

# THE STANDARD

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## MEDITATION

### Father's Good Pleasure

"Fear not little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Luke 12:32

A flock . . . a little one!

God the Father . . . and His good pleasure!

The Kingdom . . . His gift!

The above given fragments of the text, rightly understood and in their proper relation to each other, spell a peace and tranquility for the Church of Christ in the midst of the world, that no poverty can disturb, no overwhelming foe can possibly diminish. Essentially that puts heaven in the soul; gives songs in the night and causes smiles through the tears of the weary trudging pilgrim — gives hope in deepest despair.

\* \* \* \*

For, that apparently there is all reason for doubt and despair none will deny. This will become evident when the addressees are understood from their name and as to their calling. Taking their name of "little flock" in conjunction with the context, cf. verse 22, it is plain that they are the disciples of Jesus. Disciples are those that imbibe the teachings and follow the directions of their leader and therefore, in this case, the followers of Christ . . . His church.

That church, essentially one throughout the ages, is a "flock". A scriptural and very apt description of the church, this name is. A thoroughly scriptural term as applied to the church, for such she was already called in the Old Testament scriptures time and again. Beautifully, in the form of a personal confession, you have this expressed in the opening words of Psalm 23. "The Lord is my Shepherd." It is also the repeated testimony of the Lord Himself when He denotes the relationship between Himself and His people as, e.g., in Ezekiel 34:31—"And ye, My flock, the flock of My pasture . . ." In the same chapter this prophecy of the Lord already makes mention of the coming Great Shepherd, Who shall feed them and so they shall be saved. Cf. vss. 22,

23. In the prophecy of Isaiah this is marvelously portrayed in verse 11 of the fortieth chapter in these words: "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd, He shall gather the lambs with His arms, and carry them in His bosom, and shall diligently lead them that are with young."

And when the Shepherd did appear He in His discourses apart from the text under consideration, often used this figure. How He portrayed Himself as the good shepherd, spoke of His labor as gathering the lost sheep; gathering His Own, who knew His voice, into one fold!

And how applicable this natural figure is to the Church of Christ! Points of comparison abound. As a flock is a unity, so is the Church. The many sheep, varied in characteristics though they may be, belong together. So, too, the believers form a unity and essentially are one. Though oft it is torn apart into all kinds of opposing segments. They are one flock, are fed by one Shepherd; graze in the same pasture . . .

In a flock there is variation of adult and young; strong and feeble. In the Church, as manifested in this world, there are the oak trees and the smoking flax; those demanding strong meat and those requiring milk.

Further, and this aspect is repeatedly emphasized by our Saviour, there is the peculiar relationship between flock and shepherd. Sheep follow not strangers; know them not; do not recognize their voice—but gladly, spontaneously recognizing the shepherd's voice, follow him wherever he leads. So the Church, disdaining the subtle imitation of speech of pseudo shepherds, immediately react with zeal when the voice of shepherd Jesus resounds and they unhesitatingly follow . . . "knowing" His voice.

Finally, and this element seems to be vital in this connection, the flock needs a shepherd for its protection and very life. Pasture he finds to sustain them—his power and knowledge he utilizes to their defense and safety. How true spiritually! Where would the Church find pasturage, if He did not give it? Upon what could possibly the "sheep's soul" feed, if it could not assuredly say: "Thou hast the words of eternal life"? And how could she ever hope to continue safely and not fall prey to lurking foes abundant, if He were not the good . . . the faithful shepherd, Who, even in the

laying aside of His life for His sheep was the MIGHTY one?

\* \* \* \*

This latter idea, of dependency, is accentuated by the further descriptive word "little". To emphasize this idea of "littleness" the Holland translation gives the diminutive form of flock and renders the expression in full: little flocklet.

And how truly this characterizes the cause of Christ!

True, one cannot escape the fact that often the Church is presented as numerically beyond man's comprehension . . . and called an innumerable host. Such is already the instruction of the Lord in His promise to Abraham, prophesying that his seed should be as the stars of heaven (the sum of which who can tell?) and as the sand of the sea shore (what mortal would attempt to render account of them?) for multitude.

And as this prophecy becomes reality it is even so! So John, in Revelation, views the Church at any given point of time in history as one hundred and forty-four thousand strong. Sealed these are unto the fold of Christ, separate from the followers of the beast. Multiply that by the fullness period of "one thousand years", and you must receive an inkling of the vast number of Christ's flock that is as a vast sea, whose united hallelujahs echo and reecho through the mansions of glory forever. Truly, how great, the army of saints as through history and in their final cumulation, they go marching home!

And yet . . . small . . . little! How insignificant their number, comparatively speaking. Small in comparison with the world at any given time. When millions find their grave in the deluge, by those waters a mere remnant of eight souls is uplifted from among them! Many nations there were in the time of Abraham, but only one family was called from among them all. The "minority of a remnant" continued to characterize the number of the flock in all of Israel's anxious history. As to the new dispensational manifestation of this flock—how easily numbered was it at its inception; how sharply it has contrasted ever since with the hosts of the children of darkness. The one striking fact, when throughout the ages this flock stands directly over against the vast majority that will have none of this strange, this peculiar movement, is that it is so small, so very, very small! For let us remember well that the line of demarcation between what is nominally church and the openly wicked world still fails to give the true picture. That line runs right through the church institute! All is not "flock" that runs under its banner. Within the church institute reformation after reformation only tends to make the fact of the "littleness" of the flock to stand out all the more.

And finally, from the nature of the case, and according to the word of our Lord, how small in comparison even that great throng soon in glory is, with the still greater number of the damned. We cite this not to give occasion for criticism

of God's wonderful ways. It is given because that too, is the testimony of the Word that cannot lie. "Wide and broad the way is leading to destruction and many travelers it has . . . narrow the way that leads to glory land . . . and few there be that find it.

\* \* \* \*

To this "little flock" Jesus addresses the words: "Fear not".

That admonition certainly is not superfluous.

O, we realize, the lesson first of all, to the disciples and the Church, in these words regards care as to eating and raiment. That is clear from the context. And surely, from the instruction as to God's intended and surely to be realized good pleasure, peace must permeate the soul of each of His sheep, also in regard to things natural and temporal. For the Shepherd cares! He will realize the good pleasure of Father. Then there is no cause to fear.

But we want to add that just exactly because of these glorious facts, there follows too, the assurance that ALL is well in EVERY respect . . . in all circumstances of life.

How to explain this? What the sure basis for this "fear not" can be? Whence the certainty that ALL fear is uncalled for?

There is, and there can be, only one answer. And that answer lies in the fact that God is WHO He is. That means, that first of all, we must not forget that here the very Son of God is speaking. How different His Word from the empty word of attempted comfort of mere man. There is power in this speaking. He is the TRUTH, His word shall surely stand! With all the implications and details involved: Fear not . . . ever . . . in any way or respect!

But there is more too. Even the "little flock" after all is God's creation. O, as long and according to the measure we deem the Church to be the work of men, the result of our gallant efforts and great sacrifices (?) . . . it must be plain that the least adversity drives to despair. And well it may, for the "house of men" shall tumble to ruin surely! But, how different when that flock is exclusively His product and handiwork, the realization of HIS design! The flock is small, not in spite of His efforts to save more, or in spite of His promised design to save if only "many" will take God at His word! It is small because He wills it so! Each manifestation of decimation is God's own work! According to His counsel it is God that severs one large segment after another and makes his flock "little".

And from that point of view, being little is, if occasioned by truth, a sign post that we are in the right way and not a cause of lamentation. Fear not, therefore, as little small, insignificant movement—for your being so is altogether according to pattern. God's design cannot but be attained. Even the hordes of darkness are subservient to that.

\* \* \* \*

That end or purpose of God is expressed in the glorious

intention, the good pleasure of our Father: "to give you the kingdom".

How all embracing that good pleasure is as to content; how irresistible as to its power!

The content is the giving of the kingdom. No, not the promise of receiving A kingdom among many kingdoms; an earthly, even though excelling kingdom. Of such there are many, there have been and shall be others. They, however, because they are of time, this worldly, soon fade away and the one succeeds the other, only to be pushed into oblivion by its crowding successor. Such a kingdom carnal Israel always longed for and never received. For such, in its own peculiar conception, the apostate church of today yearns and strives... with attending failure... and that is her undoing!

Nay, this kingdom is THE Kingdom. It stands in a class all by itself. There is no other like it. There can be no comparison from any point of view between this and other kingdoms. Who would be a King to even dare be compared to the Lord of Glory, the King of THE Kingdom? The mere thought is blasphemy. And though it is true that here the subjects are not the noble or the rich... what subjects in any other kingdom are to be compared with the heavenized subjects of this? Seek wherever you will, throughout all the vast universe for the most ideal and beautiful place for a Kingdom... where can possibly be found a sphere anywhere near approximating the realms of glory? No it is *the kingdom*.

And concerning that one and only Kingdom God has eternal designs as to its disposition. He will give it away. It is gratuitously brought into possession of this little flock. And the glory of it all is, that it is not a mere intention as man intends actions. It is "Father's" good pleasure. That makes it sure and certain forever. For, Himself says, that He shall do ALL HIS GOOD PLEASURE.

And as to the actual deed of "giving" that Kingdom there can be no doubt either. We have the realized gift in Christ in principle and the kingdom by the work of His Spirit is placed "within" us. Further, His giving is all the continuous work of shaping the little flock. For, in a sense, the giving of the Kingdom and the calling into being of the flock is identical. Still He gives, preparing for the final entrance. He takes from us what cannot enter; He adds what is meet. And finally, when the last "little sheep of the little flock" has been brought into the fold... HE GIVES... forever to be Heirs of our King in His Kingdom.

\* \* \* \*

Because the above is all immutable, all is now also safe. Little flock, whose very essence is His Divine, causal creation, Who are what you are because of His eternal design, whose ever faithful Shepherd is God's Own Son, whose testament is title to THE kingdom as eternal heirs: Why worry? Fear not!

H.H.K.

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## CONTENTS

### MEDITATION —

- Father's Good Pleasure.....193  
Rev. H. H. Kuiper

### EDITORIALS —

- Bulletin No. 3.....196  
Bulletin No. 4.....196  
Earmarks .....197  
More Interpretation.....199  
Rev. H. Hoeksema

### OUR DOCTRINE —

- The Triple Knowledge.....200  
Rev. H. Hoeksema

### FROM HOLY WRIT —

- Exposition of I Peter 1:22-25.....205  
Rev. G. Lubbers

### IN HIS FEAR —

- Afraid of the Gospel.....207  
Rev. J. A. Heys

### CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH —

- The Church and the Sacraments.....209  
Rev. H. Veldman

### THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS —

- The Canons of Dordrecht.....211  
Rev. H. C. Hoeksema

### DECENCY AND ORDER —

- Novices .....213  
Rev. G. Vanden Berg

### ALL AROUND US —

- The Good in the Totally Depraved.....215  
Rev. M. Schipper

## EDITORIALS

### Bulletin No. 3

The undersigned hereby solemnly swear before God and men:

"THAT IN THE FIRST PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH THE GOVERNING BODY IS THE CONSISTORY SO CALLED AND THAT FROM TIME TO TIME PERSONS ARE ELECTED TO SERVE ON SAID CONSISTORY WHO ARE CALLED ELDERS. THAT A LARGE MAJORITY OF THE CONGREGATION OF SAID CHURCH WAS NOT IN HARMONY WITH THE CONDUCT OF THE SAID HERMAN HOEKSEMA, WHO WAS THE PERSON KNOWN AS THE HEAD OR FIRST PASTOR OF SAID CHURCH, AND THAT AS NEW MEMBERS OF THE CONSISTORY WERE ELECTED THE CONGREGATION WAS ELECTING PERSONS WHO WERE MORE OR LESS IN OPPOSITION TO THE SAID HERMAN HOEKSEMA. THAT BY REASON OF THE FACT THAT SAID HERMAN HOEKSEMA COULD NOT CONTROL BY HIS DOMINEERING METHODS CERTAIN PERSONS WHO WERE ELECTED TO THE CONSISTORY OF THIS CHURCH THE SAID HERMAN HOEKSEMA SEIZED UPON A PRETEXT, WITHOUT MERIT, TO CAUSE A SCHISM AND SPLIT IN SAID CHURCH WITH THE PURPOSE IN VIEW OF SECURING THE PROPERTY THEREOF AS SET FORTH IN PLAINTIFF'S BILL OF COMPLAINT."

Hubert De Wolf  
FREDERICK SYTSMA  
HENRY KNOTT  
WILLIAM STUURSMA  
LAMBERT MULDER  
ANDREW DYKSTRA  
HENRY BASTIANSE  
SIDNEY DE YOUNG  
ADOLF VERMEER  
GERRIT SIKKEMA  
JOHN BOUWMAN  
ANDREW VOSS  
By Hubert De Wolf

All this the above solemnly swear.

What a wicked person that Rev. Herman Hoeksema really is. He not only dominates the whole consistory so that for a long time they meekly submitted as dummies to his will. But he also was so wicked that when he could no longer control the consistory, he intentionally caused a schism, a split in his own congregation, and that for the very purpose that he might seize the property of the First Protestant Reformed Church.

How in the world could they ever tolerate such a man, and that too, for almost thirty-four years.

And how could the churches ever dedicate to the same Reverend Herman Hoeksema the book that was published on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Protestant Reformed Churches in 1950 in the following words: "To the Reverend Herman Hoeksema, whose capable leadership by the grace of our God played such a prominent part in our history during the past quarter century, we dedicate this book."

In other words, who is wicked? Is the Reverend Herman Hoeksema, or are the persons that do not hesitate to swear this utterly false oath?

H.H.

### Bulletin No. 4

The undersigned solemnly swear before God and men:

"THAT A LEGAL CONSISTORY MEETING WAS HELD ON THE 22nd DAY OF JUNE, 1953, AT THE CHURCH EDIFICE CONCERNING THE ABOVE APOLOGY WITH RELATION TO THE SO-CALLED ADVICE OF CLASSIS, AT WHICH A MOTION WAS PUT THAT THE REVEREND DE WOLF APOLOGIZE ACCORDING TO THE MEANING OF THE CLASSICAL DECISION; THAT SAID MOTION DID NOT CARRY AND THAT THEREUPON THE SAID CROSS DEFENDANT HERMAN HOEKSEMA, IN A DISPLAY OF ANGER, LEFT SAID MEETING, AND LATER THE ELDERS SUPPORTING THE POSITION OF SAID HERMAN HOEKSEMA WHO ARE THE OTHER CROSS DEFENDANTS HEREIN, REMAINED FOR A WHILE BUT MADE CLEAR THAT UNLESS THE DEMAND OF THE SAID HERMAN HOEKSEMA WAS ACCEDDED TO THEY WOULD ALSO SEPARATE THEMSELVES, AND THE OTHER CROSS DEFENDANTS THEREAFTER LEFT SAID CHURCH."

Signed by the same as before.

How they dare lie under oath!

I am not referring now to all kinds of inaccuracies that are found in this part of the cross bill. But I am referring to downright lies, as follows:

1. That I left the meeting after a motion that the Rev. De Wolf should apologize according to the decision of Classis was not carried. That is not true, and they know it is not true. I did not leave until the whole business was finished, and also the elders by their illegal voting had shown that they did not want to apologize.

2. The cross bill states that I left "in a display of anger." That also is a lie. I displayed no anger whatsoever, not by my speech, nor by any gestures, nor even in the appearance

of my face. I stood by the door and told the meeting that I would not be in this consistory meeting any longer because I felt that it had become entirely illegal. The only display of real anger was given by the Rev. De Wolf after I left. According to all of my elders he raved for about twenty minutes, or a half hour, against me while I was absent and against the Rev. D. Jonker who had died.

3. The cross bill lies, and they all know it, when it states that "later the elders supporting the position of said Herman Hoeksema who are the other cross defendants herein, remained for a while but made clear that unless the demand of the said Herman Hoeksema was acceded to they would separate themselves, and the other cross defendants thereafter left said church." This is a double lie. It is a lie because it leaves the impression, and the impression is undoubtedly intended, that my elders also left the meeting, while the fact is that they stayed until the end, and that the Rev. Schipper, member of the classical committee, closed the meeting in their presence. And secondly, it is a lie because it leaves the impression, and the impression is undoubtedly intended, that they left the church. In other words, they became schismatic. And they certainly did not. They never left the First Protestant Reformed Church, but are still the only legal consistory and the only true members of said church.

And therefore I once more say: how dare they lie, and that too, under oath!

H.H.



## EARMARKS

Notice how De Wolf plays *hocus pocus* when he says, in his replies to the examination questions that were placed before him by the consistory: "If you say that regeneration is a prerequisite to entering into the kingdom of heaven, you must also say that conversion is a prerequisite to entering into the kingdom of heaven."

The *hocus pocus* lies in the fact that for the guileless and unsophisticated reader, he plays upon the term *prerequisite* in connection with the terms *regeneration* and *conversion*.

In the one case (regeneration), he employs the term *prerequisite* in the improper sense of the word, as I evidently did in my typewritten sermon on Matt. 18:1-4. Then the term is improperly used to denote, not something that is required of us to do in order to enter into the kingdom of heaven, but something that God does before we can ever enter into the kingdom.

But in the other case (conversion), he uses the term *prerequisite* in the sense of something that man must do before he enters the kingdom of heaven and in order to enter it. For, in his sermon, De Wolf preached that our act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

That is *hocus pocus*.

It is deceiving to use the same term in the same sentence in a double sense without indicating it.

But let me continue to quote De Wolf:

"And now for proof of the fact that you speak—and, Mr. Chairman, I am not pleading for this thing, for I will frankly admit that I said more on the pulpit than what I now realize I said, but I will not admit that I preached false doctrine. I am more convinced now that I didn't. I am more convinced of that now. I didn't realize all the implications, and I'll frankly admit, and I suppose almost any minister will. We sometimes talk about things that we don't understand so very well, until we are put on the spot, and we have to start investigating them, and then we find things that we haven't found before."

What does all this mean?

Did De Wolf go to the pulpit, that particular Sunday evening, without knowing what he was talking about, without realizing the implications of what he said?

And did he, nevertheless, express himself very cock-surely about conditions and prerequisites? Did he not himself state that he knew, before he went to the pulpit, that he was going to offend some in the congregation exactly because he was going to preach conditions and prerequisites?

And now he says, nevertheless, that he said more on the pulpit than he realized he said, that he talked about things he didn't understand very well and didn't realize all the implications of what he said?

Yet, although he didn't quite realize what he said, he preached the truth, a marvellous truth at that, the truth that our act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter into the kingdom of heaven!

What is all this? Does De Wolf mean to say that, although he did not study the text very well, and although he did not quite realize what he said, yet the Holy Spirit so inspired him, without the Word, that he could preach very emphatically and cock-surely about conditions and prerequisites?

I suppose it is true that almost any minister sometimes goes to the pulpit without quite understanding himself the entire contents of his sermon.

That may be due to two reasons. The one is that he does not prepare himself properly, that he goes to the pulpit without having thoroughly studied his text. If I ever would do a thing like that, and depend on the Holy Spirit to inspire and lead me into the truth on the pulpit, I am quite sure, as Claus Harms expressed it once, that the Holy Spirit would say nothing to me but: "Herman, Herman, how lazy you were!"

The other reason is that, during the week, we are spiritually dull, work and work with the text but without much fruit. But even then, the Holy Spirit does not inspire the minister, who has not and does not understand his text, to preach as emphatically and cock-surely as did De Wolf on that particular Sunday evening.

But let De Wolf himself explain this.

Fact is that he claims that, although he did not quite realize what he said on the pulpit, he is now more convinced than ever that he spoke the truth.

He continues as follows:

"Now, Mr. Chairman, if the elders will please turn to question 83 of the Heidelberg Catechism, and the point I am trying to make here, Mr. Chairman, by all this, is this, that you cannot easily accuse a man of heresy when he says that conversion is a prerequisite to entering into the kingdom of heaven. You have to be very careful with that, I assure you. It isn't so easy to say that all of a sudden. I say simply the only point I am trying to make, and that is why I am trying to develop this a little bit. Notice, Catechism, Question 83: "What are the keys of the kingdom of heaven? A. The preaching of the holy gospel and Christian discipline, or excommunication out of the christian church; by these two—(notice)—the kingdom of heaven is opened to believers, and shut against unbelievers." That means, Mr. Chairman, every time the gospel is preached, the kingdom is opened to believers over and over again. Why? So that they enter in, and, Mr. Chairman, I was speaking of the daily, conscious entering into the kingdom of God when I preached that sermon. I was not speaking of conversion in the initial sense. I wasn't concerned about it, but I was speaking exactly of that fact."

This last is simply not true. It is an afterthought of De Wolf as can easily be shown and as I did repeatedly prove from the rest of his sermon. But we will let this pass. It makes no difference anyway, for no matter in what sense one takes conversion, it is never a prerequisite to enter into the kingdom of God. That act is performed, not outside, but within the kingdom. But let us finish the quotation:

"Now, the question—well, I will come back to that, perhaps, later—I want you to notice here that it is opened so that believers may, and do enter consciously—consciously, because it is the preaching that does that. It is the preaching that opens that door, and that closes that door every time the gospel is preached, and every time it is preached God's people turn from their wicked ways; they convert themselves, if you want to use that, perfectly allright with me. I believe that. They turn, through the grace of God, they turn all over again, and they enter into that kingdom."

According to De Wolf, therefore, even question and answer 83 of the Heidelberg Catechism teach that our act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter the kingdom of heaven.

But by his conditional preaching that evening and, in fact, by all conditional preaching the door of the kingdom of heaven is exactly closed tight to believers, to those that are converted and that convert themselves daily, to the elect, for it is made dependent upon an act of man, his act of conversion, whether or not he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Is that the teaching of the Heidelberg Catechism in question and answer 83?

God forbid!

Let us ask, first of all: what is the preaching of the Word?

It is the chief means of grace. What does this mean, according to the Catechism? It means that, through the preaching of the Word the Holy Ghost works faith in our hearts, conscious faith. Question 65.

The preaching of the Word is the declaration of the holy gospel, of the sure and unconditional promise of God unto salvation, by the Church, and in the service of Christ through the Holy Spirit.

In other words, when the Word is preached, the promise of the holy gospel is declared to all the hearers. But the preaching of the Word is much more. It is not only a declaration of the promise by mere men, but it is the Word of God. God speaks through the preaching. His Word is efficacious. When He speaks unto salvation His Word is heard. By whom? By those in whom the Holy Spirit works the power and the act of faith. The others are hardened through the same preaching. The opening of the kingdom of God to the consciousness of believers, according to the Heidelberg Catechism, is, therefore, only and purely an act of God. He declares the promise. He speaks His powerful Word. He works faith as a power and as a conscious act. He causes them to enter.

And there are no prerequisites!

Before a man enters into the kingdom of God, he can do nothing but sin and love the darkness. He does not and cannot believe. He does not and cannot convert himself.

He is in the kingdom of God, whether initially or continually, before he can believe and before he can convert himself.

I can put it still another way.

The kingdom of God, according to the Heidelberg Catechism, is *opened* by the preaching of the gospel, to *believers*.

That means that, when De Wolf preaches the Word, he must declare to believers: *you are in the kingdom of God*.

He certainly may not say: faith is a condition or prerequisite to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Then he shuts the kingdom to believers.

Now, what is logically first: faith or conversion, belief or our act of conversion? You say, of course: the former.

Well, then, if the act of conversion is the fruit and manifestation of faith, and if the preaching of the gospel declares that believers *are* in the kingdom of heaven, is the act of conversion then performed *in* or *outside* of the kingdom, *before* we enter or *after* we have entered into the kingdom of heaven? You say, of course, the latter. But then, our act of conversion is not and cannot be a PRE-requisite to enter into the kingdom of God.

It makes no difference, whether you speak of initial or of continual conversion, conversion always takes place, not before we enter, but *in* the kingdom of God.

To preach, as De Wolf did, and still wants to do, that our act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter into the kingdom of heaven, exactly closes the door to all true believers.

H.H.



### More Interpretation?

We found the following item in the bulletin of the schismatic group of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Mich.:

"In the latest issue of the *Standard Bearer*, the editor attempts to convince his readers that we have repudiated the denial of the error of common grave by a certain statement which we have made to the court. The fact is that we have done nothing of the kind. The statement is merely a formal statement of fact with respect to the history to which it refers and does not express any judgment. The editor of that paper has drawn his own conclusions on the basis of the implications which he makes and not upon the statement itself. These implications are his own; we deny them and assume no responsibility for them. A fuller clarification will be made in the *Reformed Guardian*."

Let us see.

The "certain statement" from the cross bill I quote again:

"DEFENDANTS FURTHER SHOW THAT THE SAID HERMAN HOEKSEMA, WHILE OCCUPYING THE PULPIT IN THE SAID EAST STREET HOLLAND CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH, BY HIS ACTS AND CONDUCT AND BY HIS REFUSAL TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE DULY CONSTITUTED AUTHORITIES OF SAID CHURCH AND ITS DECREES AND PRONOUNCEMENTS, CAUSED A SCHISM IN SAID CHURCH AND A SPLITTING OF THE MEMBERSHIP WHICH ATTENDED SAID CHURCH WHILE HE WAS ITS PASTOR."

A mere formal statement of fact with respect to the history to which it refers?

It does not express any judgment?

Suppose that the statement of fact is correct (which it is not), does not the very fact that they can make such a statement of fact, put them outside of the Protestant Reformed Churches? Will anyone admit that by making this kind of a statement of fact, they, Hubert de Wolf and the cosigners of this cross bill will, utterly repudiate all responsibility for the "acts and conduct" of said Herman Hoeksema, and for his "refusal to acknowledge the duly constituted authorities of said church and its decrees and pronouncements"? Can any Protestant Reformed man conceive of the possibility of making such a statement of fact? Will any unprejudiced outsider, reading such a statement of fact, not judge that it was made by an outsider, and certainly not by those that, in 1924, assumed all responsibility for the "acts and conduct" of the Rev. Hoeksema and for his refusal to acknowledge the duly constituted authorities, their decrees and pronouncements?

But there is more.

Will the *Reformed* (Deformed) *Guardian* be able to play so much *hocus pocus* that they make many of their poor readers believe that by this formal statement of fact they did not condemn and intend to condemn the Rev. Hoeksema for:

1. His acts and conduct, whatever these may be?

2. His refusal to acknowledge authorities? Is this not always to be condemned?

3. His refusal to accept their decrees and pronouncements: chiefly THE THREE POINTS?

4. His causing schism? Do they not know that, to cause schism in the church is always sinful and even worthy of excommunication, according to the Form for the Lord's Supper? And that they really employ the term in this evil sense is evident from the whole context, from the expression that the Rev. Hoeksema *caused* a schism, and their own distinction between "schism" and "splitting of membership."

If they had not intended to BLAME the Rev. Hoeksema, if they really still assume responsibility for the "schism" in 1924, they should have addressed the court as follows:

"WE, THE UNDERSIGNED, UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE REV. HOEKSEMA AND WHILE HE WAS OCCUPYING THE PULPIT IN THE EASTERN AVE. CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH, BY OUR OWN ACTS AND CONDUCT AND BY OUR REFUSAL TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE DULY CONSTITUTED AUTHORITIES OF SAID CHURCH AND ITS DECREES AND PRONOUNCEMENTS, CAUSED A SCHISM IN SAID CHURCH AND SPLITTING OF ITS MEMBERSHIP. AND WE STILL ASSUME FULL RESPONSIBILITY."

Of course, the statement as it appears in the cross bill, is not true. The Rev. Hoeksema, in 1924, did nothing without his consistory. Never did he refuse to acknowledge the duly constituted authorities, which consisted in his own consistory. Never did he cause a schism; classis did by deposing him and his consistory.

But let that be.

Let the *Reformed* (Deformed) *Guardian* assume responsibility for the above statement as changed by me.

Perhaps, we will then believe them, although it is rather late.

It would be much better for them to apologize for the whole lie.

But that is, I am sure, too much to expect.

H.H.




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#### IN MEMORIAM

As it has pleased our Lord to take unto himself on Jan. 17, 1954

MRS. EVELYN VELDMAN

beloved mother of our pastor, the congregation hereby expresses its deep sympathy to the Rev. R. Veldman and family with the hope that God may be their strength and comfort.

Luke 20:36, "Neither can they die anymore, for they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.

Consistory of 4th Prot. Ref. Church  
Vice Pres., Gerrit Pipe.  
Sec., Ryven Ezinga.

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## OUR DOCTRINE

### THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

AN EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

PART III — OF THANKFULNESS

LORD'S DAY 39

Chapter 2

Obedience and Promise (cont'd)

We must constantly remember that this commandment is preached, not to the world, but to the church. It is the law of liberty that finds a response in the heart of the regenerated Christian, whose principal delight is in the precepts of his God. It is certainly not the law to which the apostle refers in the first epistle to Timothy, chapter 1, verses 9 and 10: "Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine." The law is preached to the church of Jesus Christ, to those that live not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. And, "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Hence, when in connection with the preaching of the law we speak of obedience, we refer to spiritual obedience, a virtue which is the fruit of the grace of God. This virtue of obedience is not found in the world of the unregenerated at all. There may be an outward semblance, an imitation, of it, an attempt to practice civic righteousness also in this respect. But even this outward imitation of obedience in the world often deteriorates. Fact is that modern education and modern pedagogy, especially since the time of Rousseau and the latter part of the 18th century, must have nothing of parents imposing their will upon the child, and of teachers exercising their authority in the classroom, — an authority to which the child must simply submit. Rousseau and those that followed him proceeded from the false principle that the child by nature is good. The evil that in later life becomes manifest is not due to his nature, but rather to the environment and to the example of others. Hence, the child must be left alone as much as possible. He surely must not be ordered about by precept upon precept. As much as possible the child must learn to follow his own will and his own mind. Parents and educators prostrate themselves before the throne of the child, and ask him, "Lord, what wilt thou have us do?" By all means, you must not simply command the child. You must show him, before you simply demand of him, the reason why he must do a thing. And unless he plainly sees that a thing is reasonable and just according to his own judgment, you

must not demand of him to do anything at all. All this denies the very principle of obedience, which is exactly respect for, and submission to authority for God's sake. This, we repeat, is not found in the world, but only in the church.

This virtue of obedience must first of all be inculcated in the home.

For this purpose the parents must look upon their children as principally sanctified in Christ, but nevertheless, as children that have only a small principle of the new obedience in their hearts. Certainly, they do not consider their children as principally good by nature. On the contrary, they confess with the Baptism Form that "we with our children are conceived and born in sin, and therefore are children of wrath, inasmuch that we cannot enter into the kingdom of God except we are born again." On the other hand, they also confess that even as the children are without their knowledge partakers of the condemnation in Adam, so they are again received unto grace in Christ. In the first question they are required to answer when their children are baptized, they "acknowledge, that although our children are conceived and born in sin, and therefore are subject to all miseries, yea, to condemnation itself; yet that they are sanctified in Christ, and therefore as members of his church ought to be baptized." They consider their children, therefore, indeed as saints in Christ Jesus, but as very imperfect and sinful saints. And, it is the calling of the parents to instruct their little saints and to train them in the way of obedience. The children must learn to obey their parents in the Lord, and to respect and honor them and be in submission to them for Christ's sake.

This is indeed a difficult task. It requires much patience and longsuffering, and therefore, constant prayer.

The term *obedience* and *to obey* in Scripture represents a very concept. The English word *obedience* is derived from the Latin *obedientia*, which evidently has the meaning of "to hearken to a summons, to follow up a call, to submit," and hence, "to obey." Principally this is also true of the Greek word in the New Testament that is translated by the noun *obedience* or by the verb *to obey*. It also denotes compliance, submission, the hearkening to a command. He whom one obeys is his master, and the one that obeys is a servant, Rom. 6:16: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" Scripture speaks of obedience to the faith, Rom. 1:5, 16:26, which evidently means a hearkening to, a compliance with, a submission to the faith of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the same sense it speaks of obedience of the truth, I Peter 1:22. Believers are called in Scripture children of obedience, I Peter 1:14, a phrase that is translated by "obedient children," and which denotes that believers, as children of God, are characterized by obedience. They walk in obedience, and do not fashion themselves according to the former lusts in



their ignorance, but strive after holiness in all their walk and conversation. Paul speaks of the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, meaning evidently that through his preaching the Gentiles have submitted themselves to the gospel in all their walk and conversation. Rom. 15:18. Of the Philippians we read that they were always obedient, meaning, of course, that they were obedient and submitted to the precepts of the gospel which Paul had preached to them. Phil. 2:12. Abraham, according to Heb. 11:8, "was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance," and he "obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went." Here too obedience is presented as the act of hearkening to, and compliance with an authoritative summons, the call of God, and the blind following up of that summons by faith. In Acts 6:7 we read that a great company of priests were obedient to the faith, meaning, of course, that by faith they submitted themselves to the gospel of Jesus Christ as preached by the apostles. And in Rom. 6:17 the apostle writes that the Roman Christians "obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." Supremely obedient was, of course, Christ Himself, of Whom we read that He was found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself, "and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." And in Heb. 5:7 the Scriptures teach us that "in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." And in Luke 2:51 we read that Christ Himself was obedient to his parents: "And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them."

In brief, we may say that obedience, the obedience of love, is our part of the covenant. It is a thoroughly covenant conception. But let us remember that all true obedience is submission to authority for God's sake in Christ. Always obedience is compliance with the gospel of Christ, with the precepts of the Lord our God, with the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. It is the hearkening unto the Word of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, the unconditional surrender to that Word, and the following up of its summons. It is the doing of that Word in all our walk and conversation.

This, then, is also the meaning of obedience when the Scriptures admonish us to be subject unto authorities, whether it be in the home, in church, in school, or in the state.

The home relation is, of course, fundamental. With it the apostle Paul begins when he admonishes the church to submit and be obedient. In Ephesians 5 and 6, after he has exhorted wives to submit themselves unto their own husbands, he writes: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise: That it

may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." The same order is followed in Colossians 3. Also there the apostle first admonishes the wives to be in submission unto their husbands. And then he writes: "Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord." Notice that the apostle in this last verse adds the phrase "in all things." In the book, "The Home Beautiful," there is a chapter on "The Children's Part." In this the author writes: "This obedience is to extend to 'all things', the things that are agreeable and the things that are disagreeable. Though he may be unjustly treated, the child is not to rebel. He may know that his parent is unkind or oppressive or even cruel, but his duty is not thereby changed. Wrong on the parent's part will never justify wrong on the part of the child. There is only one qualification: children are to obey their parents 'in the Lord.' If the parent commands the child to commit a sin, of course it is not to obey. Herodias was under no moral obligation to obey when her cruel and bloody mother bade her ask for the head of John the Baptist. No human authority is ever binding when it bids us break a divine law. No true parent will knowingly ask anything of his child that is not right; hence, the law of parental government requires obedience in all things."

This relation of submission and obedience to parents lasts as long as the child is in the home. Although it is true, of course, that when the child grows up and becomes a young man or young woman, the relation gradually becomes one of greater freedom, yet this freedom never means that now the child can take the law in his own hands and disobey the parents. This also implies, of course, that as soon as the child marries and establishes his own home, he becomes sovereign within the sphere of his own home. And the father-in-law or mother-in-law may not attempt to encroach upon that sovereignty. This does not mean that even then the child is not called to honor and respect his father and his mother, and even to seek their good advice. But the relation of submission to their authority ceases. There is what is called in Dutch "sovereiniteit in eigen kring," a sovereignty in its own proper sphere. And that sovereignty must always be respected.

This relation of obedience and submission to authority is maintained, according to Scripture, in all other spheres of life. In Ephesians 6:5-8 the apostle writes: "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free." Notice in this admonition the strong emphasis on the truth that all submission and obedience, even to our worldly masters, is principally an obedience to Christ. Servants must be obedient to their masters as unto Christ.

They must act not as menpleasers, but as the servants of Christ. And in their service unto their masters they must do the will of God from the heart. They must perform their service not as unto men, but as to the Lord. And from the Lord they will receive their reward. The same admonition, and with the same emphasis, namely, that all submission and obedience and service must be "as unto the Lord" is repeated in Col. 3:22-25: "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons." In I Peter 2 the same admonition is addressed to the church, now, however, emphasizing that even if the servant has to suffer wrongfully, he has no excuse to refuse submission or obedience to his master: "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, when ye be buffeted for your faults ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently this is acceptable with God." This was written, we must not forget, when the relation between master and servant was that of freeman and bondman. The servant was a slave, who belonged bodily to his master. In our present system of society this is, of course, no more the case. Master and servant, employer and employee, stand as free men over against each other. The employee simply sells part of his time and effort to his employer. But this does not mean that during the time and in the place of his employment he does not stand in the position of obedience to his employer. The employer is certainly master in his own sphere, and has authority over his employees. Within the terms of his agreement with the employer he may, of course, quit his position or job. He may even agree with the entire group of employees that work in the same place to refuse to work any longer, because he considers the wages not sufficient or the working conditions too unequal. But when he or they thus quit their job or position, they may not assume the attitude that they still have a claim to the job, or prevent others from working in the same place. This is nevertheless the usual meaning of a strike. The strike is simply a means of coercion on the part of the employees to force their demands upon the employer. And by a strike the former attempt to close up the shop until their demands are granted. To this they have no right. It is rebellion, an infringement upon the authority of the employer, which he has the right to exercise in his own place of employment. It is based upon the principle that might is right. We agree with Berkhof, in his "The Christian Laborer in the Industrial Struggle," when he writes,

on pp. 25ff.: "Starting from the Christian postulate that in social life generally only the government has the right to use coercion, to enforce its decisions, to compel obedience, we are constrained to say that the boycott, the strike, and the closed shop, as means by which the unions seek to enforce their demands, contain an element that is decidedly wrong, resulting from the principle that might is right, and that every man is his own judge." And again he writes: "Now I desire to make two strictures on this idea of the strike as a general proposition. In the first place, the laboring men are either laboring under a contract or they are not. If they are, they have no right to strike, except when the employer breaks the contract; and in case they are not, they can lay down their work, but do not retain their right to the job. And in the second place, even if the right is all on their side, they are not, generally speaking, justified in forcing their demands by intimidation or violence." The strike, as commonly conceived, therefore, is to be condemned in the light of Scripture, which admonishes us that servants shall be subject to their masters.

The same principle of obedience and submission to authority is applied by Scripture to the state. According to the first epistle of Peter, 2:13-17, the Christian must submit himself to every ordinance of man, not for man's sake, nor for the fear of man, but for the Lord's sake. He must submit himself to the king, as supreme; or unto governors that are appointed by the king, because it is the will of God that by well-doing he may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. He must reveal himself in the true sense as standing in the freedom of Christ and in the service of God. The same is true of the well-known passage in Rom. 13:1-6. Because the powers of the government are ordained of God, therefore it is the Christian's calling to be subject unto those powers and assume the position of obedience with respect to them for Christ's sake.

Needless to say, although the authority of the church is of a different nature than that of the family, of society or of the state, although the church does not have the sword-power, but the key-power, nevertheless, the member of the church also stands in a position of obedience to the government of the church, and that too, for Christ's sake, Who is the Head of the church not only in the organic, but also in the juridical sense of the word. Hence, when in our churches a member makes public confession of his faith, he promises that he will submit to the government of the church, and if he should fall into sin, submit also to the discipline of the church.

It lies in the very nature of authority that submission and obedience to it has one important limitation. Because all authority is principally God's and because God has conferred all authority in heaven and on earth principally and centrally upon Christ, therefore it stands to reason that as soon as those in authority would demand something of the Christian that is in conflict with the Word of God and the precepts of the gospel, he cannot and may not obey.

In that case the principle of Scripture is clearly announced: we may not obey men rather than God. Besides, in such a case those that stand in a position of authority do not function as such, that is, as officebearers, but as mere men. And therefore, disobedience to them is in that case no rebellion against God-instituted authority.

The question must still be asked: what is the meaning of the promise that is attached to this fifth commandment, "that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

Ursinus, in his "Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism," insists that the meaning of this promise is that they who obey their parents shall have a long life upon the earth. He answers various objections to this interpretation as follows:

"But long life does not seem to be a blessing, in view of the miseries which are connected with this present state of being. Therefore it is a useless promise. Answer: That a long life seems not to be a blessing, comes to pass by an accident; for in itself it is a great blessing, although it is connected with much misery and suffering. To this the following objections are brought forward: 1. A good connected with great evils is rather to be deprecated than desired. A long life now is connected with great evils. Therefore it seems, on account of this accident, rather to be deprecated than to be desired. We reply, that a good is to be deprecated, if the evils connected with it are greater than the good itself. But God promises to the godly, in connection with a long life, a mitigation of the calamities to which we are here subject; and a long enjoyment of his blessings, even in this life. Then, too, the constant worship and praise of God in this life is a blessing of such great value, that the various calamities to which we are here subject are not worthy to be compared with it. Objection 2. But the wicked and disobedient are also often blessed with a long life. Therefore it is not a blessing peculiar to the godly. Answer. A few exceptions do not overthrow a general rule; for the wicked and disobedient, for the most part perish prematurely and suddenly. 'The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pluck it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.' 'Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.' (Prov. 30:17; 20:20) Again: temporal blessings are bestowed upon the godly for their salvation, and are therefore evidences of God's favor towards them; whilst they are conferred upon the ungodly partly that they may be rendered inexcusable, inasmuch as they have been in this way called to repentance, and partly that the godly and the elect, who are mixed with them, may enjoy these things. Objection 3. But many obedient and godly children die at an early age, and do not live to enjoy the blessing of a long life. Therefore the promise is not universal. Answer. We may here reply as we did to the former objection, that a few exceptions do not destroy the force of a general rule. The godly, for the

most part, have the truth of this promise verified in their case. Promises of temporal blessings, too, must be understood as making an exception respecting chastisements and the cross. And still further, an early translation to another and better life, even a heavenly life, is a most ample recompence for a long life."

Anyone will admit that it can hardly be said that these arguments of Ursinus hold water. The fact remains that if this promise added to the fifth commandment actually refers to a long life in this world, it certainly cannot be said, in the light of the universal facts of life and death, that the promise is fulfilled. It simply is not true that those that obey their parents and are in subjection to authority live longer in the world than the ungodly and disobedient.

Dr. Kuyper, in his *E Voto*, and others following him, have clearly recognized this fact. And therefore they attempt another interpretation of this promise that is added to the fifth commandment. Writes Dr. Kuyper, *E. Voto*, IV, 44ff. (I translate): "Now this promise would not have a hold upon your conscience if it must be explained exclusively in the sense that an obedient child would become old, and a naughty child would die young. This cannot be the essential significance of these words for us, who see in these words a promise given by God; for everyone knows how God the Lord continually calls obedient children early to His heaven, while he allows naughty children to become very old." And thereupon he himself offers an interpretation that to us is still less acceptable than that of Ursinus. He interprets that this promise added to the fifth commandment is addressed, not to the individual Israelite, but to the people, to the nation as a whole, and that it refers to the long existence of Israel as a state, as a commonwealth in the world. He figures from the exodus to the destruction of Jerusalem, and computes that Israel as a state existed 1500 years, while even the mighty Roman Empire existed only approximately 1000 years. He adds that the only state that existed longer than that of Israel was that of the Chinese. But he insists that this is all the more proof for the correctness of his interpretation, because the Chinese as a whole were always characterized by obeying their parents and keeping the fifth commandment. All kinds of objections can be urged against this interpretation. In the first place, it is not true that Israel as a state existed 1500 years. The ten tribes existed as such only a few hundred years, while the independent existence of the kingdom of Judah virtually ceased with the captivity. After the return from the captivity Israel was virtually a plaything of the nations. Besides, it is not true that the law is addressed to Israel as a nation, but throughout it is addressed to the individual Israelite. Nor could this promise be applied to the new dispensation, as if those states that were characterized by obedience to and submission to authorities existed the longest in the history of the world. But the main objection is after all that the law is not a code of common grace, applied equally to the people of God and to the heathen, as Dr. Kuyper's interpretation would have it. But God's promises

are always and only to the elect, and the law of God is spiritual. The promise of the fifth commandment is only for those that keep this commandment in the spiritual sense, from the heart, from the motive of the love of God, and principally obey this commandment as well as all others for the sake of God in Christ. For them, and for no others, are all the promises of God, and it is also this promise that is added to the fifth commandment.

We therefore understand this promise as being ultimately fulfilled in the new heavens and the new earth. Of this the land of Canaan, to which the promise refers, was a type, according to all the Word of God. This is evident especially from Heb. 11:8-10: "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed, and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." And although they never received the land of Canaan in their own personal possession, they nevertheless 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 in 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 which they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." Indeed, the meek shall inherit the earth. But it is not the earth that is found in this world, but the new earth, under the new heavens, in the new creation, where the tabernacle of God shall be with men. Such is the hope of the elect. And to this hope principally and ultimately the promise that is added to the fifth commandment refers: "That thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." The law is not a matter of common grace, but it is the law of liberty, which only those can perform that stand in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free. And even as the law is not a matter of common grace, so neither is the promise. It is not for all men, but only for the elect, for the believers in Christ Jesus. And it always ultimately refers to the final realization of God's eternal kingdom and tabernacle on the new earth and under the new heavens, where we shall see God face to face, and know Him as we are known.

H. H.



#### LORD'S DAY 40

Q. 105. What doth God require in the sixth commandment?

A. That neither in thoughts, nor words, nor gestures, much less in deeds, I dishonor, hate, wound, or kill my neighbor, by myself or by another; but that I lay aside all desire of revenge: also, that I hurt not my-

self, nor wilfully expose myself to any danger. Wherefore also the magistrate is armed with the sword, to prevent murder.

Q. 106. But this commandment seems only to speak of murder?

A. In forbidding murder, God teaches us, that he abhors the causes thereof, such as envy, hatred, anger, and desire of revenge; and that he accounts all these as murder.

Q. 107. But is it enough that we do not kill any man in the manner mentioned above?

A. No: for when God forbids envy, hatred, and anger, he commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves; to show patience, peace, meekness, mercy, and all kindness, towards him, and prevent his hurt as much as in us lies; and that we do good, even to our enemies.

#### Chapter 1

##### The Meaning of the Sixth Commandment

The Heidelberg Catechism is rather elaborate in its discussion of the sixth commandment. While it devoted only one question and answer to the preceding, that is, to the fifth commandment, it devotes no less than three questions and answers to the sixth, "Thou shalt not kill."

In Question and Answer 105 it elaborates rather in detail on the sin of murder itself, on the meaning and implication of this sixth commandment. It explains that the sin of murder consists in dishonoring, hating, wounding, or killing my neighbor; that this may be done either in thoughts, words, gestures, or in deeds, either by one's self or by another. Besides, it tells us that this sixth commandment also demands that we lay aside all desire of revenge, and that we hurt not ourselves, nor wilfully expose ourselves to any danger. And it concludes by saying that the magistrates are armed with the sword to prevent murder.

In the next question, the Catechism calls attention more particularly to the spiritual side and the spiritual roots of murder, and insists that also these are really murder in the sight of God. God abhors the causes of murder, such as envy, hatred, anger, and desire of revenge.

And finally, in Question and Answer 107, the Catechism calls our attention to the positive element in this sixth commandment. The positive opposite of murder is spiritually that we love one another, that we love our neighbor as ourselves, and that in that love we assume the attitude of patience, peace, mercy, meekness, and all kindness towards the neighbor. We must, according to the sixth commandment, always seek the welfare of our neighbor, prevent his hurt, and do good even to our enemies.

This, therefore, that we love the neighbor's person and do good to him, is the positive element of the sixth commandment. This commandment deals emphatically with the person of the neighbor. Just as the seventh commandment deals with the neighbor's marital relationship, the eighth commandment requires respect for the neighbor's goods or possessions, and the ninth commandment requires of us that we love the neighbor as ourselves in his name, so the sixth commandment demands that we love the neighbor in his person.

## FROM HOLY WRIT

### Exposition of I Peter 1:22-25

#### III

The reader should diligently keep in mind that the Apostle is here addressing the living church of God. He is not addressing potential candidates for heaven and hell, confronting them with "two ways". But he is admonishing the living church to work out her salvation with fear and trembling since it is God that worketh in her both to will and to do of His good-pleasure! The sacred writer stirs up the living church to walk in the faith and daily, progressive conversion!

The only *motive* for such a life of conversion is the living hope upon the day of Christ Jesus. We must not say that the more we keep God's commandments the more we shall hope. Our hoping does not *come forth out of keeping the Commandments*, but our keeping the Commandments *comes forth out of our hoping*. For the Scriptures say not vainly: "And everyone that *hath* this hope upon him (of seeing God) *purifieth* himself as He is pure." Only thus conceived of will we walk in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and not become entangled in a yoke of bondage! Gal. 5:1; I John 3:3.

Such is also the clear teaching of Peter here in this Chapter as we have repeatedly pointed out to you in these essays.

According to Peter hopeful living is holy living. Romanism would change this about. Jesus warned against this evil tendency of our proud human nature when he said to His disciples: beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. It is true the disciples were slow to see the import of the warning of our Lord, but Peter really learned this lesson later. May we not be slow to heed this warning of our Savior as this comes to us in very page of the sacred Gospel of good things. Standing in this liberty our hearts shall not be troubled, tempest tossed with doubts and fears. Let us stand on the rock and see that sanctification follows from a living hope. He that readeth let him understand.

This hopeful living is the only motive of daily conversion, which is heartfelt and true sorrow for our sins, and true joy in God through Jesus Christ, and more and more with the delight of hope to live for God.

In this hopeful living there are two considerations that constantly spur us on to a full-orbed life of dying unto sin and living unto God. They are the health affording words of what God has done *for us* and *in us* in His wonderful work of grace in Christ Jesus.

In the verses 18-21 the Apostle brings forward the salient point of the Gospel what God has done *for us* in Christ so that our faith and hope might be in God. That is a great incentive to a life of daily conversion. Appropriating this great truth by faith we are filled with the almighty power of God that spurs us on to being holy as He is holy. We

see that we are to walk in "our part" by virtue of what God has done for us in Christ in His "part". The new and everlasting foundation of the Testament is once and for all layed for us. The law is fulfilled. We have been perfectly and completely redeemed by Christ who became unto us from God wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and complete redemption.

In the verses 22-25 the Apostle brings up the salient point of the Gospel of what God has done *in us* in Christ, realizing the work of salvation in Christ in our hearts. We are those who are such that we are born again. And this must be the incentive unto the perfect life of hope in Christ's blessed return so that we love our brother in the Lord fervently and without hypocrisy. For, notice well, that only by virtue of the hope do we live a life of conversion, and only do we hope by virtue of regeneration as this comes forth from incorruptible seed by means of the Word of God. Apart from this work we are without hope and without God in this world! For except a man be born again by the Spirit Who blows where He pleaseth no one can see the Kingdom of heaven. Such is the manner of the love of God. Behold! then, and take careful note of the import of the verses 23-25 of I Peter 1.

It is a great truth of the Gospel that God's people are a different people than the world. We are a peculiar treasure unto God in all the earth. Ex. 19:6; 23:22; I Peter 2:9. We have been called out of darkness into God's marvelous light to declare His praises. Such is the truth of the Gospel. Scripture does not simply teach that salvation has been made possible in Christ but it teaches that salvation has been made a reality. Christ has ascended on high and hath given gifts unto men; He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places even as He elected us from before the foundation of the world that we would be holy and blameless before Him in love! We are regenerated!

Such is the clear teaching of verse 23. This verse reads as follows: "*Being regenerated ones not out of corruptible seed but of incorruptible (seed) through the Word of the living God and the abiding (word)*"

We would like to call attention yet to the following in the text.

In the first place we should point out to you, especially to the ministers in our churches, who can check on this in the sources, that the concept here of regeneration is not an abstract one. Peter is not speaking of the "subject" regeneration in the abstract sense. He does not speak of regeneration as a *concept* here at all. He is speaking of *living people*. He speaks of these living people in such a way that he speaks to them. He is speaking to these living people as they have been made alive and are very much alive. They are those *who are such* that they possess and therefore will surely receive more and have abundance. Compare Matt. 13:12. And as regenerated *ones* they stand in the midst of those who are not regenerated, who are not the Pilgrims seeking the things above in a living hope.

Peter is speaking to regenerated *people*, and he is not talking about the *subject* regeneration. This passage, it is true, affords material for such a subject and we must also have correct dogmatic construction. But in our exegesis we don't begin there. We arrive there.

Let us remember then: regenerated ones.

These "regenerated ones" are *not* viewed as they are in the *one moment* in which they were *initially transplanted* out of darkness into God's light, becoming the abode of the Spirit of Christ, but rather *as they are in that "moment"* and what they are ever afterwards by virtue of the "seed" that remains in them and as they concretely live under the means of grace, the preaching of the Gospel! Thus they are the objects who are very concretely warned *to live out* what they *are in Christ*. Never are they told to become what they are not yet. The inexorable rule of Matt. 13:12 is here maintained. The elect obtain more and more while the "rest" are hardened!

That we have here the "regenerated ones" as they are new creatures from the first contact with Christ by virtue of the coming of the Holy Spirit into our hearts is evident from the usage of the perfect passive participle. Three things stand out in this use of the perfect passive participle.

In the first place the participle indicates not so much what we do but rather what *we are*. See John 3:16; Rom. 1:16; 4:24—(Holland version)

Secondly the passive idea of the participle indicates that it is God who constitutes us what we are, not simply in the inception and beginning, but also in the perseverance. He preserves us by His almighty redemptive power in the state of new birth, energizing us from on high with incessant power.

Thirdly, the perfect tense in greek in this passage emphasizes not that God has once and for all made us children, but rather that we are constantly up to the present moment in the state and condition of being reborn ones. We are not simply such as a dead concept, but we are very much living children with constant appetites for the pure milk of the Word, and who must constantly be stimulated to a great appetite and growth in conversion and holiness. In verse 3 Peter employs the tense in Greek known as the Aorist tense. This is the point tense emphasizing that God has done once and for all. But here we see this work of God in the continuity of time, in its true existency!

When Scripture teaches and we confess that it is a matter of factness that we are regenerated then this may not be stigmatized as being mere theory overagainst existential reality. This concrete existential reality of regeneration is also very much a "matter of fact" in our confession that we are regenerated. It surely is not a matter of fiction, is it? It is the true experience of every child of God. When we say "existential" we do not mean Barthian "Existentialism" in the sense of the Barthian "moment", but we mean the Christian as he constantly is indwelt by the Holy Spirit of Christ in His mind and will, in all his "inward man". We here mil-

itate against the sickly playing out of "theory" and "practice" as this is done by those who really feel that "regeneration" is a dormant entity which somehow man's efforts must bring into action, rather than that it is the entire living Christian as he blossoms out into a full-orbed Christian life of hope and conversion. Regeneration is a "matter of fact", the most glorious fact without which there is no factness of blessed hope and the consequent walk in daily conversion and sanctification.

Go to then all those that would disparage this *factness* of "being regenerated ones" which gives blessed consolation and solid comfort to the weary Pilgrim lest he despair on the way; let no one disturb you, regenerated ones! Keep this great boon in your heart and mind. Let this spur you on. Let it be really a matter of fact, that stands as the rock of Gibraltar. And let all the hosts of hell rage. He that is in you is mightier than the enemy. No one can pluck you out of the hand of your almighty God and Father. Let the devil and his agents sneer: "theory"! You confess in blessed assurance: it is a matter of fact: we are the regenerated ones. Therefore we press on in hope and conversion from strength to strength until we appear before God in Zion above.

In this conversion and life of hope rooted in regeneration we make our calling and election sure. We don't begin with nothing. We are such that have and thus we receive more. We have faith and to this we add even as a chorus leader adds voices in the chorus until it is full-orbed, the full harmony being worked out. So too we press on in hope as the regenerated ones."

But to return to the text.

The text says that we are such "regenerated ones" out of the seed that is incorruptible and through the word of the Living God, that abides forever.

We will D.V. call attention in the next essay on this passage to the means whereby we are constituted concretely such "regenerated ones" who work out a full-orbed salvation as wide as the law of God to which there really is no end.

We will then also show that when we work out our salvation under the means of grace, the living word of God, that we will not fall into the error of confusing "basis" and "account" of the hope that is in us. Forsoothe, the working out of our salvation is not the *basis* of the hope, but it is the *evidence* of the hope as this is rooted in and stimulated in us by the knowledge of being God's reborn children, who will surely be preserved in God's power even to the end.

Wherefore lift up the loins of your mind and be sober.

Without this sobriety of hope and sanctification no one shall see the Lord. For such sanctification is the fruit and evidence of the unchangeable election of God in our lives.

Unto this God "conditions" us by means of the Word, out of incorruptible seed. He molds us as the potter molds the clay into vessels of honor through the Gospel admonitions, warning us to walk in the ways of the elect, through which He works grace in our hearts showing us forth as His regenerated ones!

G.L.



## IN HIS FEAR

### Afraid of the Gospel

(11)

"The pedagogical approach".

The Apostle Paul never heard of such a thing!

How could he have heard of it? It is a twentieth Century discovery. Indeed the Apostle was not ignorant of pedagogy.\* How could he be? The Holy Spirit, the All-Wise and Divine teacher Who leads us into all the truth, the Master of all pedagogy, by means of organic inspiration used the Apostle Paul to teach the Church the truth. A more able teacher, one whose pedagogical approach is superior to that of the Apostle Paul, you will not find in the world today. But "The pedagogical approach"—please note the quotation marks—which requires conditional theology as its principle and method of instruction was not known to the Apostle Paul. In his training by the Spirit of Christ, training in that subject was not given at all! "The pedagogical approach" which is based on the theory that to preach the gospel to man unconditionally will make him careless and profane, the Apostle never used. And we refer you to our last article, that to use the conditional form in your speaking does not necessarily mean that you preach conditions and conditional theology. Do not rush for your Bible to quote all kinds of texts with "if" clauses in them and say that Paul not only knew but also used the "pedagogical approach." Just read on a few minutes and carefully weigh the matter.

"The pedagogical approach".

Or otherwise said, Whenever God speaks concerning His elect, the promise is presented as unconditional, but whenever He speaks of the promise to His elect, He always—in the pedagogical approach—makes the promise conditional.

Such a "pedagogical approach" reveals nothing less than that those who practice it and maintain it are AFRAID OF THE GOSPEL! They dare not preach without resorting to *that* "pedagogical approach".

The Apostle Paul?

The Spirit Who guided him and illumined him?

Listen to the very opposite presented to us by both the Primary Author and this secondary author in their epistle to the Philippians! We read. "Being confident of this very thing, that He Who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ", Philippians 1:6. Paul is confident of that fact. The Holy Spirit is confident of that fact. And there is no fear in the heart of either one of them that now that the Philippians have been told that since God began a good work in them, He will perform it

till the day of Christ, they will become careless and profane.

"The pedagogical approach", which it is claimed ought to be practiced in the Protestant Reformed Churches in this twentieth Century, is sure that to tell people the truth of Philippians 1:6 is to encourage them into all manner of carelessness and profanity. "The pedagogical approach" insists that you have to tell people that there is something they must do, or else He Who hath begun a good work in them will do no more until they once again fulfill the condition. Instead of God performing it till the day of Christ, it is presented as though God will perform it only if man first does something.

Conditional theology is based on the pedagogical principle that He Who hath begun a good work in man will perform it further only *after* man has fulfilled God's conditions. Yet the defenders of conditional theology hasten to add, when it becomes necessary for them to defend themselves as Reformed men, that we fulfill these conditions only by God's grace. As we have pointed out before, that little addition overthrows their "pedagogical approach" by laying down an entirely different principle. By adding that we fulfill this "condition" only by God's grace, they approach their listeners with the Scriptural principle that God performs His work in us unto the day of Christ without conditions for us to fulfill, that He first gives us grace to believe, to convert ourselves, to sorrow for our sins and perform all spiritual activities. Because they want you to believe that they are Reformed, they will throw away their "pedagogical approach" when you begin to smell the evil in their conditional theology. But if you do not press them and criticize them, they will preach that there is something you must do before something God will do can happen. They will approach you in the preaching with the idea that even though God has begun a good work in you, He will continue that work in you conditionally. Let them not deny that as long as they defend the statements of Rev. De Wolf in their literal form!

The argument will perhaps be raised that Paul is writing to a congregation that is very strong in the faith, that to such a congregation you can say such things, but that to say it to those who are weak in the faith and wayward in their walk is to encourage them into all manner of carelessness and profanity. Nothing is farther from the truth.

Is it so (if this "pedagogical approach" is the right approach) that these Philippians are not in need of conditional theology because they are strong in the faith? Is it so that men strong in the faith do not need conditional theology and that it is only for the weak? Then, surely, we have no difficulty today as we look over those congregations, that were formerly federated as Protestant Reformed Churches, to determine which of these congregations were and are the weakest. They are the ones that left us because they are afraid of the Gospel and feel the need of conditional theology ("the pedagogical approach") to keep them in the faith and in the narrow way.

But is it so that these Philippians had no sin? And did

\*Webster tells us that "pedagogy is the art, practice or profession of teaching; especially systematized learning or instruction concerning principles and methods of teaching."

they not need the conditional approach lest they stay in those sins for which Paul still rebukes them in this epistle? Does he not write in this very verse, which we already quoted above, that God had *begun* the work? It was not perfected yet. There was still much sin in these Philippians also. However, he is confident that GOD will perform it. And he presents no condition the Philippians must fulfill in order to insure the continued work of God. Is it so that the strong in faith stand by their own strength and therefore need not the "pedagogical approach"? What can possibly be the reason why the Spirit moved the Apostle to write so confidently about God's continued work of salvation in these Philippians? It is exactly this, that the work of salvation is not conditional but the sovereign, unconditional work of an Almighty and Unchangeable God.

Indeed, one does not come to those who are walking in sin and tell them that God will perfect the work of salvation in them. You do not come to those in whom there is no evidence that God has begun a good work in them and tell them God is going to begin that work in them sometime in the future. Paul surely does say in Romans 10:9, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." But are we to understand by this that believing is the condition we must fulfill before we are saved? Is this the thing we must do before God will begin that work of salvation in us? What then of that Reformed phrase which the defenders of unreformed conditional theology, when forced to defend themselves as Reformed men present, namely, that we believe and confess only by God's grace? Is it not so very plain that if God gives us the grace to believe and to confess, that He has begun the work before we performed the act of believing and confessing? And will it not be that way all along the line as God performs that same work until the day of Jesus Christ?

Instead of the conditional pedagogical approach, what Paul writes to the Philippians, here in Philippians 1:6 and what he writes to the Romans in Romans 10:9 is essentially the same Scriptural pedagogical approach which is based on unconditional theology and utterly void of all being afraid of the gospel. Romans 10:9 also says that He Who hath begun a good work in the Church will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. That we believe with the heart and confess with the mouth is to us the evidence that God has begun a good work in us, and therefore we have the confidence of that which is declared in the last part of the verse, we shall be saved. God will give us the full salvation when we shall be saved according to body and soul in the day of Jesus Christ. And though Paul uses the conditional form here, he does not present a condition man must fulfill before God will save him or even before God will give him the consciousness of his sure salvation. Let us repeat: Paul says here to the Romans that confessing with the mouth and believing with the heart is the undeniable evidence that God has begun a good work and that, therefore, since He

will perform it to the day of Jesus Christ, the one who finds these in his life has also the testimony of God that He will be saved to the full in the glory of Christ's kingdom. The conditional form, indeed! But not conditional theology. The conditional form, indeed! But here is no "pedagogical approach" that is afraid of the gospel.

Let us note well that Paul lays all the emphasis upon God. HE began the work. HE performs it to the day of Christ. Paul is not afraid to tell the Philippians that God does it all, and that salvation is sure because God does it all.

What is more, when you approach those who are walking in sin, who are walking contrary to their confession, as the Corinthians were when Paul wrote to them, then you do not discard this truth of Philippians 1:6 to have a different pedagogical approach. Paul rebukes, exhorts, warns and admonishes these erring Corinthians exactly because he believes that the God Who began a good work in them will perform it till the day of Christ, and that He will do it through causing those *in whom he did begin the work*—the rest shall remain careless and profane—to heed these admonitions and warnings. The very basis for all exhorting and admonishing is the unconditional theology that God, having begun a good work will perform it unconditionally till the day of Christ. The approach is the same to the erring as to those strong in the faith and upright in walk. You come each time with the gospel, with Christ and not with conditions.

— J. A. Heys



Should it be thought harsh to question the salvation of one who dies under the blindness of Arminianism; as if a man who only robs God in part might miss of glory; let it be considered that, even on earth, if a person robs me only of my watch, or of a single guinea, he has forfeited his life to the law, as much as if he had robbed me of all that I am worth.

— Toplady

I know but of two uninterrupted successions. 1. Of sinners, ever since the fall of Adam. 2. Of saints; for God always had, and will always have, a seed to serve him.

— Toplady



#### IN MEMORIAM

The Men's Society of the 4th Prot. Ref. Church expresses its deepest sympathy to our president, Rev. Richard Veldman, in the death of his mother,

MRS. J. VELDMAN

May Rev. Veldman with the sorrowing family, experience abundantly the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

Peter Koster, Vice President  
Gordon Van Tuinen, Vice Sec.

## Contending For The Faith

### The Church and the Sacraments

#### EARLY VIEWS OF THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

##### *The question of infant baptism.*

The Protestant Church world, we all know, is divided upon the issue of the baptism of infants. In the churches of Reformed persuasion there is general agreement with respect to the baptism of infants as such, but hardly unanimity with respect to the grounds for this practice. There is general agreement with respect to the question whether infants should be baptized but not with respect to the reasons for this administration of the sacrament. What a tremendous difference, for example, between the Liberated conception of the baptism of infants and the conception of our Protestant Reformed Churches! The former base the baptism of infants upon a general promise (and the Rev. Kok, who deplores the leadership of a man broken in mind and in body, recommended the criticism by the late Prof. K. Schilder in which the late professor distinguished between "promise" and "prediction"—according to the Liberated the promise cannot be a prediction for the simple reason that it is conditional; hence, when, in baptism, the Lord gives each child the promise, this does not necessarily mean that that child will also receive the promised salvation inasmuch as that is dependent upon his embracing of the same through faith), whereas we maintain the particular and sovereignly unconditional promise and proceed from the fundamental Scriptural truth that all is not Israel that is called Israel. Other churches of the Protestant and Reformed Church world, however, such as the Baptists Churches and those who are Premillenarian in their conception, deny that baptism must be administered to the infants of believers. And there are also others who deny the sacrament of Baptism in its entirety, speak disdainfully of "water-baptism," and claim that the Scriptures only speak of the "Spirit-baptism."

The general references that are sometimes thought to be found in some of the early writings of the Church Fathers with respect to the baptism of infants are admittedly vague. Many of them have really no weight as proof that infant-baptism was practiced by the early Church. This vagueness is clearly evident from writings of men, such as Iraneus and Clement of Alexandria. The former, for example, had written that Jesus was Redeemer in every stage of life and for every stage of life. Upon a statement of this kind a conclusion was based that this Apostolic Father believed in the baptism of infants. However, this statement of Iraneus does not necessarily teach that the Lord Jesus redeemed children by the *water of baptism*; neither can this passage prove anything against this usage or practice. The latter, Clement of Alexandria, had written that the fish on the signet ring of trusted with earthly substance is trusted with divine! Let

them know how to 'ask' for salvation, that you may seem the Christians should remind us of the children drawn out of the water. And some have concluded from this passage that its writer advocated the baptism of children. However, this "proof" is hardly conclusive. The word "children" in this passage of Clement may simply refer to Christians, being used by this eminent Church Father to describe Christians from a certain point of view.

There are, however, some very definite references to the baptism of children in the writings of Tertullian, Origin, and Cyprian. Tertullian wrote a treatise on the subject of Baptism. Interesting, I am sure, is the following paragraph which we quote from this treatise, entitled: Of The Persons to Whom, And The Time When Baptism Is To Be Administered, and we quote: "But they whose office it is, to know that Baptism is not rashly to be administered. 'Give to every one who beggeth thee,' has a reference of its own pertaining especially to almsgiving. On the contrary, this *precept* is rather to be looked at carefully: 'Give not the holy thing to the dogs, nor cast your pearls before swine;' and, 'Lay not hands easily on *any*; share not other men's sins.' If Philip so 'easily' baptized the chamberlain, let us reflect that a manifest and conspicuous evidence that the Lord deemed him worthy had been interposed. The Spirit had enjoined Philip to proceed to that road: the eunuch himself, too, was not found idle, nor as one who was suddenly seized with an eager desire to be baptized; but after going up to the temple for prayer's sake, being intently engaged on the divine Scripture, was thus suitably discovered—to whom God, had, unasked, sent an apostle, which one again, the Spirit bade adjoin himself to the chamberlain's chariot. The Scripture which *he was reading* falls in opportunely with his faith: Philip, being requested, is taken to sit beside him; the Lord is pointed out; faith lingers not; water needs no waiting for; the work is completed, and the apostle snatched away. "But Paul too was in fact 'speedily' baptized:" for Simon, his host, speedily recognized him to be an 'appointed vessel of election.'" God's approbation sends sure premonitory tokens before it; every "petition" may both deceive and be deceived. And so, according to the circumstances and disposition, and even age, of each individual, the delay of baptism is preferable; principally, however, in the case of the little children. For why is it necessary—if (baptism itself) is not so necessary—that the sponsors likewise should be thrust into danger? Who both themselves, by reason of mortality, may fail to fulfill their promises, and may be disappointed by the development of an evil disposition, *in those for whom they stood?* The Lord does indeed say, 'Forbid them not to come unto me.' Let them 'come,' then, while they are growing up; let them 'come' while they are learning, while they are learning whither to come; let them become Christians when they have become able to know Christ. Why does the innocent period of life hasten to the 'remission of sin?' More caution will be exercised in worldly matters; so that one who is *not* (at least) to have given 'to him that asketh.' For no less

cause must the unwedded also be deferred—in whom the *ground* of temptation is prepared, alike in such as *never were* wedded by means of their maturity, and in the *widowed* by means of their freedom—until they either marry, or else be more fully strengthened for continence. If any understand the weighty import of baptism, they will fear its reception more than its delay: sound faith is secure of salvation.”—end of quote.

It is evident from this learned Church Father (who died either in 220 or 240 A.D.) that he opposed the baptism of infants. From his opposition it is very evident that the practice to baptize children must have been general in his day. His arguments against the baptism of children are especially five in number. They are: (1) the importance of baptism; (2) the consequent responsibility to the sponsors; (3) the innocence of infants; (4) the necessity of previous instruction; (5) the great responsibility involved for the recipient of baptism.

Looking at these grounds a little more closely, we may observe that they reflect the great importance which was ascribed to the sacrament of baptism during the days of the Church in its New Testament infancy. And please do not infer from this that we, in our day, seek to minimize this Scriptural truth. Tertullian, however, writes literally: “If any understand the weighty import of baptism, they will fear its reception more than its delay: sound faith is secure of salvation.” I believe that the importance which was ascribed in those days to the sacrament of Baptism was to a large extent of a mystical nature. Another ground which this eminent Church leader advances for his opposition to the baptism of infants is their innocence. To quote him again: “Why does the innocent period of life hasten to the remission of sins? This reminds us of a phenomenon in the Church of God which is so common and yet impossible to understand except for personal and sentimental reasons. I refer to the argument of Tertullian that he was opposed to infant-baptism because an innocent age needs no cleansing from sin. Now we know that this Church Father was certainly a strenuous advocate of original sin. And yet he speaks of the age of infants as the age of innocence. How often does it not happen that parents, although they profess to believe in original guilt and pollution, nevertheless view their children as being innocent? And I believe that the same error often characterizes us when speaking of our little children. How often did this reasoning not influence parents when children were taken from them in their infancy? They “believed,” then, that these children were saved and they based their “faith” upon their innocence. How could these parents come to any other conclusion than the salvation of their children whom the Lord removed in their infancy, especially when these children were viewed in the light of their innocence and purity? They had done no wrong. They were so innocent. This reasoning, we understand, can hardly be considered to be in harmony with the truth of Holy Writ. It is surely not in harmony with the Scriptural truth that our

children are conceived and born in sins, are children of wrath by nature, and indeed worthy of everlasting death and condemnation. We must not say that our children are too pure and innocent to suffer everlasting condemnation; fact is, they are by nature children of disobedience and worthy of eternal punishment. The error, however, that our children are innocent also characterizes us from another viewpoint. It is sometimes so difficult for us, as parents, to see any wrong in our children. The fact that they are our children blinds us to the reality that our children, too, are conceived and born in sins and trespasses. We can easily see sins and shortcomings in other children. But it seems to be extremely difficult for us to recognize in our own children what we can so readily discern in others. And at times we will even go to the extreme of defending our children in their presence. We do well, however, to recognize the Scriptural truth that our children are conceived and born in sins, and that this Scriptural truth also applies to the children whom the Lord has given us. We must be constantly on the alert against any deviation from the truth of our original guilt and pollution. Tertullian certainly errs when he advocated the innocence of the child as a ground for his opposition to the baptism of infants.

H.V.



Christ's sheep do not contribute any part of their own wool to their own clothing. They wear, and are justified by, the fine linen of Christ's obedience only.

— Toplady

Mere moral preaching only tells people how the house ought to be built. Gospel preaching does more, for it actually builds the house.

— Toplady

If then we are justified by the alone imputation of Christ's righteousness, it more evidently follows that good works on our part are in no sense meritorious of heaven, neither as causes nor conditions, for, however plausible and innocent the word condition may sound, a condition is no more than a softer name for cause, as being something on account of which something else is given or done. And that works can be neither causes nor (which amounts to the same thing) conditions of justification is clear, because the performance of a condition necessarily precedes the reception of a benefit suspended on that condition; whereas, good works (and works are then only evangelically good which proceed from the united principles of faith in Christ and love to God, which faith and love are the fruits of grace previously bestowed) do not go before, but follow after justification, which is the express doctrine of the Scriptures.

— Toplady

I should as soon expect to be saved by my sins as to be saved by my good works.

— Toplady

## The Voice of Our Fathers

### The Canons of Dordrecht

#### PART TWO

#### EXPOSITION OF THE CANONS

#### FIRST HEAD OF DOCTRINE OF DIVINE PREDESTINATION

Article 5. The cause or guilt of this unbelief as well as of all other sins, is no wise in God, but in man himself; whereas faith in Jesus Christ, and salvation through him is the free gift of God, as it is written: "By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Eph. 2:8. "And unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him," etc. Phil. 1:29.

The English version given above is substantially a correct rendering of the original Latin.

This article treats the question: whence is unbelief, and whence is faith? As such it forms the first step in the Scriptural answer to the all-important question which was raised by the preceding article, namely: who are they that believe?

We may notice that there are two main propositions here given, which stand in contrast with each other:

1. The cause of guilt of this unbelief (the unbelief mentioned in the preceding article) is no wise in God, but in man himself.

2. On the contrary (*autem* in the Latin; and the English "whereas" is correct if thus understood), faith in Jesus Christ, and salvation through Christ, is the free gift of God.

What, therefore, do these two propositions together teach us in answer to the question: who are they that believe?

In the first place, it is to be observed that the fathers here mention unbelief in one breath with all other sins when they insert the clause, "as well as of all other sins." Unbelief, therefore is *sin*. And unbelief, though from a certain point of view it may be placed in a special class (it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for those who have heard the proclamation of the good tidings), nevertheless it is essentially to be placed in the common classification of sin. As sin unbelief may be described as the contrary reaction of the heart and mind and will of the natural man against the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is, therefore, not a mere intellectual something (for it implies that the mind is confronted by, and understands from a purely natural point of view the gospel), but basically the spiritual, ethical attitude of a man's heart. It is not a natural and intellectual ignorance of the gospel, but is essentially enmity against God. This sin entails guilt. And guilt is liability to punishment. And thus it is to be explained that the wrath of God abides on those who believe not the gospel.

The fact that this article so intentionally places unbelief in a class with all other sins is perhaps not only to be explained from the fact that the fathers want to reason from

the general truth that God is not the author of sin to the specific truth that God is not the author of the sin of unbelief. But it is also to be explained from the fact that the Arminians separate the sin of unbelief from all other sins. There were those who taught that the atonement of Christ covered all other sins, so that not a single man need be condemned because of sin. But there was one exception: the sin of unbelief was a sin that was not atoned for. All other sins would not make a man liable to punishment, if only he believed. But through the sin of unbelief a man remained liable to punishment. Over against this error the fathers directly maintain the unity of all sins. Unbelief may stand at the head of all sins, but it is still sin. It may be the apex of the pyramid of sin; but it still belongs to the pyramid.

Now the "cause or guilt" of this unbelief is no wise in God, but in man himself. The language of this proposition is to be carefully noted. The article does not simply use "cause", since there is certainly a sense in which then it must be said that the cause of unbelief is in God, not in man. He is sovereign also with respect to the vessels of wrath. Nor do the *Canons* say "cause *and* guilt": for this would identify cause and guilt in every case. But they very carefully state: "cause *or* guilt". In other words, the term *guilt* here further defines the term *cause*. The guilt-entailing cause, the cause in the sense of the blame, is not in God. The question here, therefore, is one of the spiritual, ethical cause of all sin, and of the sin of unbelief specifically; a question of the authorship. It is the question: from whose heart does the sin of unbelief arise, God's or man's?

It is important that we understand this distinction. For the Scriptures certainly do not exclude sin, including the sin of unbelief, from the sovereign determination and power of God. Everywhere they testify the very opposite, namely, that sin and darkness and all the powers of evil come into existence and act only according to the sovereign decree of God and under the direction of His almighty providence. To mention only a few passages from Holy Writ, thing, for example, of Isaiah 45:7: "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things." Or again, Proverbs 21:1: "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will." Or think of that central sin of the ages, the crucifixion: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Acts 2:32. And again, Acts 4:27: "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." Or, with direct reference to the sin of unbelief, we may quote John 12:39, 40: "Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them." It

is beyond contradiction, therefore, in the light of Scripture, that sin and evil exist according to God's own decree, and that too, for the purpose of the glorification of His own great Name: for God wills to glorify the virtues of His sovereign grace and love by the revelation of those virtues through the deep way of sin and grace, death and resurrection, fall and redemption. Even sin is but a means in God's hand unto the realization of His eternal purpose, namely, the glorification of His own name through the salvation of His elect people in Christ. Call this position supralapsarian if you like. But remember that also the infralapsarian, even though he likes to speak of the "permissive will" of God, cannot escape the implications of the fact that whether actively or "permissively", sin is strictly within the confines of God's decree. In fact, we may safely assert, even while we grant that the *Canons* are infralapsarian in their approach, that it is for the very reason that the Fathers included also the sin of unbelief under the decree of God, and were therefore charged with making God the author of man's unbelief by the Remonstrants, that they felt constrained in this fifth article to emphasize that the "*cause or guilt*" of this unbelief, *as well as of all other sins*, is no wise in God, but in man himself.

God, therefore, is not responsible for man's sin. Man himself, the natural man, is the author of his own unbelief. Never will he be able to rightly assert: "I wanted to believe in Christ, but God prevented me." He may wickedly charge God with this in this present time, as does the objector in Romans 9:19. But ultimately, when he appears before the Judge of heaven and earth, "every mouth shall be stopped, and all the world will become guilty before God." Then the unbeliever shall have to acknowledge the wickedness and the blame of his own unbelief, and the strict justice of his condemnation. God is not the author of sin, for He cannot sin. But sinful man is always unbelieving!

One more remark in this connection: the *Canons* in this instance offer no direct Scriptural proof. The texts quoted are offered in proof of the second proposition of this article. The reason for this failure is not that the Scriptures cannot be quoted to sustain this position, but rather in that there was no controversy between the fathers and the Remonstrants about the specific question of the guilt of unbelief. The fathers therefore simply state that it is also their position,—and not uniquely the Arminian position, that the blame of this unbelief is man's, not God's.

About the second proposition, namely, that faith in Jesus Christ, and salvation through Him, is the free gift of God, we may be brief. As we remarked before, the *Canons* treat the subject of faith later in detail. Here they simply make a declaration concerning the origin of faith: it is the gift of God. And we must note that this stands in direct contrast with the preceding: "Whereas . . . but . . . *autem*." The natural man is unbelieving and an unbeliever; BUT faith in Jesus Christ is the free gift of God.

To sustain this contention over against the Arminian it

was necessary to quote the Scriptures. This is a crucial point. And so we have two Scripture passages, of which the first is Ephesians 2:8: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." We need not enter into detail about the question whether the word "that" refers to "faith" or to the fact that we are saved through faith. Briefly we mention the following: 1. Arminians make separation here between salvation and faith: salvation by grace, then, is not of ourselves, but is the gift of God, while the latter cannot be said of faith, which is of man. This is the position, for example, of A. T. Robertson in his "Word Pictures in the N.T.," IV, p. 525: "*Through faith (dia pisteos)*". This phrase he adds in repeating what he said in verse 5 to make it plainer. 'Grace' is God's part, 'faith' ours. *And that (kai touto)*. Neuter, not feminine *taute*, and so refers not to *pistis* (feminine) ("faith", H.C.H.) or to *charis* feminine also) ("grace", H.C.H.), but to the act of being saved by grace conditioned on faith on our part." This is rank Arminianism. 2. The question cannot be determined on the basis of grammar, since the neuter "that" can refer to the feminine "faith", and still be perfectly sound Greek grammar. 3. There are many Reformed men, Calvin among them, who refer the term "that" not to "faith", but to the whole idea of salvation by grace through faith. And it may be added too that good reasons may be produced for this position. Furthermore, it cannot be contended that the *Canons* refer "that" to "faith", since in their statement they also mention "salvation through him." 4. Personally, I am inclined for various exegetical reasons to adopt the view under "3", and maintain that it, as well as the view which explains faith as not of ourselves, but the gift of God, excludes the Arminian position also. But I will not quarrel with those other Reformed exegetes who adopt the alternate position.

Certainly, as far as the gift of faith is concerned the quotation of Philippians 1:29 is quite sufficient: "And unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, . . ." The fathers quote only part of this verse, since it is the part which constitutes the clear proof, literal proof, that faith is the gift of God.

In conclusion, therefore, let us note that we have here the first step in the Scriptural and Reformed answer to the question: who are they that believe? The answer is that since faith is a gift of God, it is God Who decides who shall and who shall not believe. Only they believe who are graced with the gift of faith by God. And that gift is free; it is of grace.

The question still remains, however, to be answered: *how* does God determine this? To whom does He impart the gift of faith, and to whom not?

H.C.H.



Weak faith says, "God can save me if he will." Strong faith says, God both can and will save me." — Toplady



## DECENCY and ORDER

### NOVICES

Article 9 — “Preachers without fixed charge, or others who have left some sect, shall not be admitted to the ministry of the church until they have been declared eligible, after careful examination, by the classis with the approval of synod.”

When we consider that the thrust of the preceding article of the church order is to express that only those who are adequately qualified for the office of the ministry of the Word are to be admitted thereto, we feel immediately its connection with the article quoted above. Reformed churches have always held the office of the ministry in high esteem and accordingly were careful as to whom they could admit as worthy pastors. They advocated that the clergy be trained and educated. They requested every candidate to give evidence of certain spiritual, intellectual and physical qualifications. They insisted upon thorough examinations. And, they allowed for a possible exception (Art. 8) although even then the requirements were made as rigid as possible. History has shown and continues to show that in the endeavor to safeguard her offices the church cannot be too meticulous.

Originally the ninth article of our church order was composed in order to apply the same cautiousness to groups and individuals who came from without and desired to be admitted into the ministry of the Reformed Churches. In its original form this article read quite differently than our present redaction which was so revised in 1914. We quote it here in its entirety:

“Novices, priests, monks and others who have left some sect shall not be admitted to the ministry of the church except with great carefulness and due consideration and after they have been on probation for some time.”

Both the original and the revised articles do not forbid the ministry to these outsiders but only emphasize that due caution must be taken in receiving them. All is not gold that glitters! During the sixteenth century the Protestant Churches were bitterly persecuted by the power of Rome. In that era there were not many who of the priests and monks sought office in the Protestant Churches and those that did the churches could safely receive for they were moved by conviction and acted at the risk of life itself. When the power of the Papacy began to decline, however, and the movement of the Reformation gained impetus and, in some instances, also state recognition, this situation changed. Flourishing churches were established and it was then that an increasing number of priests and monks forsook the church of Rome and joined themselves to the Reformation in the hopes of gaining new pastorates. Many of them did so only to improve their economic position. Others of them were entirely unqualified for the office. To admit them without restriction would have been extremely detrimental to the churches. Acting, therefore, in accord with the Word of God, the infallible

rule of life and conduct, they would “lay hands suddenly (meaning ordination) on no man” (I Timothy 5:22) “and let these also first be proved” (I Timothy 3:10). Thus of course prescribed in Article 9 is both proper and necessary.

It is interesting to notice that according to the original formulation of this article those priests, monks, etc. who sought admission into the ministry of the Protestant Churches are called “novices”. This has been elided from the article as we at present have it for this speaks only of “preachers without fixed charges”. This omission is to be regretted especially because the word “novice” as originally used here contains a reference to the apostle’s usage of that term in I Timothy 3:6 and this should be retained here because it gives us the directive of the thrust of the entire article. It is not as though the apostle in this passage is speaking of the same situation as that confronting the Reformed fathers. Yet, a comparison here is very striking. In the passage of I Timothy 3 the apostle sets forth the requirements of the offices in the church. Among other things he states that a bishop (elder) is not to be a novice. Novice means something new and in this connection refers to those who had just recently been converted from paganism and had joined the church. They were new in the faith. These should not be considered material for the offices in the church. Calvin writes concerning this: “There being many men of distinguished ability and learning who at that time were brought to the faith, Paul forbids that such persons shall be admitted to the office of a bishop, as soon as they have made profession of Christianity. And he shows how great would be the danger; for it is evident that they are commonly vain, and full of ostentation and, in consequence of this, haughtiness and ambition will drive them headlong.” They should first undergo a period of seasoning in the faith.

Now the fathers of the Reformation also spoke of novices although by this term they did not have reference to newly acquired converts from heathendom. Rather they had in mind the newly acquired converts from the clergy of Rome. There is, of course, a difference. Many of the latter are sincere and genuine christians. Mixed with them were those who did not love Christ but were moved by selfish and worldly interests. All of them, however, were tyro as far as the faith propagated by and in the Protestant Churches was concerned or, if there were a few who were founded in that faith, the churches had no way of knowing this. In this respect they could be called “novices” and so had to be barred from the office until after a period of seasoning they proved themselves worthy and established in the faith.

In 1914 this article was revised by eliding the phrase “novices, priests, and monks” and inserting in its stead “preachers without a fixed charge.” This change reminds me of an old saying: “All change is not improvement.” The original of this article was so designed as to safeguard not only the office of the ministry from the novices but also that of elders and deacons. This is evident for it speaks of novices not in connection with the “ministry” but in con-

nection with the "kerkendienst." And these two are by no means identical. The latter includes more than the former. In close connection with this we may easily see why many churches today have a ruling that one must be a member of the church for a stipulated period of time before he can be considered for either the office of elder or deacon. The revision, however, limits the broader scope and intention of the article to the one office which should not be done. It were better that the article had been left in its original form.

Furthermore, according to the commentary of Monsma and Van Dellen, the phrase "*preachers without a fixed charge*" refers to ministers, not of the Christian Reformed denomination, but of some other Reformed denomination, who for some reason are no longer serving their congregation and who seek to enter our pulpits and are desirous of obtaining a call from one of our churches." Such a person in relation to the church into which he seeks admittance is also a "novice" whose case is fully covered by the original wording of the article and, consequently, there is no need of this change. Nothing essential is gained by the new formulation.

It might, however, be objected that part of the original article has become obsolete. We refer to the part that mentions "priests and monks." Reformed churches today are not confronted with the situation of a few centuries ago when there was an exodus of this class from the Romish Church. This may be true but the Papacy is very much in existence yet today and what is to be gained by the omission of these words? Is there not a decided advantage in retaining them in that they indicate the historical occasion which brought this article forth? This our present rendering does not do but simply provides a way for one time ministers to be admitted into the ministry of a church without following the prescribed course of training. And this was evidently not the intention of the original article nor is it the practice of the Protestant Reformed Churches as our past precedent clearly shows.

Article 9, as it now appears in our church order, makes mention of a Classical Examination and a Synodical Approbation. The article of 1618-19 which we quoted earlier does not mention these but speaks only of "great carefulness and due consideration and a period of probation." However, previous Synods in 1574 and again in 1578 did mention this provision. Why it was omitted later is not known. Perhaps it is not necessary in the light of other articles in the church order that this be specifically mentioned in this article as it certainly is implied that one seeking admittance to the ministry under Article 9 will also be examined and approved. The "great carefulness and due consideration" would require this. That this would be done by the Classis and Synod is not open to question in light of Article 4. However, there is no harm in stating this anew as is done in the revised article. It should then also be borne in mind that this examination does not refer to an investigation of certain credentials which the applicant may possess but is to be an

examination of doctrine and life which is as thorough as that which any candidate receives under the provisions of the 4th article of our church order.

Too great care cannot be exercised in keeping the offices of the church pure and all undue attempts to enter upon those offices in another than the normal way ought to be greatly discouraged.

"Let all things be done decently and in good order!"

— G. Vanden Berg



Cavilling publications are not always to be regarded. Who would be at the pains to kill an insect of a day? Let the poor creature alone, and it will soon die of itself. Do not make it considerable by taking notice of it. If a child of four years old comes against me with a straw, that is no reason I should knock him down with a poker.

— Toplady

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Grace finds us beggars, and always leaves us debtors.

— Toplady

\* \* \* \*

Grace cannot be severed from its fruits. If God gives you St. Paul's grace, you will soon have St. James' works.

— Toplady

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Some harbours have bars of sand which lie across the entrance and prohibit the access of ships at low water. — There is a bar, not of sand, but of adamant rock, the bar of Divine Justice, which lies between a sinner and heaven. Christ's righteousness is the highwater, that carries a believing sinner over this bar, and transmits him safe to the land of eternal rest. Our own righteousness is the low-water which will fail us in our greatest need, and will ever leave us short of the heavenly Canaan.

— Toplady

## ALL AROUND US

### *The Good in the Totally Depraved*

It appears that the Rev. H. J. Kuiper, editor of the *Banner*, is aware of the fact that there are some in his churches who are slowly waking up to the truth that there is a plain contradiction between the doctrines of Common Grace and Total Depravity. And because the Rev. Kuiper is a true son of the Christian Reformed Churches he is not going to allow the pet child, called Common Grace, born in 1924, to be tagged — illegitimate. The editor of the *Banner* attempts to defend both of these doctrines in a series of editorials. We hesitated to comment on his articles until he was finished, but now that he has apparently completed them, we wish to call the attention of our readers to some of the salient points he offers in defense of both doctrines.

The editor tells his readers that he is not averse to a brotherly discussion on the doctrine of Common Grace. Of course, he wouldn't like at all to see the discussion end up in a violent controversy and maybe another split in his churches. It was, no doubt, for that reason that he and the leaders in the Christian Reformed Churches have remained almost silent all these years on the subject. But now that several heads are bobbing up in his churches that refuse to be duped into silence any longer and are crying for a review of this doctrine, he cannot do much about it except to make some kind of a defense. And because his churches have traditionally embraced also the doctrine of Total Depravity, he must defend also that doctrine, for he sees how the wind is blowing. If Common Grace must be maintained, then Total Depravity must go. And if Total Depravity is maintained, then Common Grace is foolishness. Kuiper must by all means save Common Grace and at the same time keep the name REFORMED for his churches, and therefore, he must maintain the doctrine of Total Depravity also.

Rev. Kuiper calls the two doctrines "antipodes" and he explains: "we call them antipodes, not because the one is opposed to the other but because they denote truths which seem to be contradictory. In reality the one complements the other. These two are a good example of balance, so characteristic of the churches that hold to the Reformed creed." He says further, "These two doctrines are related to each other in somewhat the same way as divine sovereignty and human responsibility, or the uni-personality and the two natures of Christ. In each case the one at first sight cancels the other. In reality, however, and in each instance the one is necessary for a correct delineation and the consistent maintenance of the other." Kuiper evidently thinks that unless you maintain the doctrine of common grace you cannot explain the outward good the unregenerate do and you will have to call these "natural virtues" nothing but vices, or deny the doctrine of total depravity.

Now, he doesn't want to call the "natural virtues" of the ungodly "vices", nor does he want to deny total depravity. So to get out of this conflicting circumstance he must find some way to make the "antipodes" come together. And that is what he tries to do in his series of articles. He is going to prove to you that the natural man is totally depraved. Then he is going to show you how to explain the good in the totally depraved.

He asks first of all: Does the sinner hate God? and implied in this question, of course, he also includes the neighbor. He warns that we must not play around with the truth expressed in the Catechism which asserts that man is "prone by nature to hate God and his neighbor." We must not say that "prone" means that man has merely an inclination to hate God, but in reality he doesn't. That certainly cannot be the meaning of the Catechism. No, man actually is a hater of God and his neighbor by nature. Kuiper asserts emphatically that "according to Scripture the depravity of the unregenerate extends to their entire inner life: their emotions, their will, and their intellect. Their emotional life is governed basically by enmity toward God and man; their will is enslaved by sin so that they are free only to do evil but not to do good; and their minds are darkened so that they cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God." "Total depravity means that the sinner is not just a potential but an actual enemy of God and his neighbor; that this hatred is always present in his soul though he may not always be conscious of the fact and though his enmity does not always come to the surface." And Kuiper makes bold to prove this both from Scripture and the writings of theologians of the past, among whom are Ursinus and Hodge.

Man's total depravity," according to the editor, "includes three things: enmity against God and man, total inability, and spiritual blindness." When he speaks of "total inability" he also explains what he means by this vague expression. He says, "It is wrong to conclude from the word 'total' that man's corruption, in his natural state, is complete *only* extensively, meaning that all the faculties of his soul have been touched by sin, but not that these are *wholly* polluted and perverted." He insists that the term "total depravity" means "total loss." However, he hastens to add that "total loss" need not mean complete destruction, and total depravity does not signify that every man is as wicked as he possibly can be or that all men are equally corrupt. He uses a rather cute illustration to show what he means by this. It was suggested to him by the dictionary he used to determine the exact meaning of the word "total." In the insurance business the term "total loss" is used to describe the results of a fire or flood that has damaged a building and its contents, when all the contents of such a burned or flooded building have become valueless to the owner thereof. So it is with total depravity. "Not only has every faculty of the soul been touched with the pollution of sin. All its powers have been rendered valueless in the sight of God, the Owner. All are

worthless in his sight, according to the perfect standard of his law."

But Kuiper doesn't stop there with his illustration. He says further, "On the other hand, the "total loss" of goods through fire does not necessarily imply that every damaged article has been consumed by the flames and burned to a crisp. Some of them, though valueless to the owner, may have value for some one else, let us say a dealer in second hand goods. Or a neighbor may desire them for repair material or at least for kindling wood. Total loss need not mean complete destruction." And then he makes the statement we quoted before: "Thus total depravity does not signify that every man is as wicked as he possibly can be or that all men are equally corrupt. As streams from the fire hose have prevented the house and its contents from being completely consumed by the flames, so the common grace of God prevents the sinner's total moral disintegration and makes it possible for him to be of some use in the world. And so we may thank God that life on earth is far more tolerable than the existence of the damned in hell."

What Kuiper means by this is clearly stated in the Banner of January 1, where he declares: "though total depravity does not mean *absolute* depravity, it does mean that *in principle* the sinner is thoroughly corrupt. Yet he has not reached the extreme limit of wickedness. The development of the principle of sin within him is being retarded by the common grace of God. We can elucidate this by a comparison with the Christian in his spiritual condition here on earth. *In principle* he is already holy and sinless. John says that he who is born of God sinneth not. Nevertheless, as long as he is in this life he is far removed from the full development of that principle (Romans 7)."

Now, striking it is that when Rev. Kuiper wants to prove that man is totally depraved he quotes the Scriptures and the Confessions, which, of course, throughout teach this doctrine in no uncertain terms. But when it comes to the invention of the "doctrine of total depravity in principle" you have no Scripture or Confession, but only Kuiper's philosophy. Did not Kuiper ever stand in the rear of the sanctuary with the publican and hear him cry out: "God be merciful to me a sinner!"? Does he believe that the publican believed in total depravity in principle? or that David in Psalm 51 conceived of his natural depravity in the sense that it was only in principle? After reading Kuiper's philosophy, I believe I would rather let David tell me what total depravity is.

Finally, Rev. Kuiper also has something to say of the "small traces of good" which are to be found in the naturally depraved man. He refers, of course, to what our Confession speaks of as "glimmerings of natural light." He warns that this expression must not lead us to say that because the natural man possesses these so-called glimmerings that he is therefore not totally depraved. No, according to Kuiper, man is totally depraved, and this depravity has thoroughly per-

meated the whole man. Neither should we make these "natural" glimmerings "spiritual." Kuiper even wants us to see with our Confessions that this natural light also becomes darkness. We must see, says Kuiper, that "were the sinner left entirely to himself and to the influence of corruption with which he is born, he would not have these glimmerings."

He then asks: "What, then, explains their presence?" And he answers: "There is only one answer we can give in the light of Holy Writ. These traces or glimmerings are present in the sinner because of God's common grace." By a general operation of the Holy Spirit this grace came to the sinner immediately after the Fall. For Scripture reference he gives you Genesis 6:3 and I Samuel 16:14 which I will not quote nor criticize here because of lack of space.

Rev. Kuiper closes his discussion with a section in which he attempts an answer to the question: Why is common grace not mentioned in our creed? His answer is: All the elements of the doctrine of common grace are to be found in the Canons. That the term is not used is due to the fear of our fathers for Arminianism. The latter used the term. He closes his articles with this statement: "They (fathers of Dordt—M. S.) say that the glimmerings of natural light, and what is included in them remain in man after the Fall. They do not say *why they have remained*. The Synod of 1924, interpreting this Article 14, said: Those glimmerings, those traces, are the fruits of common grace. If that is not the proper interpretation of this article, then it is a virtual denial of the totality of man's depravity, taught so emphatically in the self-same creed." Well, maybe someday someone in his church will prove it to Rev. Kuiper that common grace is such a denial of total depravity. I hope so. He won't listen to us.

— M. Schipper



#### PSALM 25

Lord, to me Thy ways make known,  
Guide in truth and teach Thou me;  
Thou my Savior art alone,  
All the day I wait for Thee.  
Lord, remember in Thy love  
All Thy mercies manifold,  
Tender mercies from above,  
Changeless from the days of old.  
Sins of youth remember not,  
Nor my trespasses record;  
Let not mercy be forgot,  
For Thy goodness' sake, O Lord.  
Just and good the Lord abides,  
He His way will sinners show,  
He the meek in justice guides,  
Making them His way to know.  
Grace and truth shall mark the way  
Where the Lord His own will lead,  
If His Word they still obey  
And His testimonies heed.