

# THE STANDARD

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## MEDITATION

### The Message of Comfort

"I have seen his ways, and I will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord and I will heal him. But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

—Isaiah 57:18-21

Who hath believed our report!

That is what Isaiah cried a little way back with respect to the humiliation of the Redeemer. And the implication is: no one believed the report of that suffering Servant. All misunderstood Him.

But Isaiah could just as well have introduced this text with the same question, for it is unbelievable.

Imagine: in the immediate context the Lord had said about His people: "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart."

Well, what would you expect? How would you and I finish this miserable story of backsliding and transgression? This way: "and therefore I destroyed those miserable sinners!" But instead of that we have our text before us. And in that text God says: I have seen his ways and I will heal him!

How can we ever explain it?

It is the everlasting Gospel of the unspeakable love of God for His sinful people.

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Who are they?

Who are the objects of this Divine message of comfort?

No, they are not all men. They are not even all of the historical Israel. This is plain from the negative side of the text: "but the wicked are like the troubled sea." Isaiah did not have in mind the wicked that dwelled in Edom, Moab, Egypt and Mesopotamia. Oh no, but he had in mind the wicked in Israel.

But how must we understand this? Did not Isaiah describe the wicked in vers 17, and are not the objects of the wondrous comfort of Jehovah men who abound in the iniquity of their covetousness?

Yes, but there is a difference between elect wicked and reprobate wicked. To the elect wicked God says: I am going to heal you. I saw your ways, even the ways of your heart, but I will both lead you and heal you. And doing so I will restore comforts unto you.

The objects of the comforts of my text are those that are loved of God from all eternity. That is the Gospel.

Understand it? No. I cannot. But it is true nevertheless. My text, and thousands like it, are the proof for such glad tidings.

If you are an object of that wondrous comfort, then I would have you attend to your description, a description you can trust for it is the Holy One of Israel who provides it.

You are characterized by iniquity of covetousness. No doubt, it refers to our covetousness of natural things, of the earth and earthly treasures. And to grasp for those things is iniquity indeed. God did not create us for that foul purpose.

Further, you and I are described as being froward in the way of our heart. That is serious indeed, for out of the heart are the issues of life. If we are froward in the way of our heart, then our name is froward. And froward is that we turn our back upon the living God and hasten to our idols.

We are sick with a deathly illness for God says that He will heal us. Ours is the sickness of death by nature. That is where God finds us. And in the midst of death He regenerates us unto life eternal.

We are far away from God for the text tells us that God will lead us. We have gone astray, but God will lead us back to the old paths, the pathway which leads to His heart.

That's our description, and I find it terrible but true. That characterizes everyone of those that are meant in the text.

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However, I would have you note one more word that describes the objects of wondrous comfort. They are called mourners.

That shows how God already had begun His healing work.

Mourners? Jesus calls them blessed: blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted.

Mourners for what? I think it refers to the sadness that comes over us when we see our natural estate. And it is born of the visitation from on high. When the light of the healing grace of God enters our miserable and iniquitous heart, we forthwith mourn. And we mourn with a mourning that is unique. Nowhere on this world do you find a mourning such as characterizes the objects of this comfort.

Paul speaks of it when he mentions two kinds of sorrow. There is the sorrow of the world, but that works death. But there is also the Godly sorrow, that is the sorrow according to God, a sorrow which is approved of God, and that works repentance.

Oh yes, there you have the distinction between man and man. They all are iniquitous, be they elect or reprobate. But the elect wicked mourn. But they mourn only because God showed them their terrible estate. And when they saw the abomination which characterizes their nature, they hung the head and cried to God.

Attend to Ezekiel 9:4. Th angel is bidden to put a mark on the forehead of all those that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst of the great city of God.

And so I could go on, telling you of instances in God's Word which tells on a thousand places of the mourning children of God.

They and they only are the objects of the comforts of my text.

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What is the content of this comfort?

It is this: healing for the sickness of death.

And that is properly regeneration. It has begun in the men of which my text speaks. It has even progressed to the stage where they are conscious of their new life. For they mourn.

And God continues to heal. You sing of it in the House of God. Heals our sicknesses and pains. He redeems thee from destruction; and His love thy life sustains!

I see their ways, saith the Lord, but I will heal them!

That is the unbelievable Gospel for poor sinners, my brother.

But there is more.

He will lead them.

That presupposes that they are astray. We have lost our way as we are by nature, wander on forbidden paths that lead to hell and damnation.

But our God promises here that He as the good Shepherd will come and lead us home.

He does that every day by His Word and Holy Spirit. Ah me, we will never understand such lovingkindness. While we are least deserving, He comes and leads us home to His bosom.

And, finally, He will restore the comforts.

I think that Isaiah had in mind the blessed estate of the first paradise when he talks here of restoration. For so it is. God's people in Adam and Eve were happy in the first paradise. Theirs was the relation of love and friendship of God's covenant. And they were at peace.

But that relationship is disturbed, broken.

But the text tells us that the relationship shall be restored.

And what restoration!

No, we do not regain the old paradise. But we are caught up with the Son of God in heavenly perfection. Ours is a world that is entirely renewed, made heavenly, eternal and glorious. And we shall never be able to fall from that height again.

To view those glories that abide! That is the comfort of my text. To know and to experience the blessed relationship of God's covenant in Christ Jesus is the comfort Isaiah reports to the nation, the church.

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What is the Fountain of such glories?

The text will give you the answer. It is God. God said: I have seen his ways! And the sight of His

beloved church in the clutches of the iniquity of covetousness sets the bowels of His everlasting mercy in motion. And God says: I will both heal and lead him to My glorious eternal Paradise!

God is the Fountain.

And here is the gushing of that Fountain: listen to Him: I create the fruit of the lips!

And the fruit of these lips? They are: Peace, peace!

To those that are near and to those that are far off. Oh, but that refers to the men who are privileged to bring the glad tidings of salvation from age to age and from clime to clime. The fruit of their lips is created of God. He has the message in His Divine heart, and from that heart through His grace and Spirit, He gives them the story of everlasting salvation.

And when God has filled you to overflowing with that message of comfort and redemption, you cry: Peace! Peace!

Yes, you shall have an audience. God also provides the audience.

There are those who are denominated as being near. They are without doubt the descendents of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Salvation came first to the Jews.

But it is also for those who are afar off. They are the heathen nations. Also they shall hear the fruit of the lips, created fruit. You shall be able to recognize the Divine Creator of the message. The message is God-like.

And they shall hear, and be comforted.

And they shall sing unto all eternity of such beauties.

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But the wicked are like the troubled sea!

When it cannot rest.

And they prove their restlessness: their waters cast up mire and dirt.

Here I tremble for two reasons.

I am not better than they.

And their end is terrible, too terrible to contemplate.

They cannot rest. There is no peace for them. I pity men who cannot rest. They cannot celebrate the Sabbath of Jesus who brought all the peace and rest for the mourning ones.

O God! how good Thou art!

G. Vos.

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## EDITORIALS

### Earmarks

When I read all the attempts to explain the heretical statements of De Wolf, I am reminded of the passage in Eph. 4:14, 15, and of the synodical sermon I preached on that text in 1950, the year when the Declaration of Principles was first adopted.

The text reads as follows: "That we henceforth be no more children, tossing to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Jesus Christ."

I then emphasized especially that, in order to grow up in Christ, we must, of course, grow in the truth and that, in order to grow in the truth, we must not be like small children that are easily deceived by false doctrine and false teachers. By all means, we must not think the best of them as if they are men that mean well although, perhaps, they innocently err. We should rather conceive of them as men that have the earmarks of gamblers, that play with the truth, and are characterized by cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.

A man that speaks the truth does not have to explain his statements or have them explained by others. And a man that speaks what is clearly a lie and then attempts to cover up the lie because he inadvertently spoke the lie too clearly naturally runs into all kinds of contradictions which simply corroborate that he speaks the lie and gambles with the truth.

The latter is the case with the statements of De Wolf and all that support him and attempt to give a good explanation to his statements.

They gamble with the truth.

I do not hesitate to say that, in their attempt to make the lie appear as the truth, they are playing *hocus pocus*, they are guilty of what the apostle calls "the sleight of men" and "cunning craftiness."

The statements are so clearly heretical that they are in no need of an explanation for any Protestant Reformed man.

In fact, I am convinced that De Wolf himself knew this even before he went to the pulpit on both occasions. I am convinced that, when he preached those sermons, there was no love for the Protestant Reformed truth in his heart, and that he very deliberately meant to contradict that truth as, in fact, he did.

But the various contradictory attempts at explanation simply reveal that he and his supporters intend to maintain the heresy of those statements. Only, they try to present the heresy as if it were sound Protestant Reformed truth.

Here are some of the interpretations offered of the first statement:

1. If the gospel is preached and that gospel comes with the demand to repent and believe, this demand is preached to every one promiscuously.

Compare this with the statement: "God promises to every one of you that, if you believe you shall be saved." Does the interpretation even remotely resemble the statement made by De Wolf, either in form or content? You say: NO.

2. God promises you, elect and believers in Christ, salvation in the way of and by means of faith.

I ask, is this at all the same as saying: God promises every one of you that, if you believe, you shall be saved? You answer, of course: NO.

Again I ask: is this interpretation the same as that given under 1? You answer, of course: it is entirely different.

3. The statement really means that the promise of God is for the elect. For (1) "The promise" here, evidently, does not include faith. (2) Faith is a gift of God. (3) This gift is bestowed only on the elect. (4) Hence, the statement: "God promises salvation to you if you believe" is the same as saying: God promises salvation to the elect.

How conveniently the phrase "every one of you" is here eliminated and replaced by "the elect." Moreover, does this interpretation agree with that under 1 and 2? You answer: NO.

4. We must distinguish between the great oath-bound promise and other promises in Scripture. The first statement by De Wolf did not refer to the former but only to the latter.

I ask: does this interpretation agree with any of the others referred to above? You answer, of course: NO.

Again I ask: when De Wolf spoke of the promise of salvation did he not mean the same as the "oath-bound promise to Abraham?" You say: YES.

5. De Wolf addressed the whole congregation as it exists organically. He meant that congregation when he said: God promises every one of you that, if you believe, you shall be saved.

Ingenious camouflage!

But if you address the congregation as a whole you say: saints in Christ Jesus, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, believers and your (spiritual) seed. The moment you say: "every one of you," you exactly do

not address the congregation as it exists organically, but every individual in the audience, elect and reprobate, member and stranger. Moreover, in that case you do not address the congregation at all, for the congregation consists of believers and their spiritual seed, sanctified in Christ, and you certainly do not address believers by the conditional clause: If you believe. Just try it and say: Believers, if you believe you shall be saved.

Ingenious, too, because the author by this interpretation exactly touches one of the most fundamental errors in the statements (both) of De Wolf. He has no conception of the Church. He really has no room for infant baptism. The congregation does not consist of those that are sanctified in Christ (young as well as old, parents and children) but as a crowd that is to be evangelized. Sermons such as he preached would fit very well in any Arminian revival meeting, certainly not in a Reformed church.

But again I ask: does this explanation agree with any of the above mentioned attempts at interpretation? I am confident that you will say: NO.

I could mention more explanations. One other I must mention, although it really is no attempt to interpret the first statement, nor, for that matter the second. It is:

6. We agree that the statement taken by itself is heretical, but you must interpret it in the light of its context.

Very well. But I insist that, in the light of the context, the statement certainly does not improve.

What is the context? This:

1. The sermon was preached immediately after Classis East adopted the Declaration of Principles. That Declaration maintains strongly that the promise of God is not for all but only for the elect and is unconditional. In direct opposition to this, and, I have no doubt, deliberately, De Wolf preached a conditional promise for all.

2. In the sermon he said: "You have nothing to do with election and reprobation, your responsibility is to believe. If you will believe you shall be saved." Or: "election and reprobation have nothing to do with the gospel." That he said this in this sermon, which I did not hear, is for me corroborated by two facts: (1) In the sermons I did hear of De Wolf he often either silenced or belittled election and reprobation. (2) In the second sermon to which objections were lodged, and against which I personally protested, he deprecated the truth of election. In one of the answers to the protests he denies this and claims that he only warned against "abusing the precious doctrine of election." But this is simply an untruth.

3. In the same sermon he also said: "Some of you carry Protestant Reformed on the lapel of your coat.

You are proud of being Protestant Reformed. Don't think you go to heaven because you are Protestant Reformed."

Hence, it is my conviction that the context certainly does not improve the statement that was finally condemned as literally heretical.

The sermon was bad throughout. It was a sermon such as should never have been preached from a Protestant Reformed pulpit.

All these desperate attempts at interpretation, however, reveal plainly: (1) That the interpreters themselves very well understand that what Classis East expressed is true: the statement is literally heretical. (2) That the interpreters show the earmarks of real heretics when they, nevertheless, insist on thus presenting the lie as the truth by their would be interpretations. They play hocus pocus with the truth. And they deceive the people.

It is somewhat striking that the statement from the second sermon that was condemned as literally heretical did not find so many supporters and interpreters as the first one. This certainly cannot be due to the fact that the error in the statement is less serious. It really implies that even regeneration is an act which man can or must perform before he enters into the kingdom of God. For is it not true that unless a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God? Does not Jesus say that unless a man is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God? But, perhaps, the fact that this statement does not find so many interpreters and explanation must be explained by the difficulty of trying to present even that error as if it were Reformed and Biblical.

The matter seems too clear.

Outside of the kingdom of God we are in darkness.

In that darkness, we are, according to the Heidelberg Catechism, totally depraved, incapable of doing any good and inclined to all evil, unless we are regenerated by the Spirit of God.

How, then, is it possible, as De Wolf proclaimed in the statement that was condemned as literally heretical and, in fact, throughout the sermon from which the statement was taken, except in the last two or three sentences, that our act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter into the kingdom of God?

I think that the supporters of De Wolf feel the difficulty.

Hence, I really find but two attempts at interpreting this statement.

The one is that which likes to explain away the

PRE in prerequisite and explain it in the sense of requisite.

The other likes to emphasize that our daily conversion is a continual entering into the kingdom of God, and that the former is a prerequisite to the latter.

To this I must call your attention next time.

—H.H.

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## AS TO BOOKS

GESTALTEN DER LIEFDE (Manifestations of Love), by Dr. G. Brillenburg-Wurth. Published by J. H. Kok, N.V. Kampen, the Netherlands. Price f. 4.95.

In this book the author discusses various aspects or manifestations of love, or, perhaps, it is better to say that he discusses love in its various aspects or manifestations. ("Gestalten" is somewhat difficult to translate into English). Thus the author discusses love as instinct, as feeling, as fellowship, as confidence, as meeting together, as conversation, as service, as sacrifice, as forbearance, as mercy, as humanitarianism, as brotherhood, as friendship, as love of one's enemies. And he closes with two chapters on the cooling off and on the quickening of love. The author discusses all these aspects of love in the light of much that modern philosophy and psychology has written in recent times about the subject.

A very interesting book which the average intelligent reader that knows his Dutch ought to be able to enjoy. To him I heartily recommend the book.

The book is biblical and Reformed. Yet, I have read books of the same author that are more strictly biblical and reformed than this one. It seems to me that, if Dr. Brillenburg Wurth had followed a little different line, the book would have gained both in clarity and in definiteness. I would rather have proceeded at once from the biblical concept that love is a spiritual-ethical conception, the bond of perfectness, that can exist only between the ethically perfect persons; and in that light I would have viewed the different aspects of "natural love," the distinction between the love of the brethren and of the neighbor in general, the love of one's enemies, etc., etc.

But, as I said, the book is interesting, the style is clear, and I recommend the book to the average reader that knows his Dutch.

—H.H.

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TIJD EN EEUWIGHEID (Time and Eternity), by the Rev.

J. M. Spier. Published by J. H. Kok, N.V., Kampen, the Netherlands, Price f. 8.90.

The Rev. Spier has a philosophical mind and is very much interested in philosophical problems as ought to be evident to the reader from the several books by him I have reviewed in the *Standard Bearer*. From the start he was interested in what is called "De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee" and, therefore, I am not surprised that now a book appears on the subject "Time and Eternity." The book reviews largely the different conceptions of time presented from the earliest times till the present by different philosophers and theologians as well as by the authors of the "wijsbegeerte der wetsidee" (the philosophy of the idea of law), discusses different questions related to the problem of time, devotes a separate chapter to the question as to time and the human heart, and closes with a chapter on the relation between eternity and time.

What struck my attention is that, it seems to me for the first time, the Rev. Spier criticizes a rather fundamental conception of Dooyeweerd's. It is the idea that the human heart is not subject to time but is super-temporal. For the undersigned, however, this is of less importance because I do not believe that according to Scripture, the heart is the center of man's existence from a natural viewpoint: it is a spiritual-ethical concept.

This, you understand, is not a book for the average reader, not even if he can read Dutch. But to those that are interested in philosophical problems I gladly recommend the book.

I had expected a little more on Barth's conception of the relation between time and eternity. —H.H.

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INLEIDING IN DE ZIELKUNDE (Introduction to Psychology) by Dr. A. Kuipers. Published by J. H. Kok, N.V., Kampen, the Netherlands. Price f. 16.50.

This book enjoys its third print, and it is fully worthy of it. It is not a book written for the general public. Yet I think that the intelligent reader that is able to read Dutch, would be interested in reading it. And I recommend it especially to all our ministers who, of course, must also be pedagogues.

As to the contents of the book, after an introduction in which the author discusses the significance of psychology, its history, division and method, it is divided into an analytic part and a synthetic part. The former treats of the various functions of the soul, sensation, perception and apperception, memory, concept, etc. In the second part, the author discusses the soul as an entity, the seat of all the different functions analyzed in the first part.



I consider this one of the best books I have read on the subject of psychology from the biblical viewpoint. It is very clearly written.

In the discussion of the relation between soul and body in which, by the way, I personally was always interested, the author also briefly presents the conception of the "wijsbegeerte der wetsidee" without, however, committing himself to any criticism. I would have liked to read his criticism.

Heartily recommended.

—H.H.



## OUR DOCTRINE

### THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

AN EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

PART III — OF THANKFULNESS

LORD'S DAY 38

Chapter 2

The Historic Phases of the Weekly Sabbath

The question must now be asked and answered: why do the Christians in the new dispensation celebrate the first day, rather than the last day of the week? In order to answer this question, we must call attention to the different phases of the weekly sabbath in the history of the development of God's covenant. The work which God performs for His people in preparing for them the eternal rest, though it is perfect in His counsel from all eternity, is nevertheless realized for us in time, and follows a certain line of historical development, and in the course of history presents certain distinct phases.

The Seventh Day Adventist, besides committing the error of considering the Fourth Commandment part of an outward code which must be kept, rather than looking at it from the viewpoint of the law of perfect liberty, also commits the fundamental error that he does not recognize the historical progress of God's work, and therefore insists that even in the new dispensation we must still celebrate the sabbath of creation.

It is to be feared that many people of God understand very little of this fundamental error of the Adventist, and although by force of tradition they keep the first day of the week, might easily be swept off

their feet if they should be called to defend their position.

It is, then, not superfluous to call attention to this historical development of the sabbath of the Lord our God in its different historical phases.

These different phases, or stages, of development we designate by the terms *creation-sabbath*, *shadow-sabbath*, *resurrection-sabbath*, and the *final*, or *perfected sabbath in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

All the more proper it is to call attention to these stages of development, because the Word of God points us to them in Hebrews 4. For clearly, the author of that epistle speaks of the creation-sabbath in the latter part of Hebrews 4:3, and in the fourth verse of that chapter, where he writes: "Although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works." Yet the author continues to say that although this creation-rest would appear to be *the rest of God*, He also spake of another day for His people in the land of Canaan, when He said: "If they shall enter into my rest." This, therefore, was another rest, another sabbath, a different stage in the development of the sabbath. But even this is not the final stage: for "Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, Today, after so long a time; as it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus (Joshua) had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day." The rest in the land of Canaan, therefore, was not the final rest. For even after Joshua had led them into the rest, the Lord still spoke of another day, of a rest that was still to come. That other day is the day of the new dispensation, now the work of God is finished in Christ Jesus. That day of rest is therefore now realized, but it is not yet perfected in its final manifestation. It is not yet revealed in all its glory. And therefore, there still remaineth a sabbath for the people of God. Heb. 4:9.

From this passage two things appear at once evident. First of all, it is plain from Hebrews 4 that the idea of the sabbath is that of God's people entering into His rest, into His everlasting covenant. And secondly, it is also evident from this chapter that the weekly sabbath passed through certain definite historical phases: the sabbath of creation, the sabbath in the land of Canaan, the sabbath in the new dispensation, and the final sabbath in eternal glory.

First of all, then, Scripture speaks of the sabbath of creation. God had finished the creation of the heavens and of the earth, and on the seventh day He rested. This certainly does not imply that the almighty and ever-living and active God was idle for

a day. For as we showed in the preceding chapter, this is quite inconceivable, being in conflict with the divine nature. And the Lord emphatically denies this, when He says to the criticizing Jews: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." John 5:17. But it does signify that He ceased from creating, and that He entered into the enjoyment of His finished work. This work of six days and rest on the seventh day, we must understand, is a revelation of God in time. Within God, and before His eternal counsel, creation-work and rest are identical, and eternally God enters into the enjoyment of His completed work. Now, God also sanctified and blessed that seventh day, so that it became a sabbath for man. For man to enter into God's rest. He was created after God's image, that is, with a creaturely likeness of God, adapted to live in God's covenant fellowship, in true knowledge of God, righteousness and holiness, that he might know God, love Him with all his heart and mind and soul and strength, be wholly consecrated to Him, and serve Him as king under God in connection with the entire earthly creation. Man was God's friend-servant. In the first paradise it was his calling to labor in order to enter into God's rest, keeping the garden, opposing the devil, and maintaining the covenant of God. Thus man would celebrate the sabbath, and eat of the tree of life which was in the midst of the garden.

However, the first man did not enter into the rest of God. He violated the covenant of God, denied his Sovereign Friend, and became a friend of Satan, the enemy of God. He fell. And the whole human race fell with him into that which is the very antithesis of the sabbath of the Lord, the labor and toil, the darkness and corruption, the guilt and unrest of sin, the wages of which is death. God had spoken of His rest to man, and the first man had despised the rest. And God had sworn that he should not enter into His rest because of his sin, disobedience, and rebellion. He was exiled, and banished from God's presence. The tabernacle of God had appeared in paradise long enough to be shown as an image of the glorious, everlasting rest; but in the first man Adam it could not be maintained and glorified. It was with man no longer.

But God had provided some better thing for us. Heb. 11:40. Although His works were finished from the foundation of the world, Heb. 4:3, and although He rested on the seventh day from all His works, Heb. 4:4; and although He had created man to enter into that rest with Him and in His fellowship, so that when man failed to enter into that rest of creation the sabbath seemed past and lost forever; yet He spoke of another day, of a better and higher rest that was to come. His counsel was not finished with the work of creation, neither at all frustrated by the fall of man,

For the better thing He had provided for His people in Christ Jesus is the eternal rest and perfect manifestation of His covenant life, the heavenly tabernacle of God with men. Of that eternal tabernacle the first paradise was but an image. When the image disappeared, God began a new work, the work of grace and salvation. He began to realize the higher manifestation of His covenant, and to lead His people into the rest of that other day of which He spoke, and always speaks, in the gospel. It is the work of grace, by which He causes them to cease from the labor and toil and slavery of sin, delivers them from the bondage of corruption and darkness and death, and leads them into the perfect liberty of the children of God and to that highest covenant fellowship in which they may know Him even as they are known, and see Him face to face.

Of that rest the land of Canaan was a type, even as Egypt is typical of the unrest and bondage of sin. When God delivered Israel with a mighty hand out of Egypt, led them through the Red Sea and through the wilderness, fed them with manna, and quenched their thirst with water from the rock, made them pass over Jordan, and gave them the land of Canaan for a possession, He led them into rest. Hence, the very heart of that land was to be sought in the tabernacle and temple, where God dwelt with and among His people. Hence, too, Canaan was preeminently a sabbath land; and in it the people must celebrate the weekly sabbath, the sabbaths of many special festivals, the sabbatical year, the year of jubilee. Hence, too, the weekly sabbath was a memorial in Israel, to make them remember the great deliverance which God wrought for them when He liberated them from the yoke of bondage: "And remember that thou wast servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day." Deut. 5:15. The Old Testament Joshua, therefore, as a type of Jesus, led the people of God into the rest which God had prepared for them.

Yet, even so the work of God was not finished. God had provided still some better thing for us. Canaan was a phase of the sabbath of the Lord, a stage in its historical development, a type of the better and eternal rest, but not the rest itself. In this final sense Joshua had not given the people of God rest. This is evident from the fact that even after Joshua had led them into the land of Canaan, God still spoke of another day, still put the sabbath in the future and in the light of the promise. Heb. 4:7, 8. And if Canaan had been the rest, He would not have spoken of another day. The fact is that the whole of that typical rest,



with oil and wine and corn, with temple and altar and sacrifice, with prophet and priest and king, with its continual threat of God's impending curse, which became more and more a reality as history advanced, and was fulfilled when Jerusalem was finally destroyed and the nation was cast off,—that all these things loudly proclaimed that Canaan could not be the rest of God and that the earthly Jerusalem was no abiding city. Fact is, too, that under the influence of all these clear testimonies, and in the light of the ever repeated promise by the prophets, the true people of God in Israel longed to be delivered from the yoke of the law, and lived in the hope of the salvation of the Lord. It was only in that hope that they could still keep the sabbath, even in captivity in a strange country. Is. 52:2. The blood of bulls and goats, as became gradually more and more evident, could never make perfect and lead to the rest of the Lord.

Hence, God spoke of another day. He still worked to realize the rest for His people. And He realized it in Jesus Christ. He accomplished it when He sent His only begotten Son into the flesh, and in the Son united Himself in personal unity with man. In Him, God and man in unity of divine Person, the tabernacle of God is centrally with man in such a way that it can be destroyed nevermore. God dwells in Him with His people forever. He realized it, moreover, when Christ labored at the Head of all His people to enter into the rest of God in the way of His justice and righteousness. For He labored and toiled, He strove and fought the battle alone against all the powers of darkness, sin, and the devil. He suffered and shed His lifeblood in the toil of His soul. He died and entered into the agony of hell as the faithful Friend-Servant of God, the better and last Adam, that had come to do the Father's will. In the midst of His toil He became exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. In the depth of His suffering He became utterly amazed. Yet, He was always perfectly obedient. And at the end of it all He could go in the peaceful consciousness that all was finished. Through Him God accomplished the work, realized the rest, when He raised Him from the dead, and gave Him heavenly glory. The sabbath of the Lord is accomplished on the first day of the week, the day of the resurrection. On the other, the glorious, the heavenly side of the open grave stands the Immanuel, and proclaims: "It is finished. Rest from your toil and labor, from sin and death. Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Into that rest of the resurrection of Jesus Christ we now enter by faith. It is the rest from all our own works, from sin and unrighteousness and death. Positively, it is the rest of entering into the perfect righteousness of God and His blessed covenant fellowship.

This is the idea of the weekly sabbath for the church in the new dispensation.

Yet, even now the sabbath is not fully manifested. Spiritually and in principle, indeed, the tabernacle of God is with men. We cease from works and have peace with God. But we are still living in the strange country. And though we do not battle in order to obtain the victory,—for this we have, in Christ Jesus our Lord,—although we do not work in order to merit the rest of God, yet we must still labor and fight, because we possess the rest only in principle. And in the world we shall have tribulation. Hence, while principally we have entered into the rest, the sabbath still is presented to us in the light of the promise, and there still remaineth a rest for the people of God. That rest will be revealed when all God's counsel is accomplished, when the last enemy shall have been overcome, when Christ shall come again, make our mortal bodies like unto His most glorious body, make all things new, and establish the glorious, heavenly, and eternal tabernacle of God with men. Then the work of God shall have been finished, and we shall enter with Him into the eternal rest of perfect fellowship, the sabbath of perfect activity, to the praise and glory of Him that loved us from all eternity.

—H.H.



"I may say, that in the forty years in which I fulfilled my duty as Professor of Sanscrit in the University of Oxford, I have dedicated as much time to the study of the holy books of the East as any man in the world. And I wager to say that in this collection of books the basic note is, they all agree—these holy books—be it Veda of the Brahmans, Purana of Siwa and Wishnu, the Koran of the Mohammedans, the Zendavesta of the Parsans—they all agree and find their unifying principle, which permeates them all, in this: salvation by works. They all teach that salvation must be purchased, and that the price consists in their own works and merits.

"Our own Bible, our holy Book from the East, is from beginning to end a protest against this teaching. Good works are indeed required in the holy Book from the East, even more than in any other holy books from the East, but they are exclusively the out-flow of a thankful heart. They are wholly thank-offering, wholly fruit of faith. They are no redemption money of the disciples of Christ . . ." —Max Muller

Dr. H. Bavinck, Gereformeerde Dogmatiek, p. 484, Vol. III.

## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

### The Prophecy of Isaiah (Continued)

III. Prophecies against individual nations of Israel's and Judah's limited world, chaps. xiii-xxiii.

1. The first prophecy against Babylon, chap. xiii: 1-xiv:23.

a. This prophecy is introduced by a prediction of the desolation of the anti-christian world power (the Babylon of Revelation 18) that is still to appear and of which the city and state of Babylon of the Euphrates valley was the prophetic type.

The Lord musters the hosts of heaven against it. Judging from its noise, it is a great people that gathers together, a multitude, kingdoms of nations. And they come from the four corners of the earth to destroy the whole land as the weapons of the Lord's indignation, chap. xiii:2-5.

Doubtless this "multitude" is the Gog and Magog of Ezek. xxxviii:2 and of Rev. xx:8.

b. Prophecy of the final judgment and end of all things.

The day of the Lord is at hand, coming as a destruction from the Almighty. Aware of this, men's hearts melt and there is no more spirit left in them; they let their hands fall limp. And well may they. For the day of the Lord cometh cruel with wrath and fierce anger to lay the land desolate and to destroy the sinners out of it. Stars, sun, and moon shall be darkened. The Lord will punish the whole world for its wickedness. In His wrath He shall shake the heavens and the earth shall remove out of her place, vss. 6-13.

c. Prophecy against the city and kingdom of Babylon of the Euphrates valley.

It is famed for its glory and excellence; and many persons from all nations have gone to live there. But the time will come when every man will flee the city like a chased roe and seek safety with his own people. For Babylon shall fall. The Lord will stir up the Medes against them. And they shall be activated not by lust of booty but by a different motive. What this motive is the prophet does not reveal. Babylon shall be uninhabited forever, and its palaces desolate. No wandering Arabian shall pitch his tent there, that is, use it as a temporary stopping place, nor a shepherd. But it shall be the haunt of wild beasts of the desert, vers. 14-22.

The reference here is to that portion of the Euphrates valley over which the city and state of Babylon has spread itself. At the time when this prophecy was uttered it was the most fertile region on the

whole earth. It was "one vast plain, adorned and enriched by the Euphrates and the Tigris, from which, and from the numerous canals that intersected the country from one river to the other, water was distributed over the fields by manual labor and by hydraulic machines, giving rise, in that warm climate and rich exhaustless soil, to an exuberance of produce without a known parallel, over so extensive a region, either in ancient or modern times."

But today this same region is a vast wilderness uninhabited except by wild beasts. And the city of Babylon is a heap, a wilderness, a dry land, a desert. Every one that goeth by is astonished.

So has this prophecy been fulfilled to the very letter. Yet at the time of its origination and proclamation, the city and state of Babylon as a world power had not yet made its appearance. It was not until at least 70 years after Isaiah's death that Nabopolassar in alliance with the Median king overthrew Nineveh the capital of Assyria and founded this new Babylonian empire. So here we have Isaiah foretelling the passing away and complete desolation of a kingdom 70 years before its appearance.

There is a theory that insists that this and similar prophecies of Isaiah originated long after his death and were spoken by another person, a so-called second or even third Isaiah. Underlying this theory is the view that prophecy, definitely the prophecies of these eighth century prophets such as the one with which we are now occupied, are not prophecies at all but history, that is, the narration of events during or after their transpiration; or at best prediction based on mere human foresight and thus limited as to its range and reach to these prophets' own historical horizon.

Men of today who make a study of our times foresee war between the Western powers and Russia. But what they see is their own fallible deduction which they make from the present state of affairs of our world. So, too, the prophets, it is said. As students of world affairs they concluded from the turn of events of their day that Babylon would be destroyed. And that is prophecy of the Bible; it is human speculation regarding the future of men and nations.

But this is not the position of faith. True the text at Chap. 13:1 does state: "The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amos did see." But what Isaiah saw concerning Babylon—its fall and desolation—was not a deduction of his own origination but a spectacle that God by special revelation had made to rise before his mind's eye. Hence the word that he spake was not his own; it was always God's counsel that he proclaimed, communicated to him by God's Spirit—God's counsel for all the ages that were still

to come. This alone explains the reach of Isaiah's prophecies (and of all the prophecies of the Bible). It—this reach—extends to the end of time. As we just saw, in this particular discourse Isaiah foretells the final judgment and the end of all things. With this and similar prophecies unbelief knows not what to do. It cannot explain them on the basis of its theories; but neither can it deny them. For Isaiah speaks too plainly. So all it can really do with such prophecies is to ignore them.

d. Israel's deliverance. Chap. xiv:1, 2.

The prophecy contained in vers. 14-22 implies the prediction of Judah's exile to Babylon. To the king of this coming world-power also God's people will be in bondage. But Babylon will be destroyed, the reason being that the Lord will have mercy on His people. He shall bring them back to their own land. This shall take place with the consent of the heathen, who shall cleave unto them even leading them to their place. Israel shall possess them as servants and handmaids, and shall hold those prisoners whose captives they formerly were.

e. Prophecy against Babylon's king. Chap. xiv:3-23.

In the day that the Lord will send Israel the deliverance described in vers. 1, 2 Israel will give utterance to a derisive speech about the king of Babylon (vers. 3, 4a). The prophet thinks of no particular king, but of the kings of Babylon in their totality, or rather of the king of Babylon in the abstract. He shows that the proud monarch shall be humbled to hell by the power of God.

The first section of his proverb is an exclamation of joy that the spoiler of nations is destroyed. The whole earth rests and sings. The fir trees and the cedars rejoice that they will no more be cut down, vers. 4b-8.

On the other hand, all hell, the kingdom of the dead, bestirs itself to meet the new arrival. Shades of the dead say to him, "Art thou become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us?" Vers. 9, 10.

Then the prophet again takes up the proverb, putting it into the mouth of Israel, whom he personates. To what depth of degradation has the Babylon descended! His pomp is cast down to the grave. The noise of revelry in his palace is silenced. Worms consume his corpse. How has this star fallen! He who would raise himself to the level of the Most High is cast down into the deepest pit of hell, vers. 11-15.

Men see his wretchedness and voice their thoughts about him: Is this the man that shook and devastated the earth? Vers. 16, 17. The kings of the nations lie quiet in their tomb but his grave casts him out that the corpse may be trampled. This is his punishment for having destroyed the earth and slain his subjects. No descendent of his shall ever rise to restore

the ruined city and state of Babylon, for his entire evil seed shall be exterminated. His iniquities shall thus be visited upon his children. And all will be the work of the Lord. Vers. 18-23.

2. A second prophecy against Assyria.

As the Lord has sworn, so it has come to pass and thus shall it stand. He will break the Assyrian in His land and the people of Israel shall be delivered from this scourge, vers. 24-27.

The prophecy is brief, comprising but a few lines in the text of the Scriptures. There is reason. The passing away of Assyria has already been foretold in the chapters vii-xii:6. The prophet will now be occupied with the nations of Israel's world all of which were hostile and some of whom, such as the Philistines, have been menacing the people of Israel almost from the beginning of their existence as a nation. But at the moment the great offender is Assyria; for its kings possess the world power and will continue in the possession thereof for 70 or perhaps a 100 years to come. So before taking up his discourses against the nations the prophet takes another glance at Assyria and assures God's people anew that this chief of scourges will surely be broken.

3. Prophecy against Philistia.

Its origination took place in the year of King Ahaz' death, ver. 29. The Philistines have escaped from the ascendancy of some power that was smiting them. But they must not rejoice but howl. For from this power—serpent in the text—shall come forth an adder and from the adder a fiery flying dragon, ver. 29. We deal here with imagery. It is not clear who or what is indicated.

But God's believing people must not be afraid. For they shall feed and lie down in safety. But not so the Philistines. This ancient enemy of Israel will be overtaken by a series of calamities that will result in its complete extirpation. The text reads here, "I will kill thy root with famine, and he shall slay thy remnant," ver 30. Here the Lord announces Himself as the destroyer of the Philistines. The agent through whom He will work is a "smoke" that comes from the north, ver. 31. We must understand to be meant the total of hostile armies by which Philistia through the centuries will be devastated to the point of extinction. Perhaps the dragon of ver. 2 is these armies. But it may be too that the reference is to the Messiah. What shall then be the answer of God's believing people to messengers of the nation? This that the Lord has founded Zion for His people to betake themselves to it in the times of stress and storm, ver. 32.

The land of Philistia bordered on the west and south-west of Judea. It was included in the allotment of Judah. Its soil was wonderfully fertile. In the

twelfth century of our Christian era the country still possessed a numerous population, but today it is uninhabited except by some peasants. The Philistines as a people have become extinct many centuries ago. The other eighth century prophets have more to say about this people particularly her cities all of which at the present time are deserted ruins as the Scriptures foretold.

Phophecy regarding Moab, Chaps. xv, xvi.

The prophet depicts the desolation of Moab, directing attention to the judgment as it strikes in various places of the land and to what the terrified and dismayed inhabitants experience, say and do, vers. 1-4. Therewith he expresses his heartfelt sympathy and foretells that those of the Moabites who escape the general carnage will become prey to lions, vers. 5-9.

But Moab shall escape the judgment, if he willingly serve Judah to whom he is tributary, and if he show hospitality to the fugitives among God's people in the day of *their* visitation, xvi:4a. Then when Christ shall sit upon the throne of David, and all oppression on earth shall have ceased, Moab shall share in the salvation, vers. 4b-5.

But Moab is too proud for that. Hence the judgments run their course. The whole land is filled with lamentation. In the description of the general devastation three localities are given prominence: Kirharseth with its grape-cakes (ver. 7), Heshbon with its fertile fields (ver. 8), and Shibnah with its vineyards (ver. 8).

Profoundly moved by the great distress, the prophet joins the chorus of lamenters, ver.11.

In his calamity Moab turns to his idols, but that, of course, is of no avail, ver. 12.

These troubles are to begin immediately and within three years only a small remnant of Moab will be left over so that he shall really have ceased to be a nation, vers. 13, 14.

Substantially the same prediction regarding Moab is contained in the prophecy of Jeremiah. This prophets prediction is to the effect that all the cities of Moab will be desolate without any to dwell therein. And according to Zeph. ii:8-10, Moab shall be a perpetual desolation.

Today Moab is a desolation. His cities are deserted. All but a few are in ruins. Moab has been destroyed from being a people. Such is the report of all such who in modern times have explored this region. They tell us in their "Travels" that common to all the cities of Moab is their entire desolation.

5. Phophecy regarding Damascus, Ephraim, Chap. 17.

a. The destruction of Damascus and Ephraim, the Israel of the ten tribes, xvii:1-3.

The prophet takes them together in these lines be-

cause they are allies. Unitedly they made war against Jerusalem, vii:2, viii:12. But the unholy league will beget them a common ruin. Damascus (the capital city of Syria) will be a heap. The walls of Ephraim's cities will be broken down by the same hostile armies. The dominion will cease from Damascus, meaning that Syria will pass away as a kingdom. It will be made to descend to the same depth of degradation as that of Ephraim.

b. A prophecy regarding Ephraim alone, vers, 4-8.

Ephraim shall be reduced to almost nothing. The prophet declares this by a threefold figure.

First he compares the destruction of Ephraim to the loss of flesh by a fat man, ver. 4. Second to the cutting and gathering of corn, ver. 5. The idea is that Ephraim shall be mowed down like standing grain. Third to the olive harvest, where the fruit is parted from the tree by the shaking of the branches, ver. 6.

Yet there is a gleanings that remains both of corn and of fruit, two or three on this branch, four or five on that. The truth imaged is that there will be a remnant to Ephraim, and that this remnant will be converted to the Lord and thus saved, vers. 6-8.

This remnant exists today. It is being saved still through the ages of this Gospel dispensation. And it includes all the elect, gentiles as well as Jews.

c. Description of Ephraim's destruction continued; its cause, vers. 9-11. Ephraim sees in her forests the ruined castles of the Canaanites whom he has dispossessed ages ago. The cities of Ephraim shall be like these castles, ver. 9.

The cause of Ephraim's troubles is that he forsakes the God of his salvation and is unmindful of the Rock of his strength. He cultivates in his land the worship of imported gods and is careful to protect his importations. This is Ephraim's great sin that the prophet declares by the figure of one engaged in the culture of imported plants and fences in his cherished garden. Ephraim shall surely have a harvest to consist in a heap of sorrow in the day of sorrow, ver. 11.

d. The rise and fall of the world-power, vers. 12-14.

The prophet's message is a dreadful one. To comfort the remnant he takes another glance at the world-power (Assyria and his successors through the ages) and foretells its rise and sudden destruction. He hears and sees in the spirit the noise of approaching nations, which he likens to the rushing sound of many waters. But at the rebuke of God they disappear like chaff and whirling dust before the wind, ver. 13. The evening when the tumult approaches is one of trouble; but when the morning is come all is vanished away. This says the prophet, shall be the lot of them that trouble us, ver. 14.

—G. M Ophoff

## FROM HOLY WRIT

### Exposition of I Peter 1:17

We continue our exposition of I Peter in this essay. This time we intend to make a few remarks concerning verse 17 of this Chapter. This passage is very rich in instruction and exhortation and, therefore, worthy of our believing and prayerful attention.

The text in question reads as follows: "*And if ye call on Him as Father, who without respect of persons judges according to each man's work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear.*"

For the correct understanding of the Word of God in this text, it is well to bear in mind, that Peter is not addressing the Churches here as though they were simply potential candidates for heaven and hell, that must be confronted with the "two ways" of heaven and hell, always standing in the crisis of the choice that determines their status in Christ! If such were the case this passage would indeed be very void of the truth of the Gospel. Then it would be, as some erroneously contend, that God always addresses His people "conditionally." And the dictum would be: when God speaks *concerning* His people He speaks unconditionally, but when He speaks *to* His people He speaks conditionally. But such is not the case in Scripture at all. The above dictum does not square with the presentation of the Gospel together with the exhortations in the Word of God, the Bible. It does not fit with the plain teaching of Scripture which addresses the Church as *being* an elect generation, a holy people, a royal priesthood, a peculiar treasure, called out of darkness into God's marvelous light to declare God's praises! It does not at all make sense in the light of the fact that the precepts of the Gospel are precepts *to stir up the faith that is in us* and to a godly walk of conversion that flows from such a stirred up remembrance of the great mercies of God to us in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, so that our faith and hope might be in God!

The presentation that makes faith a condition fits well with the preaching of "two ways" that makes of faith a new law; but it does not square with the "simple" Gospel-truth that faith is the God-wrought instrument whereby we receive from Christ's fullness, grace for grace.

Let this not be overlooked.

For it is important to notice that the entire thrust of the versus 17-21 is such that the exhortations find their anchor point in what we *are* in Christ. We are such in Him by virtue of the design of salvation that

we must more and more have faith and hope in God. The text does not tell us that we must become church of God. On the contrary this passage teaches us very clearly throughout that we are the children of God, who have received the Spirit into our hearts, and who by this Spirit cry: Abba, Father!

Such is the implication of the conditional *sentence* in our text!

The believers and their seed call God their Father. No, we are not simply told here that it is possible that we do call or that we shall call God our Father. Nor does the text teach that we *ought* to call God our Father. Neither does the text teach we cannot fulfill the condition of calling God our Father, and that we say before His face: O God, I cannot fulfill the condition of calling Thee Father, but wilt Thou fulfill the condition in me. No, the simply Gospel truth, free from all error is: we call God our Father. All that faith *can* do is call God Father! And that is not only what an Abraham calls God on Moriah's heights of faith, and a Jesus in the agony of Gethsemane, but it is the very confession of the penitent Prodigal, who will rise and go to his Father's house, and will say: *Father*, I am not worthy to be called Thy son!

This is the beautiful term that Jesus places upon our lips in the model prayer as the expression of the chief part of Christian thankfulness. When ye pray, pray ye thus: Our *Father*, which art in heaven. And, O, the evangelic comfort of this prayer, to excite in us a childlike reverence for, and confidence in God, which are the foundation of our prayers and our doxologies. In this name we glory in the most blessed God, forever, Amen!

We mentioned that the text contains a conditional sentence.

About this we must say just a word.

The sentence here is a conditional sentence of fact. The "if ye call upon as Father" can very well be paraphrased as follows: since ye call upon as Father. It is a conditional *sentence*, which expressed *determined* reality. That it expressed determined reality in this case is due to the fact, that Peter is addressing the Church as she is born anew unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. (I Peter 1:1-3) He addresses the church as they are the spiritual sojourners, having the new principle of heavenly joy and peace in their hearts, joy unspeakable and joy full of glory as the Apostle states in verse 8. Hence, it is the Father's good-pleasure that their cup shall overflow with goodness and mercy all the days of their life in their earthly pilgrimage. They are those who have and who must receive more abundance of mercy. And the Holy Spirit employs



this conditional sentence in this exhortation, reminding them of their good confession, in order that He may work the grace of perseverance in their hearts, stirring them onward and upward to faith and hope into God!

Thus God's efficacious work of salvation is wrought in them by the Word of exhortation, which employs a conditional *sentence* expressing factness.

Peter says: if ye call upon God as *your* Father (and you do!!) then you must *live out* all the implications of this good confession in all the relationships of life; you must have a full-orbed life of conversion and sanctification. The conditional sentence does here not express what man must perform as a prerequisite condition at all, but is simply a part of the Word of God, which comes with exhortations and threatenings and great and precious promises, as the chief means of grace, the *preaching* of the Gospel. Incidentally, this is a far cry from the dictum: God's promise always comes to God's people in conditional form! For God's promise often comes to God's people in the simple assertion: I am the Lord, thy God, Who hath caused thee to go forth out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. And I may add, without fear of contradiction, that such is the chief and fundamental way in which God's Promise comes to the Church. That is the Word of reconciliation. When we are exhorted to enter into this work by a true and living faith and hope in God, then *sometimes* (!) the conditional sentence form is employed as a *means of grace*.

And thus we have an instance of this common thought *not exclusive* use of the conditional sentence!

But when we have a promise for all upon condition of faith, and try to defend it with specious arguments, yes, then we need such dictums as: God's promise pertains to all and is ours upon condition of faith.

But enough of this heretical concoction, lest I weary the reader.

Positively Peter teaches here the need to consider that the Father whom we confess to be our God, is the same who said to Israel: be ye holy, for I am holy! God judges every man in His holiness. And all our works must be done in the beauty and grace of holiness. There must be no disagreement between our confession and walk. Our walk must be the seal and confirmation of our confession. The text does not teach that we ought to call God our Father, but it insists that we ought to walk with a conversation that is worthy of our lofty confession as sons of the living and holy God.

And then the fact is that we must show our faith out of our works of conversion, that is, out of our continuous and life-long conversion and sanctifica-

tion. Faith without works is dead. With such faith we are no better than the Devil, who believes that God is one and trembles. But He does not tremble before the Lord in godly fear. His works are wholly empty and void of all that angels adore, when they sing: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord, God Almighty. The whole earth is full of His glory.

Such dead and empty works ours are not to be. It is comely to us the saints that our works be found full. In this present evil world our works are to be found full of godliness. Our works must be such in their very nature and essence. They must be full of good fruit of the Spirit. No, they must not be rooted in the slavish fear that seeks to merely escape from the wrath to come, but they must be such that are full of joy, love, peace, meekness, longsuffering, hope and patience.

We must walk in this good confession as much as we love our soul's salvation.

Walking in our earthly pilgrimage by hope we will then often sing: My soul fainteth for Thy salvation; but I hope in Thy Word.

Ah, then the fact that our Father will judge every one according to his work becomes the great incentive to godliness. For this means that the hoping Christian will be rewarded in mercy. For those, who love and fear God, receive not strictest justice of the law, but we are refreshed with water of mercy out of the brook, as they flow to us from the Throne of God and the Lamb. And, o, these Waters of Salem, which God in His judgment without respect of persons gives to us, quicken and revive us on the way. Our hearts are then filled with joy and full of glory, full of the immensity of the glory of grace!

For there is no glory as the glory of God's grace and mercy in us, the redeemed saints.

We will see more of this in our next installment, D.V., when we will call attention to the following verses which speak of the exceeding preciousness of the redemption price with which we have been purchased.

—G. Lubbers



O praise the Lord, for He is good,  
His mercies still endure;  
Thus let His ransomed testify,  
From all their foes secure.  
He has redeemed His captive saints  
From adversaries' hands,  
Has gathered them and brought them back  
In peace from hostile lands.



## IN HIS FEAR

### Afraid of the Gospel

(6)

In response to our publishing of his statements that "Many people also speak this way about accepting the terms of the Covenant. We do indeed believe in Covenant obligations and privileges, but never as conditions," the Rev. Gritters objected by personal letter and declared that we could not find in any of his current writings that he now embraces conditional election.

We let the readers judge. We never accused him of that, in fact we pointed out in that article appearing October 1 that when he stated that "Many people also speak this way about accepting the terms of the Covenant" he was exactly touching upon the issue which is raging in our churches today. As yet we have not come to that stage where we must even directly defend Unconditional Election. But we are very, very busy fighting against the conditional theology as applied to the covenant. We fail to understand the word "also" in the quotation above if it does not mean that there are people who likewise speak of the terms of the covenant being conditional. And then we cannot see the last sentence in any other way than that he says that in that covenant he would never say that what we are obliged to do and are privileged to do is a condition.

And rather than to accuse the Rev. Gritters of teaching conditional election—we will not do that today, in spite of his conditional theology—we meant, by quoting him, to show our people that ten years ago he not only condemned unequivocally conditional election but ALSO, and at that time forever, all idea of our covenant obligations and privileges being conditions in and unto the covenant.

We had no malice in our hearts when we reprinted his words. Rather than to try to publish errors he made in the past, we wanted him and all our people to see and remember the beautiful Protestant Reformed convictions that flowed from his able pen. Since our contact with the Liberated, many of our people did forget what we formerly believed and maintained. After all it was so much nicer and easier to embrace, at least to a measure, that appeal of the Liberated theology to our own conceit and pride. It gives us more room to be man-centered in our thinking and to adopt the methodistic tactics of striving to frighten

people into an outward semblance of obedience and faith. We must keep man from being careless and profane, is then the idea, not by gospel of a salvation wholly and entirely by the works of Christ but by filling man with all kinds of fear as to the consequences, if he does not do this or that and a few more things. Preach to him admonitions, warnings and rebukes, but do not spoil it by telling him that God must first give him unconditionally this grace before he will heed these admonitions and that God will most assuredly give that grace to all His elect people. Our people, some of them, actually have developed a craving for Christ-less sermons. And that is a fact! But we wanted our people to be refreshed with the former writings of one who knew how to present the God-centered truth of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Nor is that all. We wanted to spare the brother of continuing until he did come to the point where he and his followers would maintain conditional election also. We pleaded in that article to him to come back and cast away all conditionality. For to carry out this conditional theology must needs result in a denial of unconditional election too. That is so very plain now that all the proponents of conditional theology amongst us, without an exception, have departed so far that they will now speak of conditions in the sense of *prerequisites*. (By the way, will those who like to ignore the fact that the Revs. Hoeksema and Ophoff have published their acknowledgments that they were wrong when they used the word "condition" in the past, please quote one passage to show them speaking of *prerequisites* unto salvation or unto any phase of it? We can now drop all such quotations of theirs which use the word "condition." And you can thank the Rev. De Wolf for being the spokesman for the whole movement to show us that the conditions of the Revs. Hoeksema and Ophoff are as different from those which they, the proponents of conditional theology in our midst maintain, as there is between our understanding of the word election and between that of the Arminians.) But to return to what we began to say, the idea of conditions in the sense of *prerequisites* unto salvation is set forth among us because, so it is said, we need that pedagogical approach. If you do not come thus to man, he will become careless and profane. We might add that then it surely follows that to preach election also requires the pedagogical approach lest by teaching an unconditional election we move men to carelessness and profanity. What holds for the one, surely holds for the other. If preaching that there are no conditions even IN the covenant we lose that pedagogical element which keeps man from being careless and indifferent,

then by all means we will need a conditional election for the same pedagogical approach and for the avoidance of carelessness and profanity in the one who hears about election.

But in this connection also we would like to show you how the Rev. Gritters, ten years ago, was not at all afraid that to preach unconditional election made man careless and profane. We appreciate these lines of his and would to God he would apply that also to "conditions in the covenant" and to the covenant promise and have the confidence that to cast all conditions away, would not influence man to carelessness and profanity. On page 10 he writes, "Art. XIII . . . You will recall that the Arminians (of today also) argued that election is moreover a dangerous doctrine because it leads men to careless living. Arminians said that election will induce people to say, 'Eat, drink and be merry, we are elect and no matter how we live, we will be saved anyway.' This Art., however, testifies that people who say such things reveal their hatred for the holy matters of God and by talking that way show by their very speech what awful judgments come upon them that do not walk in the way of grace and holiness. The article instructs us rather that election leads men to humiliation and adoration with consequent lives of holiness and thanksgiving. God first loves us, and therefore we also love Him. And having that love in our hearts none of us will jump to the careless conclusion that no matter how we live, we will be saved or lost anyway." Why can the brother not say that same thing about the covenant promises and the whole of our salvation? With that love in our hearts when the covenant promise, as an unconditional promise, is preached, why will we *then* suddenly jump to careless conclusions? The next paragraph for which we have no room is also very much to the point. He writes in it that election must not be treated like an "exquisite piece of furniture, stored in the attic and occasionally brought out for display." The brother had a knack for hitting the nail on the head.

But how much heavier our hearts become when we turn away from the fact that conditional promises, faith as a condition, our act of conversion as a prerequisite to our entering the kingdom, etc. etc., will lead to conditional election, and then realize that already steps, great steps have been taken in that direction and have not been retraced! It is not a mere abstract theory that to maintain conditions somewhere along the line will lead to including election which stands at the head of the line. Exactly as we wrote last time. God cannot be mocked, and when you play with fire you are very apt to get burned. That is why those who defended conditional theology—even though

they told themselves and us that they would do so in a limited sense—now defend prerequisites, the most obnoxious form of conditions. Even Dr. Schilder in his definition of conditions tried desperately to avoid that idea. The most he would say is that conditions are two things that are always found together, that is, next to each other. Prerequisites say that one thing is built UPON the other. Faith as a prerequisite is the basis for our salvation. And that is heresy pure and simple.

Nor is it difficult to see why the Rev. De Wolf *had* to speak disrespectfully of election in those sermons in which he made those heretical statements which in their literal form are heretical, that is, are heretical until you change a word, add a word or take one away. That is why he had to include, as we understand, such a statement about election even in the sermon outline which he gave the classical committee which studied his case. If we have not spoken the truth, he may feel free to use this department the next issue to show us how he can defend those statements in the light of election. We would appreciate an explanation as to why election has to be hushed in connection with *any* truth of Scripture. We would like to see how the "everyone of you, if you believe" in that first statement fits in with unconditional election, and with the "prerequisite" idea of the second statement. A chain is no stronger than its weakest link. And the chain is unconditional election unto an unconditional promise of an unconditional salvation. Make one of these conditional and they all become conditioned by that one, Make the promise conditional and those unconditionally elected to it are yet before a condition which puts their election in doubt. Make one of these three conditional and the whole chain is useless. It will break rather than be God's means to draw us into the glories He has promised.

Still more, another revealing fact. The Rev. Petter, in order to defend the two statements also felt the need of meddling with election, be it with a different approach. He speaks of promises to the reprobate, the contents of which promises is the same as that promised the elect. God promises elect David a "sure house," and to reprobate Jeroboam that same promise is not simply preached, but according to the Rev. Petter God promises this also to him. We are glad, however, that in later writings he began to doubt this and presented the possibility that the Rev. Hoeksema could show that the distinction between Promise and promises cannot stand. And, by the way, the Staten Bijbel does not translate the Hebrew word "Saith" in I Kings 11:35 as "promise" even though the English translation does six times.

—J. A. Heys

## Contending For The Faith

### The Church and the Sacraments

#### EARLY VIEWS OF THE CHURCH (Cont'd)

Another of the Church Fathers to whom we would call attention in connection with our discussion of the early views of the Church particularly as concerning the tremendous esteem in which the office of bishop was held is Tertullian. In our last two articles we called attention to the writings of Ignatius and Irenaeus and noticed that the latter even calls the bishops the successors of the apostolate.

Tertullian, the first great writer of Latin Christianity and one of the most original characters of the ancient Church, was born at Carthage between the years, 150 and 160, and died there between the years 220 and 240. This city in North Africa was also the city in which Cyprian lived. In fact, Tertullian was the teacher of this famous Church Father. Very little is known of Tertullian's life. He was a scholar, having received an excellent education. His principal study was jurisprudence (the study of law), although he was also a great student of philosophy and history. He studied law and practiced in Rome. His conversion to Christianity took place about the year, 197-198. This event must have been sudden and decisive; he himself said that he could not imagine a truly Christian life without such a conscious breach, declaring: "Christians are made, not born." In this understanding of Christ he did not advance much beyond Justin (the great apologete of the early Christian Church) and Irenaeus, but he was very gifted in the use of language and was therefore also to state the true doctrine concerning Christ more clearly and precisely than anyone before him had been able to do. He was ordained a presbyter in the church at Carthage (although he was married—something which the Roman Catholic Church may well bear in mind). In middle life (about the year, 207) he broke with the Catholic Church (thus the Church of his day was called and this must not be confused with the Roman Catholic Church of our day) and thereby became a schismatic. The statement of Augustine that he returned into the bosom of the Catholic Church shortly before his death is considered very improbable. Tertullian has been likened to a fresh mountain torrent, tumultuous, clear and precise, and making its own path. His writings cover the whole theological field of the time—he wrote against Paganism and Judaism, discussed

polity, discipline, morals. His writings are full of life and freshness. They are written in a refreshing style, peculiarly his own.

Tertullian claimed that the keys of the kingdom were given to Peter alone and not to the bishops. All spiritual men, according to this eminent Church Father, are successors of this apostle. This sentiment is clearly set forth in the following quotation: "But, you say, 'The Church has the power of forgiving sins . . . . If, because the Lord has said to Peter, 'Upon this rock will I build My Church, to thee have I given the keys of the heavenly kingdom,' or, 'Whatsoever thou shalt have bound or loosed in earth, shall be bound or loosed in the heavens,' you therefore presume that the power of binding and loosing has derived to you, that is, to every Church akin to Peter, what sort of man are you, subverting and wholly changing the manifest intention of the Lord, conferring (as that intention did) this (gift) personally upon Peter? 'On thee,' He says, 'will I build My Church;' and, 'I will give to thee the keys,' not to the Church; and 'Whatsoever thou shalt have loosed or bound,' not what they shall have loosed or bound . . . What, now (has this to do) with the Church, and your (church), indeed, Psychic? For, in accordance with the person of Peter, it is to *spiritual* men that this power will correspondingly appertain, either to an apostle or else to a prophet . . . And accordingly 'the Church,' it is true, will forgive sins: but (it will be) the Church of the Spirit, by means of a spiritual man; not the Church which consists of a number of bishops. For the right and arbitrament is the Lord's, not the servant's; God's Himself, not the priest's."

It is evident from this quotation that Tertullian, although he held the office of bishop in high esteem, opposed the idea of the primacy of the bishop of Rome. It is true that this Church Father wrote these words after he broke away from the Catholic Church of his day (not, we understand, the Roman Catholic Church of our day), but the fact of his opposition of the pre-eminence of one bishop surely indicates that there was certainly no established doctrine in his day concerning the primacy of the bishop of Rome.

It was especially by Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage who died in the year, 258, who wrote profusely on the office of bishop and ascribed tremendous importance to it. According to him, they are really the successors of the apostles. This appears from the following quotation: "Our Lord, whose precepts and admonitions we ought to observe, describing the honor of a bishop and the order of His Church, speaks in the Gospel and says to Peter: 'I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build My Church: and the gates of hell shall not prevail against

it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Thence, through the changes of times and successions, the ordering of bishops and the plan of the Church flow onwards; so that the Church is founded upon the bishops, and every act of the Church is controlled by these same rulers."

Moreover, this renowned Church Father, discussing the office of bishop, maintained that the bishops represent and preserve the unity of the Church, and that he who is not with the bishop is simply not with the Church. Attend, if you please, to the following quotations: "And the Lord also in the Gospel, when the disciples forsook Him as He spoke, turning to the twelve, said, 'Will ye also go away?' Then Peter answered Him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe, and are sure, that Thou art the Son of the living God.' Peter speaks there, on whom the Church was to be built, teaching and showing in the name of the Church, that although a rebellious and arrogant multitude of those who will not hear and obey may depart, yet the Church does not depart from Christ; and they are the Church who are a people united to the priest, and the flock which adheres to its pastor. Whence you ought to know that the bishop is in the Church, and the Church in the bishop; and if any one be not with the bishop, that he is not in the Church, and that those flatter themselves in vain who creep in, not having peace with God's priests, and think that they communicate secretly with some; while the Church, which is Catholic and one, is not cut or divided, but is indeed connected and bound together by the cement of the priests who cohere with one another."

However, we would conclude our quotations from Cyprian by calling attention to what this eminent Church leader has to say in connection with a "bishop of bishops." The following is very much to the point: "You have heard, my dearly beloved colleagues, what Jubaianus our co-bishop has written to me, taking counsel of my poor intelligence concerning the unlawful and profane baptism of heretics, as well as what I wrote in answer to him, decreeing, to wit, what we have once again and frequently determined, that heretics who come to the Church must be baptized and sanctified by the baptism of the Church. Moreover, another letter of Jubaianus has also been read to you, wherein replying, in accordance with his sincere and religious devotion, to my letter, he not only acquiesced in what I had said, but; confessing that he had been instructed thereby, he returned thanks for it. It remains, that upon this same matter each of

us should bring forward what we think, judging no man, nor rejecting any one from the right of communion, if he should think differently from us. For neither does any of us set himself up as a bishop of bishops, nor by tyrannical terror does any compel his colleague to the necessity of obedience; since every bishop, according to the allowance of his liberty and power, has his own proper right of judgment, and can no more be judged by another than he himself can judge another. But let us all wait for the judgment of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only one that has the power both of preferring us in the government of His Church, and of judging us in our conduct there."

These quotations from Cyprian speak for themselves. It is true that he also wrote the following: "There is one God, and Christ is one; and there is one Church and one Chair (by *one chair* he meant: one center of authority)". And he continued also in the following vein: "He who is not in the Church of Christ is not a Christian. He can no longer have God for his Father who has not the Church for his mother. There is no salvation out of the Church. The Church is based on the unity of the bishops. The bishop is in the Church, and the Church is in the bishop. If anyone is not with the bishop he is not in the Church."

Concluding our article on the early views of the Church, the views that were prevalent in the Church during the first three centuries of the New Dispensation, we may observe that they were characterized by vagueness and indefiniteness. The office of bishop was held in tremendously high esteem. The bishops were regarded as the successors of the apostles, and the unity of the Church was inseparably connected with them. There was no salvation outside of the Church and one could not be in and with the Church and separate himself from the bishop. On the other hand, however, there was no established doctrine concerning the primacy of the bishop of Rome. The Church at Rome may have been regarded ever so highly, but Cyprian clearly rejected the theory of a "bishop of bishops." Nevertheless, one can easily understand that this early age of the Church, because and by its very vagueness and indefiniteness, laid the foundation of the later hierarchy. Once having ascribed such tremendous importance to the office of bishop it was but another step toward bestowing more recognition upon one bishop than another. However, we will call attention, the Lord willing, to the development and rise of the papacy in later articles. First, however, we must call attention to the early views of the sacraments.

H. Veldman

## The Voice of Our Fathers

### The Canons of Dordrecht

#### PART TWO

#### EXPOSITION OF THE CANONS

#### FIRST HEAD OF DOCTRINE, OF DIVINE PREDESTINATION

##### Article 1 (continued)

We may distinguish three main propositions in the chain of reasoning which the Canons follow in this first article. They are the following:

1. All men have sinned in Adam.
2. All men are therefore become liable to the curse and eternal death.
3. Hence, God would have done no injustice had He willed to leave the entire race in sin and the curse, and condemned them for their sin.

It must be remembered, in connection with the above, first of all, that this article concerns God's will, His decree. And in the second place, we must bear in mind that the basic premise of the article is the *sovereignty*, the *absolute freedom*, of that decree of God. It was against the latter that the charge of injustice was leveled by the Arminians. Their charge might be formulated in the following propositions:

1. Reformed men teach that God sovereignly chooses some men unto salvation, and rejects the rest of men, leaving them unto perdition.
2. To sovereignly reject some while He saved others would be arbitrary and unjust on the part of God. God has no right to do this.
3. Hence, a *sovereign* divine decree of predestination, being unjust, is impossible, since God is surely just.

When, therefore, the argumentation of Article 1 is followed to its proper conclusion, and that in the light of the objection which it intends to answer, the conclusion is that the charge of injustice against a divine decree of predestination that is *sovereign* is a false charge. God's sovereignty is not in conflict with His justice. The sovereignly decreeing God is also the righteous God. And He is righteous in His decree!

A careful comparison of the two viewpoints at stake in this article will reveal how completely at odds they stand. The Arminian viewpoint which is opposed here puts man in the position of judge. The sovereign God of all is hailed into the court of man, in order to determine whether or not He, the Lord, is righteous. The very opening words of Article 1, "as all men have sinned in Adam," puts man in his proper place; and that is not the position of judge,

but the position of *judged*. The Arminians charge the God of Reformed theology,—and He is the God of the Scriptures,—with unrighteousness. The *Canons* take as their basis the "God forbid!" of the apostle Paul, when the charge of unrighteousness is brought against God. The Arminians assume the position of those who in Scripture are the real or imagined opponents of the truth of God's righteousness and sovereign freedom. The *Canons*, quoting the Scriptures, assume the stand of Holy Writ itself.

Briefly let us note the various elements of this article in connection with their Scriptural proof. *All men have sinned in Adam*. The point of this first proposition is not the truth of *original* sin, but the fact of *universal* sin. Also the truth of original sin is maintained by our fathers, but it is not treated until we come to the Third Head of Doctrine. Here already it is mentioned. But it would appear in this brief reference to our relation to Adam that the emphasis is not so much on the element of an inherited corruption, but rather on the mere fact that as long as you can say nothing more than that we are children of Adam, members of the human race, you must necessarily say that we are sinners. And that *all* men are sinners receives the weight of emphasis here. It is the first link in the chain of universal liability to condemnation. That this is true is plain from the Scriptural proof that is offered, Romans 3:23: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." If the fathers had wanted to prove the truth of original sin, they would undoubtedly have referred us to such a passage as Romans 5:12,ff. But now they simply employ a text which teaches that *all* have sinned.

Hence, they *lie under the curse, and are deserving of eternal death*, or more correctly, they *are become liable to the curse and eternal death*. This is really the point upon which the entire article hinges. All men, since they are sinners, are guilty before God. And, since they are guilty, they are worthy of eternal death. For the first part of this proposition, that all are guilty, the *Canons* offer proof from Romans 3:19b: "... that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." This quotation is striking not only because it so strongly emphasizes the universality of the guilt-verdict ("every mouth" and "all the world"), but also because it is very applicable to the argument of the Arminians that is being opposed here. The apostle Paul here emphasizes exactly that it is the divine purpose that not only in the final judgment in the day of the Lord, but also in time, every mouth must be completely silenced before God. No one may contradict, no one may be able to offer any objection when God judges.



Even though it is true that wicked men may wickedly rebel against the judgment of God, yet before God they have no ground of justice left. All the world must be guilty, punishable, even in their own conscience before God. How impossible, then, how absurd, how presumptuous, that anyone should charge God with injustice when He saves some out of a race that is all guilty! How absurd to charge God with injustice when He leaves some to perish, when He might justly have left all to perish!

For the second part of this proposition, that all are worthy of eternal death, the proof of Romans 6:23 is offered. It is plain without any further exposition. It is simply Scripture that the sinner must die. If, therefore, all men are sinners, guilty before God, they are all liable to eternal death. Death is the wages of sin. And God is the divine paymaster.

From all this the third proposition, that God would have done no injustice had He left all men to perish on account of their sin, follows. The *Canons* offer no Scriptural proof specifically for this truth. It is a logical conclusion which cannot be gainsaid; it follows inexorably from the two preceding propositions. Moreover, in the light of this argumentation the Arminian position is entirely destroyed. And how strange a position it is. They indeed consider it strange and out of the ordinary that anyone at all should go lost on God's part. They take it for granted that everyone *can* be saved as far as God is concerned. That anyone is saved they find to be quite ordinary. But according to Scripture, it would be nothing strange if no one were saved. Scripture teaches that it is a wonder, an extraordinary thing, that anyone at all is saved. In other words, as history has so often confirmed, the objection against predestination is not primarily against the decree of election. If there were only a decree of election, then perhaps there would be no disagreement. But the objection is, strictly speaking, against the decree of reprobation. Sinful man does not want sovereign reprobation. And how striking in the light of the fact that even before his own conscience eternal death is perfectly righteous and completely deserved by every man. No man by nature deserves anything but death. God might have justly condemned all. Let every mouth, then, be stopped, when the Lord of all determines to save some out of the common misery.

Such is the instruction of our *Canons* here. Man, as a guilty creature, is put in his proper place in relation to God. He has no ground of complaint whatsoever.

However, while it may be granted that this viewpoint of the *Canons* is correct and perfectly sound doctrine, we may mention in passing that there is also

another, and higher, viewpoint. The *Canons* already here give evidence that they are infralapsarian, that is, they teach that in His decrees God elected some out of a fallen race. And from the infralapsarian viewpoint such argumentation as we find in Article 1 is to be expected. An infralapsarian is almost forced to answer the Arminian argument in this fashion. Scripture, however, teaches not only that the guilty creature has no claim over against God; but it goes a step farther, and emphasizes that the creature as such, apart even from his sin, has absolutely no claim on God. God is sovereign! This is very plainly the teaching of Romans 9:14-23: "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me. Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory . . ."

Notice, in this passage, that the apostle, after he spontaneously rejects the charge of unrighteousness in God, proceeds not to defend that divine righteousness as such, but rather maintains the sovereign freedom of God over against man, the creature of his hand. This becomes very plain in the passage 19-23. There the apostle addresses not the sinner, but man. Man as such, not the sinner, is the clay. And the divine potter forms out of that one lump of human clay one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor. God is absolutely free. Not only has the sinner nothing to say. But man, apart from his sin, has absolutely no right to answer against the sovereignly decreeing God. Such is the viewpoint of this passage of Holy Writ, a viewpoint which is higher than that of our *Canons*.

But, I say once more, the stand of our *Canons* is perfectly sound. —H. C. Hoeksema



## DECENCY and ORDER

### Changing Pastorates

#### ARTICLE V.

"Ministers already in the ministry of the Word, who are called to another congregation, shall likewise be called in the aforementioned manner by the consistory and the deacons, with observance of the regulations made for the purpose by the consistory and of the general ecclesiastical ordinances for the eligibility of those who have served outside of the Protestant Reformed Churches and for the repeated calling of the same minister during the same vacancy; further, with the advice of the classis or of the counselor, appointed by the classis, and with the approval of the classis or of the delegates appointed by the classis, to whom the ministers called show good ecclesiastical testimonials of doctrine and life, with the approval of the members of the calling congregation, as stated in Article 4; whereupon the minister called shall be installed with appropriate stipulations and prayers agreeably to the form for this purpose."

The above article defines the proper procedure to be followed by a consistory of a vacant congregation in extending a call to one who is already stationed in the ministry of the Word. In so far it is repetitious of Art. 4 as there is no essential difference in calling a candidate or one already engaged in the ministry. The only difference is that the latter is not required to resubmit to examination before Classis and the ceremony of the laying on of hands it not reenacted at his installation. Hence, it would be redundant to repeat what has been written under the previous article.

There are, however, in the above article certain points of interest that are worthy of brief consideration. Although it is seldom practiced, our church order here allows for the possibility of one of our churches calling a minister of the word from outside our own denominational circles. To the knowledge of the undersigned this has been done only twice in our brief history and in both instances the calls extended were declined. Our church in Oskaloosa, Iowa at one time extended a call to Rev. P. De Koekkoek and our Roosevelt Park church (now Second Grand Rapids) called Rev. J. De Haan, both from the Christian Reformed Church. Our churches have no rule of limitation in this matter except that which is also incorporated in this fifth article of the church order which states that "the minister called must show good ecclesiastical testimony of doctrine and life" and, of course, without

these testimonials a minister called from without could not be installed with Classical approbation. Whereas, then, these credentials are in themselves a potent safeguard and the possibility of any of our churches acquiring a minister from without is very small, it hardly appears necessary that the churches add a special ruling on this matter. But in the Netherlands and also in the Reformed and Christian Reformed Churches in this country this provision of Article 5 of the D.K.O. has had rather promiscuous usage.

Consistories of vacant churches must also consider that ministers who have not served in their present charge for more than two years are not eligible for a call. This rule is not inviolable. There may be instances where a consistory has very preponderant reasons to place a name on the nomination of one who has served his present congregation less than two years and no one can deny them that right. It belongs to their autonomy. Everyone of our ministers in good standing are eligible at any time for call but before any church will call one contrary to the general rule, they should have valid reason that is convincing to their counselor who must also give an account to the Classis. And if the counselor and the consistory cannot agree as to the validity of the reasons given, the call must be held in abeyance until the advice of the Classis itself can be obtained.

There is undoubtedly good sense in this reasoning. It is generally agreed that too short pastorates are detrimental to the churches and the minister himself. It takes time for a minister to work *into* his congregation and he himself must feel that it is virtually impossible to do any real constructive work in less than two or three years. The deepest spiritual need of the congregation is discovered only after intensive and lengthy labor and the longer a minister works in the congregation the more he discovers this need. Besides this, especially in smaller churches it becomes a financial impossibility to obtain a new minister every two or three years. Moving expense is no small item and where distances are great it could and sometimes does create a real hardship.

Likewise consistories are advised to refrain from calling the same minister more than once during the period of one year without the advice of the Classis. The reason for this is to be found in the very seriousness of the call. If, after prayerful consideration, one is moved to decline a call, that decision must be considered final. It is not likely that circumstances will be so altered within a year's time so as to justify the reversal of such an important decision. However, whereas that is not altogether impossible, room is allowed for the exception.

When then a minister in a fixed charge receives a

call from another church, he is confronted with a serious question. He must prayerfully ascertain whether the Lord would have him continue in his present place of labor or whether the call received is indicative that the Lord has appointed him to a new field. Unless his motivation in seeking a decision is to do the will of Christ, Who says to one servant, "Go here" and to another "Go there," it will not go well with him no matter what his decision may be. The servant of the Lord must be ready to labor wherever the Lord will send him whether it is to his liking or not.

Oft times, however, sinful and selfish considerations move men to either accept or decline a call. Life is full of sin and its results and the ministry, too, is not wholly freed from its contamination. A minister may tire of his present charge and may openly or secretly solicit the vacant churches for a call. Such practices are always to be condemned for it is God who calls to the office of the ministry, through His church, and none should ever, therefore, solicit as he would for an ordinary secular position. Likewise, one might accept a call for reasons of personal gain or honor. The offer of a larger salary may be a sinful enticement to leave a congregation that is very much in need of his continued services or the fact that the calling church is considerably larger and has more prestige and recognition may be a sinful motivation. The minister may be sinfully lazy and so eagerly avail himself of the opportunity to enter a new charge where, as it is sometimes rather crudely put, "he can turn the pile over."

If, however, the minister of these and similar considerations leaves his congregation contrary to the Lord's will, he may be sure that the blessing of God will not follow him in his new field of labor. What he secretly coveted and thought to be gain will prove to be to his own detriment even as our Heidelberg Catechism states in Lord's Day 50, "Neither our care nor industry, nor even thy gifts can profit us without thy blessing."

And God cannot be mocked!

On the other hand, it is also conceivable that the Lord sometimes speaks through natural circumstances directing his servants in the way He would have them go. There may be, for example, a minister with a large family serving in a small congregation that is incompetent to provide adequate support. He may receive a call to a larger church that is able to provide his needs and those of his family. It may be the Lord's way of relieving the smaller church of an unfortunate situation. (P.S.—Another way of relieving this kind of situation is that the smaller church receives adequate support from the Churches at large to meet its obligations.)

A minister may be hampered by his consistory or parishoners making his labor virtually impossible. Because of some past difficulties the church may refuse to give him their support and cooperation so that his ministry becomes stagnant. In such circumstances the Lord may assign him another place where he is able to labor with fruit. Yet, it must also be borne in mind that a minister may not seek another call as an escape from a difficult situation for then his troubles will only follow him but after he has done the utmost to rectify the situation and it has become obvious that future labor is impossible is he justified in accepting another charge. The necessity of a change in pastorate may be providentially created when the climate of a certain locality impairs the health of the minister making his labor difficult and so many things need to be taken into consideration.

The minister, in distinction from the candidate, is given three weeks to consider and furnish a reply to the call extended. Normally this is long enough although if circumstances warrant it, he may be granted a brief extension of time. This extension, if granted, should under no circumstances be indefinite so that the congregation is left endlessly waiting. It should be definitely stated as to when a reply is expected. If after that time no answer is forthcoming and the minister offers no valid reason for his indecision, the call should be revoked and a new nomination made and another call extended. In considering a call the minister must consult with and receive the consent of his own consistory for unless he does this he cannot receive the required credentials in the event he should choose to accept. Without these credentials no other church may receive him. These credentials, according to the present article of our Church Order, must also receive the approval of the Classis the minister is leaving as well as the one he is entering. We hope, D.V., to discuss them in connection with Article 10 and in the present connection are only to note that the granting of credentials by any consistory must never be a mere matter of "processing a form" but must be done in integrity to God and the sister church.

—G. Vanden Berg

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#### IN MEMORIAM

The Mary-Martha Society of the Protestant Reformed Church of Manhattan, Mont., wishes to express its sympathy to a fellow member, Mrs. Albert Visser, in the loss of her father,

MR. BILL VANDER VOORDEN

May the Lord sustain her and the family and grant them His grace which is always sufficient.

Mrs. Jack Oostema, Secr.

## ALL AROUND US

### *The Third Ecumenical Synod*

Most of our readers will remember that the Protestant Reformed Churches had received an invitation to attend the third Reformed Ecumenical Synod which was held last August in Edinburgh, Scotland. They are also aware of the fact that the delegates appointed by our Synod did not go as had been previously planned. Because of our interest in this international ecclesiastical assembly and its work, we thought it well to present the following gathered from the reports of two witnesses who attended. The two witnesses are the Rev. Martin Monsma of the Christian Reformed Church who reports in *De Wachter*, and the Rev. J. W. Betzold of the Westminster Presbyterian Churches reporting in the *Presbyterian Guardian*. Their reports substantially agree as they tell us of the following items that appeared on the agenda for discussion and decision.

1. Probably the most difficult matter to come before Synod was the business concerning the name and nature of the present assembly. According to the *Guardian*, there was considerable debate anent the question what to call this assembly. Is Synod a judiciary body, or does it have only advisory capacity? Should the gathering be called an Assembly, a Convention, or a Council? Some would have changed the name to one of these. "However in the eyes of the majority the present name was most acceptable, carrying as it does not only certain ecclesiastical connotations, but also the provision that Synod will continue to offer 'advice.'" So the name "Reformed Ecumenical Synod" was retained.

2. Another matter of importance treated by Synod was "the affiliation of member churches of Synod with such ecumenical movements as the World Council of Churches, the International Council of Christian Churches, and the World Evangelical Fellowship. These are the respective world-wide projections of the National Council of Churches (formerly the Federal Council), the American Council of Christian Churches, and the National Association of Evangelicals." After considerable debate, in which some delegates argued that membership in the Synod and in these church movements in question was incompatible, while others saw nothing objectionable in them, Synod decided: a. Not to recommend membership in the ICCC though there are many commendable features in the Statement of Faith in this organization there are also certain features in the constitution and the practise

of this body to which exception must be taken. Synod would therefore leave the matter of membership in this body to the judgment of the several Churches. b. Re the WCC Synod advised member churches not to join this organization as now constituted. With respect to those churches already joined, Synod requests that they reconsider their position in the light of the basically divergent confessional statements of the RES and the WCC. c. At the same time Synod did not recommend membership of its churches in the WEF.

On the basis of the little we know that is not good respecting the three church movements in question, we consider the decisions of the Synod quite commendable. Though, according to the *Guardian*, there were some such as Dr. J. B. Marais of the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa who took a mediating position in favor of these movements especially the WCC, it appears that Synod really took exception to the modernism of these church organizations. What the Synod said about the American Council of Christian Churches, which we understand to be composed of Fundamentalist groups of which Carl McIntire, an ousted Presbyterian minister, is the leader, we read nothing.

3. At the second Ecumenical Synod held in Amsterdam in 1949 three propositions respecting the question of "Creation and Evolution" were presented to the churches for consideration. The Synod of the Christian Reformed Churches last June objected to these propositions and so declared themselves at this Synod. The Synod therefore decided to make further study of this matter and put it in the hands of a study committee of five Dutch theologians who will report at the next Synod.

The three propositions adopted at the Ecumenical Synod of 1949 which we quote from the *Banner* of June 5, 1953, are as follows: "a. This historical character of the revelation in Genesis 1 and 2 must be maintained without compromise. These two chapters offer no data to justify a symbolical or visionary interpretation or treat them as meaningful myth." "b. The true, completely trust worthy description by God of His work of creation is given to us in a humanly intelligible form, so that, although (that is full, exhaustive) representation of the divine act, it is sufficient for us to acknowledge and glorify Him as our Creator." "c. In maintaining the historical character of Genesis 1 and 2 the Church rejects all evolutionary teaching which either rules out God entirely, or conceives of God as dependent upon the process of a so-called creative evolution, or allows for Him to enter into the process only incidentally. The human form of the revelation should prompt the Church to pro-

ceed with modesty and caution, and to refrain from making various pronouncements in the field of natural science."

Respecting these propositions the Synod of the Christian Reformed Churches in session last June adopted the following advice of the committee of pre-advice. "That Synod make the following reply to the Reformed Ecumenical Synod: 1. That Synod appreciates in the statements submitted by the Reformed Ecumenical Synod on the subject of 'Creation and Evolution' the maintenance of the Bible as the infallible Word of God, and the historicity of the biblical account of creation. 2. That Synod expresses its dissatisfaction with the second and third 'guiding principle' in their present form because they do not distinguish with sufficient clarity between the Reformed position on the one hand and the positions of so-called theistic evolution and the dialectic theology on the other hand. 3. That Synod suggests to the Reformed Ecumenical Synod that the whole matter be studied anew."

In as far as we are able to judge, we are pleased with both the decisions of the Christian Reformed Churches and the Ecumenical Synod on this matter. They appear to show an attempt to cling to the infallible, historical account of the Scriptural narrative of creation, and a purposeful opposition to the current attempt to introduce the evolutionistic theory of creation of the scientist or the theory of "the category of the super-historical" taught by Barth.

4. Synod also entered into the racial problem which had been presented by the Reformed Churches of South Africa. The difficulty which Synod tried to solve can be briefly stated as follows: The Church believes that the children of God are all one in Christ, but does this mean that all races can or should live together? In South Africa it appears that since Word War II this problem has become acute. There are between nine and ten million negroes in South Africa, but about two and a half million whites. Though there are more colored children in school than whites, the bill is footed by the white tax-payers. Hence social and economical difficulties have also arisen. This question has been put into the hands of a broad committee consisting of twelve members from four different countries with three from each country: England, Holland, South Africa and America. They will report at the next Synod to be held in 1958 in South Africa.

5. The Synod also entertained an overture from the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands re the problem of the spiritual care of emigrants. As is well known many emigrants have migrated from the

Netherlands in recent years to various countries including South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States. The Churches of the Netherlands desired that these people have the Reformed Churches in these countries provide them with spiritual care. A commendable overture we would say. A committee of five was appointed to provide the emigrants with information. Rev. J. M. Vander Kieft of the Christian Reformed Church in America is one of the members of this committee.

6. And finally, the Synod also considered the request for advice presented by the Christian Reformed Church of this country re the woman-suffrage question. At the Synod of the latter Churches in 1950 it was decided to present this question to the Ecumenical Synod. Our readers will probably remember that we called attention in a previous article to the fact that the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands took a stand in respect to this question. They decided in favor of woman-suffrage in the Church. The Synod of Edinburgh appointed a committee to study the matter which committee later reported and rendered advice which the Synod in turn decided to offer to the Churches for earnest consideration. The advice includes six points which we cannot now quote for lack of space. It appears to us, however, that the Synod spoke in favor of woman-suffrage, basing its stand not so much on what Scripture says about this matter, but rather on what it does not say. In other words, because it is the opinion of Synod that Scripture does not expressly condemn the practice of Woman-suffrage in the Church, therefore it is allowable. Perhaps we will have more to say later on this subject.

—M. Schipper

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#### MEN'S LEAGUE MEETING

The Eastern League of Men's Societies of the Protestant Reformed Churches will hold their mass meeting Thursday evening, Nov. 19 at 8 o'clock in the Hudsonville Prot. Ref. Church.

Rev. G. Lubbers will speak on the topic: "The Place of Exhortation in the Preaching of the Gospel."

Opportunity will be given for questioning and discussion after the address.

We cordially invite all our men to hear this timely and worthwhile address.

The Board