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MEDITATION

Jehovah's Nearness to the Broken Hearted

"The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit."

Ps. 34:18

How blessed it is to be of a broken heart!

How salutary is contrition of spirit!

For Jehovah's nearness is the experience of the heart-broken and the contrite in spirit. And Jehovah's nearness is an unspeakable blessing!

Of such blessedness the sweet psalmist of Israel speaks when he instructs us that the Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and that He saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. And such blessedness do all they experience who are heart-broken and of a spirit contrite. Never is there an exception to this Word. Always is it true. Never does a heart-broken sinner experience that the Lord is far from him. Always does the contrite in spirit taste the salvation of Jehovah! Jehovah's nearness it is that is celebrated in this psalm. And a very distinctive nearness it is.

O, to be sure, the Scriptures testify that He, Jehovah, is not far from any one of us, and that in Him we live and move and have our being. True it is, that from a certain point of view this same Jehovah was as near to Abimelech-Achish, the king of the Philistines, as He was to David, His anointed. Undeniable it is that also Abimelech, as well as David, had no life, no breath, no being, apart from the living God. In that same sense, no more true is it of the broken hearted than of the hard hearted that God is near to them.

But such is not the nearness of which the poet sings.

Nor is it true that men ever meet the God of this providential power and government in such an abstract way. While it is true that He, the living God, the Immanent-Transcendent One, is near everyone in His power to uphold, to preserve, to govern, so that men cannot possibly escape the testimony of His eternal power and Godhead; and while it is true that He reveals Himself as the God that is to be glorified and thanked; it is not true that He makes Himself known merely as an abstract, impersonal providence, Whose

revelation has nothing to do with righteousness or unrighteousness, holiness or corruption. Nor dare we say that He looks in kindness upon *all* the children of men, even in time, even for a moment.

God is God! He is the living God! He is the God of infinite perfections! The Holy One is He, and the absolutely Righteous Judge! And all His perfections are one in Himself. And as He is, so He makes Himself known. Righteous He is, and always that righteousness He reveals. Holy He is from all eternity, as the I AM, the Unchangeable One; and never does He reveal Himself as anything but holy. And thus it is that with regard to the children of men He reveals Himself in all the works of His hands not as an abstract power of providence, not as an ethically neutral being, but as the God of all infinite perfections that He is.

Eternally, therefore, He loves or He hates. Constantly He blesses, or He curses. Always He makes Himself known as the God Who saves, or destroys. For "the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. But the face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth." Always is He near men either in His favor or in His wrath.

Nay, but the psalmist celebrates the wonder of grace!

For Jehovah is near the broken hearted, and He saves the contrite in spirit. That is, His nearness is a saving nearness. It is a nearness in love, a nearness to redeem, to deliver, to defend, to protect. The nearness of the Rock of our salvation is the theme of David's song.

Make no mistake. That saving nearness of Jehovah does not mean that we are never in trouble. As a general rule, the more it becomes evident that the God of our salvation is near us, the more bitter becomes the hatred of those who hate us for God's sake. The clearer the light of the grace of God's saving nearness shines in, and through them, the more numerous become the afflictions of the righteous. Such had been the experience of the Lord's anointed, David. And it was His experience just because he was the anointed of Jehovah. He was in trouble on every hand. Relentlessly his own countrymen had pursued him, until there was no safe place found for him in Canaan. Also in Gath he was not safe. Now very likely he was hiding in the cave of Adullam,

in fear for his life, surrounded not by a mighty host and a strong army, but by a small band of men. Fugitives they were from the wrath of Saul. And so you hear him even in this same psalm, crying out that the afflictions of the righteous are many.

Yet he is victorious. He sings of Jehovah's nearness, of His saving nearness. He has victory even in apparent defeat, joy in the midst of sorrow, life in the midst of death! He has reason to sing!

O, that saving nearness does not mean that according to this world's standards we are saved out of trouble. Nay, it inevitably implies that according to this world's standards, in this present time, life's way is dark and filled with afflictions.

But that Jehovah is near to save means that He saves us, delivers us, from the power of darkness, from sin and death. Undoubtedly this is also typified in David's deliverance out of the hands of Abimelech-Achish. And remember: it was not David's insanity, but the angel of the Lord that had saved David. Remember too that the greater part of David's deliverance was not his temporal deliverance from death at the hand of Achish, but the spiritual deliverance from his own folly of having feigned insanity and having trusted in his own devices. The angel of Jehovah encamped round about him, protected him, so that wicked Achish *could* not destroy the Lord's anointed. That Jehovah is near in His saving power implies that He is always near us in His favor, and that He is always, continually, saving us; always blessing us, never cursing us. It means that He saves us even through the means and the way of our afflictions. And in the third place, that saving nearness of Jehovah certainly means that the broken hearted and contrite in spirit never come into ultimate trouble, into final desolation, but that Jehovah saves them out of all their afflictions, in order to bring them into glory.

In the midst of all our afflictions, surrounded by dangers, in the midst of death itself,—because death is the essence of any affliction,—He causes us to experience His grace, His righteousness, His holiness, His love, His mercy, His lovingkindness that is better than life. He receives us into His everlasting covenant. He dwells with us. The angel of the Lord encamps around us! Jehovah saves the contrite in spirit! God is for us! Who can be against us?

You ask: who are the objects of that blessed nearness?

The answer is: the broken hearted, the contrite in spirit, and they only.

For He is Jehovah, the I AM, the eternally Unchangeable One. Never does He change in all His virtues. And as the Unchangeable One, He is the perfectly righteous and Holy One. Righteous He is, so that His will is always in harmony with His own good being. And holy He is, the Holy One of Israel, so that He is totally consecrated to the good, to Himself, and so that He burns with unquenchable wrath against all evil. And because He is the Unchangeable One, unchangeable in all His virtues, He eternally hates the

hard hearted and the haughty in spirit. He is near them, to be sure, but He is near to destroy and to consume them in His hot displeasure. And just as eternally He loves the broken hearted and the contrite in spirit. Always is He near them. Always He embraces them in His undying love. And except you be broken hearted and contrite of disposition, you will never experience His favor.

Jehovah is near the broken hearted.... He saves the contrite in spirit.

That you are broken hearted implies that your heart is by nature hard. It implies that your heart was hard over against God, that is, over against His will as expressed in His law. It implies that your heart is not receptive for His Word. It means that your heart is naturally stony, that it is by nature the heart of the proud, self-centered, self-loving sinner, who knows no repentance, who confesses no guilt, who loves the darkness, who hates the light. It is a cold, dead heart. It lacks any feeling of love over against the living God, the Fountain of all good.

But that heart is broken. That stony, proud, rebellious, non-receptive, self-loving, impenitent, stubborn spiritual center of your being has been crushed and broken down. All the stony hatred and enmity against God has been pulverized.

And the result is that you are become contrite in spirit. You experience consciously, you know before your own mind, before the face of God, that you are crushed. You realize that the heights to which your self-love and pride have raised you are false, and you confess it. In place of stony pride and stiffnecked haughtiness, the pride of rebellion and the haughtiness of sin, comes a deep sense of humility, and an inner abhorrence of your rebellion and sin. And you cry out, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner!"

To such Jehovah is near. He is near to those who are imbued with a deep and heartfelt sense of His greatness and power, His righteousness and holiness. He is near to those who in humiliation confess their sin. Near He is to those who acknowledge that even apart from sin they are dependent upon Him always, owe their all to Him, and can never merit anything from Him. He is near to those who humbly confess that on account of their transgressions they are guilty of His just wrath, and have lost all right to His favor and can only continually increase their guilt. Near He is to those who in utter despair cry out to Him for deliverance, and cast themselves upon His everlasting mercy.

To all such Jehovah is near. To only such is He near.

Nay, it is not thus, that our brokenheartedness merits Jehovah's nearness.

Be we ever so contrite, in ourselves we can never be restored to the favor of God. And all the remorse of endless aeons could never suffice to wipe out the guilt of a single sin, the debt of one act of rebellion. The penance of an eternity would not suffice to invoke upon us the favor of the living God, Righteous Judge. Necessarily would we spend eternity under the outpouring of His fierce wrath.

Nor is such a thought in harmony with a truly broken

heart. Not out of a contrite spirit will arise the proud theory that there are prerequisites for us to meet and to fulfill before we can enjoy the favor of the living God. Such a theory is foolishness. And foolishness is always pride.

But the broken hearted find their all in Christ Jesus. He is the Righteous One *par excellence*. He represents us before the bar of God's justice. And He is perfectly righteous. And He was afflicted even unto death in our behalf and in our stead. Assuming the burden of our guilt and of the wrath of God which was due us, He remained perfectly contrite in spirit all the way, so contrite that He humbled Himself even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. He it was. Whom the Lord delivered out of all His afflictions. His bones Jehovah kept; not one of them was broken. And He raised our Lord Jesus Christ for our justification.

In Him and with Him we are righteous before God, we, the broken hearted and the contrite in spirit.

And: the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous . . . But the face of the Lord is against them that do evil . . .

But even so the end of that wonderful gospel of grace has not been heard. If nothing more takes place than the death of Christ, we will never experience Jehovah's saving nearness. For in His favor He is nigh only to the contrite. His saving nearness is only for the broken hearted.

Our hearts must be broken; our spirits must be crushed. Not by our own act, not by the persuasion of a host of preachers does that haughty spirit become contrite. There is only one who can change a hard heart: Jehovah Himself. He must draw near to us first, always first, before we will ever draw near to Him. And He does so. Through His Spirit and by His Word He irresistibly causes us to draw nigh unto Him. He causes us to behold ourselves in all the filth of our corruption. He opens the spiritual eyes of our understanding to the vision of Christ crucified. He humbles us. He crushes us. He breaks our hearts. And He causes us to flee for refuge to the shadow of the cross.

But even then the story is not told. The gospel is this, that Jehovah from all eternity, freely, sovereignly, according to His own good pleasure,—for He is the I AM, the Self-sufficient One, Who has no need of any creature,—He beheld us in Christ Jesus as broken hearted and contrite in spirit. And that sovereign counsel He fulfilled, and continues to fulfill. He breaks the hard heart. And He crushes the proud spirit.

And if you ask then why it is, ultimately, that Jehovah is nigh the broken hearted, the answer is,—the answer of the everlasting and blessed gospel of salvation,—that Jehovah is near to the work of His own hands, that He loves the fruit of His own almighty and irresistible grace. Surely, only to the broken hearted is He ever nigh, and only the contrite in spirit does He ever save. For they are His own, and Jehovah loves what is His own. For He is the I AM. He loves Himself.

O, for a thousand tongues to magnify His name . . .

H.C.H.

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EDITORIALS

From B. Kok I received a letter for *The Standard Bearer* which, because of its insulting language, I will not publish in its entirety, but from which I quote the following essential paragraphs:

"I grant you that I did not quote the entire articles from which these quotations were taken. This was neither possible, nor necessary in an article written for the Reformed Guardian. But the statements I did quote were literally exact, together with the references, so that everyone could verify them. Neither did I 'string together a few quotations' from your articles, but clearly indicated that they were separate paragraphs and sentences by using dots and dashes between them, something which you failed to do when quoting from the 'Cross Bill' in 'Bulletin No. 1' (Standard Bearer, January 1, 1954)

"To my mind the added sentences which you placed in italics in your article (Standard Bearer, January 15, 1954) merely served to prove my contention that your writings on 'Promise and Prediction' are contradictory. I will gladly leave this, however, to the judgment of the discriminating reader. How anyone in their (must be *his*, H.H.) mind can maintain on the one hand 'it is a distortion of the term to say: a promise is a prediction' and on the other hand maintain that 'the promise is a prediction and the prediction is a promise' is a conundrum to me. It is a bit confusing, to say the least."

And then Kok asks me to apologize for having slandered his good name and accusing him of being guilty of lying and slander and the very works of the devil.

This I cannot do, because what I wrote is the simple truth.

In my article of Jan. 15 I challenged Kok to *prove* that it is not true; I did not ask him simply to talk.

What he must prove is:

1. That it is not ethically corrupt to quote the first sentence of an entire paragraph from my writing while the rest of the paragraph is essential to understand the meaning.
2. That it is not ethically corrupt to do this *intentionally* in order to leave the impression with his readers that I was guilty of a flat contradiction.
3. That it is not ethically corrupt so to string together a few sentences from rather long articles of mine (even though with dots and dashes) that the reader of Kok's quotations receives an entirely wrong impression, altogether different from what I actually wrote.

What I wrote actually is no contradiction at all, for I simply wrote that, although a promise is also a prediction, it is much more and that, therefore, Schilder's contention that a promise is nothing more than a prediction is a distortion of the term.

Hence, I maintain that I simply wrote the truth: Kok is guilty of lying and slander.

Moreover, he is repeatedly guilty of the same sin.

To a certain brother, and who knows to how many more, he wrote, behind my back, that I am an old man, broken in mind and body. He knows that he is lying and slandering. I am sure that I never gave any evidence of this to Kok.

To another brother, and who knows to how many more, Kok rides his favorite hobby of conditional theology, claims that this has always been Protestant Reformed and, to support this contention, quotes me as follows:

"It is, of course, the Reformed view that all 'conditions' of the covenant, all 'conditions' unto salvation, are fulfilled by God Himself. If, therefore, we say that our actually receiving the blessings of the covenant is conditioned by faith on our part, we must hasten to add that God Himself gives us the faith." This quotation is taken from *The Standard Bearer* vol. 22, p. 175.

Here Kok is guilty of the same evil practice of lying and creating a wrong impression as he usually is when he quotes me.

What is the case?

The above quotation was made from a discussion with the liberated. In it I present their view of conditions and the covenant. This is very evident from the context as well as from the fact that I put the term *condition* and *conditions* in quotation marks which means, of course, that the term is not mine and does not represent my view.

Kok knew this. He *deliberately* left a wrong impression. In plain language: *he lied*.

Can I prove this? I surely can. He, of course, read the entire article from which the above quotation is taken. But in that same article I wrote as follows:

"This view (of the liberated, H.H.) is in conflict with the plain language of our Baptism Form.

"The truth of this statement is already evident from what we quoted of that Form above. That expository part of the Form establishes the whole of God's covenant and all of its benefits as absolutely sure unto 'the children of the promise.' God's part of the covenant is that He realizes it completely, objectively and subjectively, both as to its objective establishment and as to its subjective application. God assures 'the children of the promise' that He establishes His covenant with them, that He adopts them, that He forgives their sins and justifies them, that He delivers them and sanctifies them, and He preserves them and glorifies them. This is absolutely *unconditional* (italics in the original article, H. H.). No condition whatever is mentioned in this part. Fact is, that if there were a condition attached to this, the covenant could never be realized, and that entire expository part of the Baptism Form would be made vain. *But God's work is never conditional* (italics put in now, H.H.). And the language of the Baptism Form is as positive and unconditional as it possibly could be . . .

"To be sure, the Baptism Form makes mention of our

'part' in the covenant that 'we by God through baptism (are) admonished of and obliged unto a new obedience, namely that we cleave to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that we trust in Him, and love Him with all our hearts, and with all our souls, and with all our mind, and with all our strength, that we forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and holy life.' But this part is not presented as a condition for the part of God, which we must fulfill before, and in order that God fulfill His part, but as the new obligation of love, which follows upon and from God's part. And only when and after God has fulfilled His 'part' of the covenant can we begin to fulfill ours." Standard Bearer, Vol. 22, p. 177.

This is plain language.

This language Kok read when he made the former quotation from the same article.

Hence, I claim *he lied* in that quotation.

The worst of the whole matter is, not that he lied about me, but that he misrepresented and lied about the Protestant Reformed truth.

This Kok does quite constantly.

Perhaps, in some future time, I will, the Lord willing, issue a pamphlet in which I inform the reading public what I, since the beginning of my ministry taught about conditions.

For the time, being, however, this must suffice.

But Kok surely has no right to ask me to apologize. What I wrote about him is one hundred percent true.

H.H.

Bulletin No. 5

The undersigned hereby solemnly swear before God and men:

"THAT CROSS DEFENDANT HERMAN HOEKSEMA IS UNABLE TO CONTROL THE ACTIONS OF CLASSIS WEST AND THAT SUBSTANTIALLY ALL OF THE CONGREGATIONS OF CLASSIS WEST ARE NOT IN HARMONY WITH HIM AND THAT HE HAS LOST CONTROL OVER CLASSIS WEST.

"THAT FOR THE PURPOSE OF CARRYING OUT THE CONSPIRACY TO GET CONTROL OF THE VARIOUS PROPERTIES OF THE VARIOUS CHURCH CONGREGATIONS AND TO DICTATE THE POLICIES OF THESE CHURCHES, THE SAID HERMAN HOEKSEMA HAS RECENTLY MADE VISITS TO LOCATIONS WHERE THE CHURCHES OF CLASSIS WEST ARE LOCATED AND THERE HAS ATTEMPTED TO CREATE AND IN SOME INSTANCES HAS CREATED SCHISMS IN SAID CHURCHES, AND HAS ATTEMPTED TO SPLIT THE CONGREGATIONS AND ORGANIZE A NEW

CONGREGATION OVER WHICH HE COULD HAVE CONTROL....

Hubert De Wolf

FREDERICK SYTSMA
HENRY KNOTT
WILLIAM STUURSMA
LAMBERT MULDER
ANDREW DYKSTRA
HENRY BASTIANSE
SIDNEY DE YOUNG
ADOLPH VERMEER
GERRIT SIKKEMA
JOHN BOUWMAN
ANDREW VOSS

By Hubert De Wolf

Again I say, what must one think of men that have the evil courage to lie so slanderously and that, too, under oath?

They lie and slander when they swear that I ever tried to control Classis West.

They lie and slander when they swear that I ever formed a conspiracy to get control of the various properties of the congregations in Classis West.

They lie and slander when they swear that I ever went to the churches in Classis West to create schism there. They (Edgerton, Hull, Redlands) were split before I ever went there. Besides, I went there only on their own invitation.

They lie and slander when they swear that I organized congregations over which I could have control.

In short, it is all one awful lie, and that under oath!

Do these men, that always have their mouth full of "responsibility" have no sense of responsibility before God themselves?

H.H.

What Rev. Hofman did not Write!

The truth of the heading of this article flashed into my mind when I read the latest editorial from the hand of Rev. Hofman in the Jan. 28, 1954 issue of Concordia. I looked at my good wife and said: the trouble with this writing of brother Hofman is in *what he does not write*. And the thing that saddens me is that brother Hofman errs so grievously in the sin not only of omission, but also of commission. There is method in this madness.

Rev. Walter Hofman pursues a certain method which makes it impossible to do justice and to speak the truth of the matters he is discussing. For he tells his readers that he "will begin with a review of some of the decisions taken by Classis East in its meeting of last October. (October 21, 1953 meeting held in Hope, G.L.) From commenting on that meeting we hope to work back and touch upon various things to the very beginning of the split as it first occurred in the First Church in Grand Rapids, now already over a half year ago."

Rev. Hofman's method?

It is to lift an event out of its historical setting, out of the continuity of events as they transpired chronologically, and to place upon them a construction of fiction rather than that of fact. It is a fiction invented by his own mind that is placed on the action of the Classis and upon the motives of the Stated Clerk and others. Had Rev. Walter Hofman intended to do more than "review" some decisions and to "touch upon various things" and given an accurate and a historical sketch of events, his method would be different, he would attempt to give the entire picture, would give it in its proper historical focus and perspective.

It is sheer folly and madness to work as does the brother, who has an alleged high esteem of me. I pray that he may see the folly and the madness of his method. For then he would heartily agree with me that what he did not say, and evidently refuses to say, is the grave evil of his editorial.

I call attention to the following matters that Rev. Walter Hofman omitted in this writing; matters which he should have kept clearly in his mind when he set himself up as a judge of Classis East and of the undersigned; matters which are indispensable in a righteous judgment before the face of God, Who trieth the hearts and knows the secrets of men; factors which an editor must keep in mind shall he be able to have the conviction in his heart: thus saith the Lord!

It is a striking fact, that Rev. Walter Hofman is silent in every syllable of his editorial of the fact that Classis West met on August 14, 1953 to deliberate upon matters which were the rightful domain only of Classis East. He is silent on this score, even when he speaks of matters which should have reminded him of this meeting of Classis, and of the rather prominent part that he played in this meeting. He sets himself up to judge of Classis East and ignores the fact that Classis East simply took the stand they did, and that "consistently", according to the decisions of Classis West. Will Rev. Hofman come to this too in his "touching upon" the happenings leading up to the decisions of Classis East, October 21, 1953? We shall see! But then Rev. Hofman will have to do considerable reconstruction on the editorial we are here referring to.

What was the cause for the refusal of Classis East to acknowledge the Deputies Ad Examina of Classis West?

Is Rev. Walter Hofman so ill-informed that he does not know? Classis East stated the reason in good, plain English. It is as follows: "A. That Classis West has broken the Church Order and become schismatic by arbitrarily reaching out and ruling in the internal affairs of a church which does not belong to its resort to the extent of declaring that one group of office-bearers in the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, namely, the suspended Rev. H. De Wolf and a number of deposed elders are the legal Consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Mich.; and by the same action ousting a group of lawful office-bearers, namely, the Rev. H. Hoeksema and C.

Hanko and their office-bearers. Grounds: Articles 30, 31, 36 of the Church Order.

B. That, therefore, Classis East cannot receive and seat the Deputies for Examination of Classis West." Motion carries. Art. 31 of Minutes of Classis East, October 21, 1953.

I believe that this is good plain English. I am quite certain that Rev. Walter Hofman has this decision of Classis East in his possession. Why did he not bear this in mind when he set himself up as a judge of Classis East's doings in regard to their not accepting the Deputies ad Examina of Classis West? I do not know the heart. But I do know that Rev. Hofman did not take this decision together with the grounds of Classis East into consideration. And I also know that had he squarely faced this matter it would have called for a little soul-searching by Walter Hofman of himself concerning the action of Classis West in session August 14, 1953! He might be disillusioned to the fact that not the Stated Clerk of Classis East became the prey and victim of a fierce black spider of Rev. Hofman's literary creation, but that Classis West became the victim of the sin of their own flesh. For the Scripture saith, that he that doeth sin is a slave of sin!

It is a grievous matter to sin against the fifth Commandment. But it is worse still to perpetrate this very evil while accusing others of it. That is often the tragic irony of men who do not really perform righteousness. They get caught in their own net and devices; the spider then outdoes himself. Now a spider would not easily do this. But I am not so certain about the editor of Concordia in this instance!! For there is madness in his method. It does not edify the saints, nor protect them from the wiles of Satan, neither is it indicative of a mentality that will have the grace to admit that Classis West erred in their ruling in matters that pertained to the difficulty of a Church resorting in Classis East.

But to show me that I am wholly mistaken in assuming that Rev. Hofman deliberately refuses to give the entire picture, will Rev. Hofman show two things:

1. Wherein Classis West did not reach out into matters pertaining to the life of a Church outside of its resort.

2. That Classis West did not transgress the Church Order by deciding upon matters (that were none of their affairs) even a month before Classis East met to deliberate upon these matters; a month before the proper ecclesiastical body took a decision!

Please, brother Walter, show to your reading public the justice and equity of this deed; maybe "Classis West" will undo the wrong they have done us and make a "just settlement"! Then they will say: All things are *settled* and *binding* "unless" they conflict with the Word of God and the Confessions. And in their practical application of this "unless" they will have to say: "until, until . . ." this matter comes in the proper way before us. But we have, by our decision, made this "until, until" impossible and cannot, therefore, come to the "unless, unless . . ." We are be-

tween the horns of the dilemma of our sinful act. But, brother Walter, that all may be assured that your article was more than an editorial splurge, show once the error of Classis East's decision in the light of the action and decision of Classis West! That will make interesting reading, we are sure. It will be a different method too; a bit more sane and righteous.

When I read brother Hofman's editorial concerning the matter that he calls an episode that is enlightening and informative, I felt very much aggrieved. I searched my conscience whether matters were actually as Rev. Hofman states them. He suggests that I gave Rev. James Howerzyl the "run-around". Now I don't know whether Rev. Howerzyl, with whom I had the reported telephone conversation, told brother Walter that I had done this. I really cannot believe that he would say such a thing of me, or that he could truthfully characterize my dealings with him as such. Fact is, that Rev. Howerzyl alleged not to understand the import of the night-letter telegram. I thought that he did not understand its implication in that I had not sent the former letter to him but to Rev John D. de Jong in Hull, Iowa. And therefore I asked him what is not clear. I thought that only for such a reason the telegram letter was not clear to him. This telegram letter reads as follows: "Kindly be advised that the letter in regard to the Deputies of Synod was sent by the undersigned merely on the strength of the former Status Quo. Be further advised that Classis East will, no doubt, not recognize you should you appear. Kindly inform all whom it may concern."

This telegram Rev. Howerzyl alleged not to understand. He wanted to know whether they were invited or not, whether he should come or not. I repeatedly told him that Classis had taken no decision, and that should he come I was certain Classis would not acknowledge him. And that it would hardly do for me to say come, and then when he came to say: well, you are not welcome, we cannot acknowledge you. I told him then and there, because he wanted to know: Must I come or not? I then said: you are not invited. That I would submit my answer to Classis and take the consequences. Remember that Rev. Howerzyl could still yet have appeared and he too could have taken the consequences. I did not give him the word of Classis. I did not give him the "run-around". He could take my word for what it was worth. But none of the Examiners had the courage of their convictions, that the former Status quo stood, to appear at that meeting on the strength of the earlier communication. Had Classis taken the stand that I had done wrong I would have submitted to their judgment. The trouble was: the dye was cast, the Rubicon had been crossed. And this had not been done by Classis East, but by Classis West.

About this letter Rev. Walter Hofman is silent in every language. I ask: what madness is this?

Will brother Hofman please inform me and all his readers how conceivably even these Deputies Synodi Ad Examina could possibly function in Classis East? Would they

have been willing to say to the Rev. De Wolf, Kok and Blankespoor, sitting in the back-seat of the church auditorium, we acknowledge this Classis as not being schismatic, even though it remains true that our Classis has declared that you Rev. De Wolf are the legal Consistory, and by implication declared this too of you Revs. Kok and Blankespoor. However we will surely help this group of schismatic churches, gathered here in Classis East, examine Candidate Lanting and bid him God's speed in a Classis that does not acknowledge you, brethren De Wolf, Kok and Blankespoor, and which our Classis cannot recognize?

And is that the reason why Rev. Walter Hofman lets this matter of what the Stated Clerk of Classis East did, pass before his readers? Rev. Hofman feels that it was deep intrigue that caused Classis East to be puppets? Let's not be silly. It was the action of Classis West that layed the ground-work for the logic of events. And Classis East was consistent in their stand, not with the consistency of a helpless fly in the web of a cruel spider. Here we do not speak of consistency. It was the consistency of men, who feared God with a good conscience, and who had the grace to live honestly as in the day, and did the only possible thing in the circumstances created by Classis West. Rev. Hofman should be able to see this. Then there is hope that "Classis West" too will see the light, and take away the offence in Israel.

Classis East said: here we stand! We cannot do ought else, so help us God! Classis East has extended the brother hand and said: "Classis West" we point to the more excellent way! It is this: "Motion is made that Classis would hereby plead with Classis West to repent from their evil way of schism in our churches, and gladden our hearts with the news that they return to us once more so that haply we may continue our journey as Protestant Reformed Churches together."

Classis East made a "splendid opportunity" for Classis West.

Come, brother Hofman, buy out this opportunity editorially, and convince the brethren of the error of their way.

Then there is hope!

G.L.

IN MEMORIAM

The Mary Martha Circle of the Fourth Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids expresses its heartfelt sympathy to its Pastor, Rev. R. Veldman, in the loss of his Mother,

MRS. EVELYN VELDMAN

who passed away January 17, 1954.

May the God of all grace and comfort console their hearts in the glorious thought that "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord."

Mrs. H. Haan, Vice President
Mrs. J. Hager, Secretary.

AS TO BOOKS

Dogmatic Theology by William G. T. Shedd. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. Three volumes. Price, for the set, \$14.85; per volume, \$4.95.

Zondervan is to be congratulated for reprinting several classic works on theology, especially of the preceding century. This work of Shedd on Dogmatic Theology is one of these. It belongs to the nineteenth century. Dr. Shedd's work is, of course, well known among theologians, his work on the History of Doctrine as well as that whose reprint is hereby offered to the reading public. Under the title "Dogmatic Theology" (which, by the way, I like much better than "Systematic Theology" for the simple reason that all theology is systematic or ought to be) Dr. Shedd treats five loci, evidently considering that the doctrine of the church is not a separate locus of dogmatics. His style is remarkably clear, so clear, in fact I do not hesitate to recommend this work, not only to theologians, but also to the general reading public that are interested in the study of Reformed doctrine. This remark, of course, does not mean that the work is not thoroughly scholarly, for it is indeed.

A book review is hardly the place for a thorough and elaborate criticism. A few remarks must suffice. Dr. Shedd is a traducianist and devotes several pages in defense of this view. He also defends the theory of common grace in common with other English and American theologians of the Calvinistic type. Thirdly, and in connection with the foregoing, he even speaks of prevenient grace preceding regeneration. It would be interesting to offer a thorough criticism on all these points, but, as I said, there is no room for this in a simple book review.

In the meantime, I once more congratulate Zondervan on this reprint and recommend the work to the discerning reader.

H.H.

IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies' Aid of First Prot. Ref. Church, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, mourns the loss of one of its faithful members,

MRS. SIMON DEVRIES

whom the Lord took unto Himself January 19, 1954.

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."

"I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust." — Ps. 91:1-2

Mrs. H. Hoeksema, President.

Mrs. J. Van Winshey, Secretary

OUR DOCTRINE

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

AN EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM
PART III — OF THANKFULNESS

LORD'S DAY 40

Chapter 1

The Meaning of the Sixth Commandment

The person of my neighbor is the other man in my life. It is the man that has the same talents and powers and gifts as I have, and whose talents and gifts limit mine, and therefore limit my person. He is the man that stands next to me. He occupies the same position as I do in shop or office, in school or church, in state or society, and whose position in life therefore limits my position. The neighbor is the man whose interests are closely linked up with my interests, even so that the latter are limited and circumscribed by the former. The neighbor is the man who crosses my path in life, and whose interests often conflict with mine. He probably is the better man, the man with more talents and gifts than I have, and who strives for the better position in life. He is the man that in church demands that I move up in the pew, so that he may have the end seat; the man that honks his horn behind me on the road when I drive my automobile, so that he may pass me. He is, moreover, the man whose person demands of me that I sacrifice myself for his sake, that I deny myself, that for his sake I endanger my own life. The neighbor is the man who lies on the roadside between Jerusalem and Jericho, attacked by highway robbers, who stripped him and wounded him and left him half dead. He was a neighbor to the Levite, the priest, and the good Samaritan, although only the last named recognized him as his neighbor. And finally, the neighbor is even my enemy, who hates me, persecutes me, and accuses me of all kinds of evil, speaking falsely. In one word, the neighbor is the man whom God places on my path, whose name limits my name, and whose position circumscribes my position. He is the other man in my life.

That this is true is already evident from the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." In a sense it is, of course, true that everybody is my neighbor. The Hottentot and the Kafir, the Chinese and the Indian,—all men are my neighbors, although I have never seen them, met them face to face, although I have no contact with them and they do not limit my name and position. But it is also evident from the sixth commandment that strictly speaking this is not the meaning of the term *neighbor*. For it is not likely that I will ever kill a person that lives in distant lands, or even a man with whom I have no dealings whatsoever. In fact, it is very easy for me to deceive myself into believing that I am a very good neighbor when, in church or at a mission conference, I am so moved with compassion for the soul of the poor

heathen that I put five dollars in the collection plate—although, if that same poor heathen in the body ever crossed my path, I would probably hate him, and thus murder him. And therefore, it is well to understand that the sixth commandment has no reference to the distant neighbor, but to the one that lives very close to me and whose person in every way limits mine.

Now, the one spiritual root of murder is hatred of the neighbor. This is literally expressed in Scripture, I John 3:15: "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." This is also implied in I John 3:11, 12: "For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." And the same is implied in the teachings of Jesus concerning murder in Matt. 5:21, 22: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca (dumb-bell, empty-head), shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." To hate the neighbor, therefore, is murder before God.

Hatred is not mere feeling or sentiment or emotion. It is much more than that. Of course, it is also a feeling, a feeling of strong dislike and aversion, a feeling of loathing, of abomination and abhorrence. But this feeling is nevertheless rooted in the intellect and will of man, and ultimately in the heart. The intellect judges that something or someone is evil, whether that judgment is objective and based on the truth, or whether it is merely subjective and false. And when the object is thus presented to the will, it detests it, inflicts evil upon it, and seeks to destroy it. Hatred, therefore, is fundamentally an ethical attitude or force, and is rooted in the heart of man. Hatred as such is, of course, not sinful. It all depends upon the question: what is the object of our hatred? It is possible to speak of a holy hatred, so that hatred becomes a spiritual, ethical virtue. The saints are admonished to hate evil. Ps. 97:10. The psalmist declares in Psalm 119:104: "Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way." Cf. also vs. 128. In the same psalm, vs. 163, we read: "I hate and abhor lying: but thy law do I love." In Amos 5:15 the people of God are admonished: "Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the Lord God of Hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph." And in the well-known chapter of Romans 7 we read in vs. 15: "For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that do I." Nor is this hatred of the people of God directed only to sin and evil in the abstract, but also to evildoers and those that are enemies of God. When Jehoshaphat returned home from aid-

ing the wicked king Ahab in his battle against the Syrians, the prophet of the Lord came to him, and said to him: "Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? Therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord." And in Ps. 139: 21, 22 the psalmist, inspired by the Spirit of God, exclaims: "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? And am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies." Although, therefore, in Scripture we are admonished to love our enemies, it is a spiritual impossibility to love the enemies of God. Such hatred, that is principally rooted in the love of God, is holy. God Himself hates evil, and hates all the workers of iniquity. In that sense hatred is merely the antithesis of love in the heart and life of the Christian, and therefore is perfectly holy.

However, this is not the hatred that is the root of murder. Holy hatred is always an expression of the love of God, is hatred for God's sake. But hatred that kills the neighbor is rooted in enmity against God. Its object is not the evildoer as such, but is the neighbor in his position as neighbor next to me. To hate the neighbor is not to will him in his position, in his God-given and God-appointed position as a person that limits my position in the world. Hatred of the neighbor, therefore, is principally rooted in hatred of God. One that hates the neighbor exactly in his position as neighbor, in which he is placed next to the one that hates him, rebels against God, Who placed him there, and says in his heart, and presently openly to the neighbor himself: "I do not want you there." It is this hatred that naturally leads the one that hates to the act of removing him from his position, and therefore, to the act of destroying him. Such is murder. Murder is every attack upon the neighbor that is motivated by enmity against God and by hatred of the neighbor, that removes the neighbor from his rightful and God-ordained position as neighbor next to you.

That one root of hatred reveals itself in various forms, bears various fruits in human consciousness and life. The Heidelberg Catechism enumerates some of these when it says that "In forbidding murder, God teaches us, that he abhors the causes thereof, such as envy, hatred, anger, and desire of revenge." Hatred may merely manifest itself as unholy anger, that is, as anger without a cause, or as anger for your own sake. It is, of course, possible to be angry with a man in a holy sense. In that sense the Christian must be angry and filled with indignation whenever the cause or name of God is attacked. But unholy anger is anger without a cause, or for a wrong cause,—the cause is in you. And in that unholy anger you hurt, wound, dishonor, or kill your neighbor, remove him from his position. Or that same hatred may blossom forth in the corrupt fruit of envy. Envy, one of the most despicable expressions of a corrupt and sinful heart, is that attitude over against the neighbor that reveals itself in a disposition of jealousy and malice because the neighbor prospers, and prospers more than you; or he prospers in a position or way in which you want to prosper,

and cannot because the position of the neighbor is such that he limits yours. Envy and jealousy are the cause of much dissension and corruption not only in the world, but also in the church of Jesus Christ. They are roots of bitterness, that cause strife and contention, and often disrupt the church. Then also this root of hatred reveals itself in a desire of revenge. We have been insulted, or in other ways injured by the neighbor. And now we contemplate revenge. We seek an opportunity, that may perhaps never come and never be realized, but upon which we contemplate nevertheless, to inflict upon the neighbor injury for injury and insult for insult. Even if our revenge only expresses itself in saying to the neighbor, "Raca," or, "Thou fool," we are, according to the Lord's teachings, guilty of murder and in danger of hell fire. All these, and other corruptions of the sinful heart, are the causes of murder. And these causes are counted for the deed by the Lord our God.

In Question and Answer 105 the Catechism also teaches us that this deed of murder can be committed in various degrees. It can be done in thought, or by words or gestures, as well as by the actual deed of killing the neighbor. Moreover, the deed of murder can be committed by myself or by another, and consists not only in the final act whereby I deprive the neighbor of his life, but also in any evil I may inflict upon him, as, for instance, by dishonoring him or by wounding him. You may therefore inflict evil upon the person of your neighbor only in thought, and that thought before God is murder. Or again, you may hurt your neighbor by your sharp tongue and your dagger-like words. The reference here is, of course, not to false testimony: this must be discussed under the ninth commandment. The Catechism when it speaks of words by which you commit the sin against the sixth commandment, does not refer to slander and backbiting or to false testimony against the neighbor, but is thinking of all such words of reproach and contempt, of all words which you address directly to the neighbor with murder in your eyes. By such speech you mean to murder your neighbor just as well as the highway man murders him when he takes his revolver and shoots him. Thus, you can murder your neighbor with mere gestures. You do not even have to speak to kill your neighbor. There are many gestures of contempt and scorn and utter disdain, such as a contemptuous smile, the pulling up of your nose, the raising of your eyebrows, not to speak of other gestures by which you may literally kill the neighbor. All this, according to the Heidelberg Catechism, is murder before God, rises from a heart that is filled with hatred against the neighbor, and therefore is motivated in its deepest root in enmity against the Most High.

Just a word may be said here about the suicide. The Catechism refers to this when it says: "also, that I hurt not myself, nor wilfully expose myself to any danger." Also the act of committing suicide falls under the sixth commandment, because it is principally rooted in enmity against God and hatred of the position in which God has placed a man. Either

by his own fault and sinful life, or by the hand of God over him, his position has become unbearable. He is led in a way of hopeless suffering, from which there is no way out in this life; and he removes himself from his God-ordained position in the world. Or he has ruined his life by living in corruption and lasciviousness, until his very bones are rotted by disease; and he imagines that he can find a way out of his misery by killing himself. Or again, a man is ruined financially; and being hopelessly in debt, he seeks the easiest way out by committing suicide. The suicide is not a brave man, but a wicked coward, who has not the moral courage to stand and function in the position in which God has placed him. This, of course, does not apply to cases of insanity. Nor does it apply to Samson, who in the epistle to the Hebrews is classified with the heroes of faith. It was no doubt by faith that Samson called upon the name of Jehovah and said: "O Lord Jehovah, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes." And the Lord heard Samson's prayer, so that he took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the whole house rested, leaned upon them with his right hand and with his left, and said, "Let me die with the Philistines." Samson was a Nazarite. And although in his entire career he plainly revealed the corruption of his sinful heart, yet he fought the battles of the Lord. And as a Nazarite he died, and by dying slew the enemies of the Lord and of His people. But the real suicide is a man that is motivated by hatred against God and hatred of his God-given position in life, and who simply removes himself from that position to open his eyes in hell.

* * * *

Chapter 2

The Sword-power and the Sixth Commandment

How, in the light of the sixth commandment, must we judge about capital punishment and the waging of war by the government? What is the Christian's individual responsibility when he executes the sentence of the judge by taking a criminal's life, or, when he is called by the government to military service.

The first question is not so difficult to answer.

First of all, it ought to be evident from all Scripture that capital punishment is demanded by God.

This is evident already from Romans 13:4, according to which the magistrates are invested with the power of the sword: "For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." The sword certainly is the instrument whereby the evildoer, that is, the murderer, is beheaded. This is also clearly the meaning of Gen. 9:5, 6: "And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by

man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man." Also in Lev. 24:17: "And he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death." And again, in Numbers 35:31: "Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall surely be put to death." Hence, when the magistrate punishes the murderer with death, this is not the same as if a private person kills his neighbor. But rather, through that magistrate it is God Who executes the deed of capital punishment. To punish the murderer with death, therefore, is certainly not a violation of the sixth commandment, but is directly demanded by God. And no sentimental reasons, or false humanitarian motives, can ever be an excuse for disobeying the command of God. Nor is the hangman, who executes the deed, responsible to God for it. Even when he personally should judge that in a certain case justice miscarried, and that the person whom he is called to deprive of his life was not guilty of murder, not he, but the judge, the magistrate, is responsible before God for the execution of capital punishment.

But what about war? May the Christian participate in the wars of this world, or must he refuse military service?

According to the strict pacifist, wars as such must be condemned. Therefore, it follows that a Christian must be a conscientious objector, and refuse to participate in any war.

This, however, has never been the stand of the Reformed churches. That war may be waged by the government is not clearly and definitely expressed in our own *Confessio Belgica*, or Netherland Confession, Article 36; nor is it literally expressed in Articles 39 and 40 of the French Confession of Faith, although it is certainly implied in these confessions. But it is clearly maintained in some of the later Reformed confessions. Thus, already in the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, 1571, it is stated: "The laws of the realm may punish Christian men with death, for heinous and grievous offences. It is lawful for Christian men, at the commandment of the magistrate to wear weapons, and serve in the wars." This is literally repeated in the Irish Articles of Religion, 1615. In Chapter 23 of the Westminster Confession of Faith, 1647, we read: "God, the supreme Lord and King of all the world, hath ordained civil magistrates to be under him, over the people, for his own glory and the public good, and to this end hath armed them with the power of the sword, for the defense and encouragement of them that are good, and for the punishment of evildoers. It is lawful for Christians to accept and execute the office of a magistrate when called thereunto; in the managing whereof, as they ought especially to maintain piety, justice, and peace, according to the wholesome laws of each commonwealth, so, for that end, they may lawfully, now under the New Testament, wage war upon just and necessary occasion." The Second Helvetic Confession, Chapter 30, speaks of the magistrates as follows: "The chief duty of the civil magistrate is to procure and maintain peace and public tranquillity: which, doubtless, he shall never do more happily than when he shall be truly seasoned with the fear of God and true religion —

namely, when he shall, after the example of the most holy kings and princes of the people of the Lord, advance the preaching of the truth and the pure and sincere faith, and shall root out lies and all superstition, with all impiety and idolatry, and shall defend the church of God. For indeed we teach that the care of religion does chiefly appertain to the holy magistrate.

"Let him, therefore, hold the Word of God in his hands, and look that nothing be taught contrary thereunto. In like manner, let him govern the people committed to him of God, with good laws, made according to the Word of God in his hands, and look that nothing be taught contrary thereunto. Let him hold them in discipline and in duty and in obedience. Let him exercise judgment by judging uprightly: let him not respect any man's person, or receive bribes. Let him protect widows, fatherless children, and those that be afflicted, against wrong; let him repress, yea, and cut off, such as are unjust whether in deceit or by violence. 'For he hath not received the sword of God in vain.' (Rom. 13:4). Therefore let him draw forth this sword of God against all malefactors, seditious persons, thieves, murderers, oppressors, blasphemers, perjured persons, and all those whom God has commanded him to punish or even to execute. Let him suppress stubborn heretics (who are heretics indeed), who cease not to blaspheme the majesty of God, and to trouble the church, yea, and finally to destroy it.

"And if it be necessary to preserve the safety of the people by war, let him do it in the name of God; provided he hath first sought peace by all means possible, and can save his subjects in no way but by war. And while the magistrate does these things in faith, he serves God with those works which are good, and shall receive a blessing from the Lord.

"We condemn the Anabaptists, who, as they deny that a Christian man should bear the office of a magistrate, deny also that any man can justly be put to death by the magistrate, or that the magistrate may make war, or that oaths should be administered by the magistrate, and such like things.

"For as God will work the safety of his people by the magistrate, whom it is given to be, as it were, a father of the world, so all subjects are commanded to acknowledge this benefit of God in the magistrate. Therefore let them honor and reverence the magistrate as the minister of God; let them love him, favor him, and pray for him as their father; and let them obey all his just and equal commandments. Finally, let them pay all customs and tributes, and all other duties of the like sort, faithfully and willingly. And if the common safety of the country and justice require it, and the magistrate do of necessity make war, let them even lay down their life, and spend their blood for the common safety and defense of the magistrate; and that in the name of God, willingly, valiantly, and cheerfully. For he that opposes himself against the magistrate does provoke the wrath of God against him."

— H. H.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of I Peter 1:22-25

IV

This beautiful passage of Scripture calls attention to the living hope that is ours through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. More particularly it admonishes us concretely to live in this hope as this is manifested in a walk of conversion, the putting off of the old man and the putting on of the new man. The central manifestation of such a walk of hope and conversion is in the *fervency* of the brotherly love that we have for one another. In this fervency of love we see love perfected. Sanctification will thus be finished and completed in the fear of God.

Shall this conversion be a reality in our life then our souls must be purified in the obedience to the glad truth of the Gospel, namely, that we have received doubly from the hand of the Lord for all of our sins. God has constituted us His people. We are His "regenerated ones". And to us, who are thus reborn, and who greatly see the need of the forgiveness of sins, this great and solid comfort of God is directed. This comfort is the incentive to walk in thankfulness and in all good works of hope and the joy of everlasting immortality.

Thus the admonition to walk in all love and hope, manifesting itself in conversion, is well-founded. The admonition does not tell us to become what we are not, but it enjoins us to live out to the full what we are. We are to hope perfectly for the grace which is brought us in the revelation of Jesus Christ in the last day.

This is a great mystery of godliness. It shall always supercede our comprehension just how the Holy Spirit constitutes us what we are. But we rest assured that this great reality is ours, and such, that because of it, we love and serve our Saviour.

This does not mean that we cannot form some conception of this work of God whereby He constitutes us concretely His "regenerated ones". On the contrary, we are told by Peter rather accurately how God works this grace of being regenerated ones. He does this not simply to satisfy our curiosity but rather that he may incite us to the working out of our salvation, knowing that it is God, Who works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. Are we not constituted conscious regenerated ones exactly by means of the Word of God as it is proclaimed by Prophets and Apostles? Does not God work the grace of conversion in us through the exhortation of the glad-tidings? While Peter is teaching concerning this work of God, he is at once also bringing this Word of God as the glad-tidings. He is writing the very Word of God that is living and abiding. Let us put off the shoes from our feet, and draw near.

The apostle tells us that our being concretely, consciously

"reborn ones" is "out of incorruptible seed through the living and abiding Word of God". And to prove this Peter quotes Isaiah 40:6, 7, where we read: "Therefore that all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of it (man) as the flower of grass; the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the Word of the Lord endureth forever." And to this Peter adds the explanatory note: "and this is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

Concerning these elements we would like to make a few remarks:

In the first place, we call attention to the element in the text that speaks concerning the truth that our being concretely reborn ones is ours of incorruptible seed. We should bear in mind that the apostle here contrasts two kinds of seeds, to wit, corruptible and incorruptible seed. The former is, no doubt, in the light of the context which speaks of all "flesh" the seed from which our natural birth springs forth in the womb of our mother. This is corruptible seed coming forth from corruptible man. It is the seed of flesh from which flesh is born. It is the birth of which Nicodemus at first thought that Jesus was speaking. The seed that is corruptible is, therefore, the seed of man. From this our earthly human nature comes forth as we eat and drink, bring forth children, and die. It is corruptible seed. Not so is the seed from which we are constituted the concrete reborn ones, so that we are constituted incorruptible, and undefiled and such that never fade away. That is incorruptible seed.

What is this incorruptible seed?

We know that this seed is *not* corruptible. It will never die or fade away. Such is the case with all other seeds. Such is the lot of the grass and flowers. Their inward power and strength is such, that it fades away and is corrupted. It does not have the power to extenuate life and existence. And the reason for this is that "the Spirit of the Lord blows upon it." God's breath destroys it. But this "Seed" is such that it is caused by the breath of God. He puts such a principle in us through the Holy Spirit that it never fades away. It is a "seed" because it is a life's principle that must develop, grow and unfold! It is perpetual growth that shall endure in immortality and life and glory.

Out of this seed we are regenerated ones!

Of this implication of seed all are agreed that study the Bible. But not all agree on the relationship of the phrases "out of incorruptible seed" and "through the living and abiding Word of God."

Calvin interprets "seed" to be the same as the "Word of God", or at least it is the "Word of God" from the viewpoint that the Word of God is fruitful in our life. Writes he "for the Gospel is not preached that it may only be heard by us, but that it may as the seed of immortal life altogether reform our hearts." On the other hand Culbertson interprets the relation of "incorruptible seed" and the "Word of God" as being such that "the seed" denotes evidently the vital principle of grace, the new nature, the restored image. It is the same with what John means when he says "his seed

remaineth in him" I John 3:9. The Word is set forth as the instrument by which the seed is implanted."

We rather agree with the interpretation which takes "seed" in the sense of newly implanted life of Christ. In the first place because, as is evident from I John 3:9, this presentation is very Scriptural. In that passage too our being concretely born again ones is ours of seed. It is a new principle of life. In the second place because this follows from the contrast of corruptible and incorruptible seed. If the one is a principle of life so is the other. In the third place because it hardly seems that we have here the "seed" in the sense of the parable in Matthew 13, the parable of the sower. Wherefore we do not interpret "seed" to be identical with the Word of God.

Nor do we believe that this "seed" is implanted by the the Word of God, as the preached Word. Rather the Word, that is preached, causes the principle of the love of God shed abroad in our hearts to reveal itself in the reborn life of faith and hope in God. Hence it is out of the incorruptible seed and through, by means of the Word of God, as this is brought to us in the preaching of the Gospel tidings and its practical implications.

Peter says that the Word, which by the Gospel is preached unto us, is a Word that emphatically came to us *as glad tidings*. Literally this is a *gospelized word*. It is a word that is therefore brought as good tidings in the Cross of Christ. Thus it is spoken of in the most glowing terms in Isaiah 40:9 "O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the mountain: O Jerusalem that bringeth good tidings, life up thy voice with strength: lift it up be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah; Behold, your God!" And again in Isaiah 40:28-30 we read "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of His understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that hath no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall be faint and weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint."

Such is the glad-tidings to "my people", the elect pilgrim saints in the midst of this world, looking for the heavenly fatherland.

This is the glad-tidings that was preached to the Galatians by the Apostle Paul on his Missionary Journeys. He preached to them the glad-tidings of the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. This Word came to them as the Word announcing the fulfillment of the great promise of God. He has brought our salvation making Himself known in the working of the power of His might in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He exalted every valley and made every mountain and hill low; He made the crooked straight and the rough places plain. And in this all He revealed the

matchless greatness of the infinite glory of His grace and truth. And concerning this great work the preaching resounded. And the Lord wrought with the preachers, performing signs and wonders, working mightily in the hearts of all His own. And so by means of this preaching God the Father wrought great faith and hope in the hearts of those who are the elect strangers. He called them mightily by means of the preaching out of darkness into God's marvelous light.

Thus He very concretely brought them forth by the Word as the reborn ones, to be some first fruits of His creation.

And, O, what He has begun He will surely finish by the same Word of His power in the Gospel. For the Gospel is not a passing thing that loses its potency in the hearts of the redeemed through the Spirit, but it is living and abiding. It is a living Word and not a dead powerless Word. It is a Word that gives light and joy to the soul. It is a power of God unto salvation in the heart of every believing one. It causes the one in whom the seed is placed by God to become a believing one. It is that power that breaks down all our prejudices in the knowledge that the love of God was so great to us in forgiveness that we ought to love one another.

And it is a Word too that "remains" forever and ever. It remains not simply in the static sense. But it remains in all its living power to work faith in our hearts. Such is the idea of the term employed in the original Hebrew in Isaiah 40:8. The term means to arise, and is associated with verbs of going, going forward. Hence, it means to increase, or to flourish. Prov. 28:12. And so it is, applied to the Word of God, indicative of an abiding, a staying power, that goes forth conquering and to conquer. It brings us from one conquest over sin and the devil to another. By this living and life-giving and joy-affording Word God makes us love each other fervently. He so enjoins us in the text before us. For the admonitions and exhortations and threatenings of the Gospel are living and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, passing in to the dividing asunder of the marrow and bones, and is a discernor of the thoughts and the intents of the heart.

Well may the admonition be sounded by the Apostle in Chapter 2, that we lay aside all malice and all guile, hypocrisies and envies, and all evil speakings! For these are not the manifestations of our being regenerated ones out of incorruptible seed, by the living and abiding Word of God. Such is not a walk of gratitude in obedience to the Gospel of glad tidings.

Let us walk in the obedience to the truth of the glad-tidings of good things.

Such is the walk of conversion springing forth from the living hope of the reborn saints.

G.L.

IN HIS FEAR

Afraid of the Gospel

(12)

"The pedagogical approach".

It also is an insult to God!

An insult it must be, for it was invented and is set forth to defend the God-insulting conditional theology that speaks of prerequisites which man must fulfill before God will bestow salvation upon him.

Indeed, we have been assured repeatedly by the defenders of conditional theology that man fulfills these conditions by God's grace, that they too believe that man is by nature dead in sin and can do nothing before God gives him the grace to do so. But if they are sincere, why do they insist on defending the word condition as a prerequisite? Why do they, by conflicting arguments, try to defend those heretical statements of Rev. De Wolf? Why do they—though it is plainly a lie—continue to defend the contention that when God's Word speaks concerning the elect, it speaks of the promise as being unconditional, but that when God speaks to the elect, He tells them that the promise is conditional? Why do they invent and defend such a God-insulting thing as "the pedagogical approach"? As long as they do these things we may not and cannot accept their conflicting claim to be Protestant Reformed, to believe in total depravity and to be free from the arminianism and pelagianism against which the Reformed churches have always waged a holy warfare.

One who loves the Protestant Reformed truth is amazed at the expressions and statements produced in the defense of conditional theology. One wonders whether the authors of these phrases and terminology really thought the thing through before putting it down as the thing they intend to defend, or whether they deliberately invented these things to deceive the unskilled. This phrase, "the pedagogical approach", for example, sounds so innocent and even seems to be so beautiful and Scriptural a solution of the problem. Yet look at it again. Analyze it and consider what it really says and denies, and you will see that it insults the Almighty and All-wise God.

According to the "pedagogical approach" we must come to man with the promise of God as being conditional, lest man become careless and profane. The "pedagogical approach" would come to man with a long list of things which he must do, chief of which is that he must believe in Christ. Then you will not make him careless and profane. You will be presenting to him something that will keep him active in things spiritual. Come to man first with what man must do, and then, the "pedagogical approach" claims you can tell him about the grace of God which enables him to do all these things. Never come to man first with a finished salva-

tion in Christ and with sovereign election from the foundation of the world;—never come to man first with election unto faith and with an unconditional promise of faith to the elect, the "pedagogical approach" says. That would tend to make man careless and profane. That is a passive doctrine! You can come with these later on, the "pedagogical approach" says, when a man has become stronger in his faith, but even then you have to be careful with such a doctrine. Oh, indeed!, they say that they believe such things too; but it must not have the emphasis. Christ and God must not have the emphasis. It is nice to have them and to believe in them. But you must approach man with man's works which he must do. That is the way to keep him in the fear of the Lord.

All this would be sensible and even correct were it not for one extremely important element that the "pedagogical approach" either ignores or does not even believe. And that fact is that GOD PREACHES IRRESISTIBLY HIS OWN GOSPEL, and the conversion and activity of faith in man is not wrought by the human preacher—though it is through him that God works it—but by the irresistible power of the Spirit of God.

The "pedagogical approach" !

Is God afraid of the Gospel too? Must He approach man very gently and cautiously lest the very man He wants to save is by the Gospel driven away from salvation? And does He therefore tell His human messengers to make use of this "pedagogical approach"? lest His work of salvation be rejected and overthrown? Is HE afraid that little man, who is utterly dependant upon God for every breath of life, will make God's work of salvation more difficult unless he is approached with what man must do instead of with the Gospel which tells us of what God HAS done? Is a regenerated child of God going to be influenced to evil works by being told that God is the God of ALL his salvation and that our works are the fruit of salvation rather than the condition unto salvation? No Protestant Reformed man can believe that! No Protestant Reformed man subscribes to the "pedagogical approach"!

The school teacher needs a pedagogical approach. The politician and salesman need their special approach. These have to be careful lest they antagonize. These must approach man when he is in the right frame of mind, or else by their words they must first put man in the right frame of mind, before driving home the point for which they contacted that man. Men have to try to exert influence on other men. For that you need a pedagogical approach. You have to try to make them see things your way. You have to try to mold and bend their hearts and minds to conform to your heart and mind. But that is not a fair presentation of what God does through the preaching of the gospel.

God does that which no man can do to his fellowman. God puts a new life in us. He gives us a new heart and a

new mind. He makes us to be new creatures in Christ, II Cor. 5:17. Before a man can even *see* the kingdom, God causes him to be born again. To that born again man who has a new heart and a new mind God preaches the Gospel. And that new life, which is from above cannot become careless and profane when the gospel is preached unto it, and when it hears of the wonderful, finished work of salvation which comes unconditionally to the elect of God. John, by the power of the Spirit, is bold to say that "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God", I John 3:9. That truth stands in direct opposition to the "pedagogical approach". John knew nothing of it. And he dared to tell the elect that they do not and cannot sin according to that new principle of life which God has given them. And the "whosoever" in the text is not a condition. John does not tell us what we must do in order to obtain that glorious state of being sinless and of being incapable of sinning.

To be sure, that born again man will need instruction. God saves him as a rational, moral creature; and so he will be told by God, in HIS preaching of the gospel, what God has done for him and in him. He will be told what the way of the Lord is. And he will be told by God what the fruits of the Spirit and of salvation are, so that as he finds them in his life, he may have comfort and assurance in a life here below where his "sins rise up against him, prevailing day by day." But let us never forget, that God preaches the *gospel* to that reborn man. He tells Him what HE has done.

In the hearing of fallen man who had chosen the friendship of the devil and who was still placing the blame upon his wife—and that in such a way that he complains that God gave him an unfit wife—God preaches the gospel of a salvation that stipulates no conditions for man to fulfill. Without the "pedagogical approach" He dares to tell man at the very outset of his journey in the fields of sin that HE intends to deliver him fully from that power of sin that holds him. To a very rebellious nation God says, without any "pedagogical approach", these words of salvation, "I the Lord change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed", Mal. 3:6. To sinners who, because they were aware of their sins were filled with terror when an angel of the Lord appeared to them, God had the gospel preached without the "pedagogical approach" when the shepherds were told "Fear not for behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy. For unto you is born in the city of David a Saviour", Luke 2:10, 11. Let us not insult God by declaring that He must, through His human messengers approach man with the need of his works in order to prepare him for instruction in God's wonderful work of salvation. No Protestant Reformed man will do that! And if through ignorance and failure to think it through, he has declared such a thing, he will surely admit that he was wrong, and see to it that those whom he taught this error know of his condemnation of it.

And then, too, that expression that gives content to the "pedagogical approach", namely, that when God's word speaks about the elect it presents the promise as being unconditional, but when God speaks to His elect people He presents the promise as being conditional! Analyze it once! Think it through. Test it out! Everytime God speaks concerning the elect, He presents the promise as unconditional. We ask, to whom does He speak concerning the elect? To the devil? To the reprobate? To the holy angels? Or to other elect? And for whom were these passages of Holy Writ recorded and preserved all these years? For the reprobate? For the devil? For the holy angels? Or again for other elect? Is it not so very plain that whenever He speaks concerning the elect and presents the promise as unconditional that He is speaking to other elect? And is it not very dangerous for God to tell some elect that the promise to other elect is unconditional? Should we not come to the only possible conclusion, then, that God always must speak of the promise as being unconditional? No one we now know has yet dared to say that. But let them be honest and either admit that the "pedagogical approach" is an insult to God and that they do not want it anymore, or else let them be consistent and dare to tell their people that the Almighty God is afraid of man, whom He has made, and therefore must approach him with care and with due respect for his feelings and powers to frustrate the Almighty God!

Those who are so afraid of the gospel that they have deceived themselves into thinking that God is also afraid of His own gospel are not Protestant Reformed men. The truth makes us free. It gives peace and joy.

J.A.H.



When for the truth I suffer shame
When foes pour scandal on my name
When cruel taunts and jeers abound
When bulls of Bashan gird me round
Secure within Thy tower I'll dwell
That tower *Thy Grace Immanuel*



Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

EARLY VIEWS OF THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

The question of infant baptism (continued).

In our previous article we were discussing the grounds which Tertullian advanced in support of his opposition to the baptism of infants. And we concluded the article by calling attention to the second ground for his rejection of this practice, namely that an innocent child needed no cleansing from sin. A third ground advanced by Tertullian concerns the consequent responsibility to the sponsors. "For," we hear him say, "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?*" We have no difficulty understanding the thrust of this argument. At the time of the administration of the sacrament of Baptism we certainly take it upon ourselves, do we not, to instruct the child in all the knowledge of the Lord. Besides, do we not administer to the child the water of baptism which is a sign and seal of the righteousness which is by faith? But, does not this sacrament impose upon us a tremendous responsibility, yea a responsibility whose fulfilment we cannot guarantee? The parents themselves are mortal, subject to death. They may die and therefore not be able to fulfill their baptismal pledge. Besides, the possibility also exists of the development of an evil disposition in those "for whom they had stood." In other words, the children themselves may resent the instruction given them and thereby render vain all our efforts to bring them up in the fear of the Lord. Of course, there is one fundamental element which Tertullian fails to see in this connection. When the sacrament of Baptism is administered, the sacrament is not administered to the child merely by the parent but also by the Church, and it is indeed the Church which answers the baptismal questions and assumes responsibility as well as the actual parents of the child. This means, of course, that if the parent or parents should die, the Church would, of course, assume full responsibility for the instruction of the baptized child. For the rest, however, this argument of Tertullian is clear. Of course, this does not mean that we endorse this reasoning of the learned Church Father. We will return to this in due time.

The fifth ground which Tertullian advances for his opposition to the administration of baptism of infants consists of the necessity of previous instruction. He calls attention, in the passage we quoted from his writings, to the text: "Forbid them not to come unto Me, for of such is the Kingdom of God." However, when commenting upon this Scripture

he writes: "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. More caution will be exercised in worldly matters: so that one who is *not* trusted with earthly substance is trusted with divine! Let them know how to 'ask' for salvation, that you may seem (at least) to have given 'to him that asketh'." This fifth and final ground which is advanced by the eminent Church Father concerns the great responsibility involved in baptism for the recipient of the sacrament. In fact, for this last-mentioned reason he recommends even to grown-up persons (single persons, widows, etc.) to delay baptism until they are either married or have formed the firm resolution to lead a single life. This last observation of Tertullian, apart from its reference to infant baptism, is indeed worthy of note also for our present day. He advocates that baptism be deferred in connection with the unwedded. This contains surely for us the timely suggestion that young people defer their marriage until they have made confession of faith. It lies in the nature of the case that young people should marry in the Lord and be spiritually able to assume all the spiritual obligations connected with married life. Tertullian, however, advises such to defer their baptism. And this advice is surely based upon the tremendous responsibility involved for the recipient of baptism. The sacrament certainly lays upon its recipient the calling to walk as having died and risen again in and with Christ Jesus. However, to receive this sacrament one must be able to fulfill these spiritual obligations.

This analysis and criticism of infant baptism by Tertullian is worthy of our attention. The similarity between his objections to the baptism of infants and the arguments of the Baptists today is indeed striking. In the first place, Tertullian's appeal to Holy Writ is surely weak. His comments on the text: "Forbid them not to come unto Me," are surely far-fetched. The Saviour does not say that these little ones must not be forbidden to come unto Him after they have grown up and have learned to know the Christ, but that they, *as little ones*, must not be forbidden to come unto Him. Moreover, his comments on Luke 6:30 ("Give to every man that asketh of them; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again") are surely vague and indecisive. Does this mean, for example, that my asking of the Lord is a condition or prerequisite for the Lord's blessing of me? If so, I would never be blessed and no infant could possibly be saved. Besides, what about the prayers of the Church which are addressed to the living God in behalf of our children (according to election) upon the basis of that Scripture which assures us that the promise belongs to us and to our children? Is it possible that these prayers of the Church must be included in Luke 6:30 and Matt. 7:7? This same vagueness and indecisiveness also applies to the writer's comments on Matt. 7:6: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine,

lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." It must be quite evident that the Saviour, speaking here of dogs and swine, refers to those who actually trample the things of God's Word and covenant under foot. This text hardly refers to little infants. Besides, if the learned Church Father would conclude from this passage that Baptism must not be administered to the infants, why did the Lord command in the Old Dispensation that circumcision be administered to all the male infants who were born in the sphere of the covenant?

However, the striking feature of Tertullian's objection to infant baptism is its striking resemblance to the rejection of the baptism of infants by the Baptists of today. I am sure that we are all familiar with a fundamental objection of the Baptists against the administration of the sacrament to the seed of the Church. This fundamental objection can be briefly summarized as follows: the Baptist does not want the sacrament to lie. He will remind you of the Scripture that Baptism is a sign and seal of the righteousness which is by faith, and that whosoever believeth and is baptized (hence, baptism must follow upon the act of believing) shall be saved. This accounts for his refusal to baptize infants. Baptizing infants, the inevitable result will be that we will also baptize children who, when they come to years of discretion, will reveal themselves as profane and as haters of the Lord and of His covenant. It is not our purpose at this time to enter into a refutation of this argument of the Baptists, except to remark that his argument against infant baptism must be charged against the Lord when, in the Old Dispensation, He commanded all the male sons born within the sphere of the covenant to be circumcised. Circumcision was surely also a sign and seal of the righteousness which is by faith. Is this not principally the same objection which is lodged by Tertullian against the baptism of infants? He writes, does he not, that the children must come to Jesus while they are growing up and learning, that they must become Christians, having become able to know the Christ. Moreover, he speaks of the danger in which the sponsors may involve themselves when they will find themselves unable to fulfill their baptismal pledge, either because of their own mortality or because of the children who will refuse to submit to their instruction. This is principally the same objection as that which is voiced by the Baptist. Tertullian declares that, baptizing infants, the danger may develop that parents will fall short of their baptismal pledge, either because of their own mortality or the refusal of the baptized to submit to their instruction. The implication is, of course, that the sacrament of Baptism, as administered to these erring children, will fall short of its objective. Hence, to prevent his misfortune, it is the wiser and safer policy to wait with the administration of the sacrament until the person has revealed himself. This is also the thrust of what the learned writer records concerning Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. The chamberlain had been prepared by the Spirit and was baptized only when he revealed his faith. Moreover, he writes that whereas

caution is exercised with respect to worldly affairs, why should it not also be exercised in connection with Divine and spiritual matters? Hence, let them, we read, "know how to ask for salvation, that you may seem (at least) to have given to him that asketh." In other words, Tertullian advocates that the sacrament of Baptism be administered only to those who express their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ in order that the parents may not fall into the danger of being unable to fulfill their baptismal vow or be disappointed because of the development of an evil disposition on the part of those who have been baptized. Then the administration of the sacrament will have been true and it will not have been administered in vain.

This reasoning of Tertullian is, we understand, an error. Apart from his weak attempt to engage the support of Holy Writ, this eminent writer should have realized that his argumentation suffers shipwreck upon the rock of God's command in the Old Dispensation. It is simply a fact that the Lord commanded that all the male children should be circumcised the eighth day. And we know that the rite of circumcision had the same meaning as the sacrament of baptism. Hence, Tertullian argues, therefore, against the Old Testament institution. Secondly, however, Tertullian overlooks and completely fails to reckon with a very important truth: Reprobation. This failure, by the way, characterizes also the Synodicals and the Liberated of the present day. The Synodicals, although they would limit the covenant to the elect and declare that the promise is only for them, nevertheless would declare something for all the children of believers and therefore declare that the sacrament of Baptism must be administered upon the ground of presumptive regeneration. The Liberated, on the other hand, declare that all the children are equally in the covenant, seek the essence of the covenant in the promise, and advocate that all the children are recipients of the promise in an equal sense of the word. Baptism is the sign and seal of the promise of God to and for every baptized child. And the Baptist would limit the administration of the sacrament only to believers. But, in all these conceptions, the truth is overlooked and ignored that what is true of the preaching of the Word applies equally to the administration of the sacrament of Baptism. The sacrament of Baptism never lies and this for the simple reason that the promise is intended for and given only to the elect. The purpose of this sacrament is two-fold, even as the purpose of the preaching of the Word is two-fold: it is a savour of life unto life but also of death unto death. If, then, the result of our instruction is the hardening of some, we must remember that, in that case, our instruction did not fall short of its objective, but served the sovereign will and good pleasure of the Lord Whose purposes never fail.

H.V.

The Voice of Our Fathers

The Canons of Dordrecht

PART TWO

EXPOSITION OF THE CANONS

FIRST HEAD OF DOCTRINE OF DIVINE PREDESTINATION

Article 6. That some receive the gift of faith from God, and others do not receive it proceeds from God's eternal decree, "For known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world," Acts 15:18. "Who worketh all things after the counsel of his will," Eph. 1:11. According to which decree, he graciously softens the hearts of the elect, however obstinate, and inclines them to believe, while he leaves the nonelect in his judgment to their own wickedness and obduracy. And herein is especially displayed the profound, the merciful, and at the same time the righteous discrimination between men, equally involved in ruin; or that decree of election and reprobation, revealed in the Word of God, which though men of perverse, impure and unstable minds wrest to their own destruction, yet to holy and pious souls affords unspeakable consolation.

The accepted English translation of this article is a little weak and inaccurate on three counts. The first inaccuracy appears in the very first sentence of Article 6, in the expression "receive the gift of faith." This is supposed to be a translation of the Latin "*fide...donantur*." It is more accurately rendered by the Dutch, "Dat God sommigen in de tijd met het geloof begiftigt...." The second error is also found in the opening sentence in which our English simply omits altogether the original Latin phrase, "*in tempore*," that is, "in time." Correctly rendered, therefore, this sentence should read as follows: "Moreover, that some are gifted with faith by God in time, and some not so gifted, proceeds from His own eternal decree." And finally, our English does not properly render the contrast of the last sentence. The Latin, "*Quod ut perversi, impuri, et parum stabiles in suum detorquent exitum, ita sanctis et religiosis animabus ineffabile praestat solatium*," is rendered in the English: "which though men of perverse, impure and unstable minds wrest to their own destruction, yet to holy and pious souls affords unspeakable consolation." The original presents a slightly different emphasis with its "*ut...ita*." This is also more correctly rendered by the Dutch, "*evenals...alzo*." A corrected reading would then be: "Which as perverse, impure, and unstable men distort unto their own destruction, thus to holy and pious souls it affords consolation."

Strictly speaking, this sixth article does not yet treat the subject of predestination proper, although it mentions the decree of election and reprobation, and although it has a good deal to say on the subject. It is, however, not the in-

tention of the present article to define and to describe the decree of predestination. Sovereign election is not defined by the *Canons* until we read Article 7, while sovereign reprobation is not described until we reach the fifteenth article of the First Head of Doctrine. Article 6 still leads up to the subject of predestination. And it gives us the answer to the question that was raised by the previous article. There we learned that God Himself made a distinction: to some He imparts the gift of faith, while to others He does not. The question remained, therefore: how is it determined who shall receive the gift of faith, and who shall not? How does God determine this? To whom does He impart that gift of faith in Jesus Christ, and salvation through Him? And to whom does He not impart it? To that question this sixth article supplies the answer. It enters into the deepest cause and source of the fact that some are gifted with faith by God, and others are not.

In general, the article teaches us that this phenomenon of some receiving the gift of faith and others not receiving it proceeds from God's eternal decree. The eternal decree of God, therefore, is the source from which in time it comes to pass that some receive faith while others do not receive it. We may notice immediately, therefore, that this article establishes a certain definite relation between the work of God in time and His eternal decree. Already here you find, by implication at least, a denial of the Arminian view of election on the basis of foreseen faith. For it is plain from the very first sentence of Article 6 that the relationship between God's work in time and His decree in eternity is not such that the eternal decree receives its contents from the history of time as God foresaw it. But rather is the relation thus, that history receives its contents from the eternal decree of God. The decree is first. It is eternal. It is the source. History is the revelation, the unfolding, of the contents of God's eternal decree. History,—also the history of salvation and damnation, the history of receiving faith or not receiving this gift,—proceeds from, comes forth out of, God's eternal decree. This counsel of God is eternal, as God is eternal. Never was the Lord God without His counsel. This does not mean that the decree of God is something outside of Himself by which He is bound. For indeed, God's counsel is free and sovereign. His decree is the act of His own will. And while theoretically it might possibly be said that before the infinite God there existed also an infinite number of possibilities in regard to the world that was to be created, and the history of the world that was to take place, and that God sovereignly and with a free act of His will determined all things as they actually exist and develop, nevertheless we may not so conceive of things that we imagine that there was ever a period in God in which He was without His decree. For known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world. Acts 15:18. In close connection herewith, and especially if we remember that eternity must not simply be conceived of as time infinitely extended, is the fact that this decree of God may not

be compared with a dead plan, a mere blue-print, such as an architect might make of a house. In the case of such a blue-print the realization of the plan is always better and more glorious than the original conception. But God's decree is the counsel of the living and eternal Lord Himself. It is His eternal good pleasure, according to which He willed and conceived all things that are ever realized or take place in time. In that decree God has eternally all things with Himself. And He rejoices perfectly in all the works of His hands. The counsel of God is the eternal reality of all things in God's conception. And the creatures and events of history are but the revelation in time and space of that eternal decree. And what is true of all things is true also of the phenomenon that some are gifted with faith and others are not.

Thus we can understand more clearly, in the second place, that the *Canons* teach us that the counsel of God's will is the standard, the criterion, of God's works in time. In this connection, it is evident that the *Canons* distinguish this standard of God's counsel in a two-fold manner. In the first place, there is the decree of election. It is the decree of God to save and to glorify some through the means of faith. And because God works all things after the counsel of His will, Eph. 1:11, therefore in time He also bestows faith upon the elect. He does so by graciously softening the hearts of the elect, — hearts that are equally as hard as the hearts of the non-elect, — and thus inclining them to believe. It is evident too, therefore, that the *Canons* maintain that it is not the proclamation of the gospel that softens men's hearts and causes men to believe. This is the work of God. And He accomplishes that work according to the standard, the criterion, of election. The fact that some are gifted with faith by God in time is simply the unfolding of what from all eternity is true and real according to God's counsel. That some receive the gift of faith from God proceeds from His eternal decree of election.

On the other hand, there is the decree of reprobation. To employ the obviously infralapsarian language of the *Canons*, this decree of reprobation is the eternal determination of God to leave the non-elect in His just judgment to their own wickedness and obduracy. To them, therefore, He does not impart the gift of faith. He leaves them in their own wickedness and hardness. Also they may hear the good tidings of the gospel proclaimed. And certainly, it cannot be said that preaching of the Word is the cause of their hardness. Nor, however, can it be said that that preaching of the gospel is *grace* to the reprobate, but that some men reject God's proffered grace. For the simple fact is that God never intended to be merciful to the reprobate. He decreed to leave the non-elect in His judgment to their own wickedness and obduracy. And according to the standard of that decree God works in time. And when He thus works, He does not impart the gift of faith to them. The fact that some do not receive the gift of faith in time is simply the unfolding of what from all eternity is true and real according to God's

counsel. That some are not gifted with faith in time proceeds from God's eternal decree of reprobation.

Such is the instruction of our *Canons* here. This does in no wise alter the fact that, as Article 5 teaches us, the cause, in the sense of the guilt, of unbelief, as well as of all other sins, is no wise in God, but in man himself. But neither does the fact that the guilt, or blame, of the sin of unbelief is man's alter the truth that the failure to be gifted by faith proceeds from God's eternal decree. But the question that was left by Article 5 is now answered. If you ask: how is it determined who are gifted with faith, and who are not so gifted? the answer is: God Himself determines this in His eternal decree. And this decree He carries out in time.

— H. C. H.



O GOD, REGARD MY HUMBLE PLEA

O God, regard my humble plea;
I cannot be so far from Thee
But Thou wilt hear my cry;
When I by trouble am distressed,
Then lead me on the rock to rest
That higher is than I.

In Thee my soul has shelter found,
And Thou hast been from foes around
The tower to which I flee.
Within Thy house will I abide;
My refuge sure, what-e'er betide,
Thy sheltering wings shall be.

For Thou, O God, my vows hast heard,
On me the heritage conferred
Of those that fear Thy Name;
A blest anointing Thou dost give,
And Thou wilt make me ever live
Thy praises to proclaim.

Before Thy face shall I abide;
O God, Thy truth and grace provide
To guard me in the way;
So I will make Thy praises known,
And, humbly bending at Thy throne,
My vows will daily pay.

Psalm 61

DECENCY and ORDER

Called by another Church

The tenth article of our Church Order reads as follows: "A minister once lawfully called, may not leave the congregation with which he is connected, to accept a call elsewhere, without the consent of the consistory, together with the deacons, and knowledge on the part of the classis; likewise no other church may receive him until he has presented a proper certificate of dismissal from the church and the classis where he served."

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

These Scriptural words, as Calvin observes, express "a rule by which we must regulate everything that has to do with external piety." In this connection, however, we would apply them particularly to the minister who receives and is called upon to consider a call from another congregation than the one he serves. Either an acceptance or a decline of the call may have far reaching effects upon the churches concerned as well as the future course of one's ministry. Good order is fundamentally abiding in the will of the Lord and without this all labor in the ministry of the word is made ineffective. It is then especially imperative that the minister considering a call do the right and orderly thing in order that the Lord's blessing upon his labor and the church he serves may not be impaired.

That the churches are also aware of the importance of this matter is evident from the tenth article of the church order which sets forth an orderly procedure to be followed and which safeguards, in as far as possible, against all abuse. It provides the minister with the liberty to consider and decide upon calls received while also requiring the consistory to acquiesce in the decision made. This implies that the minister does not consider and decide wholly on his own but takes his consistory into consultation in the matter in order that the ultimate decision may be mutually agreeable. Following this procedure each consistory member must avoid imposing his own selfish wishes upon the situation and remember it to be his duty to be resigned to the Lord's way which is for the best interest of the church. One cannot be moved by carnal and ulterior motives in deciding spiritual things.

It can be shown that historically this article has been interpreted so that the function of the consistory consisted in much more than *giving consent*. This body would make the decision and to this the minister would acquiesce or, if he could not agree, appeal the matter to the Classis. This is based upon the position that the bond of union between a pastor and his congregation is of such a nature that it cannot be broken by any single individual. The minister alone cannot sever this tie. With this we can agree but

whether the consistory has the prerogative to decide upon a call that is addressed to her minister is a question which is open to debate. There is no doubt that the consistory must have a voice in the matter but that voice need not be *exclusive* nor *decisive*. Its limitations and power must be clearly marked in order that its abuse may be prevented.

Considering Article 10 we fail to see that it gives credence to the thought that consistories are empowered to *decide* in the matter of ministerial calls. More than one factor brings us to this conclusion. In the first place, the article itself speaks of the consistory giving *consent* which in the dutch is *bewilliging*. This is not the same as *to decide*. One can give consent or agree with a matter that has already been decided upon but then the action of decision proceeds the expression of consent. If, then, it is the prerogative of the consistory to *consent*, it is implied that the decision is made by another. It would be foolish to state that a consistory must give consent to its own decision.

It might, perhaps, be pointed out that the minister is really deprived of the power of decision if his decision is ineffective until he obtains consistorial consent. Without her consent he cannot accept a call. It appears then that the ultimate power of decision in the matter still reposes in the consistory. This would be quite true if *consent* meant only *approbation of the decision made*. Then the consistory would in effect make the decision real or have it annulled by her final action. For this we find no justification but rather interpret *consent* to also imply *the granting of the right or permission to the minister to consider and decide upon a call received*. The thought then is that a minister cannot consider a call until his consistory has given its consent. It stands to reason then that the consistory that grants this prior consent will also acquiesce in whatever decision is reached. In this way the consistory exercises her rightful authority in the matter at the proper juncture and the freedom of the minister to consider and decide upon the call is not infringed upon. And, this does not exclude mutual consultation in arriving at the decision. Likewise in justice to the matter should the minister consult with the consistory of the calling church.

In the second place it must be considered that the first part of this article cannot be separated from the last part. Giving *consent* is connected with *granting a proper certificate of dismissal*. This does not mean that when a consistory grants her minister permission to consider a call she gives him a dismissal certificate but it does imply that should he feel inclined to accept the call the proper certificate would not be withheld. If there are reasons or circumstances for which a consistory cannot give proper dismissal to her minister, she should not even allow him to consider a call to another church. Such situations could and frequently do exist. Suppose that the minister's teachings are called in question or that the uprightness of his walk is disputed and the consistory is investigating. Suppose there is trouble

in the church in which the minister is *personally* involved so that his leaving might be detrimental to the entire congregation if he left without clearing the matter. No consistory may before God subscribe to the certificate of dismissal of ministers under those circumstances and to do so is to be dishonest with God and the sister church to whom they commend their minister. To avoid the more difficult situation where the minister accepts the call and then must be refused the proper dismissal credentials, it is better that the consistory withhold the right to even consider. Perhaps it is not the easiest course to follow but then it is not a question of utility. It is a matter of good order! Often consistories in difficult situations have followed the course of least resistance and to avoid further trouble or to get rid of the undesirable have granted their minister dismissal when they should never have done so. The consequence of such action can only be the perpetuation of misery. Consistories must be honest before God and consider then the testimonial to which they must subscribe when they send their minister to another church. We quote it here in full with the italics our own:

"The consistory of the Protestant Reformed Church of declares by these presents that the Rev. in this church from 19..... to 19..... has ministered in the office of minister of the Divine Word *faithfully and diligently, adhering in doctrine and life to the word of God, as interpreted by our forms of unity and the church order.*

And considering that sufficient reasons have been added for the consistory to acquiesce in his acceptance of the call of the church of, *we unhesitatingly recommend him to the classis and to the church of* with the prayer that the great King of the church, who says to this of His servants 'go', and he goeth, and to that one 'come' and he cometh, may make him there also a rich blessing.

Resolved to give him this testimonial of dismissal at our meeting of 19....."

Now the part of this credential which we have italicized is especially important. The consistory in giving consent to the acceptance of a call by her minister does more than sever the tie that once bound them. She also testifies that her pastor has been "faithful and diligent to the Word of God in doctrine and in life." She "recommends him without hesitation to the Classis and the church that has called him." Unless she can do so in good conscience before God she may not consent to release him nor should she permit him even to consider a call elsewhere. Her task and duty, as consistory, is to "take heed that the minister faithfully discharge his office" (Art. 23 D.K.O.) and if that is not done she may not simply get rid of him by releasing him to another church but she must faithfully administer discipline over him.

It seems to us, therefore, that it belongs to the work of the consistory to see to it that all things are in such *good order* that her minister can consider another call should it be received. Not the minister is to determine whether all is in that order but this is left to the judgment of the consistory. Upon her consent the minister is then free to decide upon a call according to the dictates of his conscience.

Let us suppose, however, that all things are in good order so that there is no reason for a consistory to refuse permission to consider a call. The minister decides that he must accept a call. The consistory, however, wishing to retain the services of a faithful minister expresses that it is its judgment that the Lord wills him to remain with her. Whose decision is in such an instance to stand? It would seem that both the consistory and the minister should weigh carefully each others reasons and attempt to come to an agreement. If this is impossible, which is very unlikely, the matter might be referred to the Classis for disposal. In no case, however, ought a consistory to attempt to bind the conscience of her minister who feels the Lord calls him to another place of labor.

G.V.D.B.

ALL AROUND US

Getting Personal.

A certain brother wrote to me last week calling my attention to an article appearing in the Reader's Digest (February, 1954, page 63) which he thought pretty well describes what is going on lately with those who are in the consistory of the Rev. De Wolf. After reading the article, I agree with him.

For obvious reasons we cannot quote the article, but we can say a few words about it. The writer informs his readers that it is a time worn trick in the lawyer's bag to use the get personal policy when he has no case, no argument to bring against a defendant. The author quotes cases where this trick was used. The purpose of this method of attack is evidently to make the accused look ridiculous and be laughed out of court. But read the article for yourself. It is worth while if you really want to know what is going on with those who used to be with us and who are now trying through the courts to confiscate properties that do not rightfully belong to them.

When one reads the Cross Bill entered by the De Wolf faction in the courts, which I am informed not even all his elders knew about but to which their names were nevertheless affixed, which was written evidently by a lawyer who could not find a reasonable argument for his case and therefore went to the bag to pull out this trick, one wonders how it is possible that they will stoop so low to get their end. No

one in his right mind is fooled by this trick except those who are blind enough to use it. No judge who is worthy of the name will allow this trick to sway him, least of all THE JUDGE of all the earth. If only De Wolf and his group could understand this, and repent in bitter tears. But we hear of no repentance. How sad!

* * * *

Not Hoeksema, But Kok Changed

In the January issue of the Reformed Journal (Vol. 4, No. 1) Rev. Daane writes on the subject: "Can the Gospel Be Preached to Every Man?" It is not our purpose to comment on what he has to say about this subject as such, for he evidently has more to say in future articles. We will wait, therefore, until he has concluded.

Incidentally, however, he also answers the Rev. B. Kok, who had written a letter in criticism of Dr. Daane in a previous issue of the Journal. Our readers will recall that in the Nov. 1, 1953, issue of the Standard Bearer we quoted Rev. Daane as saying "Although they do not admit it, those of the Protestant Reformed Churches who now disagree with the Rev. H. Hoeksema have taken at least one theological step back toward the Christian Reformed Church." Rev. Kok also read this article and this statement and sent a letter to the Reformed Journal registering his objections. It is to this that Dr. Daane replies. I am quoting only that part of the article that has to do with Kok.

Dr. Daane entitles this part with the question: "Has Hoeksema Changed His Position?" He answers as follows: "Hoeksema's willingness to recognize the validity of the factual conditional (If a man believes, God will save him), does not mean that he subscribes to a conditional theology. For it must not be overlooked that there is nothing conditional about, 'If a man believes, God will save him' as long as this cannot be addressed to any particular man. It is an abstract truth that cannot be applied to any particular man. Hence, acceptance of the factual condition does not commit Hoeksema to a conditional theology.

"Rev. Kok believes that Hoeksema's rejection of conditions is a departure from Protestant Reformed theology as Hoeksema himself taught it formerly. Consequently Rev. Kok thinks I am mistaken when I declare that those in the Protestant Reformed Churches who now believe in conditional theology have taken a step toward the Christian Reformed Church.

"In both instances I think Rev. Kok mistaken. Hoeksema has not changed his theology, except in the sense that he has *purified* it. Consistency demands that Protestant Reformed theology repudiate conditions. This theology can retain conditions in the abstract, but it cannot retain the conditional as a means of interpreting and determining gospel-address. Protestant Reformed theology has always denied that the gospel preaching is of the nature of an 'offer.' It must therefore deny that gospel preaching is of a conditional nature. *It is not Hoeksema but Kok who has*

departed from the genius of Protestant Reformed theology. (I underscore. — M. S.)

"Hoeksema has not always expressed himself consistently on the matter of conditions. This has provided those who differ from him with quotations and fuel for debate. But a few quotations and a bit of inconsistency ought not to becloud the real issue. And Hoeksema's purification of his theology by a removal of some of the old leaven that clung to it, ought not to be presented as though it were a theological departure. Hoeksema sees clearly what Rev. Kok does not see: if the conditional is used to interpret the general preaching of the gospel address, then there is no reason for continuing to reject the Christian Reformed definition of *offer* as an actual offer of salvation to any man who hears the gospel. *Rev. Kok should either repudiate conditions and make common cause with Hoeksema, or he ought to allow the leaven of conditions to lead him to accept the Christian Reformed conception of the gospel as an offer to any who hear the gospel, and return to the Christian Reformed Church.* (I underscore. — M. S.) His present position is a half-way house. He denies common grace, but he holds to a conception of conditional gospel-address which bespeaks an offer of the gospel to all who hear, and therefore of a grace which is common. *His present theology is a theology of inconsistency: it is neither Protestant Reformed nor Christian Reformed.*" (I underscore. — M. S.).

So far the quotation relative to the Rev. Kok. It is crystal clear that not only the Rev. Hoeksema has seen clearly what Rev. Kok does not see, but also Rev. Daane. The prediction which Rev. Hoeksema made at a public meeting in First Church sometime ago is coming true. At a mass meeting in which he answered questions relative to our controversy, he answered this one: "What do you think those on the outside of our churches will say about us?" His answer in part was: "I am sure that those of the Christian Reformed Churches and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands will sustain me," or words to that effect. Even though Rev. Daane will not agree with Hoeksema's doctrine, he knows as well as all the rest who know anything about 1924 that Hoeksema has not changed, that he never believed in conditional theology and he never will. But Rev. Kok does not see this, and it appears that he never will. The more Kok writes in defense of his conditional theology the more I am convinced that he never understood our Protestant Reformed conceptions. If this is not true, then there is only one other possibility and that is that Kok repudiates the Protestant Reformed theology and desires to be Christian Reformed. Rev. Daane has hit the nail squarely on the head.

* * * *

A Challenge to the Rev. J. D. De Jong.

When the Concordia of January 28, 1954, arrived, we noticed an article "Miscellanea" with its sub-title: "Rev. Schipper And The News Items Of Hull," written by the Rev. De Jong. He was commenting on an article I wrote in the December 15th issue of the Standard Bearer relative to

a news item he had previously placed in Concordia regarding the split in Hull and about my labors in that place after the split.

I just want to leave this challenge with him. Rev. De Jong will you please do me the favor of publishing in Concordia my entire article published in the Standard Bearer above referred to relative to your news item? I dare you to put it in Concordia in toto. After you have done this, you can make all the comments you feel necessary and I'll try to answer them.

I know you don't like to have your people read the Standard Bearer, but I'm sure it won't hurt them to read just my little article. If you refuse to heed this challenge, I shall have to conclude that there is "a moral issue involved."

* * * *

A Symposium On Television.

The January 15th issue of the Banner brought to its readers three articles written by as many ministers in the Christian Reformed Churches on their evaluation of television. At the conclusion of these short articles the editor briefly summarizes and compares the arguments these ministers presented.

After reading the articles, we too have made some observations as to what they say: 1. All three proceed from the assumption that television is here to stay, and therefore the christian cannot avoid making some kind of a judgment concerning it.

2. All three are not ready to say that a christian home may not have a TV set.

3. All three can conceive of a christian home using the instrument, but with great discretion.

4. All three are aware of the evil influences this instrument may have in the home, and warn against these influences.

5. All three are afraid that most television viewers do not use the instrument with discretion.

6. All three make mention of perhaps the most outstanding evil of TV, namely, that it is a time-wasting device.

This is a summary of what christian leaders have to say about TV. Would you also like to read a summary of what a man of the world has to say about television? The following are quotations taken from a clipping of the Chicago News, Saturday, November 17, 1951. The writer of the article is Jack Mabley, and the heading of the article is: "One Million Sets Here—TV Has Traveled A Long Way—But Where's It Going? After 4 Years, It Still Caters To The Sponsor's Fast Buck."

"The millionth television set was installed in a Chicago area home this month. Commercial television is four years old. It is time to ask some questions about this machine that is rearranging the lives of two-thirds of the population.

Have programs improved in four years? No, they are getting worse. However, there are many on the air today

—more than 500 out of Chicago stations alone in a single week—that because of sheer mass provide a fair number of worthwhile shows. Percentage-wise, the number of constructive programs has become deplorably low. But in quantity, there are enough to suit any taste.

How are moral standards? Improving, largely because of public indignation at excesses of horror, brutality, and vulgarity.... Is the plunging neckline still plunging? No. The new gimmick is to have buxom young ladies overflow in strapless gowns. The technique is different, but the moral intent is still on a guinea pig level.

Are programs good for children? Of 500 programs available to youngsters in a seven week period, perhaps 10 are decent enough that a conscientious parent would encourage his children to watch them. The remainder of the 490 range from amusing, harmless and indifferent all the way to nightmare-producing monstrosities that will teach children everything that has led to the moral decay of this age.

Whether a TV set will be a constructive force with children is completely in the hands of the parents, and their regulation of TV is going to play a huge part in determining the moral caliber of the next adult generation."

The writer closes his article with this question and answer: "What has TV done for society in four years? Not much for, plenty to.

The positive contributors of the Kefauver hearings, the good dramatic shows and the spasmodic opera and symphony telecasts have been offset by 30 minute commercials, the coarseness of Berle and other loud comedians, Howdy Doody, Murder at Midnight, and the 95 percent of all TV that is dedicated to only one thing—to make as much money as possible as fast as possible for the sponsor, the broadcaster and the talent."

What shall we say about television? It seems to me that if a man of the world is afraid of the instrument and holds it in serious question, it would be preposterous for a christian to try to talk it good. No one in his right mind would say that the instrument in itself is evil. We Protestant Reformed people have learned long ago that sin is not in things, no more than grace is in things. But we hasten to add that the instrument thus far has been almost entirely under the control of the sinful and corrupt world. And until the instrument can be brought into the service of the Kingdom of God, no christian family should play with fire.

Our observation has been that those who stand weakest in the church are the first to get the instrument in their homes. This speaks volumes. The one who has a strong sense of moral and spiritual values is the one who refuses to be caught with the TV craze. In connection with this we also observed that those who have a set are those who almost never attend your society meetings in the church, who are not subscribers to worthwhile religious periodicals, who cannot carry on a constructive discussion relative to matters

of sound doctrine. They are the ones who are susceptible to every wind of doctrine.

I agree with what one of the ministers in the Symposium writes in closing his article: "But for the present I believe that TV is potentially dangerous. We intensify rather than ease the problem of fulfilling the solemn vow made at the baptism of our children when in the presence of the people of the Lord we replied in the affirmative to the following question, 'Do you promise and intend to instruct these children, when come to the years of understanding in the afore-said doctrine, and cause them to be instructed therein, to the utmost of your power?'"

I cannot believe parents are sincere when they take this vow, and then place their children before a TV set and allow them to drink in all the trash that comes from Hollywood.

M.S.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Dear Editor of the Standard Bearer:—

IT IS WELL!

As bitter as the onslaughts are against you in person, the above title nevertheless can retain its rightful and honorable place. SUFFERING FOR CHRIST'S SAKE! Factually, then it couldn't be better! At least, I find so much cause for rejoicing! Because you my brother must suffer? God forbid! This devilish bitter gall of iniquity? Nay, we sorrow with you, while on the other hand we also rejoice. Not that we are being so unrighteously treated; nay, but that by this VERY UNRIGHTEOUSNESS, you, and we as protestants are being justified before ALL in our protesting against such corruptions, which here-to-fore were so glosscoatedly blanketed with a pious veneer; BUT WHICH NOW STAND OUT IN SUCH BOLD RELIEF SO THAT HE THAT RUNNETH CAN READ: That the protestants' undying efforts and determinations, 'to root out this corruption', must undeniably (now!) be justified by all!

To anyone who can read and understand the common grammar, and who still has a small sense of truth and righteousness, it certainly must have become more than crystal clear *by now*, 'That the De Wolfs' *corruptions*' lie much deeper then just a few 'slips of the lips, which he didn't mean that way'... and as also, that B. Kok's 'striving to protect the purity of the doctrines of the Pro. Ref'd Churches' is such an untenable corruption of self-conceived underhanded political maneuvering, that no human being, and surely no christian, can afford to be a party of such outlandish iniquity. The beauty of this (sin?), nay, BUT in the REVELATIONS OF THESE HIDDEN SINS, which we have so righteously opposed;... but, which THEY so ardently???, and seriously??? defended and maintained (throwing every conceivable effort into the fray) and by which efforts they

have succeeded to deceive so many... THEY THEMSELVES NOW WRITE INTO THE PICTURE TO EXPOSE THE FACTS SO UNDENIABLY CLEAR, AND UNDERSTANDABLE, BY THESE THEIR OWN ADMISSION IN WRITING AND OPEN CONFESSIONS, THAT THEIR BEING EVICTED FROM THE COMMUNION OF THE PRO. REF'D CHURCHES IS HONORABLY JUSTIFIABLE NOT ONLY, BUT DEFINITELY WAS A NECESSITY. How strange! *They now say, just what the protestants have maintained*, and the Classis has vindicated to be true.

Can you imagine, even for one moment, that all this corruption which B. Kok has recently brought to light by his own pen (NOW FOR ALL TO READ) is the self-same corruption which he in preaching and teaching, bulletin and in housevisitation, was carrying on here in Holland's congregation? And that we were just compelled to swallow this hook, line and sinker, and not to take recourse to it? And that if some dared to take issue with him, he would fly into a frenzy, or with threats of various kinds even dared to damn them to hell if they dared to continue to oppose him? Brother Hoeksema, these onslaughts are nothing new here in Holland! I must honestly confess for the TRUTH'S SAKE, that my SOUL has often been chilled while I was forced to listen to all such, and then to be compelled to hear above this all, that such preaching and teaching; Kok had the brazen effrontery to classify his preaching with that venerable title of "Preaching the Lord Jesus Christ and him crucified." (?????PREPOSTEROUS!)

Factually, then, B. Kok has only begun to put into writing, that which we were compelled to listen to, as being the preaching of the gospel'. Interwoven through his preaching, teaching and other efforts, ran this line of his maneuvering, of backbiting, slander, etc, as you now can read from his own pen. Is there still a man alive who wonders why we felt seriously obligated to protest against such corruptions? Moreover, if I were to relate all of it as I know it, then I would need the entire Standard Bearer, at least for one issue. BUT JUST THAT CORRUPTION which we as protestants could not possibly hope to describe in its proper character (in and through our protests) Kok now kindly(?) publishes himself, so that all can read and judge properly!

My soul exclaims in praise to God "Oh how righteous God IS"! To me, then it is God, Who is uncovering this SIN! SIN breeds SIN! Feed on it, and stupidity, idiocy, and TRUTH, all seem to be synonyms to the heart and mind which dares to flirt with this gruesome monster, who traps his adherant and slays him with his own conceits, Thanks be to God Who has heard our pleas and cries. De Wolf, Kok, et alii, have justified our protests and the actions of Classis East. Brother Hoeksema, and all, cheer up! We now have the answer. Thanks be to God for His love.

Yours In Christ;

H.A. Van Putten

CLASSIS WEST MEETS IN DOON, IOWA.

This meeting was held on January 21, 1954. The decision to hold such a meeting was reached, jointly, by the consistories of the Protestant Reformed Churches of Doon, Edgerton, Hull, and Redlands. They resolved to call a special classical session, at which the faithful remnants of Classis West would be represented. Although a public announcement of this proposed session of Classis West appeared in our Standard Bearer, a special invitation was sent to these consistories concerning whom it was not known whether they had taken a definite stand.

This classical meeting was represented by the following consistories: Doon, Edgerton, Hull, and Redlands. The first important business concluded at this meeting was a decision to ask Synod for recognition as the legal and faithful continuation of Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Closely related to this, it declared that what was formerly Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches had, in its gathering last September, committed schism when it decided not to recognize the suspension of the Rev. De Wolf and the deposition of the elders supporting him and to recognize them as the legal and proper continuation of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan. At that meeting of Classis West last September it was not decided to protest or appeal or advise, but simply to recognize the Rev. De Wolf and his supporting elders as the legal and proper consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan. This decision was plainly an act of schism and rebellion even as such also characterized the action of the Rev. De Wolf and his supporting elders. Hereupon we decided to request Synod that it recognize us as the legal and faithful continuation of Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Another important item of business concluded at our meeting of Classis West last Jan. 21 was to present our claim for recognition to Synod at its continued session to be held, the Lord willing, March 11(?), 1954. In connection with this, the Classis also decided to elect delegates to this continued session of Synod to replace the delegates from Classis West that have become schismatic. The *primi* delegates chosen are: Ministers: Revs. H. C. Hoeksema and H. Veldman; elders: J. Blankespoor, N. Kooiker, T. Feenstra, and J. Docter (the last named is former *secundus* delegate to synod, now serving as *primus*). The *secundi* elder delegates are: H. Huiskens, E. Van Maanen, R. Brunsting, and E. Van Egdom. It was also decided that ministers, moving into the West, would serve as *primi* delegates, in order that the quota of four ministers might be filled. A letter, expressing our request for recognition and stating the grounds for this claim, will be forwarded to the president and vice-president of the synod.

A third item of business concluded at our meeting was a decision to notify Classis East that we favor an early synod with a view to the settlement of our ecclesiastical and property difficulties, if we fail to be recognized at the continued synod in March, according to Part 2 of Art. 1 on Rules of Order of the Synod.

Classis West also decided to request each minister of Classis East to contribute one sermon for reading purposes and each minister of Classis West to contribute two sermons. Of course, this does not mean that each minister of Classis East may not contribute more than one. These sermons should be forwarded to the consistory of Edgerton, c/o Ray Brunsting, Clerk, Pipestone,

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Minnesota, Route 3. We request our ministers to regard this notice as a request to them from Classis West. And may I personally add that these sermons are needed. Brethren, please do not delay.

It was also decided to send a letter of admonition to all the erring churches who have separated themselves from our classis, calling upon them to return from their erring way. This letter will be presented at our following classical meeting for approval. It was deemed advisable to publicize this letter, either in the Standard Bearer or by other means.

A new classical committee was chosen at this classical meeting, consisting of the Revs. H. C. Hoeksema and H. Veldman and the Elders John Docter and James Blankespoor.

The next meeting of Classis West will be held, the Lord willing, in Doon, Iowa, the first Wednesday of April. The constituent consistories are kindly requested to take note of the decision taken at our Jan. 21 meeting that at this proposed session, April 7, 1954, all matters belonging on regular classical session will be entertained, including matters for the new synod, such as subsidy requests, new synodical business, voting of synodical delegates, etc. Please regard this announcement as appearing in this article as an official notice.

The undersigned, serving temporarily as stated clerk of Classis West, was unable to attend this meeting of Classis West. He had looked forward to this meeting, but the will of God, which is always good, also in this instance, was otherwise. We are thankful that we may be privileged to carry on in the interest of the cause of our Protestant Reformed Churches. Lynden, although "reorganized," was unaccountably absent. We express the desire that other churches may also realize that, to join forces with schismatics, is itself an act of schism. We may ask schismatics to return from their evil way and we surely personally wish the same, but we cannot very well recognize them and gather with them. May God's blessing continue to rest upon us and our churches, that we may remain faithful to the calling wherewith the Lord has called us.

H. VELDMAN.