ancient churches there were not only certain set hours in the week appointed for meetings, but that also the Lord's day itself, ever since the apostles' time, was consecrated to religious exercises, and to a holy rest; which also is now very well observed by our churches, for the worship of God and the increase of charity. Yet herein we give no place unto the Jewish observation of the day, or to any superstitions. For we do not account one day to be holier than another, nor think that mere rest is of itself acceptable to God. Besides, we do celebrate and keep the Lord's day, and not the Jewish sabbath, and that with a free observation."

With this latter view of the sabbath Calvin agrees, as is evident from his commentary on Galatians 4:10: "*Ye observe days.* He adduces as an instance one description of 'elements,' the observance of days. No condemnation is here given to the observance of dates, as in the arrangements of civil society. The order of nature out of which this arises, is fixed and constant. How are months and years computed, but by the revolution of the sun and moon? What distinguishes summer from winter, or spring from harvest, but the appointment of God, —an appointment which was promised to continue to the end of the world? (Gen. 8:22) The civil observation of days contributes not only to agriculture and to matters of politics, and to ordinary life, but is even extended to the governments of the church. Of what nature, then, was the observation which Paul reproves? It was that which would bind the conscience, by religious considerations, as if it were necessary to the worship of God, and which, as he expresses it in the epistle to the Romans, would make a distinction between one day and another (Rom. 14:5).

"When certain days are represented as holy in themselves, when one day is distinguished from another on religious grounds, when holy days are reckoned a part of divine worship, then days are improperly observed. The Jewish sabbath, new moons, and other festivals, were earnestly pressed by the false apostles, because they had been appointed by the law. When we, in the present age, make a distinction of days, we do not represent them as necessary, and thus lay a snare for the conscience; we do not reckon one day to be more holy than another; we do not make days to be the same thing with religion and the worship of God; but merely attend to the preservation of order and harmony. The observance of days among us is a free service, and void of all superstition."

Yet, although in the new dispensation we do not consider one day more holy than another, and although we do not consider it specially religious or of any value of merit to spend the sabbath day in idleness,—yet, on the other hand, we should not fail to observe that the sabbath day originally is rooted in the creation ordinance, and that it was given to the New Testament church in order to be filled in a special measure with the things of the kingdom of God and of His everlasting covenant. Man was not made for the sabbath, but the sabbath for man. And the Lord Jesus Christ is Lord also of the sabbath. The keeping of the sabbath is a highly spiritual matter, an act of faith and hope, that can be performed only by the Christian that professes in word and walk that he has become a stranger in this world, and looks forward to the inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, to the eternal sabbath that remaineth for the people of God.

Bearing this in mind, it cannot be denied that the desecration of the sabbath in our day is an evil that is assuming alarming proportions. And the danger is more than imaginary, that the Christian pilgrim, as he lives in and travels through this strange land, will defile his garments and adopt the habits of the world. And many causes and circumstances have, especially in late years, concurred to aggravate this danger. The wave of abnormal economic prosperity that is sweeping especially our country surely does not prove to be a spiritual blessing for many children of God, but is rather conducive to a spirit of worldly-mindedness by which also they were overcome to a greater extent than they realized or were willing to admit. Everybody is prosperous in the things of the world. All had sufficient means to seek after, and in a measure to obtain the commodities and even the luxuries necessary for the enjoyment of this present life. Not to possess an automobile is an uncommon thing. Young and old spend their time of leisure between the wheels. Home life is destroyed. Family fellowship becomes a strange thing. The family altar is forgotten. If one is not on the road to enjoy a ride, he can find his home connected with every conceivable place of amusement by means of the radio and television, which has become as common as the auto. Man has become amusement crazy. Life seems to be without care and worry. The things of this present time occupy a chief place in our hearts and minds. The things heavenly recede into the background, and appear gradually with less frequency above the threshold of our consciousness.

With such a spirit of frivolous worldly-mindedness and practical materialism, the sabbath is no longer remembered, and desecration of the first day of the week has become customary. Even as the sabbath is or-

daind for the purpose of lifting up the pilgrim-stranger in this world to things spiritual and heavenly, so it can easily be pressed in the service of the world and serve the purpose of enjoying the things earthly and material better than any other day of the week. And even as this desecration of the sabbath itself has its source in a spirit of worldly-mindedness, so it exerts a reflex influence upon the minds and lives of the people of God, so that it becomes less heavenly-minded and more attached to the things of the world. The true significance of the sabbath, that it was not ordained for recreation and pleasure-seeking, that its chief purpose is not even that we might rest from our daily toil and labor, but that on that day we should exclusively be occupied with the things spiritual and heavenly, that so it might have a sanctifying influence on our whole life in the midst of the world and that we might have a foretaste of and more and more fervently long for the eternal sabbath,—this true import and significance of the weekly sabbath is less and less understood.

Hence, we will first of all ask the question: what is the idea of the weekly sabbath?

The sabbath in the deepest sense of the word is the rest of God. This is abundantly proven from the Holy Scriptures. It has its beginning in the rest of the Lord on the seventh day, after the six days of creative work in which the heavens and the earth were finished. For on the seventh day God ended His work which He made, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. Gen. 2:2. And because of the rest from all His work which He had made, on that seventh day He blessed and sanctified it. Gen. 2:3. This is referred to in the Fourth Commandment: "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it." For that reason it is called in the Ten Commandments "the sabbath of the Lord, thy God." Ex. 20:10; Deut. 5:14. In Lev. 23:3 we read: "Six days shall work be done; but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein; it is the sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings." And in Isaiah 58:13 we read: "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shall honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words, then shalt thou delight in the Lord." In Psalm 95 it is said: "Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest." It is true that in this latter passage the original Hebrew does not use the word *sabbath* for rest. And it is also true that the first refer-

ence in the phrase "my rest" is to the land of Canaan. Yet, from Hebrews 4 it is evident that this "my rest" has also a higher, an ultimate meaning, and that essentially it is expressing the very idea of the sabbath. For the author of the epistle to the Hebrews applies the text from Psalm 95 directly to the final rest of the sabbath, that remaineth for the people of God. The unbelievers in the desert could not enter into God's rest because of their unbelief, Heb. 3:19: "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." Heb. 4:1. And when finally the author writes, "There remaineth therefore a rest for the people of God," he uses the very word *sabbath* for what is translated "rest" in our language. The sabbath, therefore, is God's rest, the sabbath of the Lord thy God. It is the rest of God for which we are admonished to labor, in order to enter therein. Heb. 4:11.

This must necessarily determine the true implication of the notion of rest. The word *sabbath* means literally: rest. And the primary notion appears to be that of ceasing and desisting from work. However, we should not make the mistake of confusing the idea of sabbatic rest with that of complete idleness. Idleness and rest are by no means identical. The former is sinful, and always condemned in the Word of God. Strictly speaking, man that is created after the image of God cannot be idle in the sense that he ceases from all activity and labor. Even though he should stretch his body on his bed, so that he refrains from all physical labor, he would still be busy thinking and willing, planning and desiring; and it would prove to be an absolute impossibility for him to force himself into a state of complete inactivity. Neither is the chief purpose of the sabbath that we refrain from all earthly labor. Nor is there anything especially meritorious or holy in the mere fact that on the sabbath day we cease from our weekly toil. To raise this notion of desisting from work to the primary and main idea of the sabbath was the error of Phariseism, always severely condemned by the Lord. It is very evident that one may completely refrain from doing any work on the first day of the week, and yet so crowd the day with his own work, with speaking his own words and following after his own pleasure, that for him the day becomes of all days most unholy. It is therefore important that we bear in mind from the outset that rest and idleness are not identical. In fact, that we desist from daily labor on the first day of the week has its purpose in the positive notion that we should fill the day with other activities, with the work of and for *the rest*.

Rest is the entering into, and the enjoyment of a finished and perfected work. In this sense the rest

is absolutely of the Lord. God is never idle. He is pure activity. With all His glorious and infinite Being He is unceasingly, from eternity to eternity, active. As the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Three in persons, One in Being, He lives the life of infinitely perfect action. Yet in God is *the rest*. There is in Him no labor or toil, no struggle and strife to reach a certain end, to accomplish a certain work. For His work is eternally finished and perfected. From everlasting to everlasting He lives the infinitely perfect life of covenant fellowship and divine friendship within Himself. From eternity to eternity, the Father generates and gives life to the Son. Yet this divine activity of eternal generation is eternally perfect. From everlasting to everlasting the Son is generated by the Father. Yet with infinitely perfect love the Son cries eternally, "Abba, Father." Eternally the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. Yet this procession is eternally finished and perfect. God is infinite action, and at the same time perfect rest. His action is rest, and His rest is action. And in this eternal rest of perfect action, in the which there is never a moment of idleness, He rejoices with the divine joy of eternally entering into perfect covenant fellowship with Himself. This divine covenant life of God, eternally active, eternally perfect, the infinite love-life of God, is the rest of God, the divine and eternal sabbath of the Lord.

Now it is God's eternal good pleasure to prepare a rest for His people in Christ Jesus, a rest which should be a reflection and a manifestation of the rest of His own divine Covenant life. This rest of God's perfected covenant with us is the sabbath that remaineth for the people of God. And this is the essential idea of the weekly sabbath in the new dispensation.

We must remember that it is the eternal purpose of the Triune God to establish His covenant with us. Unto this end He ordained them whom He foreknew, to be conformed according to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren, and that they might be able to stand in covenant relationship with Him. And whom He thus fore-ordained, He also called, justified, and glorified. Rom. 8:29, 30. The glory of the exceeding great promises which God gave unto His people is so great that by these they even are made partakers of the divine nature. II Peter 1:4. According to God's purpose, they are chosen in order that they should be holy and unblameable before Him in love, Eph. 1:4; that they should be renewed after the image of God in knowledge of Him, Col. 3:10, in true righteousness and holiness, Eph. 4:24; that they might have fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, I John 1:3; that

they might be in the Father and in the Son, I John 2:24; that they might know Him, love Him, walk with Him and talk with Him, enter into His secrets, eat with Him and drink with Him, dwell in His house, yea, know Him as they are known, see Him face to face, and be like Him in perfection, John 17:3, 21-23; I Cor. 13:12; I John 3:2; Matt. 5:8; Ps. 17:15; Ps. 25:14. They shall be the temple of God; and they shall be His people. II Cor. 6:16. In that perfect rest, where the tabernacle of God shall be perfectly realized, the covenant and kingdom of God shall be identical. For in that tabernacle of God shall be "the throne of God and of the Lamb; and His servants shall serve Him: And they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever." Rev. 22:3-5. That heavenly rest, that perfect, though creaturely, reflection of God's own sabbath, of His divine covenant life, that perfected fellowship of friendship with the living God, is the sabbath which God prepares for them that love Him. And into that rest of God they enter. This entering into God's perfected work, into His rest, His sabbath, is the idea of the weekly sabbath, according to Scripture.

Of that sabbath, indeed, our whole life in this world must be a manifestation. For also in the midst of the world we must be friends of God. For the friendship of the world is enmity with God. And whoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. James 4:4. As friend-servants of God we are to walk worthy of the calling wherewith we are called with all lowliness and meekness, be followers of God as dear children, walk in love as Christ has loved us, walk as children of light. Eph. 1, 2; 5:1-8. Antithetically we are called to live from the principle of regeneration, according to the Word of God, and be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom we shine as lights in the world. Phil. 2:15. Even now our conversation must be in heaven, where is our real citizenship, and from whence we also look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Phil. 3:20. We must not seek the things that are on the earth, but the things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, and set our affections on them only. Col. 3:1-3. In respect to these things there is no difference between one day and another. But the things of this present time, the cares and anxieties of the world, our daily toil and labor, have a tendency to draw us downward to the things of the earth. And the battle with the devil, the world and sin is hard. Neither are we as yet perfectly delivered from sin, but the motions of

sin still dwells in our members. Hence, we should consider it a great blessing of our covenant God that on one day of the week we may rest from our daily toil, separate ourselves in a special sense from the world about us, and gather with the people of God, to set our mind wholly on the things that are above. Such is the idea of our weekly sabbath. The vacuum that is created by desisting from our daily toil is no end in itself. Neither is one day holier than the other. But the rest from our daily labors must serve the purpose of creating the proper opportunity for the church of Christ in the world to occupy itself wholly with things spiritual and eternal, to set its mind entirely on the things which are above, to be busy with the exceeding great promises only, and thus to be strengthened for that battle that must necessarily be fought if our whole life is to be reflection of the eternal sabbath and we are to be the friends of God in the midst of the world, blameless and without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

This is evidently the fundamental idea of the Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day 38. Instead of emphasizing what we may not do on the weekly sabbath, it insists that we are called to fill the whole day with the things concerning the kingdom of God. The ministry of the gospel and the schools must be maintained. On the day of rest I am called diligently to frequent the church of God, to hear His Word, to use the sacraments, publicly to call on the name of the Lord, and to contribute to the relief of the poor. Thus devoting the weekly sabbath entirely to the things of God's covenant and kingdom, it will bear fruit for our entire lives, so that "all the days of my life I cease from my evil works, and yield myself to the Lord, to work by His Holy Spirit in me: and thus begin in this life the eternal sabbath."

H.H.



The Lord is great, with worthy praise
Proclaim His power, His Name confess,
Within the city of our God,
Upon His mount of holiness.

With our own eyes we have beheld
What oft our fathers told before,
That God Who in His Zion dwells
Will keep her safely evermore.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of I Peter 1:14-16

Continued

Since it is sometime ago that we called attention to the setting and meaning of this particular portion of Holy Writ from I Peter, and, no doubt, the exact text is not clearly before our mind any more, I shall write out this particular passage in full.

The text reads as follows: "*as children of obedience, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lust in your ignorance: but like He Who has called you is holy so be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living; because it is written: Ye shall be holy for I am holy.*"

Just to refresh our memories, we wish to call to mind the fact that Peter here addresses the church in their new legal status to God as children, the pilgrim strangers in the midst of this world. Ours is a new Status Quo in Christ. Old things have passed away, we are saved in hope, in a living hope through the efficacious grace of God wrought in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And our sole and whole comfort is that in the day when Christ shall be revealed upon the clouds of heaven God will reward the evil for their evil, but will reward the righteous in tender mercy for their faith and patience performed in the same mercy. Viewing all things in the light of the great and final Day of the Lord is living with the loins of the spiritual mind girt up. That is sobriety in Christ. That is the clear and penetrating knowledge and grasp of the realities of the Kingdom of God and of His Christ.

In this world of sin, as long as we are "not yet" in heaven, we can only walk in spiritual sobriety and according to the Spirit of grace, by actually walking very concretely *in conversion*.

The text speaks of the actual and continuous conversion of the saints in Christ. Scripture everywhere teaches the conversion of the saints. It never speaks of the conversion of the reprobate. The Bible never tells us that we must convert the world, but Scripture teaches very clearly that the saints are to keep themselves unspotted from the world. James 1:29. For we have seen very clearly from the writings, of Calvin, Ursinus, Bavinck and others, that all conversion is never *before* faith, but that conversion in both parts, the putting off of the "old man" and the putting on of the "new man", is *out of faith*. Without faith it

is impossible to please God, because we are pleasing to God in the conversion by faith. It is a conversion of faith. See Heidelberg Catechism, Question 91.

Such is also the case in our text.

In the first place we should take careful notice on the *incentive* that is indicated in the text, as being the only incentive and spiritual possibility of conversion. Writes Peter: "*as children of obedience.*" We wish to point out a very careful touch here in Scripture. This "*children of obedience*" should not be read simply as though it were the equivalent of *obedient* children! There is quite a distinct difference between these two expressions. The latter expression would indicate the difference between children of God, namely, the difference between *obedient* and *disobedient* children. Both are then children, some walking in sin for a season and others not. But such is clearly not the intent of Peter in the expression "*children of obedience!*" In the expression in the text the notion is expressed that the children of grace, regenerated unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, are *fundamentally* and *principally* children, and, therefore, by virtue of this regenerating grace of God: *obedient!* The characteristic of the new-born children is that they are obedient with the new obedience of faith to the Gospel in Christ.

That such is the case is borne out by the following in the text.

This is borne out by the Hebraism of this expression. In Scripture we also have the term "*children of disobedience*" and that, too, as contrasted with the term "*children of light.*" Eph. 5:6-8. Only the children of God, who were darkness, but who are *now* light in the Lord can walk as children of light. Only the elect generation, a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar possession to the Lord can so walk as to show forth the praises of Him Who has called them (us) out of darkness into His marvelous light. And when the apostle Peter addresses us as "*children of obedience*" it is very clear that he addresses the church from the viewpoint, that the Church is sanctified principally in Christ, the church as to her remnant according to elective grace! Children of obedience are the Israel of God that walk according to the rule (Kanon) of faith!

The church is here, therefore, not addressed as a mixed whole, as a general audience, but Peter takes his stand in the Church and confesses to be a fellow-partaker of the like-precious faith. II Peter 1:1. In this Church he sings in joyful confession: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ, Who according to His great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, unto the inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that

fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last day. In this Church Peter takes His stand. Let it never be forgotten.

And, therefore, we do not have here a precept of the law cowing unbelievers in feigned submission, but we have the precepts of the Gospel, that is, precepts, which are a *part and parcel of the Gospel!* It is the exhortation that is implicit in the good-news of God in Christ. It is the precept which God employs by His Holy Spirit to energize to further obedience those who are obedient. It is then according to the rule; he who has receives more. Let it be understood: *receives* and not *acquires* more! It is the faith that is then stimulated in us whereby we walk in the obedience of Christ, our Head. What we now walk we walk by the faith of the Son of God.

He, who thus receives more grace, will walk in continuous conversion of faith!

The rule is laid down here, first of all, negatively. It is that we be "not conformed to the lust in former times of our ignorance." In this phrase the Apostle reminds the readers and us of what we formerly were apart from Christ and glorious faith-knowledge of the Gospel. It was the time when the Gentile-Christians still by serving the dumb idols, had not yet had their hearts opened to the Gospel of the Kingdom and of the hope of everlasting life. But that is, thanks be to God's almighty and efficacious grace, a matter of "former times." They live at the time of the writing of the Apostle in the "now" of the knowledge of the glorious Gospel in the face of Jesus Christ!

To be in this present grace wherein they stand and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God they need fulfill no *pre-requisites*. They were simply born again by the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But since we are thus born again we are *obliged* unto *new* obedience, that of not serving in the oldness of the letter but in the newness of the Holy Spirit! It is the "must" of being the new creatures in Christ in self-conscious faith, which becomes more and more *assurance* of self-conscious faith!

Certainly this self-conscious faith is that of justifying faith. Only as the justified by faith do we crucify the "old man" of deceitful lusts. These lusts of the former times in our ignorance are not merely the lust of the carnal pleasures of fornication and lasciviousness, but they refer to the entire category of all that is contrary to the spiritual nature of the law of God. This is clear by virtue of the contrast in the text. Peter says: in *all your conversation!* That means according to all the Commandments of God and

not merely according to some of them! Sanctification is not piece-meal anymore then regeneration is piece-meal. It is the sanctification of the whole man. Not merely the outside of the cup must be cleansed, but the whole cup must be cleansed. When a man is washed by the grace of God he is every whit clean. Sanctification is not the trying to make a putrid thing look good, with a thin veneer of hypocritical self-righteousness, but it is the cleansing of the inner man so that in all his manifestation he is every whit clean.

That such is the clear intent and evident teaching of the Apostle is further evident from the positive side of the walk of conversion out of faith. The Apostle writes: Be ye Holy for I am Holy!

This word from the pen of the Apostle is evidently a quotation from the Old Testament Scriptures. Lev. 11:44, 19:2, 20:27.

It is a word that gives the deepest and final ground, but also at once the only possibility of conversion and sanctification. For let it not be forgotten that the Lord, our God here speaks to us of His transcendency as well as of His immanency. Jehovah is Holy, that is, He is exalted far above all that is called creature. He is separated from the creature as the Creator. Never can the two be placed on one line. God is the exalted one dwelling as the Holy One in eternity. And He is everlastingly dedicated perfectly to Himself as the most Blessed forever, Amen! Because He is Holy all creatures are to Worship Him!

Now it would seem that the very fact that God is Holy would make it impossible to worship Him. The sinner not covered with the blood is afraid of a Holy God. He quakes with fear. How then can this be a motive to incite us to a godly walk?

The answer?

It is simply this: God *has* called us unto holiness. He constituted us a holy people, a royal-priesthood. And exactly by principally setting us in the knowledge of the blessed Gospel by faith, we are by this faith sanctified. Acts 15:9.

Thus walking in sanctifying faith we walk with the loins of our mind girt up. Nothing beclouds our vision. We see that the night is far spent and that the day is at hand; we will not walk as in the night, but in the light of day. O, the glory of this precept of the Gospel. It gives light to the simple. God's holiness, where into He calls us, is the deepest motive and sure ground of the realization of this walking in conversion.

—G. Lubbers



IN HIS FEAR

Afraid of the Gospel

(5)

God cannot be mocked.

He may not be mocked; but He cannot be mocked either.

And when one departs from the straight line of the truth, he must come back to the point of departure or else continue still further away from the truth.

That is not only a fundamental principle taught us in the Scriptures, it is also the testimony of Church History and even of our every day life.

It makes no difference how little the departure may be, one must come back from it all the way, or else he will go still further in his way of error and of a sinful walk.

And so it is that today things have come to a head; a crisis has been reached in our churches; congregations have split; individuals show by their absence from God's house on the Sabbath that they have made up their minds to go even farther away from the truth and from the upright walk than they did before.

No longer do they manifest themselves as being *afraid* of the gospel. They DARE to show you that they despise it, do not want to hear it and go where they may hear that which is more palatable to their tastes. They may, perhaps, tell you that they are sick and tired of always hearing in the preaching that there are no conditions unto salvation and that man has no prerequisites to fulfill before God gives the next installment of salvation. But they then go and sit back with joy and complete satisfaction in the pews of a church that as vehemently or even more vehemently brands as heresy an unconditional promise of God to the elect that He will give them salvation thru faith. They may tell you that they are full to their chins of conditions, but that is not so. Their behaviour shows that this is not so. For they run as fast as they can to go where they will be filled even more with conditional theology. After all that theology has something for man, flatters him and does not put him in such a hopeless and helpless light as the truth of an unconditional election to an unconditional promise of an unconditional salvation!

We like to show you, again, from the writings of the Rev. M. Gritters that unless one returns back to the straight line of the truth, he will go farther into

error, perhaps farther than he at first intended to go.

We find on page 28 of his book, "The Testimony of Dordt," this beautiful reformed statement, which he made when he was not afraid of the Gospel, "Art. X . . . This article, with one finger points to the Total Depravity of those who hear the Gospel, and with the other finger points to the Sovereign grace of God which gives the elect sinner the grace to obey and receive it. The article asserts this in one clause when it says, that God 'Confers upon them faith and repentance.' As also everywhere speaking about these things, the Scriptures assert that faith is the Gift of God, as, for instance in Phil. 1:29 Scripture saith, 'For unto you it is GIVEN, in behalf of Christ . . . to believe on Him.' Through the mysterious working of His Grace God bends the will so that it believes, and humbles the heart so that it repents. Showing by the way also, that faith and repentance are the requisites for salvation, and these requisites Grace confers upon us. And God confers these gifts, as the articles say upon His people as He has CHOSEN them. God does not confer them upon all people without any distinction, but God confers the gifts of repentance and faith upon the elect. Hence, the Gospel preaching itself is never grace, but rather the idea is that, through the preaching of the Gospel God confers grace upon the elect. The conferring of these gifts is not general but particular; not left to the free-will of man but determined by the counsel of God's election. The more also that we hear the Gospel the more we must be upon our knees, praying God that He, through Christ, may confer and increasingly confer, upon us the gifts of repentance and faith."

This passage, surely, shows us that the conditional theology that is maintained so tenaciously today by the Rev. Gritters and his colleagues who have left the Protestant Reformed Churches and who are afraid of the Gospel we preach (the *only* Gospel for it preaches a complete salvation that is unconditionally obtained by the elect), that this conditional theology was not at all known by the Rev. Gritters ten years ago. Not even when he writes, as above, that faith and repentance are the *requisites* for salvation. At that time he embraced the truth of Scripture and of the Canons, for he declares that *God confers these gifts upon the elect*. Note that he does not say that God requires faith and repentance of *man* in order for him to attain to salvation. With a mind and heart that was pure of the Arminian taint of conditional theology he says that faith and repentance are requisites for salvation. No more! Well, yes he does say more. He says that GOD CONFERS THEM upon His elect. And hence, ten years ago, he writes by implication that God requires these OF HIMSELF, for

He confers what He requires. Faith and repentance are required because God has elected us to salvation. Thus GOD'S DECREE OF ELECTION requires faith and repentance IN US but not OF US. God CONFERS these *upon* us and does not set them *before* us as pre-requisites.

At that time he had never heard of that nonsense of "conditions which WE fulfill by God's grace." That is nonsense! For it is meaningless double talk. It says that there are conditions and at the same time there are not conditions. It says that there is something God apart from His grace demands of us, and that these things are at the same time given us in His grace. Let us explain. Were I to meet a penniless deeply indebted beggar on the street. Were I to say to him, give me ten dollars, right this very moment, and on that condition I will assume all your debts and and care for you the rest of your life. I would be talking nonsense to that man. I would be mocking him, ridiculing him, making a fool of him. But note how I would destroy my condition, were I to say, well, my good man, I know that you cannot meet my condition, so I am going to give you the ten dollars to give to me. I demand something of you, and I am going to do that thing myself which I demand of you. Have I not destroyed my condition? Have I not taken it away? Have I not said to that man, my good man there is no condition for you to fulfill. I will assume all your debts and care for you the rest of your life *regardless* of the fact that you did not first do something for me.

And so to return to these words of the Rev. Gritters, written when he saw things the way we always believed and maintained them as Protestant Reformed Churches. GOD CONFERS THEM UPON THE ELECT. Beautiful truth! But that beautiful truth means exactly that these things are not conditions which man must fulfill. They are however, things which he will and must ENJOY. And they are required not in order that he may be saved, but they are requirements for salvation because THEY ARE PART OF THAT SALVATION! They are not, even by the teachings of the Rev. Gritters, PRE-requisites but requisites. He did not dare in those days say that these had to be there BEFORE salvation could be given us. He said that God confers them upon us *as part of our salvation*, AND AS THE THINGS UNTO WHICH WE ARE ELECTED.

Another very interesting element in this connection is that which we penned down at the beginning of this article. One must return to the straight line of the truth or he will go farther and farther from the straight line. And it is evident that the Rev. Gritters has the LAST YEAR gone farther from his writings

in this well-worked-out study of the Canons than he went even TWO YEARS ago.

For when he and his consistory drew up a document—which undoubtedly was chiefly his work which the consistory adopted—to send to the Synod of 1951 in order to seek the rejection of the Declaration of Principles, he did not believe in prerequisites YET. On page 133 of the Acts of Synod of 1951 we read the following from him and his consistory:

"2. Second, in the Declaration (under C) it is declared 'that faith is no prerequisite or condition unto salvation.' WHICH IS TRUE OF COURSE, but are we to conclude that this IMPLIED HERESY pertains to Rev. Petter because he used the term 'conditions?' Then the Declaration must tell us plainly what it wants so that we may know where we are." (The capitalization in both instances is ours, J.A.H.)

Indeed, we do by that very Declaration know now where we are and also where those who want conditional theology are. For notice that only two years ago the Rev. Gritters rejected the idea of faith being a *prerequisite* unto salvation. He says that it is true that faith is not a prerequisite unto salvation and that it is heresy to say that it is a prerequisite unto salvation.

And yet, he and his consistory rush to recognize and take their stand besides a group that maintains exactly that heresy today! When a minister of the Gospel is suspended because he says that our act of conversion is such a prerequisite to entering the kingdom, and a goodly number of his elders defend him in that statement, the Rev. Gritters will recognize them as a consistory in the Protestant Reformed Churches. His consistory did not come to Classis West and say that the suspension and deposition was illegal but that the group so illegally deposed should by Classis West—which seemed to think that it was the Synod—be admonished to confess its error of defending such heretical statements. Oh, No! It was ready to take to its bosom that group of men with their heretical statement EVEN THOUGH IT REJECTED SUCH HERESY two years before. It has not one word of admonition, of rebuke, of warning for that faction of what was once the consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids. It wants to maintain man's responsibility but does not hold that group of men responsible for what it had itself once condemned.

When you are afraid of the Gospel, you apparently are not afraid to do illegal things. —J. Heys

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Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

EARLY VIEWS OF THE CHURCH (Cont'd)

Continuing with the early views of the organization of the Church as entertained by the early Church Fathers, we now call attention to Irenaeus. In our preceding article we called attention to the views as expressed by Ignatius, one of the Apostolic Fathers and bishop of the church at Antioch. The great esteem in which he held the office of bishop appears from all his writings, although we also called attention to the fact that Ignatius also held the office of the presbyter or elder in high regard. Later the office of bishop was held in much higher esteem.

Irenaeus is reputed to have been the first to have advocated the institution of bishop as a diocesan office and as the continuation of the apostolate. From him we quote the following quotation: "It is within the power of all, therefore, in every Church, who may wish to see the truth, to contemplate clearly the tradition of the apostles manifested throughout the whole world; and we are in a position to reckon up those who were by the apostles instituted bishops in the Churches, and to demonstrate the succession of these men to our own times; those who neither taught nor knew of anything like what these heretics rave about. For if the apostles had known hidden mysteries, which they were in the habit of imparting to the "perfect" apart and privily from the rest, they would have delivered them especially to those to whom they were committing the Churches themselves. For they were desirous that these men should be very perfect and blameless in all things, whom also they were leaving behind as their successors, delivering up their own place of government to these men; which men, if they discharged their functions honestly, would be a great boon to the Church, but if they should fall away, the direst calamity . . . Since, however, it would be very tedious, in such a volume as this, to reckon up the successions of all the Churches, we do put to confusion all those who, in whatever manner, whether by an evil self-pleasing, by vain-glory, or by blindness and perverse opinion, assemble in unauthorized meetings; we do this, I say, by indicating that tradition derived from the apostles, the very great, the very ancient, and universally known Church founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul; as also pointing out the faith preached to men, which comes down to our time by means of the succession

of the bishops. For it is a matter of necessity that every Church should agree with this Church, on account of its preeminent authority, that is, the faithful everywhere, inasmuch as the apostolical tradition has been preserved continuously by those faithful men who exist everywhere The blessed apostles, then, having founded and built up the Church, committed into the hands of Linus the office of the episcopate. Of this Linus, Paul makes mention in the Epistles to Timothy. To him succeeded Anacletus; and after him, in the third place from the apostles, Clement was allotted the bishopric. This man, as he had seen the blessed apostles, and had been conversant with them, might be said to have the preaching of the apostles still echoing in his ears, and their traditions before his eyes. Nor was he alone in this for there were many still remaining who had received instructions from the apostles. In the time of this Clement, no small dissension having occurred among the brethren at Corinth, the Church in Rome dispatched a most powerful letter to the Corinthians, exhorting them to peace, renewing their faith, and declaring the tradition which it had lately received from the apostles, proclaiming the one God, omnipotent, the Maker of heaven and earth, the Creator of man, who brought on the deluge, and called Abraham who led the people from the land of Egypt, spake with Moses, set forth the law, sent the prophets, and who has prepared fire for the devil and his angels. From this document, whosoever chooses to do so, may learn that He, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, was preached by the Churches, and may also understand the apostolical tradition of the Church, since this Epistle is of older date than these men who are now propagating falsehood, and who conjure into existence another god beyond the Creator and the Maker of all existing things. To this Clement there succeeded Evaristus. Alexander followed Evaristus; then, sixth from the apostles, Sixtus was appointed; after him, Telephorus, who was gloriously martyred; then Hyginus; after him, Pius; then after him, Anicetus. Soter having succeeded Anicetus, Eleuthirius does now, in the twelfth place from the apostles, hold the inheritance of the episcopate. In this order, and by this succession, the ecclesiastical tradition from the apostles, and the preaching of the truth, have come down to us. And this is most abundant proof that there is one and the same vivifying faith, which has been preserved in the Church from the apostles until now, and handed down in truth."

In connection with this lengthy quotation we would make the following remarks. We see readily that this is a rather remarkable quotation. Neither is it difficult to understand that the Romish Church of the present, claiming that the pope is indeed the successor

of the apostles, feels itself considerably strengthened because of writings such as this quotation of Irenaeus. Irenaeus lived later than Ignatius (he is alleged to have suffered martyrdom in the year, 200 A.D.) and presents here a more advanced development of the episcopate. Of course, the accuracy of these remarks of Ignatius may well be questioned. May we conclude, for example, that his presentation of the successors of the apostles is just as accurate as his remark that it was Abraham who led the people of God out of the land of Egypt? He writes, does he not, that the one God, omnipotent, the Maker of heaven and earth, the Creator of man, called Abraham who led the people forth from the land of Egypt. However, this may have been merely a slip on the part of this eminent church father and does not, of course, show conclusively that he also erred in his presentation of the historical successors of the apostles.

We do well to bear in mind, however, that his presentation of the successors of the apostles is based upon tradition. Having suffered martyrdom about the year, 200 A.D., he belongs to the age of the Church Fathers after the era of the Apostolic Fathers. One can easily understand that this tradition had been fairly well established and entrenched in the consciousness of the Church at the time of this Church Father. Particularly worthy of note is Irenaeus' reference to the tradition that the church at Rome had been founded and organized by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul. We know that Paul was in Rome. Acts 27 and 28 clearly prove this fact. But there is nothing in Scripture to warrant the supposition that the apostle, Peter, had also been in Rome at one time or another.

Quoting the International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, we read concerning Peter the following: "The tradition is that he died a martyr's death at Rome about 67 A.D., when about seventy five years old. His Lord and Master had predicted a violent death for him (John 21:18, 19) which it is thought came to pass by crucifixion under Nero. It is said that at his own desire he was crucified head downward, feeling himself unworthy to resemble his Master in his death. It should be observed, however, that the tradition that he visited Rome is only tradition and nothing more, resting, as it does, partly upon a miscalculation of some of the early Fathers who assume that he went to Rome in 42 A.D. immediately after his deliverance from prison (Acts 12:17)." Schaff says this "is irreconcilable with the silence of Scripture, and even with the mere fact of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, written in 58, since the latter says not a word of Peter's previous labors in that city, and he himself never built on other men's foundations (Rom .15:20; II Cor. 10:15, 16)."

And this is not all. The observation of the above quotation that the apostle, Paul, never mentions the labors of the apostle, Peter, in his epistle to the Romans is certainly well taken and much to the point. However, we should notice that Irenaeus informs us that the blessed apostles, having founded and built up the Church, committed them into the hands of Linus the office of the episcopate. There is a tradition that Linus was bishop of the Church at Rome, and that his consecration to the government of the Roman church as its first bishop was one of the dying acts of the apostle, Paul. Concerning this Linus we read in II Tim. 4:21. And there is certainly nothing in this Scriptural reference to suggest anything which might even resemble his elevation to the office of bishop at Rome. And we may surely add that there is nothing in all of Holy Writ to suggest the thought that the apostles designated and appointed men to be their successors. It is certainly Scriptural that the apostolic office was a special office and that it was not transmitted to men who were bishops in the churches then in existence. We have already called attention to the reason why the episcopal form of church government should become as prominent as it did in the early years of the New Dispensational Church.

Be all this as it may, reading the quotation of Irenaeus, one need not doubt that the office of bishop was held in tremendously high esteem during the New Testament infancy of the Church of God. In fact, this noted Church Father sets forth the thought that these bishops were the successors of the apostles, that Linus was ordained to be the first bishop of Rome by Paul himself. Moreover, he even calls attention to the succession of bishops in the Roman church. This, of course, we do not intend to dispute. But we do dispute the allegation that these bishops were successors of the apostles and appointed and ordained by these apostles.

The Lord willing, we will continue with this high esteem in which the office of bishop was held in our following article. Then we expect to call attention to two other prominent Church Fathers: Tertullian and Cyprian. It is especially the latter who emphasized the priestly dignity of the bishops and that they were the successors of the apostles.

—H. Veldman

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In sweet communion, Lord, with Thee
I constantly abide;
My hand Thou holdest in Thy own
To keep me near Thy side.

The Voice of Our Fathers

The Canons of Dordrecht

PART TWO

EXPOSITION OF THE CANONS

FIRST HEAD OF DOCTRINE OF DIVINE PREDESTINATION

Introduction

That the chapter concerning divine predestination stands first in the *Canons* and is the longest of the five heads of doctrine is, of course, no accident. From the historical viewpoint this has its occasion in the fact that the Scriptural truth of predestination bore the brunt of the Arminian attack, and that it was on this subject of predestination that the Arminians expressed themselves in the very first of their *Five Articles*. It was to be expected, therefore, in view of the apologetic character of the *Canons*, that they too would speak first on the subject of divine predestination. However, from the doctrinal viewpoint it is also proper that this should be the first concern of the *Canons*, since the truth of divine predestination is the foundation of the entire structure of the truth concerning our salvation. To the credit of the Arminians it must be said that, although they erred concerning the truth, they showed no ignorance of the fundamental issue, but recognized the fact that if they were to promulgate their doctrine of a conditional salvation, they must above all overthrow the Reformed conception of divine predestination. That is at least more than some pseudo-Calvinists will acknowledge in our own day. Our fathers at Dordrecht, as well as the Arminians, also recognized the cardinal importance of the truth of divine predestination, and in the construction of the temple of the truth which we have in our *Canons* they therefore accorded to this truth of predestination the place of prime importance. And they labored long and carefully, in order that this foundation might be properly and correctly laid.

Nor is the significance of this carefully laid foundation to be overlooked. When in eighteen clear and concise articles, together with nine rejections of errors, our fathers in unmistakable language have delineated the Reformed conception of divine predestination, there is, on the one hand, absolutely no excuse for ignorance on the part of Reformed people of either the meaning or the significance of God's sovereign predestination. The church, being led into all the truth

by the Spirit of truth, has said, with the Scriptures in hand: "This we confess. This is the truth of Holy Scripture. Here are the implications of that truth for the gospel of your salvation. If you would speak the truth, if you would indeed be Reformed, then here is the clear line of the truth." And on the other hand, inasmuch as the *Canons* function as a bulwark, a defense, of the truth of God's Word concerning our salvation, they clearly mark the line of battle, both for friend and foe. It is only too often the case that the enemies of the truth of divine predestination make a caricature of this truth, in order then to do battle against it. They set up a straw man of some sort. They purposely substitute fatalism or determinism for the Scriptural truth of predestination. Or they picture the predestinating God of the Scriptures as a horrible tyrant, who delights in the desolation of little infants. Or they picture the predestined creature as a passive stock and block. And having charged the Reformed confessor with all these horrors, they proceed to do battle against their own caricature of the Reformed confession. The result is that these enemies of the truth often seem to leave the field of battle victorious. And, sad to say, the simple and undiscerning are often confused by these tactics, led to believe that indeed there is something seriously wrong with our Reformed view of predestination, and deceived into compromising or even surrendering completely. The Arminians were adept at such tactics, as our fathers well knew; and the enemies of the Reformed faith in general still follow this plan of battle, in order to deceive the simple. Only, in the *Canons* the line of battle is clearly defined. We say, as it were, in this First Head of Doctrine: "Put your straw men away now. Be done with your caricatures of the Reformed faith. When you fight against fatalism and determinism, or whatever it may be, you do not fight us. Here is the truth. Here is our confession. Here is the battle line. Here is our first line of defense. Would you vanquish us, you must make a frontal assault against this bulwark, defined in these eighteen positive and nine negative articles. But remember! The timbers of this bulwark are firmly fastened in the foundation of the infallible Word of God. And unless you can destroy that foundation, you will surely leave the field of battle utterly routed." Likewise, therefore, it befits the Reformed confessor to find his defense behind this bulwark of the truth.

As to the method followed in these articles, it will immediately be evident that the *Canons* are apologetic in character. This is true not only of the negative portion, the Rejection of Errors, but also of the positive part, in which the true doctrine is expounded. Even while they develop the true doctrine, the fathers,

as it were, have one eye on the Arminians. Thus, for example, one immediately feels in the first article that the *Canons* are on the defensive: an objection is being met, namely, the argument that the decree of predestination is unrighteous. And so, by way of defending the true doctrine, our fathers at the same time develop and define that true doctrine.

Of the contents of this first chapter we will give no general oversight here, beyond that which is furnished in the title, "Of Divine Predestination." Rather will we allow the various articles to speak for themselves.

Article 1. As all men have sinned in Adam, lie under the curse, and are deserving of eternal death, God would have done no injustice by leaving them all perish, and delivering them over to: condemnation on account of sin, according to the words of the apostle, Rom. 8:19, "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." And verse 23: "for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." And Rom. 6:23: "for the wages of sin is death."

Our English translation of this article¹ is not as literally correct nor as forceful as it might be. The article undoubtedly intends to emphasize a universal human *guilt*, and this is more clearly expressed in both the Latin original and the Dutch translation of this article. The English rendering, "lie under the curse, and are deserving of eternal death," is in the Latin, "*et rei sint facti maledictionis et mortis aeternae*," which is more aptly translated in the Dutch, "*en des vloeks en eeuwigen doods zijn schuldig geworden* (and are become guilty of the curse and of eternal death)." The translation, "by leaving them all to perish," is also an extremely free rendering of the Latin, "*si univ-ersum genus humanum in peccato et maledictione relinquere.....voluisset*." Here again the Dutch is much more accurate with its, "*indien Hij het ganse menselijke geslacht in de zonde en vervloeking had willen laten* (in case He had willed to leave the entire human race in sin and the curse.)" A little more accuracy in the rendering, therefore, would have emphasized more strongly the idea of a common human liability to death.

It is evident that the *Canons* here proceed, in their introduction of the truth of predestination, from the viewpoint of God's righteousness. The question is: Can God be charged with injustice in election and reprobation? More stringently formulated the ques-

tion is: Is not God unjust in His decree of reprobation? As we indicated above, when we took this article as an example of the apologetic character of the *Canons*, the occasion for choosing this viewpoint lay in the controversy with the Arminians. They sought to present matters so, that the Reformed churches made of God an unrighteous tyrant, who arbitrarily saved some and damned others. That is a charge whose stinging lash Reformed people feel also today.

Let us examine the implications of this charge which is met by Article 1. It is noteworthy, first of all, that the accusation which is here answered by the *Canons* is purely rationalistic. It is the product of human reason, yea, of sinful reason, which charges God, the only Righteous Judge, with unrighteousness. And a careful examination of Arminianism will reveal that such rationalism characterizes its entire view. We will undoubtedly have opportunity to repeat this observation in our further studies. And how striking it is that those who are themselves guilty of such rationalism are known for their accusations of rationalism against Calvinism. That is much worse than the proverbial pot calling the kettle black. In the second place, it must be observed that this charge of divine injustice in predestination can only be brought against those who maintain that God's predestinating decree is sovereign and free. Under the Arminian conception of a predestination on the basis of foreseen faith or unbelief such an accusation is said to be unnecessary. The Arminian view is alleged to have exactly this advantage, that it leaves God righteous when it makes the matter of man's salvation or damnation a matter of free will. But, it is alleged, if God is sovereign in predestination, if His predestinating decree has its source, its cause, its occasion only in Himself, then God is an unjust and horrible tyrant. Ultimately, therefore, this first article maintains not only the righteousness of the predestinating God, but the sovereign freedom of the God of our salvation. Finally, let us notice how inevitably our confession concerning God is tied in with the whole subject matter of the *Canons* from the very outset. God and His works are not to be separated. And so it is that it is not merely God's decrees that are at stake here, but the decreeing God! The Arminians attacked not merely the righteousness of the decree of predestination, but the righteousness of God! They attack not only the absolute freedom of the decree, but the sovereign freedom of God! And to this our *Canons* give answer here.

—H. C. Hoeksema

¹) The English rendering here used is taken from "The Psalter."



DECENCY and ORDER

The Lawful Calling

F. The Exhortations

It is rather important that we give special attention to the concluding part of the form for the ordination of ministers of the Word. This part contains a most serious charge or exhortation of God to both the one who has been ordained and to the congregation in which he has received his office. And, as is always the case, when the exhortations of God are not heeded, the results are spiritually damaging. For the practical and spiritual well-being of the church, therefore, and the success of the ministry of her pastor, it is imperative that both the church and her minister do more than merely *read the form* but that they especially attend with all earnestness to the charge given them from the Word of God. Doing this continually the ministry will be blessed and the joy of the Holy Spirit will prevail in the church.

The newly ordained minister is charged first. His charge is, first and foremost, that he shall "feed the church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood." Today, the success of the minister is no longer measured by this standard. He is regarded as a good minister who is a *nice fellow, good sport, good mixer and an eloquent speaker* even though he feeds the church with stones and he who ministers the pure bread of life is persecuted and regarded as out of line with the times. But that is not strange for so it has always been and those very things are the earmarks of a good preacher. Doesn't Paul, a faithful apostle and servant of Christ, tell us much of his own reproaches and afflictions in II Corinthians 11:23-33. And isn't it written plainly to Timothy that the only true standard by which a *good minister* is to be gauged is: "If thou shalt put the brethren in remembrance of these things thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained." (I Tim. 4:6)

That then is the *only* calling of the minister of God. He must look for none other. He must feed the sheep of Christ in the green pastures of the truth. He must proclaim to them the whole counsel of God as revealed in the Scriptures. He is charged "before God and the Lord Jesus Christ to preach the Word; be instant in season and out of season, reprove; exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." (II Tim. 4:1, 2) He must comfort the sick, strengthen the weak; lead the simple; admonish the erring; bring joy and peace

to the sorrowing. And all of this he must do with the Word of God.

In realizing this charge unto the holy office three things are requisite for the minister.

1. He must love Christ! The love of Jesus constrains him! In that love is the love of Christ's sheep whom he pastures and feeds. That love is then not a sentimental attachment of the pastor to his church, a bond of flesh, but it is the spiritual bond whereby pastor and flock are united in the spirit of truth. Love and truth always go together. (Eph. 4:15) Without the truth, love is impossible. For that reason the pastor is charged here also "to take the oversight of the flock." He must rule them and in the love of Christ demand of them that they walk in the truth. That alone is love. And when there are those who will not heed, it is not love to leave them in the gutter of sin but, together with the elders, the pastor must apply the means of love to save them and administer the discipline of Christ.

Thus is the pastor charged "to love Christ and feed His sheep."

2. The second requisite is that he must be diligent in the meditation and study of the Word of God. The form states: "Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, meditate upon those things, give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all; take heed to thy doctrine, and continue steadfast therein."

The pastor must be a student. A student of the Word! Only when he, himself, delves diligently and deeply into the riches of the Word will he bring forth treasurers for the church. Even as a good cook is diligent in preparing the food for the family, so a good pastor is diligent in preparing the spiritual meal of the church. And the church must not then think that her minister has nothing to do and has all kinds of time to loiter here and there. He does not! Not if he hears his charge. Not if he understands his calling. Oh, no! He must labor incessantly to prepare food that is wholly pure of the poisonous mixtures of deceit and falsehood.

3. And, finally, he "must patiently bear all suffering and oppressions as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." Suffer he surely will when he labors to faithfully execute such a charge. Opposition will continually arise from within his own sinful flesh as well as from without. Those that are carnal will withstand him and the reproaches of men will be heaped upon him because he refuses to accede to the modern clamours and trends.

He must stand fast. All this he must bear with patience and so also be an example unto the people of

God in "word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. "Then his labor will not be grievous but will be joy in the Lord being performed in the assurance that "when the chief Shepherd shall appear, he will receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

A solemn charge!

A difficult labor!

And a glorious end!

"Therefore, beloved brother, take heed to thy calling!"

The congregation, too, is charged by the Word of God. Most beautiful does the form of ordination express this and we must know it to be our individual calling to heed this exhortation and have it always before us as we walk among God's people in the midst of the church. Then alone will decency, order and peace prevail in the congregation. Then our faith expressed in the thirtieth article of our Confession will not be a matter of dead letter but will be a living experience. There we read:

"Moreover, that this holy ordinance (concerning the offices in the church) of God may not be violated or slighted, we say that every one ought to esteem the ministers of God's Word and the elders of the church, very highly for their work's sake, and be at peace with them without murmuring, strife or contention as much as possible."

This means that the minister (and elders too though at present we are discussing only the ordination of ministers) whom the church ordains to the office must be esteemed highly at all times by the church and that, not because of his person or because he is better or different or holier than other men, but alone because of the sanctity of the office in which he functions. And, the minister must know too, that his person cannot really be divorced from his work and that, therefore, should he at any time reveal himself as unworthy of the office, he at that time also loses the esteem and high regard of the congregation. This must inevitably be so because the respect of the congregation may never be to the person of the minister in separation from his office. They may never set him up on a pedestal and hold him in high reputation as a man. That would be idolatry, the worship of the creature. Rather, he must be esteemed highly *for his work's sake*. As long, therefore, as he properly performs the work of his office, he must be held in that estimation.

This becomes plain further in the charge that is given to the church in the form for ordination. She is told to "receive her minister *in the Lord* with glad-

ness." (Underscore ours) She is exhorted "to hear and receive the word which God speaks through him" and that that word is then not to be received as "the word of man" but "as the word of God Himself". Understand, too, that the church must desire to hear nothing from her minister but the Word of God and require of him nothing other than that he bring them that Word as an ambassador of Jesus Christ. The church must certainly be able to discern between the Word of God and the word of man and the former she is duty bound to hear and heed while the latter she must reject. For she is charged "to be submissive to that Word, obeying them that have the rule over her because they watch over her souls as those that must give account."

From all this it should be evident what the calling of every member of the church is. Christ Jesus has instituted the office of the ministry of the word in the church. Through men whom He places in that office it pleases Christ to speak unto His church and to reveal unto her His holy will. To that revelation she must be attentive and walk according to it without murmuring and complaining. To the rule and government of the church that is according to that revelation she must always be submissive.

Doing this joyfully "the peace of God shall enter your house." Likewise upon the rebellious and disobedient abides the wrath of God. But the congregation, walking in relation to the ministry of the Word according to her solemn charge, lives in the assurance of hope. Through the Word which she hears and heeds she receives an ever increasing assurance of the reward of the eternal inheritance which shall be hers and wherein all things shall forever be harmonious with and in submission to the will of God in Jesus our Lord.

Congregation, that is a holy calling!

And also a difficult way accompanied by much tribulation!

But the end thereof is certain! Eternal life through Christ!

And so, the exhortations to the minister and the church are concluded with this beautiful confession: "Since no man is of himself fit for any of these things, let us call upon God with thanksgiving."

Pray about it! Fervently!

That we ministers and churches, through the grace and Holy Spirit of Christ may hear and heed with all faithfulness the solemn exhortations unto our calling.

G. Vanden Berg

ALL AROUND US

Theology And Schism

Under the above caption Dr. James Daane writes in the *Reformed Journal* of September, 1953. We gather that the theology of which he speaks has to do with the matter of common grace, while the schism to which he refers is the one which has recently taken place in the Protestant Reformed Churches. We have not the room to quote his entire article which is indeed very interesting, but here are a few quotes:

"The recent break-up of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids is a sad event in the history of Reformed Churches. It is cause for more than a localized grief. There should be a general sorrow in Reformed Churches over this new rending of the body of Christ within the family of the Reformed Churches. Although it would seem that this event is a historical justification for the Three Points of 1924 it would be less than Christian if we of the Christian Reformed Churches viewed it as merely an event of self-justification. Such an attitude would be sinful. For whatever else this event may be, it should be experienced as a rending of the body of Christ, whose body we are.

The story of the division and sub-division of the Reformed Churches in Holland and America is not a pleasant story. While separation is not limited to the history of these Churches, it is significant that so much separation has taken place within the churches who possess such a strong denominational consciousness. This new event of separation which has taken place within the Prot. Ref. Churches is cause therefore not only for grief but for careful reflection. It thrusts questions upon us which we ought to face anew. Why do Reformed Churches continue to break-up? When is a separation necessary and legitimate, and when sinful?"

Such are the opening remarks in Dr. Daane's article. He then proceeds under separate headings to delineate on his subject. Under the first, which he titles "Our Centennial", referring of course to the centennial which is to be celebrated next year in the Christian Reformed Churches, he warns against "mutual admiration and self-praise, coupled with a thanking of the Lord that we are not as other churches," and exhorts to a careful reflection on such a question as: "When and on what grounds is it legitimate to raise up an independent Reformed church alongside of an existing one?" Writes he: "Proper centennial thinking will require that we think on the schisms that appeared

within our own churches. The history spelled by the Berean and Protestant Reformed Churches should not be ignored. It is a part of our history. These went out from our Church, not from another. Their theologies were developed within our denomination, not in some other denomination. This part of our history which gave birth to these theologies and these Churches may not be regarded as forgotten pages."

Under the next heading which he titles "Am I My Brother's Keeper?" Dr. Daane seems to be pained by the treatment his churches have given those who were cast out of her midst. Writes he: "We shall need the humility and courage to ask ourselves whether we have forsaken and abandoned the churches that went out from us to the hurt of their own errors. Have we dissociated ourselves from them as though they were no concern of ours, perhaps the more easily to take pride in our rightness? Have been our brother's keeper or has our brotherly love stood still at our denominational borders?" Dr. Daane then continues and makes this startling observation: "The record shows that we have not and our failure deprives us of an opportunity to render real service now. *Although they do not admit it, those of the Protestant Reformed Churches who now disagree with the Rev. H. Hoeksema have taken at least one theological step back toward the Christian Reformed Church.* For this we can take no credit. Long ago we terminated the theological conversation about common grace. This places us at a distinct disadvantage now, for the present situation in the Protestant Reformed Church is hardly the best psychological moment to enter the discussion. *Yet there would be point in demonstrating, if it could be done within the context of an existing theological conversation, that those who differ from Hoeksema and affirm the rightful place of 'conditions' within Reformed theology have thereby theologically conceded that grace can after all be offered inasmuch as a condition is in its very nature of the essence of an offer.* None can predict what might have been. But in view of what has now happened, it is not too fanciful to think that something very good might have come from a continuation of the common grace question with the Protestant Reformed Churches. In any case, it would have been no more than brotherly concern for those who are of us, though they went out from us. If the theological issue of 1924 was significant enough to warrant a church split, it was also of sufficient significance to warrant a continuation of the theological conversation in the hope of a healing of the breach .

Dr. Daane seems quite certain that the common grace conversation was terminated for the sake of the peace of the church. But with this he is not at all satisfied. He claims that the doctrine of common grace is

no "small bit of theology with no large importance." He says: "If we should come to think so, then we would have to regard the action of 1924 which resulted in the creation of the Protestant Reformed Churches as a very large mistake. . . . Truth is something to believe, and something by which to live. If common grace was a truth which warranted a break within our denomination, then it was a truth of large theological stature, something by which to live . . . The claim that common grace should not be stressed too much should sound very strange in a church which in 1924 stressed it so much as to make the Three Points of common grace an occasion for split in our denomination."

Daane argues that "the doctrine of common grace is no mere appendix to Reformed theology. It is a vital organ in the body of Reformed Theology. Surrender of the doctrine of common grace would affect the very nature of our theology."

Dr. Daane wants the common grace discussion to be continued. Writes he: "The denial of common grace arose out of a theological spirit that existed within our churches. Although the denial was so strengthened by the considerable theological ability of Herman Hoeksema that his name has both in America and Europe come to be associated with a definite theological position, yet the fact remains that the denial arose out of a theological spirit that existed in the bosom of our churches. This should guard us against the unrealistic fancy that only one or two of that generation were touched by that spirit, and that the next generation, trained by the preceding one, would be wholly immune to that spirit. Present differences concerning common grace indicate that the spirit of Hoeksema's denial are not yet dead . . . Looking back over the years it is not too much to say that our languid post-1924 interest in common grace at least suggests the possibility that if Hoeksema had moved more slowly and the issue had not been settled in so hurried a fashion, Hoeksema might well have brought a much larger sector of the church under the banner of his thought."

Dr. Daane writes much more which we are sorry we have no more room to quote. But this much is plain. In the first place, it is our opinion that he has correctly observed that those in our present controversy who have disagreed with Hoeksema "have taken at least one theological step back toward the Christian Reformed Church." Whether they will admit it or not, those who believe in and teach a conditional theology have no right of separate existence from the Christian Reformed Churches. And we would advise

them to leave us and go where they can live in agreement under one ecclesiastical roof.

In the second place, we are happy that Daane admits that his churches have neglected the Protestant Reformed Churches all these years. Every overture our churches sent to them reminding them of their sin was ignored. Let the Christian Reformed Churches in their Centennial acknowledge this.

Thirdly, we agree with Daane that the common grace issue is not a small thing. We have always maintained that the Christian Reformed Churches have an entirely different world and life view than we do.

Fourthly, we can also agree with Daane that if the Christian Reformed Churches had not so prematurely cast out the Rev. Hoeksema he "might well have brought a much larger sector of the church under the banner of his thought." People whose eyes the Lord opens have no trouble following him in his thought because it is generally based upon the truth of Scripture and the Confessions. He is a Reformed man, you know, the Synod of 1924 being witness. And why shouldn't those in the Christian Reformed Churches who still love the old Reformed truth not follow him. It is still not too late for them to repudiate the error of common grace, to come out and follow him. We advise them to do so.

—M. Schipper



IN MEMORIAM

The Board of Adams Street Protestant Reformed School hereby expresses heartfelt sympathy with Mr. John Hamstra in the loss of his father:

MR. JOHN HAMSTRA, Sr.

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

Adams St. Prot. Ref. School Board
J. Heys, Pres.
A. Vermeer, Sec'y.

Grand Rapids, Michigan