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MEDITATION

The Righteous Branch

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is the name whereby He shall be called, The Lord our righteousness." —Jeremiah 23:5,6

Not many days hence, and we will celebrate the glorious event of the birth of our Saviour.

For four thousand years the Church of God had looked for Him. On many pages of the Old Testament Scriptures you find the longing for the coming of this Saviour, and on the other hand, the sure promise of His advent. God has promised throughout history that He would send His Goël, His Messiah. Yes, and it really means that God promised that He would come Himself. That is the Gospel of the promise: I, your God, am coming to save you!

A very clear instance of such a promise we have heard in the prophecies of Isaiah, chapter 40, verse 9. It concludes in the triumphant shout: Behold your God! In it is the glad cry: He came at last!

It is an answer to the ever recurring question: Who is active in religion? And the answer is: God acts. And when He acts there is religion. Then we corrupt ourselves again. Then God acts again, and the result is reformation. And thus it continues throughout all history. Yes, we are active too. But our action is the corruption of truth and life. That is the sad commentary of all history. Clearest of all in the book of the Judges. There you see the ever recurring cycle of God establishing His people in the truth. Then they corrupt themselves. God takes ven-

geance and gives them in the hands of their cruel enemies. Then they cry to God. And He would send a judge to deliver them. And they are again established. But then the same cycle starts over again: corruption, misery, crying to God, and reformation. And that is our history.

Essentially you have the same thing in my text.

It is taken from the prophecies of the weeping prophet.

He wept for about fifty years.

Then God took him to heaven and wiped all his tears. He is singing now.

But we will take our cue from him for this little meditation.

For our comfort in these days of the advent of Christ.

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Here is Jeremiah's promise in the name of the Lord: God is going to send unto David a righteous Branch!

And this Branch is Jesus. This prophecy was fulfilled in that wonderful night when Jesus was born. It may have been the text for the sermons of those lowly shepherds.

Notice: God raises Him!

And: in the midst of the utmost wickedness. Not only in the earth, but Judah-Israel have become like unto Sodom and Gomorrah.

But God raises Him. You ask me why I emphasize this truth. Because it is fundamental, and because we are always trying to corrupt that truth.

It is fundamental for it reveals the entire style of the palaces of God's salvation. All along the way it is God who saves. Not for one moment is it any differ-

ent. God raises the Branch, the Princeps, the Leader of the people.

He is called Branch, that is a twig that points in a different, in a new direction. And the direction this Princeps points to is the heart of God! This Branch is tantamount to Paul's cry: For out of Him, through Him and unto Him are all things. Amen.

You see, we are all going in the opposite direction to where this Branch is pointing. Our direction is hell. But He comes unto David (so says the text) and He leads David back to the good conduct: righteousness.

In one word: this Branch brings salvation.

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Who is David?

The text tells me that God will raise a righteous Branch unto David.

But David was dead and gone by the time this prophecy was spoken.

Yes, but although King David, the father of King Solomon was dead at this time in history, David was still there.

David in my text speaks of Judah-Israel, the Church, God's people, the elect.

And here I approach a chapter that is overwhelming: I can hardly continue. It is the everlasting chapter of God's love. For you must have asked yourselves: why call that church David? And the answer is that the name David means Beloved!

Beloved? The Church? Israel? Judah? God's people? We? I, of all persons?

Yes, my dear brethren, you and I, and all that hope in God. We are called David in my text, and that speaks of the eternal chapter of the love of God. I hear a man warble sometimes on my radio about the Love of God. It is the title of a hymn. Oh, but it is beautiful and true.

Perhaps you would ask me for proof.

Well, there is proof; there is overwhelming proof.

The whole world is full of proof that God loves His own people whom He foreknew. There is so much proof in the world that the trees and the mountains are bidden of the Holy Ghost to sing and clap their hands, for that His goodness endureth forever!

But you ask for proof and I will give it. And you live this proof, bye and bye when you and your dear ones will travel again to Bethlehem to see the Word that has come to pass.

The proof is that God came in swaddling clothes, in a dirty manger and dirtier stable, in order to show you how much He loved you. He came to point in the direction of His loving Heart. He came in Bethlehem

and said: Behold Me in your misery and poverty! But I come to make you rich!

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Yes, the Branch would be raised unto David.

And what would His labor be?

This: He would be a King and He would reign in justice and judgment.

There is an eternal terror in these words.

You know what would happen to you when justice and judgment would be meted out to you?

There is but one answer: you would find yourselves in outer darkness.

But wait! This Branch is going to execute judgment and justice in the earth, as a labor of everlasting love of God!

And that makes all the difference.

Oh, I pity the world and the devils. They shall feel the justice and judgment, and its experience shall be hell forever. Did not this Branch say: Now is the world judged! And also this: Now is Satan cast out!

But as for David: He will execute judgment and justice in the earth for them too, but then they will be saved. Jesus will prosper in that awful labor. But He Himself will go under. For He will take your hell and damnation on Himself.

You can read it in the text. The effect of His labor in the earth will be that Judah shall be saved! And Israel shall dwell safely. In these few words you have salvation, marvellous salvation, heaven and heaven's joy and peace.

Saved, what is it? It is the loss of the greatest evil and the obtaining of the greatest good. Through His justice and judgment your sin and guilt are annihilated. And through the same labor your righteousness will shine as the sun in the firmament.

To dwell safely.

I yearn as I write. We do not dwell safely as sinners. There is an unspeakable apprehension in the very atmosphere. As sinners our lot is described in one of the prophets: In the morning we say: wish it were even! and in the evening we say: wish it were morning!

But through the labor of this Branch Judah is saved and Israel shall dwell safely.

What unspeakable salvation!

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His name is The Lord our Righteousness!

Yes, that is first of all Jesus Christ who was born in Bethlehem almost two thousand years ago. There can be no reasonable doubt about that. The Branch is the Saviour-King.

But I would like to point out that He is in reality God Himself, Jehovah, Lord of Lords, and King of kings.

Salvation is of the Lord.

No, this Branch is no third party that came between the outraged God and the guilty sinner. Oh no. But it is the Party of the First Part: God, blessed forever.

Yes, this Branch is Jehovah in swaddling clothes, lying in the manger.

It is Jehovah clothed with humility, Jehovah clothed with our weakened, earthy, corruptible and mortal human nature. It is Jehovah with guilty David in His loins.

That is what you see in Bethlehem's stable. That's what the shepherds came to see. They saw the Sign of all that marvellous miracle. They came to see the Incarnation of Jehovah.

And He is called The Lord our Righteousness!

These last words of His name tell a wonderful story.

It tells of the results of His labor. He established righteousness for David so that it might clothe him.

Read of it in the Revelation of John, the beloved Apostle.

He saw a great multitude of happy souls, arrayed in long white clothes before the throne of God.

And there must have been a question in his soul for he is *answered* by one of the four and twenty elders who said to him: What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

But John did not know, and so he said: Sir, thou knowest!

And here is his answer, and it sheds light on the name by which Jehovah-Salvation is called: These are they which came out of great tribulation, *and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

And still clearer is John's revelation in chapter 19:8. There we read that to the Bride of the Lamb (and that is the same as David in my text) was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is *the righteousness of the saints.*

The Lord our Righteousness!

Thus shall He be called, says the text.

Oh, let us call Him that for evermore! Amen.

G. Vos.

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EDITORIALS

Earmarks

It will be plain to every one that at all understands the truth that the difference between us and those that left the fellowship of the Protestant Reformed Churches at bottom concerns the truth of election and reprobation.

It is the age old question whether grace is always particular and for the elect alone, or whether it is common and, in some sense, is for all men.

It is the question that arises again and again in the world whether, in the matter of salvation, God is absolutely sovereign, so that He is merciful unto whom He will be merciful and whom He wills He hardens; or whether man can and must contribute at least something to his salvation.

Those that condemn the statements made by the Rev. De Wolf maintain, as the Protestant Reformed Churches always did ever since 1924, that grace is never common but always particular. Those that support those statements simply believe that the grace of God is common.

I know that they, with a show of indignation, deny this. They *say* that they are Protestant Reformed! They *claim* that they hold to the truth of election and reprobation, and of particular grace just as well as we do. But, in the light of all their agitation in the churches, and in the light of what the Rev. De Wolf himself called his "unhappy statements," I maintain that all their actions belie their words and their claims.

Often I begin to think that many that went along with us in 1924 and many that joined our churches in later years never were Protestant Reformed. They should never have gone along, they should never have joined us. How otherwise is it to be explained that one of my own elders, A. Dykstra, could say in one of our consistory meetings that he knew of nine former elders, and himself was, of course, the tenth, that were convinced that the synod of Kalamazoo, 1924, was right when they declared that I was onesided. That the Rev. Petter for a time perhaps, embraced the Protestant Reformed faith, superficially at least, but that he never was Protestant Reformed at heart is evident from all that, in the last few years, he produced, and more especially from his opposition against the Declaration of Principles. The same is true of all that were against that declaration.

The two statements made by the Rev. De Wolf are only a concise expression of what lives, not only in his

own heart, but also in the hearts of all that so strongly support him.

How the Rev. Gritters has changed since he, ten years ago, instructed his people in Sioux Center by his exposition of the Canons. Confer the excellent articles of the Rev. J. Heys in the *Standard Bearer*.

And the Rev. A. Cammenga? The man that was supposed to proclaim the Protestant Reformed truth to those that are outside? In the light of his enthusiastic support of that first sermon of the Rev. De Wolf, in which he stated that the promise of God is for all on condition of the act of believing, I am convinced that he never preached, as our missionary, either in Lynden or in Chattam, the distinctive Protestant Reformed truth. (He was in church when De Wolf preached that sermon, and although he never paid me a visit, the morning after he came to my house just to tell me what a wonderful sermon that was!). I would like to know how, in the light of his wholehearted agreement with that sermon, he could ever have opposed the First Point of Kalamazoo 1924.

At any rate, the two statements that, by Classis East and the Consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, are declared to be literally heretical, attack the very heart of our Protestant Reformed truth.

It is Protestant Reformed to teach that the promise is for the elect alone. De Wolf and his supporters believe that the promise is for all that hear the gospel.

It is Protestant Reformed to maintain that, in the preaching of the gospel, there is no common grace, but that, through the preaching, God is merciful to whom He will be merciful and whom He will He hardens. De Wolf and those that support him believe and maintain that the preaching is grace for all that hear.

It is Protestant Reformed to teach that faith is not a condition but a means unto salvation. But De Wolf and those that follow him (or did he follow them?) insist that man's act of believing limits the promise of God.

It is Protestant Reformed to teach that man is by nature darkness, wholly incapable of doing any good and inclined to all evil, and he can never convert himself to enter into the kingdom of God unless he is born again by the Spirit of God. But De Wolf and those that support him teach and insist that our act of conversion is before (PRE-requisite) we enter into the kingdom of God.

I am aware that the Rev. De Wolf now explains that he was not referring to initial and principle but to continual conversion and entering into the kingdom of God.

But, in the first place, let me remark that this is

an after thought of De Wolf and that, throughout the sermon, except in the last few sentences, he spoke of principle and initial conversion and entering into the kingdom. I know, for I heard the sermon myself.

Besides, he virtually stated in that sermon that, if we did not convert ourselves, we would all go to hell. He referred to Luke 13:24 ff, which speaks of the workers of iniquity that shall never enter into the final kingdom of glory but to whom the Lord says: "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity." This certainly could never be said to those that were already regenerated.

Again, at one of the consistory meetings soon after that sermon was preached, I suggested to him that the Lord, in Matth. 18:1-4 certainly spoke to his regenerated disciples that certainly, as far as their subjective condition was concerned, were already in the kingdom of God. I asked him whether Peter, had he died on the spot when Jesus addressed His disciples, would not have gone to heaven. His answer clearly revealed how far, at that time, the explanation which he now offers, was from his mind. He simply said: "that has nothing to do with it."

But even if he referred to continual conversion and entering in, the statement does not principally change, but is still heretical. In no sense of the word can it ever be said that our act of conversion is before we enter into the kingdom. Always we must be in the light, always we must be in the kingdom before we convert ourselves. Outside of the kingdom we are ever in darkness, and never convert ourselves, whether principally or continually. Our act of conversion, therefore, even in the sense of continual conversion is always an act in the light, and can never be a PRE-requisite to enter into the light.

In one of his answers to the questions put to him in the examination to which the consistory subjected him, he virtually admits that our act of conversion is not a prerequisite to enter into the kingdom of God, although in all the other answers he emphatically maintains this heresy.

The question was: "Do you maintain that our act of conversion is before we enter into the kingdom of God, that is, a prerequisite?"

And he answered as follows: "In the sense of our consciousness of entering in, and being in the kingdom. I would say it belongs to our act of entering into the kingdom."

In the last sentence, he, evidently, denies that our act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter into the kingdom. The two are simultaneous. The act of conversion takes place or is performed at the same time that we enter into the kingdom. Conversion is the act of entering in. But then the former can never

be before the latter, can never be a PRE-requisite.

An earmark of being a heretic I find in the way Rev. De Wolf attempts to distort the plain meaning of the Confessions so as to favor and support his statement that our act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter into the kingdom of God. An illustration of this you may find in one of his answers to the questions of the above examination.

The question asked for his explanation of Canons III, IV, 1-4 and 10. And the answer was rather lengthy, but I will quote all the essential parts of it.

"That question is not an easy question, the question concerning our entering into the kingdom, the manner of our entering into the kingdom, that which takes place in the sinner who enters into the kingdom of God, and the chronological order of events with a view to enter into the kingdom. I have been trying to make a little study of that, Mr. Chairman, as you find these various references in Scripture, and I am not prepared to give you a full explanation of these things, because it is rather an involved problem, and it is not to be over simplified by making a line, and saying that man is first on one side and then on the other, I assure you, and the Canons also do not do that. It is rather difficult to immediately establish these things here that are in question."

Let us remember that, in his sermon, the Rev. De Wolf was quite sure of the solution of this problem and especially of the "chronological order of events" when one enters into the kingdom of God. Did he not definitely state that our act of conversion was first and that the entering into the kingdom followed? PRE means before, and refers, therefore, to the chronological order "of events." Why then camouflage the matter now and state that the matter is not so simple? I consider this an earmark of heretics. Vagueness is their strength.

But let me continue the question:

"Are we not in the power of darkness before we enter into the kingdom of God?" Well, Mr. Chairman, you can say a lot of things about that. Certainly it is true that the natural man is in the power of darkness and it is also true that when one is in the kingdom he is in the light. I think we may say that."

May say that? Is it possible, in the light of Scripture and the Confessions ever to say anything else? De Wolf says: "You can say a lot of things about that." I would like to hear those "lot of things."

But I continue:

"Now I would like to call your attention to Art. 10 (of Canons III, IV, H.H.), particularly, to show you that this problem is not so simple. And, Mr. Chairman, the reason that I call special attention to

Art. 10 is because it mentions the kingdom. The other articles do not, if my memory serves me correctly. 'It is to be ascribed to the proper exercise of free will, whereby one distinguishes himself above others, equally furnished with grace and conversion, as the proud heresy of Pelagius maintains; but it must be wholly ascribed to God, who as he has chosen his own from eternity in Christ'—and now Mr. Chairman, may I call your particular attention to the order in which we have these things here in this article—'as he has chosen his own from eternity in Christ, so he confers upon them faith and repentance, rescues them from the power of darkness, and translates them into the kingdom of his own Son.'"

Remember that DeWolf wants to call special attention to the order of these things: faith, conversion, and being translated into the kingdom of God's Son. And note, in the following, how he twists and distorts the Confession to support the heresy that the act of conversion is even before our being translated into the kingdom. Said he:

"Now, Mr. Chairman, there must be some reason why our fathers used this order. They speak of "translation into the kingdom of his own Son" as following upon being rescued out of the power of darkness, as following upon the conferring of faith and repentance upon them, which faith and repentance are certainly active and conscious realities. Repentance cannot be anything else but conscious, must be; and faith I believe, according to our confessions, usually has the idea of the conscious act of faith. I think that if you look up the idea of faith in our confessions, you will find, Mr. Chairman, that that is the aspect of faith as it stands upon the foreground, not the potential, not the potential of faith, but the act of faith, and I find it very significant, Mr. Chairman, that our fathers put it in this order."

I must continue this in the next number of the *Standard Bearer*. This answer is very important, and I do not wish to do De Wolf an injustice by quoting him only in part as is always so characteristic of the so-called *Reformed Guardian*, thus distorting the truth.

Only I want to call your attention to the smooth way in which De Wolf prepares us for the error that the Confessions teach that our act of conversion is before we are translated into the kingdom of God. We first believe: faith is presented here as the act of faith. We first convert ourselves: conversion, too, is presented here as our act. Thereupon God rescues us from the power of darkness, and translates us into the kingdom of His own Son.

All this must serve the purpose of bolstering up

his heresy that our act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter into the kingdom of God!

What a Pelagian interpretation of our Reformed Confessions!

—H.H.



OUR DOCTRINE

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

AN EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

PART III — OF THANKFULNESS

LORD'S DAY 38

Chapter 3

The Observance of the First Day

From the preceding it will be evident that it is important properly to observe the weekly sabbath, and that the desecration of that sabbath day is a sad sign of spiritual deterioration.

First of all, it will be plain that they who insist on the seventh day instead of the first day of the week are utterly in error, proceed from a wrong conception principally, and fail to understand the significance of the Christian sabbath.

▲ This error is not to be found only in the mistaken notion that one day is holier than the other. The error of the Seventh Day Adventist much rather consists in this, that he does not understand the progress of God's work, and fails to see that God repeatedly spoke of another day. He does not understand that our sabbath consists principally in our entering into the work of God, which He perfected for us in Christ Jesus our Lord, and that therefore, if we must celebrate a special day at all, the Christian church, following Scripture, chose the first day as being the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Seventh Day Adventist insists on the sabbath of creation and of the day of shadows. He closes his eyes to the fact that God has provided some better thing for us.

The sabbath of creation is gone forever, and cannot possibly be celebrated by the Christian church. It was lost when man fell into sin and death.

The first paradise will never, and must never, return.

Moreover, the sabbath of the shadows was tem-

porary, as are all the shadows. And the earthly land of Canaan is forever destroyed, to open up new vistas for the better, that is, the heavenly country. For this better country already the patriarchs of the old dispensation hoped, as they dwelt in the land of Canaan as in a strange country. For we read: "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Heb. 11:9, 10. And again, in the same chapter, vss. 13-16: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."

A better day has dawned. And the dawn of this better day the Seventh Day Adventist ignores, does not see. It dawned on the first day of the week, the resurrection-day of the Lord, that gives us rest. Small wonder that the disciples from the outset met on that day. Small wonder, especially in the light of the fact that again on the first day of the week the risen, glorified Lord returned in the Spirit, and sanctified that day until His coming again in glory. On that first day of the week God entered into His rest through our Lord Jesus Christ, when He raised Him from the dead. On the first day of the week He spiritually bestowed that rest upon His church, which is the temple of God with men. It is on that day that the people of God celebrate the sabbath of the Lord their God.

From all that we have said about the sabbath of the Lord, it will also be self-evident that it is quite impossible to legislate the world into proper observance of the sabbath day. It is impossible for the unbelieving world to observe the sabbath of the Lord our God. I have no objection that proper legislation be passed, and that the already existing laws be enforced, pertaining to restriction of labor, business, traffic, and public amusements on Sunday. But at best such legislation may be conducive to create a better atmosphere for the people of God in the world to keep the weekly sabbath holy and to fill their minds and hearts with the things concerning the kingdom of God. Nevertheless, the ungodly cannot possibly celebrate the sabbath, even though they spend it in complete idleness and refraining from all labor. The sabbath is

strictly a spiritual idea. The keeping of the sabbath is a high spiritual act, the expression of hope and faith on the part of the Christian sojourner in the midst of this present world. It is for this reason a very evil omen, a sign of apostacy, of a lack of spiritual life, of a sick faith and a waning hope, when they that call themselves Christians, that outwardly join the band of Christian pilgrims in the world, evince no longing to keep the sabbath properly, desecrate it, and more and more join the world, to follow after their own desires, speak their own words, and do their own evil works.

For the Christian is really a stranger and sojourner, a pilgrim in a strange country, because principally he entered into the sabbath of the Lord through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He is begotten again unto a lively hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. When he is regenerated, he receives the beginning of that new and resurrection life of the Lord. He ceased from his labor and toil. He rests from sin and from the world and its evil works. And he becomes a new man, the citizen of another country, the heavenly, of the new Jerusalem, that will descend out of heaven from God in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. He lives the sabbath life. Hence, his whole life is a sabbatic life, a ceasing from sin, and an entering into the rest of God's perfected covenant.

But in this world his life is a sojourner's sabbath. For he still sojourns in Babylon. And in Babylon they do not know the sabbath of the Lord our God. They are aliens to the very idea of the sabbath, of the rest of God's tabernacle. We need not be surprised, therefore, that in the world they devote the first day of the week to the pursuit of earthly and worldly things, of the things of the flesh. It is usually especially on the sabbath that all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, becomes emphatically manifest. But this is all the more reason why the Christian sojourner, living his sabbath life in the midst of the world, where he feels that he is a stranger, where he meets with Babylon's opposition and reproach, where all things tend to draw him downward and to make it difficult for him to live his life of rest, shall long for the day of the Lord, the weekly sabbath, which the Lord in His great mercy provided for him, and shall insist to keep it holy. He shall not entertain the notion that by merely refraining from earthly labor he is observing the sabbath of the Lord. He shall not imagine that one day is holier than the other. The Phariseistic view of the sabbath is not his. But he shall as much as is in him desist from every earthly task, to remove from him mind and heart all earthly cares, in order that

the whole day may be occupied only with the sabbath of the Lord; congregate with His people in His house diligently; meditate on His Word; take hold of His promises; and let his whole conversation be in heaven.

"Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and his hand from doing any evil." Is. 56:2.

For even as this keeping of the sabbath is itself the expression of a healthy and vigorous spiritual life, of the lively hope unto which we are begotten again by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, so the proper observance of the weekly sabbath will bear the fruit that the believer individually and the church of Christ organically is strengthened in the most holy faith, quickened in the hope eternal, sustained and encouraged to cease from evil. Strengthened and quickened and encouraged by the proper observance of the weekly sabbath, the believer will yield himself to the Lord, to work by His Holy Spirit in Him. And he will be encouraged once more to take up his pilgrim's staff and pursue his journey in the world, looking forward to the eternal rest that remaineth for the people of God.

Blessed is that man that doeth this, for he has the sure promise of the Lord: "My salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed."

—————:—————

Lord's Day 39

Q. 104. What doth God require in the fifth commandment?

A. That I show all honor, love and fidelity, to my father and mother, and all in authority over me, and submit myself to their good instruction and correction, with due obedience; and also patiently bear with their weaknesses and infirmities, since it pleases God to govern us by their hand.

Chapter 1

The Question of Authority

The fifth commandment introduces the second table of the law, which prescribes the fundamental principles that lie at the basis of the Christian's life in relation to the neighbor. In this connection, it is well to be reminded of the fundamental truth that the basic principle of the whole law is the love of God, as the Lord teaches us in Matt. 22:37-40, in answer to a question by a lawyer: "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On

these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Although, therefore, there are two tables of the law, the first dealing with our relation to God and the second with our relation to the neighbor, yet the entire law is one. The second table is based upon the first, and can never be separated from it. When the Lord teaches us in Matt. 22:38 and 39 that the great commandment is the love of God, while the second commandment, concerning the love of the neighbor, is like unto the first, the meaning is, of course, that the love of God is the principle of the whole law and that without it there is no love of the neighbor possible. The latter is rooted in the love of God. It is evident, therefore, that the law requires that we love the neighbor for God's sake. Only in this sense may we love the neighbor as ourselves. Just as the law requires that we love ourselves for God's sake, so we must love the neighbor for His sake only. It is for God's sake that we must love the neighbor in his relation of authority over us. And for His sake we must be obedient and submit to the authority. For God's sake we must love the neighbor in his person, and preserve his life. For God's sake we must love the neighbor in his marriage relation, and not commit adultery. For God's sake we must love the neighbor in his earthly possessions. And for God's sake we must love the neighbor in his name. This we must remember, lest in treating the second table of the law we preach to the Church of Jesus Christ a code of external precepts, which every man is able to fulfill.

This is a not uncommon error.

Preachers of the Word, when they proclaim this second table of the law, not infrequently apply it to the world, to human society in general, instead of to the church of Christ. In that case the preaching of the law indeed becomes a matter of common grace, and the sermon becomes a matter of so-called civic righteousness.

It is strictly necessary, therefore, to maintain the principle that the second table of the law is rooted in and based on the first. In the world there is, of course, a certain outward morality, a certain external keeping of the second table of the law in favorable circumstances. By natural light the world understands very well that dissoluteness with regard to the law, especially with respect to the second table of the law, leads to self-destruction. They observe clearly that the keeping of the law is profitable for them. Hence, although they often fail in this respect, they make a desperate attempt to observe the precepts of the law, although, of course, not from the principle of the love of God nor for His sake. God is not in all their thoughts. But this is not the purpose of the

preaching of the law in the church of Jesus Christ. In the church the law is proclaimed as a guide in the midst of a sinful world for a life and walk of Christian gratitude to God. It is addressed to the believer, and not to the world in general. And therefore, we must remember from the outset that also the second table of the law is based on the love of God.

Now, the fifth commandment, which reads, "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee," stands at the very head of the series of precepts which together constitute the so-called second table of the law. This is but natural, and to be expected. For the fifth commandment deals with God's will concerning the parental relationship in the home. And the family is the beginning, the basis, the root, of all the different relationships that exist and develop in the organism of the human race. From the home develops society and all the different relationships that are implied in that term. From the home also develops the institution of the state and all the different gradations of positions of authority which there are in the state as an institution. It is therefore quite logical and in harmony with the fundamental significance of the family that the fifth commandment should stand at the very head of all the precepts that deal with our relation to the neighbor.

It is also evident that the fifth commandment, as well as Scripture in general, considers the chief and fundamental relationship in the home, the primary principle on which the home is based, to be that of authority and obedience. With that principle that fifth commandment deals when it addresses the people of God of all ages with the injunction: "Honor thy father and thy mother." And the Catechism explains that the fifth commandment applies not only to the home, but is equally applicable to every relationship of authority and obedience in human society. And therefore, we must first of all treat this problem of authority and of obedience and submission to that authority for God's sake.

Let us notice that the fifth commandment does not say *love* but "honor" thy father and thy mother. In Lev. 19:3 this idea is even expressed more emphatically: "Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father." When the Heidelberg Catechism explains this fifth commandment in the words, "That I show all honor, love and fidelity, to my father and mother," the term "love" does not refer to natural love, but to spiritual, ethical respect that is rooted in the will and finds its deepest fountain in the heart of man. What is called parental and filial love is natural, not spiritual. There is nothing ethical in the natural love of a parent for his offspring, nor in the natural love of

a child for its father and mother. Such love cannot even be a possible subject of a commandment. In this sense you cannot command a father and mother to love their children, or children to love their father and mother. This natural love belongs to the relationship which is fundamentally increased. It is given in the blood relationship. It is not a question of the will, and therefore cannot be a matter of a commandment. In this sense even a dog loves its young, and even the puppies love their parent. Although, therefore, it is of significance that the honor and fear and respect that must be shown to the parents is connected with this natural love, in itself has no spiritual, ethical significance. It is true, of course, that according to Scripture sin can even corrupt and degenerate this natural love. Parents frequently forsake their children, even in infancy. And children not infrequently show a complete want of this natural love for their parents. But in this deterioration of the natural love between parents and children, the horribleness of sin becomes clearly manifest. But this natural feeling of attachment of parents to their children and children to their parents is based on the blood relationship, and is not rooted in the will. For this reason, children frequently shed bitter tears from the fount of this natural love at the grave of their parents which during their entire life they have neglected, disobeyed, and completely disregarded. The same is true of this natural love of parents for their children when they must carry them to the grave. They coddled and fondled them when they were infants. And when they grew up, they showed them an intensity of natural love, but nevertheless spoiled them and neglected to instruct them in the fear of the Lord. And lest we should imagine that the fifth commandment refers to this natural love, it does not say "love," but "Honor thy father and thy mother."

This is an entirely different conception. Natural love is based on the blood relationship. Spiritual, ethical love is rooted in the heart. Natural love is a matter of feeling. Spiritual, ethical love is a matter of the will. Natural love may very well go hand in hand with enmity against God. Spiritual, ethical love is rooted in the love of God. Natural love as such is devoid of grace, although some present it as a matter of "common grace." But spiritual, ethical love is found only in him whose heart has been regenerated by the grace of God. A child, a young man or young woman, can be motivated by natural love without showing any honor or respect to his father or mother. But spiritual, ethical love respects father and mother and all that are in authority for God's sake.

—H.H.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Prophecy of Isaiah

(Continued)

6. Prophecy regarding an unnamed land, Chap. xviii.

Woe—that is trouble, sorrow—is proclaimed against a land the name of which is not revealed but of which the prophet says that it lies beyond the rivers of Ethiopia. It is not likely that Egypt is meant as with this land the prophet deals separately in the next following discourse. What land is meant cannot be determined. Whatever the land, its great offence seems to be that it sends swift messengers in boats of bulrushes to a nation described in the text as “scattered and peeled, feared from the beginning (from afar off) hitherto, meted out and a trampling, whose land the rivers have spoiled.” (verses 1, 2)

According to some the reference is to Ethiopia or to Egypt or Arabia. According to Calvin the nation meant is the people of Israel. This is likely. The clause, “whose land the rivers have spoiled,” must then be taken in the figurative sense. Rivers are then armies so that what is imaged is the intermittent spoilage of Israel’s land by the heathen through the centuries of the past. If the “nation” is Israel, the messengers must have been under orders to induce Israel to unite with the people of the unnamed land of ver. 1 in a defensive war perhaps against the Assyrians. But God’s people must trust in the Lord and may not put their confidence in an alliance with foreign nations.

The prophet now intimates that something great is going to take place, vers. 3-6.

The Lord will raise up a banner on the mountain that all the inhabitants of the world will see and a trumpet will be blown that all will hear, verse 3. Then the Lord will take His rest and will look in His dwelling-place like a clear heat upon the herbs and like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest. But before the harvest He shall cut away the sprigs and the branches, and the fowl of the mountains shall summer upon them and the beasts of the field shall winter upon them, ver. 3-6.

The imagery of this last verse seems to be that of a vine or a tree with all its branches cut away so that only the stock or trunk remains. Just what is indicated must remain an open question. Doubtless the “banner” of verse 3 is Christ, so that what is here presented is the exaltation of the crucified and resurrected Saviour to the right hand of God in the highest heavens and His gathering all men—the elect

of God—to Himself through the Gospel as proclaimed by His servants. By His efficacious look the work of gathering the church—a work that is solely His—prosper. In the final judgment, when the house of God is full, the church will be pruned, that is, it will be separated from the carnal seed that riots in its bosom and from the hostile world-power through the destruction of the latter. As delivered out of all their troubles the redeemed of God—the scattered and peeled nation—will present themselves to the Lord as a sacrificial gift, verse 7.

This is a conjecture but not any more so than any of the other explanations that are given of this prophecy. And to my mind it comes closest to being the right conception.

To us the prophecy is obscure. But it is clear enough as to its essential idea, which is the salvation of the church through the destruction of the total of its enemies. And before the mind of God’s people for whose comfort it was first spoken it must have clarified itself as to its obscure details in the process of its initial fulfilment. That is, they came to know who that unnamed nation was of verse 1. We do not. Implied in all such prophecies is, of course, the message that Christ died for our sins.

7. Prophecy regarding Egypt, chapters xix, xx.

a. The Lord comes against Egypt in judgment, xix:1-15.

As riding upon a swift cloud, the Lord comes into Egypt. The idols flee and the heart of the nation melts (ver. 1). The whole land is torn by civil strife; confounded, the people seek counsel from the idols and wizards (vers. 2, 3); this, of course, does not avail and Egypt passes under the harsh rule of a tyrannical king (ver. 4). The river Nile dries up and becomes a bed of stinking pools and morasses. The reeds and flags wither as also the fields and meadows on its banks (vers. 5-8). Its fisheries cease (ver. 8), and the manufacture of linen goods comes to an end (ver. 9). Both proprietors and the hirelings are ruined (ver. 10). The counsellors of Pharaoh that boast descent from wise men and kings are at wits end; for they cannot say what the Lord has purposed against Egypt and counsel accordingly (ver. 11, 12). They are confused in their minds and cause Egypt to err and befoul itself like a drunken man wallowing in his vomit (ver. 14). There is general unemployment. Egypt’s civilization comes to a miserable end (ver. 15).

The word of the prophet has come to pass. Today the far greater part of Egypt is a desolation as a result of the drying up of the river Nile and its tributaries. Except where still partially watered by the Nile and cultivated, it is bare and depopulated. Three hun-

dred and fifty years previous to the Christian era Egypt passed under the dominion of the Persians. Afterwards it became entirely subject successively to the hard rule of the Macedonians, the Romans, the Greeks, the Arabs the Georgians, the Ottoman Turks, and lastly the Mamelukes, whose system of oppression was methodical so that explorers as late as 1850 were still saying that "everything the traveller sees or hears, reminds him he is in the country (Egypt) of slavery and tyranny. So the Lord had said, "And a fierce king will rule over them" (see above). Yet at the time that this prophecy was uttered Egypt was mightiest of ancient kingdoms. It was a most fertile region and was called the granery of the world.

b. The terror of Egypt in the day of its visitation, 16, 17.

When the Lord will lay His hand upon Egypt, it will be afraid and fear, ver. 16. Knowing the power of the Lord, it will live in dread of the land of Judah. When men think thereof, they will quake with fear, beholding as they do the accomplishment of the Lord's counsel, ver. 17.

c. Egypt converted to the Lord, vers. 18-25.

Five cities shall turn to the Lord including Ir-Cheres, the city of the sun. And soon there will be an altar in the midst of the land and a pillar consecrated to the Lord on its borders. So shall the whole nation serve the Lord, not head for head and soul for soul, but the nation nevertheless, the body of the elect (vers. 18, 19). And their expressions of gratitude and praise, symbolized in the text by the altar and pillar, will signify the Lord's love of them. And when they cry unto Him through the ages because of their oppressors, He will deliver them from every hostile power—sinful flesh, devil and the world (ver. 20). So will He reveal Himself unto them as their Saviour and the fruit thereof will be that they will know and serve Him and praise and magnify His name. They shall do sacrifice and oblation and vow a vow unto the Lord and perform it (ver. 21). So, if the Lord will smite Egypt, He will also heal. And when they turn unto the Lord, He will be entreated of them and heal them always (ver. 22).

But not only Egypt but Assyria as well will be converted to the Lord. Thus they will no longer be enemies of one another but will be one by a common faith in Christ as united in the truth (ver. 23). And in this spiritual confederacy Israel will have a place as the third with Egypt and Assyria. And that will be a blessing in the midst of the whole earth but only as the fruit of the Lord's blessing them saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance" (vers. 24, 25) in whose Christ all the nations of the earth are blessed.

Therefore "Israel *mine inheritance*". The prophecy is that of the calling of the gentiles in this Gospel period.

d. Egypt in bondage to Assyria, chap. xx.

The prophecy originated in the year that Tartan, commander-in-chief of king Sargon (Salmanassar) of Assyria, came against Ashdod, the key to the land of Egypt, laid siege to the city and took it (ver. 1). The Lord instructed Isaiah to remove his garment made of coarse linen and his shoes and go about naked and barefoot in token that the king of Assyria shall lead away the Egyptians and the Ethiopians as prisoners. They shall go naked and barefoot with their buttocks uncovered as a sign of the nakedness of Egypt (vers. 3, 4). And all the inhabitants of the coast of Palestine, with fear and shame, will perceive how foolish they were in making the power and glory of Egypt and Ethiopia their expectation (ver. 5). This is what they will say, "Behold, such is our expectation, whither we flee for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria: and how shall we escape!" (ver. 6).

8. The second prophecy against Babylon; prophecies regarding Edom, Arabia, Jerusalem and the Chamberlain Shebna, chapters xxi, xxii.

a. Against Babylon, xxi:1-10.

The prophet beholds the swift-moving army of Elam (Persia) and Media, that as a dust-laden and violent wind in the south, beats against treacherous and nation-spoiling Babylon and sweeps it clean away. The vision is hard; it presents the complete desolation of this world-power that has still to make its appearance. The Lord commands, "Go up, O Elam; besiege O Media." It is He that sends them. For an end must be put to sighing, i.e. to the bondage of His people (vers. 1, 2).

So terrible is the vision that the prophet is seized with pain as a woman that travails. He is bowed and dismayed at what he hears and sees. He is in a maze from the horror that affrights him. The night, hitherto longed for as a time of repose, has become a time of fear (vers. 3, 4). This is a description not of the prophet's own reaction but of the state of mind of the Babylonians in the night when the city was surprised by Cyrus. It anticipates the anguish of soul of the kings of the earth in the moment of the fall of the culmination of the Babylon of the Euphrates valley—the Babylon of Rev. 18, the world-power still to appear in this Gospel period. They—the kings—cast dust on their heads, "and cry, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas that great city, wherein we were made rich . . ." (Rev. 18:19).

Now follows a description of the way in which the Babylonians were occupied in the night that the ca-

lamity struck. Though the troops of Cyrus surrounded the city, they were eating and drinking and making merry. The only precaution they took was to set watches. That was dangerous as became apparent when the cry reached the revellers in the midst of their banqueting: arise ye princes! to arms, The foe is come, anoint the shield" (ver. 5). But it is inconceivable that the prophet can make such an announcement. The thing whereof he speaks is a matter of the distant future. So the prophet affirms at this juncture that what he presents is not his own speculation or invention. How were this possible, if Babylon as a world-power is still to be brought into being. But the Lord has said to him, "Go set a watchman, let him declare what he seeth," that is what the Lord will show him (ver. 6). Having made this clear, the prophet—for he is the watchman—goes on to relate what he sees next: a train of horses, asses and camels. It is Cyrus' army on the march with Babylon as its destination. But shortly the vision vanishes and the prophet sees nothing more for some days and nights, so it seems. Becoming impatient, he cries with the voice of a lion, "My Lord I stand continually upon the watchtower in the daytime and am in my place of watching every night" (vers. 7, 8). Barely has he uttered these complaining words, when his vigil is rewarded. The vision recommences, and the prophet sees a chariot and a couple of horsemen. It is a sign upon which the Lord imposes *His* word in explanation thereof and the prophet jubilantly exclaims, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground" (ver. 9).

The prophet has announced that his beloved people will be threshed in Babylon. He has declared that they will be delivered from the threshingfloor. Both will come to pass without fail. Israel must believe this. Indeed a mere man cannot make such announcements. And therefore the prophet concludes this discourse with the emphatic declaration, "that which I have heard of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, have I declared unto you" (ver. 10).

b. Prophecy against Edom. Chapter xxi:11, 12.

In the text Edom is called Dumah, which is a transliteration of a Hebrew noun that means *silence, death, desolation*. A man cries to the prophet out of Seir—the dwelling place of Edom—and puts to him the question, "Watchman! what of the night?" meaning: when will the night end and the day dawn for my land? The repetition of the question bespeaks the intensity of the desire that the night—Edom's tribulations—may soon come to end. But the watchman replies, "The morning cometh but also the night." The answer is obscure, but it fully clarifies itself when placed alongside of the other prophecies regarding

Edom such as that of Malachi at vers. 3, 4 of the first chapter, "And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the Lord of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, *The people against whom the Lord hath indignation forever.*"

In a word, Edom as a nation is reprobated. The day will certainly dawn, but for Edom never,—Edom, in the final instance, the total of reprobate men. By the judgment of God this people will be reduced to everlasting desolation and will be silent in hell forever. Such is the prediction to the initial fulfilment of which all who have explored the country testify. The report is that by the judgments of God the Edom of Israel's limited world has been reduced to desolation and is thus a Dumah, a land of silence.

The second part of the watchman's reply to those who question him is just as inigmatical: If you would enquire again, do so; if you would return, then come. But if the destiny of Edom is irrevocable, why should the prophet thus encourage his interrogators to return? It is not unlikely that he wishes to clarify for them his prophecy but at this time is unable because he is in need of more light. Fact is that afterwards another and clearer disclosure was made to him regarding Edom. In the 34th chapter the prophet is again occupied with this people and its land. Here a new light is shed upon his former prophecy.

c. Prophecy regarding Arabia. Chap. xxi:13-17.

The world-power must lay its hand upon the tribes that inhabited the Arabian desert,—tribes engaged in commerce. To reach their market places—Tyre, Sidon, Babylon—they have to cross the desert. Here we see the remnant of their caravans, scattered by a force against which they are unable to defend themselves, hiding in a forest far from the regular route to escape the wrath of their pursuers. They dare not leave their hiding places. Destitute of the means of subsistence, they are given bread and water by the natives, "inhabitants of the land of Tema" (vers. 13-15). These tribes, Kedarenes, descendants of Ishmael, are a martial people, that through the ages of the past have distinguished themselves by the use of the bow, and all this in fulfilment of prophecy (Gen. 16:12; 21:20, 21). And so they have always been able to defend themselves against the attacks of other plundering tribes. They are the master tribes of the Arabian desert. Yet they, too, must succumb to the world-power (ver. 16). Their glory shall fail. Their might shall be reduced to almost nothing (ver. 17).

—G. M Ophoff

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of I Peter 1:18, 19

In our former article we called attention to verse 17 of this first Chapter of I Peter. We noticed that our confession and walk must be in perfect harmony. Always it is the order of *Confession* and walk. These belong together. The moment the former is minimized in respect to the latter it is impossible to retain either one of the two. They who play out our walk overagainst our Confession as an antipole, rather than presenting them as root and fruit, certainly have no Christian walk left. And I may add, that they who speak so much of "moral issues" in our times and so little about the real implication of "heretical statements" certainly show in their walk that they are not able to retain a christian ethics! The Lord, Who judges according to every man's work, is not mocked.

If we confess that God is our Father, then we are to walk as children of the new obedience in Christ in all of our conversation in holy fear and trembling. We are to be such that it can be said by the Consistory in good conscience: N.N. is sound in faith and upright in walk!

Now there is nothing that incites to a walk of godliness as the spiritual realization that we have been bought by a great and precious price, and thus have been made God's dear children.

Of this we are reminded in the verses 18 and 19. These verses read as follows: "*Knowing that ye were redeemed not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain conversation (manner of life) handed down from your fathers; but with the precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ.*"

We ought to keep in mind, that the real subject of this passage is not simply that Christ died for us in the fulness of times. The matter that the Apostle wishes to call to mind here is not simply a Christological fact taken-by-itself, but that the subject is still our walk of conversion, of perfecting sanctification in the fear of God. These verses still deal with the exhortation of the Apostle, as a precept of the Gospel, that we who have the Spirit of the Son in our hearts, who call upon God as "Father" shall keep in mind the great redemption price with which we have been purchased. Doing this latter with spiritual sensitiveness we shall discern the things that differ. The *factness* of our having been set apart will constantly stand out before the eye of our mind; then shall we be living having the loins of our mind girt up, in that sancti-

fication without which no one shall see the Lord! For holy living is hopeful living.

In passing, it should be pointed out, that he who constantly keeps in mind that he has been purchased with a great grace, will also clearly understand that the work of Christ on the Cross is not the whole of the spiritual consideration unto a godly walk. They who walk in a pious and godly conversation, which does not merely have the form of godliness, denying its power, will be motivated by the *whole Counsel* and *Decree* of God concerning God's bringing them to the final salvation in Christ!

Such was the case with our godly fathers of the Synod of Dort. They understood that, unless the whole truth of God concerning our redemption to salvation was confessed, the *solid comfort* of the saints would be undermined. Only by preaching the full truth could they obey the summons of the Lord, who says: Comfort ye, comfort ye my people!

And this is also the clear teaching of Peter in this entire section. We know that our fathers speak of the "golden chain" of our redemption. All the elements of this "chain" are here present. Notice the following elements:

1. Notice that in verse 20 we read that the Christ Who has redeemed us was "foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of times for your sake." All is anchored in eternal election and predestination. Take this away and you never have a Cross and a great redemption prince that is certain. This is the first and all-controlling link in the chain.

2. According to this election of certain persons unto life and holiness, Christ died to save this people from their sins. He paid the great redemption price. This is the second link in the chain. vss. 18, 19

3. Those thus redeemed according to the purpose of election have also been regenerated unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ! efficaciously they are called by the Word of God, Who liveth and abideth forever. vs. 23.

4. And to these come the exhortations to keep this "golden chain" in mind and to walk in the "ways of the elect" to perfect sanctification in the fear of God, walking in the conversion which flows forth from faith as the fruit on a good tree—fruit of election in our life.

Such is the golden chain presented here in this wonderful first Chapter of I Peter.

All this is the spiritual motivation of sanctification. When this is lacking the very heart is out of our sanctification. For the heart-beat of the life of the Church is election. Not for nothing is election named

the *cor ecclesia*, the heart of the Church. For this very reason election-preaching is the only preaching that really calls to faith and repentance. Election preaching is not simply a sermon on the topic "election" once in a while. That the out-and-out Arminian will do too in his own way. But election-preaching is such that all the preaching finds motivation in God's sovereign and unchangeable love, whereby we have been called out of darkness into God's marvelous light. And election preaching is preaching that calls to repentance not in that it says that we must "accept" Jesus, but rather that it says: ye are the children of light! Walk as children of light!"

That is the very warp and woof also of this entire chapter. He that readeth let him take note!

For to him that hath is given and from him that hath not is taken away even that he thinketh to have! And it is with a view to this "receiving" more and more from this fulness of Christ, also in the life of sanctification, that Peter here appeals to the sanctified consciences of his readers, when he says: *Knowing* that ye have been redeemed . . . with the precious blood as of a lamb without spot and blameless!

We said that the motivation unto a godly walk in the redeemed saints is exactly what God did on the cross in Jesus; that this consideration cannot be a fearful one unless it pulsates with the heart-beat of election. Look at all the anemic children of God who are robbed of this sweet and solid comfort of elective love and grace of God on the cross! How are they not harassed all their life with fears. Never do they stand in that grace wherein they rejoice even in tribulations in the hope of the final glory. As far as their hope and joy is concerned Christ might as well never have died. For they groan under the law rather than to rejoice in grace. And our fathers of Dort say: Evil and wicked people pervert the doctrine of election to their own destruction, while to the godly this affords the sweetest consolation. Our fathers at Dort were not "hair-splitting theologians, filled with ice-cold and hard logic," but they were men of God, shepherds of the flock of God. And their great concern is the comfort of the hearts of God's people. This people must be refreshed in the great consciousness of redemption. But shall this be done, then the source of comfort may not be polluted at its source, that is, election and eternal predestination may not be perverted into a conditional contingency that has lost all certainty!

The "golden chain" must remain our sweetest consolation and the incentive to a holy and Godly walk.

Thus it is here in I Peter 1:14 to the end of the chapter.

Thus it is also in the mind of all who will walk in

the footsteps of the sons of Abraham, the fathers of Dort.

Shall we do this, then we must stop speaking of faith as *being* a condition and we must confess in child-like obedience that faith is a means, an instrument which God works in our hearts by the preaching of the Gospel, and which he stirs up in us unto a living faith by the exhortations of the Gospel. For let it be clearly understood, that our Fathers of Dort, the Counter-Remonstrants, exactly had to battle for their very life's sake with the Remonstrants, who made faith a "condition" and not a "means." They defined faith as they did because only thus could they maintain their nefarious conception of predestination, based upon foreseen faith and the excellencies of man.

The following excerpt from a book written in 1924 by Rev. Meijering on the "Dordtsche Leeregeels" is quite revealing on the issue of whether faith must be defined as a "means" and "gift" or whether faith is a "condition, cause, or prerequisite."

The Remonstrants said that the entire Decree of election is that God elects *believers*. Quote: "that the will of God to save those who would believe and who would persevere in faith and obedience is the whole and total Decree of election unto salvation, and that God's Word reveals to us nothing more concerning this Decree."

On January 19, 1619 Professor Lubbertus from Franeker answered the question whether from such passages as John 3:36 and similar passages it could be proved that God's purpose to save *believers* was the whole Decree of election. On the next day this was also done by Gomarus and some of the Theologians from other countries. And shortly afterwards Thysius, Professor from Gelderland, answered the questions:

1. Whether the Decree to save believers (eligendi) was the whole of the decree of Predestination.
2. Whether faith was a condition, which is required in those who are elected, or whether faith is a fruit that flows from election.

And Rev. Meijering adds: the point of controversy between the Remonstrant and the Counter-Remonstrants is exactly on this point of what "faith" is.

This is very instructive.

It teaches us to beware of any definition of faith that fits in that teaching which breaks the "golden-chain," making faith a *pre-requisite condition* rather than a fruit of election, as a "means" to obtain the salvation of election. Only the latter is the incentive to a walk of conversion.

(to be continued)

G. Lubbers

IN HIS FEAR

Afraid of the Gospel

(7)

Christ or conditions.

That is the issue! Either Christ and His work is the prerequisite for my entrance into the kingdom of heaven or else my act of converting myself is the prerequisite. Either Christ and His atonement is the basis for my salvation or else I am saved on the condition of faith, and perhaps on the condition of a few other things demanded of me.

Christ and conditions?

You prefer to say that? You say, Christ is the basis for my salvation and for my entering into the kingdom of God, but once in that kingdom and once receiving salvation there are conditions to my conscious enjoyment? Then you are still wrong, for then you still put a condition where Christ ought to be and expect the conscious enjoyment of your salvation from that fulfilled condition instead of from Christ. It is still, though in a more limited sphere, conditions instead of Christ. It is still with you as though you have to choose between Christ or conditions. And you choose conditions!

Wherever you retain conditions in your theology, you exclude Christ. For Christ has not prepared a conditional but an unconditional salvation. Of course, *our* righteousness must exceed that of the Scribes and of the Pharisees, if we are to enter the kingdom of heaven. But there again you see that it is Christ and not conditions. That righteousness which exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees is Christ. We are told in I Cor. 1:30 that Christ is "made unto us wisdom, and *righteousness* and sanctification and redemption." And again in II Cor. 5:21 we are told that we are "*made* the righteousness of God *in Him*." Therefore my righteousness before God upon which my salvation is based and which is the prerequisite for my entering the kingdom is not something I have fulfilled, is not something that is a condition placed before me, but is the work and the righteousness of Christ.

If I have to do something *before* I can enjoy the consciousness of my salvation, then I tremble with fear, and I have no joy or certainty of salvation. Conditional theology exactly takes all my joy away, for it takes Christ away. And He is my righteousness which exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees. When I am afraid of the terrible wrath of God, then I can only find one place to hide and where I can breathe

freely and where I can find peace. And that is behind Christ. He must be *before* me, must be between me and God. And I must be in Him and know that God judges me in Him. But if I have to hide behind a work of mine that God requires of me, if I have to believe that there is a condition that I must fulfill, I will never be conscious of any salvation.

And, yet, the amazing thing is that people have learned to like exactly such a philosophy. And a philosophy it is, for a Scriptural doctrine it is not. As we wrote last time, some people have learned to enjoy Christless sermons. With them it is indeed: Christ or conditions, and they choose conditions. They want you to be a methodistic exhorter who lays out a long line of requirements which you must fulfill. And the moment that you begin to proclaim that Christ fulfilled *all* these and that, as the Apostle Paul says, it is not we who do these things when we walk in sanctification but the grace of God in us, you have actually spoiled the sermon for them. The minute you bring in election and Christ as The Righteous One Who fulfilled all for His Elect, you spoil the whole thing for them. Why? Because you have spoiled the condition. You have taken away conditional theology and it makes them so sad to think of parting with such a man-exalting theory.

We would like to give you a clear example of this Christless preaching and of the craving for the methodistic tactics that have arisen among those who have cast away Protestant Reformed truth and who are afraid of full and free salvation in Christ alone.

There has been in circulation for the last year or more a document that is composed of quotations from the works of the Rev. Hoeksema, the Rev. Ophoff and the Rev. Vos. The one of the Rev. Vos we have in mind at this time. We will quote it just as far as the author of this document quoted it. It is from a meditation upon the text in Matthew 7:21, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." A text, by the way, which you can nicely make a conditional text, if you want to rob it of Christ, just because the text does not mention Him by name. And if you are going to follow the advice of the Rev. De Wolf you will have to do that, because he warns you not to bring election into any text, unless it is literally there. So here, the name of Christ is not at all in the last part of this text which declares what is necessary for us to enter the kingdom. And so, make it a Christless sermon and you will have your conditional preaching. And you will have said: conditions NOT Christ. But let us give you the quotation.

"Therefore birth in the line of the Covenant, to

have God-fearing parents, church attendance, catechism teaching, confessing the Name of God, partaking of Christ's supper—all these things are nothing but terrible-condemnations if they are all you possess. Then you surely will not enter the blessed Kingdom of heaven.

"What then is the entrance?"

"Doing the will of God constitutes the entrance according to the text. And we realize that this answer has a pelagian sound, as though after all man by his own work of obedience could enter the Kingdom of heaven. And I would make answer that I do not care how much it sounds like pelagianism, that obedience to the will of God is the only door heaven possesses. There is no other entrance. And the door to hell is the door of disobedience to God's will. That is the truth which you will find on every page of the Bible."

So much is quoted of the writings of the Rev. Vos. And that is exactly as much as those who are addicted to conditional theology want. And what follows in the meditation of the Rev. Vos would spoil it all for them. As long as you continue in the vein of those lines of the Rev. Vos, you are, in their opinion coming with the pedagogical approach which is necessary lest man become careless and profane. And consequently the lines which follow and were left unquoted and wherein the Rev. Vos draws very sharply the Protestant Reformed lines of the truth and wherein Christ is brought forth in all His beauty and glory, these lines put the lie to the accusation that the Rev. Vos also preached conditions. Not even when quoted out of context does he in these lines teach conditions. Indeed, he does show us in these lines a prerequisite for entering the kingdom, but that prerequisite is not the prerequisite of the Rev. De Wolf, namely, *our* act of conversion and *our* act of doing the will of the Father, it is a prerequisite which God Himself fulfills in the person of His Son. In this meditation the Rev. Vos as he stands before the question: Christ or conditions, says, by all means give me Christ. Here is the rest of his article, and please note the shades of 1924! The very first sentence shows why the quotation was not completed.

"But let us explain.

"We find the whole matter beautifully stated in Psalm 24:3-6. There we read: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand at His holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity nor sworn deceitfully."

"There is the answer, and you have noticed that also there we have the matter of entrance into the

kingdom, that is, the holy hill of Zion.

"The only answer is purest obedience, from the love of God.

"But then I hear you make answer and say: Who can then be saved: For we have very filthy hands; our hearts are cesspools of unholiness; continually I lift up my soul unto vanity; and as for the truth in the inward parts: all men are liars and I am one of them! And we would say: that is true of all natural men. But there is one man among men who is not so. *He fulfills the requirements of the heavenly entrance to the very last details.* And that Man is the God-Man, the Immanuel. It is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

"And here is the blessedness of the Gospel: He ascends the holy hill of Zion in purest obedience *substitutionally for you and me. For all the elect of God.* He pays the awful price for all your and my disobedience and that is the story of His blood. That is shed for me, even me!"

The underscoring is ours. That is beautiful Protestant Reformed truth. It is preaching Christ and not conditions. And note how election is not hushed but becomes the very core and heart of the possibility for us to enter that kingdom thru Christ's blood and obedience. In the next paragraph the Rev. Vos also states that "The Cross of Christ is the entrance." He also goes on to show that "the Holy Spirit regenerates us so that His life of perfect obedience enters us and recreates us unto new creatures." He preaches no passive doctrine of the believers being stocks and blocks. It is the vibrant truth of Christ, that we are in Christ as living members, living out of Him and to His glory. It is the message of Christ in us and not of conditions set before us.

Let not those addicted to conditional theology therefore deceive themselves into thinking that they have a God-given calling to do missionary work in the Protestant Reformed Churches. They have not! They cannot have such a calling. God calls the Church to do missionary work with the gospel, not with heretical statements. He commands the Church to come with Christ and not with a theory that conveniently sets Him on the shelf and puts conditions where He belongs. And, by the way, their claim that they do have such a calling is very revealing. It is characteristic of their whole movement's change of tactics whenever some new emergency arises. For to claim that they have such a God-given calling is an admission on their part of that which formerly they did not want to state, namely, that they do have a different doctrine than that of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

—J. A. Heys

The Voice of Our Fathers

The Canons of Dordrecht

PART TWO

EXPOSITION OF THE CANONS

FIRST HEAD OF DOCTRINE, OF DIVINE PREDESTINATION

Article 2. But in this the love of God was manifested, that he sent his only begotten Son into the world, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. I John 4:9, John 3:16.

As the word "but" indicates at the beginning of this article, we turn here to a contrasting thought. In the former article it was established that it would not have been unrighteous on the part of God if He had doomed the entire human race to destruction in the way of sin, that therefore it could not possibly be called unrighteous on God's part if He desired to save some out of that human race, and that certainly no damn-worthy sinner has any ground for complaint whatsoever when and if God should save some, while He might in all justice leave all to perish. We found, further, that the underlying thought in the article, the ultimate principle, is not merely the perfect and unsailable righteousness of God, but His absolute freedom. And now the thought presented in Article 2 stands in direct contrast to the language of Article 1: "God would have done no injustice by leaving them all to perish and delivering them over to condemnation on account of sin But in this the love of God was manifested, that he sent his only begotten Son into the world, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Hence, we are here given to understand that what, from the point of view of divine justice, *might have been* God's will, (namely, to leave all to perish), nevertheless *was no* His will. Instead, God willed to save some men out of their condemnation and to give unto them eternal life.

A word of caution is in order here. For it might seem at first glance as though by the intended contrast of Article 2 the divine virtues of righteousness and love are set at odds with one another, and as though God's love is presented as overcoming His righteousness. And our *Canons* must not be thus misunderstood. Others, indeed, present matters thus, just as often God's mercy is presented as overcoming His justice. This presentation is, I think, quite well known, but is not at all characteristic of the Reformed faith. It runs as follows. God might have, according to His justice, allowed all men to perish. He would

have been perfectly righteous, had He done so. But God is a God of love. And as a God of love, He does not allow Himself to be governed by such strict justice. His love is greater than His justice. It overcomes His justice. And in His love He saves men from the condemnation to which His justice would have moved Him. Such a view denies the oneness and simplicity of God, because it denies the unity of His attributes. God is One. And all His attributes are one in Him. His mercy cannot be in conflict with His justice. Nor can His love be in conflict with His justice. But rather is His mercy a just mercy. and His love is a just love. The divine love is characterized by perfect righteousness and justice, because in the Triune God love is the bond of perfectness, the bond which unites Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in the sphere of perfection. And what is true as far as the virtues of God in Himself are concerned is also true as far as the manifestation of those virtues is concerned. God does not *reveal* His love or His mercy as being in conflict with His justice, but in the manifestation of those virtues He exactly shows forth His love and His mercy as they are characterized by utmost justice.

Nor do the *Canons* offer any other viewpoint. The contrast set forth here is not between divine justice and divine love. The contrast is between divine *wrath* and divine love. To leave all men to perish and to deliver them over to condemnation on account of sin,—the possibility mentioned in Article 1,—would be a manifestation of just wrath, but nevertheless a manifestation of wrath. And now Article 2 begins to speak of the manifestation of the love of God, as it stands in contrast with the hypothetical manifestation of the divine wrath suggested in the former article. And it is perfectly correct, of course, to contrast the divine wrath and the divine love. God's wrath is the manifestation of His hatred. And God's hatred is the counterpart, the antithesis of His love. But His hatred is a just hatred, and His love is a just love. His wrath, the manifestation of His hatred, is a just wrath; and the manifestation of His love is just. In fact, only a love that is characterized by strictest justice is worthy of the name. Only such a love would be able to save us. And of that divine love this article speaks.

In connection with this main thought of Article 2, that God willed to save some sinners from their doom and to give unto them eternal life, we may notice the following elements.

In the first place, we are here taught that the origin, or cause, of this divine will to save is the love of God: "in this the love of God was manifested." In other words, God wanted to reveal not only His wrath,

but also His love. We need not here develop in detail the Scriptural conception of the attribute of God's love. Suffice it to say that the love of God is the infinite and eternal bond of fellowship that is based upon the ethical perfection and holiness of the divine nature, and that subsists between the three Persons of the Holy Trinity. This divine love it pleased God to make known, to reveal. Notice that this implies that the reason for this manifestation of love is not to be found ultimately in the objects of that manifestation of love, but in God's eternal love of Himself. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost love one another with an eternally perfect and infinite love, and are pleased to manifest that love for their own sake. And the highest revelation of God's love is in the work of salvation, that work of God whereby He, in the desire to manifest His own infinite love, reaches down to the in himself and damnable sinner, makes him a fit object of His love, receives him into the intimate fellowship of His love in the covenant of friendship, and causes him to partake of that divine love, thus making him to reflect the love of God that is shed abroad in his heart.

In this same connection it is important to notice how our fathers conceive of the relationship between God's love and the revelation of Christ. Very often this relation is presented as though God was filled with hatred and wrath against men, but that Christ loved them, and that in His love Christ died for His people, thus meriting for them the love of God and changing the divine hatred into a divine love toward us. Christ then is a third party between God and us, and becomes the reason for God's love toward us. Our fathers, however, following Scripture, present the matter in just the other way. God's love is first! And because God loved His people from all eternity with an unchangeable love in the Son of His love, He sent His only begotten Son into the world. If it were not for God's love, Christ would never have come. Christ, therefore, is the manifestation of God's everlasting love. Such is the thought of Scripture. And such is the thought that is already in this second article set forth by the fathers.

In the second place, this article calls attention to the way and the ground of the salvation of some, namely, that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that whosoever believeth should . . . have everlasting life. The sending of His Son, therefore, is the manifestation of divine love, of a love that saves its object. And that sending of His Son, and all that is connected with it, the work of Christ, is the ground of the salvation of those whom God desires to save out of the whole human race.

And the third element to which this article calls

our attention is the means through which some are saved and receive everlasting life, namely, faith: "that whosoever believeth on him should . . . have everlasting life."

Numerous are the Scripture passages which might be adduced as proof for the thoughts that are here set forth. Our *Canons* set forth only two. Striking it is, however, that here, where the positive thought of the *Canons* is presented, we find no human reasoning whatsoever, but the simple presentation of Holy Writ, and that too literally. This entire article, with the exception of the word "but", is literally Scripture. In fact, even here it is evident that the fathers will not use isolated texts, but are interested in the current thought of Scripture. For they take a part of the text in I John 4:9, and add to it the last part of John 3:16, "that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Let those who boast that they want only Scripture, and that they will have nothing to do with creeds (and remember, that this is characteristic, at least in our day, of all Arminians especially),—let them take note of the style of the fathers. They indeed allow the Scriptures to speak!

Need it be mentioned that this article is only a beginning? The work of Christ is mentioned, but it is not fully described. The means of faith is mentioned, but its origin and activity is not defined. The love of God is mentioned, but the saving power of that love is not defined as yet, nor are the objects of that love determined in this article. And thus far, although the subject of this chapter is divine predestination, the decree of election and reprobation has not been so much as mentioned. Especially does the question remain, therefore: who are the "whosoever" mentioned in this article? Who are they that believe? Or, to state the question more exactly: how do men come to believe? This question is crucial, for it is this that decides who shall be saved and shall receive everlasting life. And to this question the following articles give the answer.

—H. C. Hoeksema



NOTICE

This is to inform you that at present Nanning Klaver, 924 Godfrey Ave., S.W., Grand Rapids 9, Mich. has been elected Clerk and James Swart, 1007 Grandville Ave., S.W., Grand Rapids 9, Mich., has been elected Treasurer of the 2nd Pro. Ref. Church.

DECENCY and ORDER

The Liberty to Minister

ARTICLE VI.

"No minister shall be at liberty to serve in institutions of mercy or otherwise, unless he be previously admitted in accordance with the preceding articles, and he shall, no less than others, be subject to the church order."

Although on the surface this article of the church order may not appear to be very important and the subject treated here perhaps does not readily arouse your interest, yet, a closer analysis of its content will show that it expresses a fundamental principle of Reformed Church Polity that is more and more being disregarded in our day to the detriment of the church. What is more, the implications of this article have a far broader practical scope than we may realize and effects each of us ecclesiastically or otherwise.

The negative tenet of this article is an aversion to an error of the Romanists which made its inroads into the churches of the Reformation in the sixteenth century. According to this error the authority of the office of the ministry is vested in the person of the priest or minister. This is a serious error that has its ultimate fruit in sacrilege and idolatry. The fact that an article appears in our church order against it by no means implies that we are entirely freed from it. Remnants of it are still sometimes found in modified forms among Reformed people who in their practical thinking and attitudes fail to distinguish properly between the minister, the ministry, and the church. Even in our own churches we have seen evidences of this error when throughout our present struggle to maintain the truth we find people who either out of sentiment or ignorance seek to sustain the minister instead of the ministry. They defend the man rather than the holy office. These are ignorant of the issues at stake and when they are confronted by other members of the church who are better posted than they and who present to them the truth of the matter, they reply to all argumentation with the foolish retort: "I don't believe it anyway because dominee says it differently." The assumption in this sort of argumentation is that the person of the dominee is vested with the authority of the holy office and must, therefore, be endowed with some form of infallibility!

Pure Romanism!

Contradicting this error the sixth article of our church order correctly avers that the authority of the

office of the minister reposes in the local church. Out of this principle the rule is deduced that no one has the liberty to function as minister of the Word except those who have been lawfully called and ordained by the church and are subject to the articles of the church order, or in the words of Dr. H. Bouwman:

"Dit artikel gaat uit van de gedachte, dat niemand kerkdienst kan vervullen zonder wettige roeping en zonder verband met de plaatselijke kerk. (Underscore mine, G.V.). De regel van de beroeping volgens Arts. 3-5 geldt ook voor de predikanten in particuliere heerlijkheden, gasthuizen, enz."

From this it then follows that all true ministry of the Word can proceed only from the instituted church. The minister can function only upon its authority and the church in turn has its authority from none other than Christ Himself Who commissioned her "to preach the Word, etc." Maintaining this principle it soon becomes evident that a great deal of that which in our days poses as "true ministry" cannot be regarded as such. Rankest among such would-be gospel preaching is the work of modern revivals and evangelism.

The sixth article of our church order, however, does not have this particular phase in mind but rather applies this principle to the work of the minister who serves in institutions of mercy in particular. It also adds "and otherwise" indicating that the hospital pastor is not the only one effected by this rule. To these may also be added in our present times the ministers who assume instructors positions in the christian schools, college presidents and professors, etc. The question is whether or not these may retain a ministerial status while engaged in such labors to which the article replies that they cannot unless they are properly called by a local church according to the preceding rules of the church order.

The historical occasion of this article sheds some light upon the necessity of such a ruling. The original redaction of the article was somewhat different from our present revised rendering. It reads as follows:

"Persons engaged in the ministry of the Word in the mansion of any ruler or baron shall be properly and lawfully called as the others, subscribe to the Confessions and the Church Order, and appoint the ablest of the group they serve to the offices of elder and deacon."

The occasion then of the adoption of this rule was the practice of the early Reformation days in which the feudal lords appointed house-pastors to minister in their estates and rulers appointed court-pastors.

The latter practice was begun by Prince William I and, perhaps, was the direct occasion for the adoption of the above cited rule. These pastors who were appointed by barons and rulers and who were not lawfully called by the church would not have recognition in the Reformed Churches. And this was necessary to safe-guard against the error of Rome which vests the authority of the ministry in men and to maintain the truth that this authority rests only in the church.

In 1578 the Synod of Dordrecht expressed itself as cited before. This is rather interesting because the ruling then adopted indicates that the Synod was well aware of the fact that if such a court-pastor or family-minister was to have an ecclesiastical status, the group to which he ministered would have to be instituted as the church. Elders and deacons must be appointed. Subscription to the Confessions and church order must be made. There must be the ruling as well as the teaching ministry. Where the church is not properly instituted the minister could not possibly function in an official capacity because the right to do so does not inhere in him or in any man, but in the divinely instituted offices of the church. This is rather pointedly demonstrated in Judges 18 when there was no king in Israel and everyone did as seemed good in his own eyes with the result that the priesthood and ministry were shamefully corrupted.

That this ruling of the Synod was not without error is also rather apparant. According to it the minister was to appoint from the constituency of the group he served some of the ablest men to the office of elder and deacon. This is in conflict with the rule of Reformed Church expressed in previous articles of the church order according to which the elders and deacons are to be chosen and called through the church. Nevertheless, already here the sound principle was recognized that ecclesiastical work can proceed only from the instituted church. If this principle were understood and practiced today the revisions in missionary labor by many Reformed Churches would be very great. It appears as though this is but another of many sound and fundamental principles which form a large segment of the nominal Reformed Church has already passed into oblivion.

The present application of this article is to the hospital-pastor or one who labors in an institution of mercy. Because the latter is not an organized church, does it follow that such a minister loses his ecclesiastical status and that all his work in such an institution cannot bear an official stamp? This is evidently not the intention of the article. The article points in another direction. It only states that the minister engaged in that sort of work must be called, etc. by the local church. The patients in the hospital do not

constitute the church but rather they are members of a local congregation. This church in turn calls a pastor to minister exclusively to their spiritual needs. He is then placed under the care and supervision of that particular consistory and to her he gives account of his labors. Should he prove himself to be unworthy of his labors, the same consistory would be compelled to remove him from his office. Thus in 1918 the Synod of the Christian Reformed Churches ruled on this point in Art. 37 of the Acta as follows:

"Spiritual Advisors for Institutions shall be called by a neighboring church in consultation with the respective Boards."

It is the view of the undersigned that this sort of ruling cannot be applied to those who assume the position of instructor in christian day schools or colleges. Just because one is engaged in the work of teaching Bible does not imply that he thereby has the right to retain a ministerial status. The instruction in the school is in its very nature non-ecclesiastical as long as the school itself is non-parochial. The teacher in the school is not engaged in preaching the word. When one, therefore, accepts such a worthy position, he is no longer engaged in the work of the ministry but has entered upon a new vocation and should relinquish his right to administer the Word and Sacraments until he is called anew into the ministry. If this right is to be retained he must either receive an associate pastorate or a status of emeritation in one of the local churches. Then, however, he is not minister by virtue of his position of instructor in the school or college but rather by virtue of the office in the church.

G. Vanden Berg

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Alas for me, whose lot is cast

With those who find their joy in strife!

With those who hate the paths of peace

I long have dwelt and spent my life.

In thought and act I am for peace,

Peace I pursue and ever seek;

But those about me are for strife,

Though I in love and kindness speak.

I cried to God in my distress,

And by the Lord my prayer was heard;

O save me, Lord, from lying lips

And from the false, deceitful word.

ALL AROUND US

Too Much Election?

It was while I was working in Hull, Iowa, a few weeks ago that I received another issue of Poortwake, a little Dutch paper that is sent to me regularly from the Netherlands by a Young Ladies' Organization (Liberated). I read an article in it at the time, which to me, was very striking and on which I thought to comment. But because I was busy I laid it aside. However, after perusing the article again, I thought it well to call attention to it even though it may be a little late. The article appeared in the September 4th issue, on pages 168, 169. The name of the author is not given, but I surmise that it is Mr. K. Van Spronsen who visited among us a few years ago. I will not translate the entire article but merely give the gist of it, and then make my comments.

He reminds his young people that the time for vacation is ended, and that they must get busy again with their studies in matters that concern Reformed truth. He calls attention to the fact that there are many great problems that arise which force themselves also upon youth for solution. Among these are the deplorable separations in the Church which are taking place today.

He suggests that his young people may also have read of the separation which took place in the Protestant Reformed Church in America. Concerning this he says that whoever takes cognizance of the back ground of the differences that have arisen in these Churches, understands also something of their tragedy. Rev. Hoeksema, so he continues, in 1924 and since that time, has in faithfulness to the Scriptures fought his fight against an imposing Arminianism in America which had also gained ground even in Reformed Churches. Against this Arminianism, and correctly so, Hoeksema had raised up that central part of our Confession, namely, election.

But now look at the further developments! That part of our Confession he has dogmatized so one-sidedly in his preaching and doctrine that the *requirement* and *promise* of the Covenant of grace, of which Scripture is full, no longer receive their proper emphasis. The result—the unfortunate thing that has happened—separation!

He then asks: Doesn't this perhaps have something to say to us? And he answers: Maybe it does.

He reminds his young people that they (the Liberated) also have a struggle, though it is from an en-

tirely different point of view. He realizes that in their peculiar struggle that glorious part of our Confession, election, may find itself too much in the back ground. He says, and I translate as literally as possible, "We hear so little talk about it, and we read so little of it." And he concludes "It is a human characteristic to fall into one-sidedness. What took place in Grand Rapids surely has something to say to us. The Five Articles against the Remonstrants, let them not become dead capital among us."

Well, well! That is something! Hoeksema was the only one who fought Arminianism in this country. And Hoeksema did this by always maintaining the glorious doctrine of election, which according to the writer of the above mentioned article the Fathers call "the heart of the Church." But the poor fellow went off the beam with this doctrine. He preached and taught it so much that he became one-sided. In fact he became so one-sided that in respect to the requirement and promise of the covenant of grace, well—these simply don't exist anymore. Too much election! Well, well! That is something! You really have to read the Dutch papers to find out what goes on in America.

One wonders where the man got his information. Was it the *Standard Bearer*, perhaps? If it was, I would like to know the volume and the page. Or did one of our schismatic ministers tell him this story? One wonders when he reads stories like this. We suggest that the young ladies, who were advised to study the problem of "separations," that they do not slick this story up, but do a little investigating on their own.

But notice what an admission this author makes. He tells his young people in no uncertain terms with their doctrine (Liberated) they are liable to lose election if they don't watch out. In fact, so he tells us, they have already lost it. No one speaks of it anymore, and no one writes about it anymore. The only place you can find it is in the Canons of Dordt, the Five Articles against the Remonstrants. Verily "the heart of the Church" has fallen into the dust! I would like to remind our readers that we Protestant Reformed people can surely learn something from the liberated. We learn this, that as soon as you monkey around with that conditional business, you are on the road to losing everything. And this is going to be the experience of all those who have separated from us to embrace their conditional doctrine.

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What Kind of Grace is "Common" Grace?

This is the question Dr. M. J. Wyngarden of Cal-

vin College attempts to answer in the latest issue of *Torch and Trumpet*.

He writes: "This question is generally asked by those who deny or doubt that there is a certain grace or favor of God in addition to saving grace. They are not convinced that there is some kind of favor of God, and that there is a sincere offer of salvation also to those who do not accept that offer. They take this stand because the reprobate do not receive the power needed to accept this offer. The question can be asked, which grace, what kind of grace do they then receive?"

Dr. Wyngarden then attempts to show what kind of grace the reprobate receives by quoting from Calvin's commentary on the prophecy of Zechariah 11: 10, 14.

Space will not allow that I quote the professor at length. But he says that "according to John Calvin, these verses speak of the reprobate, reprobate who stand overagainst the poor of the flock that waited on the prophet, and acknowledged that the words which he spoke were the Word of God."

When we read this we became interested to know whether or not John Calvin actually taught this. So we took our commentary of Calvin on Zechariah and began to check the quotations the professor made. And we were astonished to learn the method the professor uses when he makes quotations, a method one uses when he wants to make another say what he wants him to say. Let me quote a little more to show what I mean.

Here is what Wyngarden quotes further from Calvin: "But he (the prophet) says further, that the poor of the flock perceived this: and thus he shows, that while the body of the people followed the way to ruin, a few derived benefit from God's scourges; and thus it never happens, that God chastizes without some advantage. Though then *the reprobate* (italics mine, M.J.W.) obstinately resist God, and hesitate not to tread under foot his judgments, and, as far as they are able, render them void, there are yet some few who receive benefit, and acknowledge God's hand so as to humble themselves and repent."

And now follows a quotation to which I especially call attention to show up Wyngarden's method. What follows appears all in one paragraph in Wyngarden's article, which means that he intended that the reader concludes that this was exactly as he read it in Calvin's commentary. "For the paternal care of God had been most basely and most shamefully repudiated, as well as the *kind favor* which he had manifested toward the people. (I found this on page 312 of the

commentary, M.S.) They had thrust from them the *kindness of God*, and in a manner carried on war forwardly with God, so as to prevent any access to His favor. (This I found on page 313, far removed from that which he had just quoted above, M.S.) That Zechariah now speaks in his own person, and then introduces God as the speaker, makes no difference... (Wyngarden left out the words: "as we said yesterday"—that is indicated by the series of dots. M.S.) as to the main subject; for his object is to set forth how shamefully the Jews had abused the *favor of God*, and how unjustly they had despised it. (Italics mine, M.J.W.)" (This I found on p. 324 of the commentary M.S)

Wonderful way to quote, don't you think? Reminds me of someone else I know who likes to quote that way. You can make any writer or commentator say anything you want to when you use this method. And there can be no doubt that is what Wyngarden attempted to do. He wanted Calvin to teach Wyngarden's pet doctrine of "Common Grace."

But is that what Calvin teaches in his commentary on the passage referred to in Zechariah? I think not. As I understand Calvin, all he purposes to teach is that God had manifested his favor to Israel, particularly Judah, looked at as a people constituted of both elect and reprobate. The majority in the latter group. And in order that God may save his people and at the same time destroy the reprobate, he causes the prophet to come before them all with the two staves, Beauty and Bands, which are the Word of God. This Word of God the poor recognizes as the power of God unto salvation, while the reprobate are hardened thereby unto their destruction.

Surely the people see God's favor to His people in Christ. This is true also today under the Gospel. God shows it to them. But is God therefore gracious to the reprobate? Nonsense! Let Wyngarden exegete the entire chapter for himself and he will see this if he has eyes to see. And if he writes again, let him do his quoting fairly, not deceptively. *Torch and Trumpet* should refuse articles of this kind. It destroys the very purpose for which the periodical was brought into being.

—M. Schipper

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Salvation! O melodious sound,
To wretched dying men!
Salvation, that from God proceeds,
And leads to God again.

CONTRIBUTIONS

A TESTIMONY FROM THE RECORDS

With reference to the former Rev. Kok's, "News Items from Holland," in *Concordia*, Nov. 5, 1953, the undersigned simply makes the following testimony from the Consistory records, beginning as early as the latter part of 1949, when the Holwerda-Kok case originated in the Netherlands.

On Nov. 17, 1949, elder Kortering filed a lengthy document with Consistory, advising the following. On the basis of I Tim. 3:2 and I Tim. 5:19, as literally taken from Deut. 19:15-21, Professor Holwerda, and in our case (Rev. B. Kok) being placed before the Lord, will have to answer these questions to the legally ordained Consistory of Holland Mich., of which Rev. Kok is pastor. Whether yes or no Rev. Kok made these statements as Professor Holwerda wrote in that letter to an immigrant in Canada. This must be investigated, as well as the integrity and truthfulness of the reporter, Professor Holwerda, a professor in Dogmatics in God's Christian Church in the Netherlands. For, Rev. Kok challenges the truth of these statements as he (Prof. Holwerda) made them. Shortly after this my office expired on Dec. 31, 1949. The Consistory never carried out this advice beyond the public statement made by the then Rev. Kok to the Congregation, in which he denied the truth of the Holwerda report. The undersigned re-entered the office of elder over a year later, and also failed to again take up that matter. I herewith confess my guilt, it would have been better in view of the present history if the whole matter had been cleared up at that time. With the passing on of Professor Holwerda into eternity the whole matter was sealed to the day of judgment, as far as official action was concerned.

On Feb. 22, 1953 elder Kortering registered a lengthy document in Consistory disagreeing with Consistory's stand taken on Dec. 20, 1950 against Synod adopting the Declaration of Principles.

On Sept. 8, 1952 elder Kortering submitted to Consistory for their study, examination, and consideration, his grounded objection to Rev Kok's conditional theology, as he expounded it on Sunday Morning, Sept. 7th from the pulpit, and as he had written and defended the Liberated Doctrines publicly in his articles in *Concordia*, etc. This also was a lengthy document, copy now filed in Classis.

On Dec. 12, 1952 the above Sept. 8th grounded objection became a protest, requesting the suspension of Rev. Kok from his office, on the grounds submitted, and on the fact that he refused to retract his condi-

tional theology as expounded on the pulpit on Sept. 7th, and as written in his articles in *Concordia*.

On Dec. 18, 1952 elder Kortering made the motion to initiate the proper proceedings to suspend Rev. Kok from his office. The Elders failed to support this motion. Elder Kortering appealed his protest to Classis East, to have them judge over us, whether the grounds submitted in his protest of Dec. 12th are sufficient grounds to suspend Rev. Kok from his office.

After this and at the same meeting, Dec. 18, 1952 Art. 6, Consistory decided unanimously to have Rev. Kok prepare his answer for Classis, on the protest of Elder Kortering, and to present this answer at our next General Consistory Meeting D.V., to be held on Dec. 26th, for their consideration.

On Dec. 22, 1952 Elder Kortering filed his copy of protest against the Consistory of Holland with the stated clerk of Classis East.

On Dec. 26th 1952 elder Kortering laid a copy of this protest sent to Classis (which was basically the same as his Dec. 12, 1952 protest already in the record of Consistory), on the table of Consistory.

At this Dec. 26, 1952, meeting, Rev. Kok failed to carry out the mandate of Consistory Art. 6 Dec. 18th minutes above. And instead of answering my protest, which Consistory could adopt as their answer to my protest to Classis. Rev. Kok corrupted the Consistorial mandate by charging me with violating Art. 30, Church Order. His loud arguments caused tension to rise in Consistory, and in the confusion that followed, nothing was accomplished, the copy of my protest was not read, and the answer that Rev. Kok had prepared was simply received for information and filed.

At the Meeting of Classis East, January 7, 1953 Rev. Kok as delegate simply kept that paper which he had read to Consistory on Dec. 26, 1952, in his pocket, did not read what he had reported to Consistory, but blocked my protest gaining the floor of Classis by saying that Consistory had no time to answer it.

The rest of the history of my protest at Classis from then on is so well known to all that we need not repeat it, the minutes of the Holland Consistory are simply filled with articles, referring to my protests. From the minutes officially given to me over the Rev. Kok's own signature dated Aug. 13, 1953 I can count at least 39 articles, separate entries in the minutes in reference to or connected with my protests, from Sept. 12, 1952 to April 21, 1953. From that several were omitted, and these do not count my separate protests against the Consistory allowing Rev. Vermeer, and Rev. Petter to occupy our pulpit after they schismatically recognized and preached for the De Wolf group.

In addition to above, Consistory forgot to include in their report Art. 12, Mar. 12, 1953 minutes, which read: Kortering requests to have the following entered in the minutes. Due to the fact that my own protests are in the records of Consistory, and in as far as these other protests now in consideration at this time, read on my protests. I hereby want to express, and have entered in the minutes, that I do not want to be held responsible for answers given by Consistory, either expressed or implied to these protests.

On August 2, 1953 Kortering had the following entered in the minutes of Consistory. To Rev. Kok and the Consistory, 1st Prot. Ref. Church, Holland, Mich. Dear Brethren: I wish it understood that I assume no responsibility for any errors that may be preached by Rev. Kok. Grounds: My protest against the Consistory for failing to suspend him from his office is now at Classis.

Among errors I also consider personal statements as follows, made in this morning's sermon. Which "some of you lay in my mouth." As I objected once before, sermon Feb. 1st, entered in Mar. 18th minutes, Consistory, the pulpit is never the place for such personal statements or remarks. Neither is that God's Word, which must always be in the mouth of God's Servants on the pulpit.

Besides these official minutes which I literally quoted above, I can testify that many times I have tried to correct the former Rev. Kok. That went so far and so often, that personal animosity from some of the deacons rose everytime this occurred. In a spirit of open rebellion, one would cry to the top of his voice, get out of here, if you don't like Kok's preaching. This has happened more than once. Under this unpleasant tension above, and the long suspense in which my protest at Classis could not be treated and end the matter, I was compelled to issue the blanket order above, and have entered in the minutes, that I refused to be held responsible for any errors that Rev. Kok might be preaching, on the grounds, that he would not be preaching these errors any longer, if Consistory had done its duty and suspended him from his office last fall, as it was their duty to do.

From all this I fail to see how the former Rev. Kok has the audacity to publicly infer that I never corrected him, and always agreed with him. I must say that I am only a sinful man, strong in some things and weak in others. I may have been too easy in the ethics of some things. If I had not been, he (the former Rev. Kok) would not now dare to boast as he does in *Concordia*. But for that I am also glad, that I did not fight with my fists, but did fight with

the sword of the spirit the Word of God, as the record clearly shows. And that is much more important, for it had as its purpose the welfare of the former Rev. Kok at heart, that he (D.V.) might see his error and repent. And now by his own action (as clearly reported in former issues of the *Standard Bearer*). He, cut himself loose from this office of discipline, from this hand of friendship, from this voice which no longer corrects him. And having lost his office, and lying outside of the Church, the following Scriptural Discipline applies.

I Cor. 5:5: To deliver such an one unto satan for the destruction of the flesh that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

II Thess. 3:6: Now we command you brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly and not after the tradition which he received of us.

II Thess. 3:14: And if any man obey not our word by this epistle note that man and have no company with him that he may be ashamed.

II Thess. 3:15: Yet count him not as an enemy but admonish him as a brother.

This scripture admonishes us to no longer extend our hand of fellowship to the former Rev. Kok, and exhorts us to admonish him for the error of his way. Which we hereby also do. Let him repent before God, flee from his errors, confess his sins. Let him return and willingly again place himself under the legally ordained office of discipline of the 1st Prot. Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan.

As to the second charge that while the undersigned was meeting with the former Consistory, tentative plans for meeting separate the following Sunday were secretly made. This is absolutely false. Not one of the entire Congregation knew anything about this. They are all open witnesses. Ask anyone of them yourself. The undersigned himself worked all that night (Friday night), and everything was arranged after the former Consistory had become schismatic along with the former Rev. Kok, on that fateful Oct. 9th meeting, after which all of them lost the fellowship of the Protestant Reformed Church.

—J. H. Kortering

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Report of Classis East . . MET IN GRAND RAPIDS, MICH. — OCTOBER 21, 1953

Classis East met on October 21, 1953, in our Hope Church at 9 o'clock and met for three sessions, Morning, Afternoon and Evening. The purpose of this gathering of Classis was to examine candidate-elect George Lanting so that he might be installed in office in our church at Grand Haven.

I It can be reported that all churches resorting in Classis East sent delegates to this Classis except Kalamazoo.

The agenda of this Classis, strictly speaking, had but one item on it. However, it soon became evident that there were a few other matters that needed to be considered prior to the examination of Candidate Lanting. It was the matter of Classis West action as this appeared from the Documents sent to us by said Classis and the implication of the decisions recorded in these Documents as this affected our receiving Deputies Ad Examina Synodi from this Classis.

The Stated Clerk informed Classis that he had notified the Deputies of Classis West to come, but had later informed them by letter that they would, no doubt, not receive any seating should they come. He also informed Classis of a telephone conversation held with one of the Deputies from Classis West in regard to this matter.

Classis took note of this matter, and, after careful deliberation of the entire matter, decided as follows: (Articles 26, 29, 31)

"A. That Classis West has broken the Church Order and became schismatic by arbitrarily reaching out and ruling in the internal affairs of a church which does not belong to its resort to the extent of declaring that one group of office-bearers in the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, namely, the suspended Rev. De Wolf and a number of deposed elders are the legal Consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan; and by the same action ousting a group of lawful office-bearers, namely, the Rev. H. Hoeksema and Rev. C. Hanko and their office-bearers. Grounds: Articles 30, 31 and 36 of the Church Order.

"B. That, therefore, Classis East cannot receive and seat the delegates of Examination of Classis West. Motion carries."

In regard to the action taken by the Stated Clerk Classis decides to express the following:

"I. That Classis expresses that although the Stated Clerk acted prematurely and without proper authorization of Classis, the Stated Clerk, as appears from subsequent events, acted correctly.

II. That the Deputies be informed on this decision.

III. That Classis send a copy of the above decisions to the former Classis West for information.

IV. That likewise Classis East send a copy of these

decisions to the next meeting of Synod, and request Synod to approve of our stand taken herein."

It was also decided to send a letter to "the former" Classis West, pleading with them to return from their schismatic way and to once more walk with us on our pilgrim journey in good order and decency.

It is also decided to send a similar letter to the Rev. B. Kok and his followers and to Rev. J. Blankespoor and his followers and to Rev. H. De Wolf and his followers.

Rev. G. Vos examined Cand. Lanting in the first three Loci of Dogmatics, and Rev. R. Veldman in the last three Loci of the same. Rev. H. Kuiper examines in Knowledge of Confessions, Rev. G. Vanden Berg in Knowledge of Scripture, Rev. C. Hanko in Controversy and Rev. M. Schipper in Practica. The Revs. J. Heys and G. Lubbers were judges of the Sermon preached on John 3:16.

Classis decided in closed session by unanimous vote by ballot to advise Grand Haven to proceed with duly installing Cand. Lanting into the Ministry. Rev. C. Hanko informs the brother of Classis' decision with a few well-chosen words and Rev. G. Vos leads Classis in prayer after Classis sings: "Dat 's Heeren zegen op U daal."

It was decided to ask all churches resorting in Classis East to take up collections for an Emergency Fund to help defray the expenses of the traveling of the ministers who preach in Iowa, Minnesota and California. A committee of laymen is appointed to handle these moneys. This committee is: Mr. Richard Bloem, John Flikkema and Peter J. Lubbers.

Classis decides that the January Classis will be held in Hudsonville. Classis adjourns at a late hour on Wednesday evening.

Rev. G. Lubbers leads Classis in the closing prayer.