

THE STANDARD

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MEDITATION

Faith and Jericho's Walls

"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days." Heb. 11:30

Salvation is of the Lord!

By faith the walls of Jericho fell down!

The two truths are essentially identical. They stand not at odds with one another, but are in perfect harmony. Salvation of the Lord is necessarily salvation *by faith*. And in the instance of the text upon which we here meditate, this is expressed in the not unimportant words, "after they had been compassed about seven days."

And so you can include in the cloud of those who witness to the glorious truth that salvation is of the Lord, by faith, also the believing host of Israel, by whose faith the walls of Jericho fell. And heeding their witness, run with patience the race that is set before us, laying aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us.

* * * *

Israel was to have the promised land. Such was the great promise made to the fathers, and such had been the hope of all the true people of God during all these years that had passed since the promise first was given. That fact was as certain as the faithfulness of the unchangeable Jehovah, Whose Word never fails. There could be no doubt about it.

But it must become evident that the promise is Jehovah's. It must become plain that the promised land can be received only out of the hand of the covenant God. And for this reason, Israel may and can and does take possession of the land of promise only in the power of faith. By faith the walls of Jericho fell. Salvation is of the Lord . . .

By faith, — but emphatically, *by faith*, — Israel takes the promised land!

Evident this is already in the crossing of the swelling tide of Jordan. Without Jehovah they cannot enter the land. The Lord Himself divides the waters before them, so that the entrance into Canaan is made by Jehovah, visibly, as represented in the ark of the covenant. And so it is too when

the land must be captured: by faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.

Israel's path led directly to Jericho. A strong city it was, with impregnable fortifications. Jericho's walls were capable of keeping out any enemy that might appear at its gates. And Jericho is of strategic importance. It must not be by-passed. If Israel is to capture the land, she must capture Jericho first. If they fail before the walls of Jericho, they will never succeed to capture the rest of Canaan. If they succeed when they stand before this key-city of the land, they certainly will not fail to take all of Canaan.

And Jericho had heard of the approach of the children of Israel. It is straitly shut up: none go in, and none go out. Israel's reputation as those who are more than conquerors has preceded them. And in the natural reaction of the kingdom of darkness, though they are afraid, they shut themselves up against the kingdom of God. And they are determined to offer stubborn opposition.

What must Israel do? Must they burn the gates, and storm the walls, and kill the inhabitants, and thus take possession? Must they test the strength of their armies against this fortified city? Or must they, perhaps, lay siege to the city, and patiently wait until famine and pestilence become their allies within the walls, so that the people are forced to surrender? Thus it is that the nations of the world fight their battles: they depend on an arm of flesh. But it is not the plan of battle for the kingdom of God. For God's people, for Israel, — and it makes no difference principally whether you speak of Israel in the old dispensation, or in the new; whether the object of faith is the promise of God in shadow-form, or whether it is the promise of God in its spiritual reality and fulfillment, — for Israel there is but one method, a radically different method of battle, a method which the world does not know, which it cannot understand, which has never arisen in the heart of man. It is the method of faith!

By faith the walls of Jericho fell down. And it must be emphatically *by faith*!

The Prince of the host of Jehovah makes known to Joshua faith's plan of battle against Jericho. He reveals, first of all, that the Lord has given into Joshua's hand the

city and the king and the mighty men of valor. That must be established first. According to His Word, the matter is finished and it cannot be changed. Jericho is already, — in reality, in the reality of God's counsel, — before the battle is ever joined, in the possession of Joshua and the children of Israel. The Lord had done that. He would also realize it. They are more than conquerors. The victory is theirs before they fight the battle. From Jehovah's hand they are to receive the city. And remember: this is the method of *faith*!

And only when He has established this firmly in Joshua's mind and heart, does the Prince of Israel's host reveal to Joshua the details as to the manner in which the city is to be taken. And what a strange way! What a marvelous way! It is the way of faith! No storming of the gates or scaling of the walls; no bloody assault and terrible battle; no exhortation to the valiant men of Israel to do their utmost that they may capture the city; none of all this is mentioned.

O, no: a plan of battle is revealed such as has never arisen in the heart of man. A plan it is, such as the Pentagon would reject as foolhardy. The host of Israel are to go around the town one every day for six days in succession. In the procession they are to carry the ark of the covenant preceded by seven priests carrying seven jubilee trumpets. On the seventh day they are to compass the city seven times. And then the priests are to blow their trumpets, and the people are to raise a great and loud war-cry, and the wall of the city will fall down flat. Then Israel's host can press this impregnable fortress-city, and everyone can go straight forward, and Jericho will be in their possession. It is this plan which is executed by the host of Jehovah, and according to which the city fell to Israel's possession.

By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.

* * * *

That it might be *by faith* the people may not take the city in their own strength at all, or by force of arms. Never must they be able to claim the land by their own effort. Never must they be able to say that *they* had conquered the land, and could therefore also do with it as they pleased. Always it must be evident that Jehovah had given them the land by His own right hand. And at Jericho's gates this must be plain from the very outset, that the Lord Jehovah gives them as with His own hand the entire land. The inheritance must be a gift. It must be grace, all grace, free grace, only grace!

And as it is in the age of shadows, so it is too in the age of reality. As it is with the typical inheritance, so it is with the heavenly land, the inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that never fadeth away. It is of grace, that it might be by faith. And it is by faith, that it might be by grace. God gives us our salvation absolutely freely, without any effort, without any exertion, without any merit on our part whatsoever. He saves us while we are yet sinners. The Captain of our salvation is of Him! The regenerating, life-implanting,

faith-bestowing, sanctifying, and preserving Spirit is of Him in Christ! He is the God of our salvation in the full sense of the word. It is all, absolutely, entirely of Him!

By faith, — yes, by faith, — the walls of Jericho fell down. That means: the work was God's, all God's, most emphatically and exclusively God's!

All the details of the "battle-plan" testify to this. They all spell out that wonder of grace which is expressed in those two words, "by faith."

There is, of course, symbolism in these details of Israel's march of faith. And the entire significance of that Old Testament march of faith centers and culminates in the ark of the covenant. It symbolized that Jehovah Himself was in their midst, and that He was marching among His people as they went around the city. Without that ark of the covenant not only was their marching vain; it was impossible. Not only was it Jehovah Who, marching with His people, gave them the city. But you cannot from any human and natural viewpoint explain that march around Jericho's walls without Him. What is Joshua, the captain of Israel's host, without Jehovah? His very names expresses it: Jehovah-salvation! What is Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, unless He is Jehovah, the I Am, come to tabernacle with His people and to be a God unto them?

Not only is Jehovah the center of that marching host of Israel, and the object of their confidence. He was the source of the whole march. He was the source even of the faith by which Israel marched. Without Him it would all be a fiasco. You cannot, from any human and natural viewpoint, explain that march without Him. Imagine the armies of the world marching *around* a city, instead of *against* it. Imagine an army before a walled and fortified city without battering rams, or cannon, or bombs. It is foolishness. It is idiocy. But not to faith!

For in that ark you have the presence of the Lord of hosts, condescending in His grace and mercy to save His people, to fight the battle of salvation for them, and at the same time to inflict judgment upon His enemies. Jericho, the kingdom of darkness, the enemies of the cause of God, their measure of iniquity being full, must be judged. And the Lord of Hosts will Himself uproot this kingdom of darkness. He will make place for His own kingdom of peace. God in Christ is the strength of His people Israel. And He alone destroys the kingdom of darkness, and perfects His own everlasting kingdom of righteousness.

In harmony with all this are the other details. There is the prominent number seven: seven days, seven times the seventh day, seven priests, seven horns. It is the number of the perfection of God's everlasting kingdom, accomplished by Him. There are the trumpet blasts, symbol of the mighty voice of the Lord. They signalize His coming. They are an announcement of the coming of the Lord to save His people, and to execute judgment upon the wicked.

Ah, then there can be no question whether the walls will fall!

But you say: where was the faith? And what had that faith to do with the fall of Jericho?

But do you not see now that this whole wonderful procedure illustrates the true nature of faith? Israel was to receive and enter Jericho and Canaan. But they were to receive and enter by faith. If the Lord had merely caused the walls to fall down without any act whatever on the part of the people of Israel, the sacred writer could not in this instance have penned the words "by faith." For their faith would not have been manifest. Faith does not mean that the Lord puts His people to sleep and breaks down the kingdom of the devil, and then causes them to wake up after a while in the eternal inheritance. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, *after they had been compassed about seven days*. The power of faith is indeed active!

But what, pray, is the peculiar character of that power and activity of faith? What is its relation to the final realization of the kingdom of God and the destruction of the kingdom of darkness. Is it, perhaps, thus, that faith is the one-tenth that we must do after the nine-tenths that God performs? Is it our one-tenth, prerequisite to the reception of the divine nine-tenths? But no: then salvation would not be of the Lord! Peculiar to faith is that it receives, always receives. Never can it do anything but receive. Even when it is active, even when it is manifested in the fruit of all good works, it manifests nothing but that it receives.

That faith was evident before Jericho's walls.

For do you not see that there was absolutely no causal and no visible connection between the march of the people and the falling of the walls? To the natural eye it must have seemed futile, utterly foolish. What effect could that marching have upon the mighty walls of the kingdom of darkness?

But the missing link in this case was the power of the Almighty. His power destroyed the city. His power was the source of the faith. His power was revealed to Israel and in Israel.

That power their faith clung. It received the wonder of grace. They laid hold on the promise of Jehovah, confident that His Word would surely come to pass. And thus it came to pass. The trumpet blast is heard. The victor's cry rings. The mockery in Jericho's walls is silenced. And faith is crowned with success. By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after they were compassed about seven days.

Salvation is of the Lord!

That salvation faith delights to behold. To the strong arm of Jehovah faith clings. And it loves to sing, and shall sing to endless ages:

They gained not the land by the edge of the sword,
Their own arm to them could no safety afford,
But Thy right hand saved, and the light of Thy face,
Because of Thy favor and wonderful grace.

H.C.H.

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EDITORIALS

Seeing that at the time when this Standard Bearer leaves the press, I expect, the Lord willing, to be in Lynden, Wash. and that, most probably I will have little opportunity to write, I offer the following instead.

There was a moment at Classis East in April 1953 when the classis felt obliged to censure me because of certain expressions I made on the floor of the classis.

To this censure I replied in the following document.

I am sure that, since the matter was quite public, there is nothing wrong in giving it further publication here.

Besides, all our churches are interested in what transpired at Classis East, and what I state in the following document about cesspools of corruption has since become more evident than ever.

H. H.
April 15, '53

*Classis East of the Prot. Ref. Churches,
Convened in Hudsonville, April, 1953.*

Reply To My Classical Censure

Esteemed Brethren:

Apart from my suspension and deposition from the office of a minister in the Christian Reformed Churches in 1924-25, it was the first time in my entire ministry, whether in the Christian Reformed or in the Protestant Reformed Churches, that I was ever censured. I want you to know, brethren, that I consider this very serious. Any form of ecclesiastical censure is the beginning of excommunication. If, therefore, you are not playing with terms, and not making a mockery of church discipline, the classis will undoubtedly have to continue the way which they commenced to follow yesterday. And if I do not repent, which I will not, the classis will have to make the case pending with my consistory, and ask that I be excommunicated from the Prot. Ref. Churches. I must also express my surprise that the classical censure was imposed upon me in such a cold, unchristian, and unbrotherly way. A mere motion was offered and passed to censure me, and the classis through its chairman did not even address to me one single word of admonition, and try to bring me to repentance for my sin. However, the censure was nevertheless imposed. And seeing it is such a very serious matter, I certainly have the right to defend myself against whatever charge the classis holds against me. And seeing that I am the defendant in this case, I beg the classis to attend unto my plea, and let me finish it to the end.

The classis considered itself in duty bound to censure the undersigned: 1) Because he accused the Rev. Kok and his consistory of lying; and, 2) Because he supported the Rev. Ophoff in his statement that our churches were in need of a cleaning out of cesspools of wickedness. Now, in the first place, brethren, I cannot understand why the brother that moved it did not offer his motion to censure me when

on Friday last (April 10) I offered my advice to the classis why the protest of Mr. Körteling should be treated at this present classis. For in that advice I said the same thing as the Rev. Ophoff did in his document which he read to the classis in the forenoon of April 14. And I quote: "When this part of the protest is treated, it will, undoubtedly, appear to classis that the Rev. Kok and his consistory of speaking some very serious untruths, not to say deliberate lies. I need not enumerate them here, but I will mention them when the protest is discussed. I ask, brethren, must not the Rev. Kok and his consistory wholeheartedly confess these untruths, which now have become public, before the Rev. Kok can even preach and lead his congregation in public worship, and before the consistory can properly function as overseers of the church in Holland? Remember that, according to the Heidelberg Catechism, lying and slander belong to the very works of the devil."

The term *untruth* and *lie* mean the very same thing, according to the dictionary, except that the one is perhaps of a little harsher sound than the other. Yet the classis let this pass, and no one made a motion to censure me. In the second place, I want to call the brethren's attention to the fact that the term *lie* and *lying* is as such certainly not objectionable. The classis cannot possibly censure me for using that term as such. For in the first place, it is a thoroughly Biblical term, as Biblical as the very opposite, *truth*. And in the second place, it is a confessional term. As to the first, I refer to Ephesians 4:25: "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another." And in Col. 3:9: "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds." But I need quote no more. For you are all acquainted with the fact that the Bible frequently speaks of lying, and admonishes the people of God not to lie, either against the truth or against one another. And as to our confessions, I but quote to you Lord's Day 43: "That I bear false witness against no man, nor falsify any man's words; that I be no backbiter, nor slanderer; that I do not judge, nor join in condemning any man rashly, or unheard; but that I avoid all sorts of lies and deceit, as the proper works of the devil, unless I would bring down upon me the heavy wrath of God." Hence, certainly the classis can have no objection against the use of the term *lie*, *lying*, or *lies*, as such. It must be, therefore, that the classis was of the opinion that when I made that accusation, I either had no sufficient grounds for it, or was myself speaking an untruth. The burden of proof, therefore, now evidently rests upon me, although I am convinced that after the reading of the minutes of Holland's Consistory and the reading of the protest of Mr. Körteling, the classis itself was certainly in a position to know that when I made that accusation I spoke the truth.

The question may be asked, first of all, what is meant by *lying*, or *to lie*? In general, I would say that a lie is not a statement based upon ignorance of the facts or upon a mere misconception. But I would rather define it as a statement

that pretends to be the truth while one knows that it is an untruth. When, therefore, I accuse the Rev. Kok and his consistory of lying, I must prove to the satisfaction of classis that they knew the truth, but deliberately misrepresented it. As to the statement of the Rev. Ophoff which I condone, that we must clean out cesspools of wickedness, or of corruption, if we would prevent our churches from going to the rocks, there certainly can be no objection to that language as such either. By a cesspool I understand a cistern or vault that is constructed or designed to receive some filth or sedimentary matter. The figure therefore means a collection of moral corruption that is permitted to accumulate and to rot, and that must be cleaned out. I am also convinced that it is high time that we began to clean out such cesspools among ourselves.

And now for my proof. I wish to point out the following.

1. The Rev. Kok and his delegate lied when they left the impression upon the classis that the consistory had decided that the protest of Mr. Kortering was not legal because the consistory had not had sufficient time to treat it.

2. I claim that the Rev. Kok was lying when on the floor of the classis he said that the whole consistory was amazed and dumbfounded and that it struck them as a thunderclap out of a clear sky when on the 12th of December Mr. Kortering lodged his protest with the consistory and demanded the suspension of the Rev. Kok.

3. I claim that the Rev. Kok and the consistory are lying when they emphasize that Mr. Kortering had a wrong conception of church polity, so that he was of the conviction that the action of suspension of a minister must not initiate with the consistory, but with classis and synod.

4. I claim that the Rev. Kok started a cesspool of corruption when in the old country he sold our Prot. Ref. Churches down the river.

5. I claim that the Rev. Kok added to the same cesspool when later he constantly agitated for Liberated doctrine and against the Declaration of Principles.

6. I claim that the Rev. Kok added again to the cesspool when, probably in conjunction with others, he searched all my writings to find passages in which I mentioned the term *condition*, although I can plainly prove that from the very start of my ministry till the present time I never believed in conditions.

7. And finally, I wish to make a few remarks about a cesspool of slander especially about me in terms that sometimes smell literally of the cesspool.

the charges which served as the grounds of Mr. Kortering's protest. In a letter addressed to Mr. Kortering, and dated Jan. 26, 1953, the consistory states: "Whereas the consistory was given but one evening in which to discuss and weigh the justice and righteousness of your demand, namely at its meeting of December 18th." I quote this from the answer by the consistory of Holland, which was read in our classical meeting in the forenoon of April 8, 1953. This is evidently not true. For Mr. Kortering himself states, and I quote from his protest of December 12: "And since after repeated warnings by us as individual officebearers, as well as other sources in the midst of our churches, brother Kok still insists on preaching and teaching his conditional theology as we have revealed in this protest, as well as his public writings in our church papers." And from his protest to the classis I quote the following: "These brotherly warnings and admonitions by the elders took place on what Rev. Kok was publicly writing in these papers, during the period following the adoption of the Declaration by our synod, and before Sept. 7th, 1952. On Sept. 7th Rev. Kok openly took this same controversy, which was still continuing in these papers, to our pulpit.

"That, brethren, must be clearly understood.

"Therefore, on Sunday morning, Sept. 7th, 1952, immediately after the service, I objected to Rev. Kok introducing to our pulpit, his conditional theology controversy, which He did that morning by expressing his own opinion. My objection caused division among the elders and the pastor, as to what Rev. Kok said in that sermon. Because of my objection, and the division that resulted, Rev. Kok himself issued the statement hereinafter referred to, and delivered copies of it to all the elders.

"I received a copy of this transcript, shortly after dinner that same Sunday from the hand of Rev. Kok himself. I studied this transcript, and immediately proceeded to ground my objection, by submitting to consistory for study, examination, and consideration, my written opinion, on what Rev. Kok had preached that morning, and as he gave it to us in writing. This document was officially received by consistory a few days later on Sept. 12th, 1952. This written opinion was the ground why I objected to Rev. Kok introducing his conditional theology controversy, in the official preaching on our pulpit. This document after being received for information was given in the hands of our pastor for study and examination till our next elders' meeting held on Oct. 9th. This was practically a whole month. The document was returned to consistory on the Oct. 9th elders' meeting, without any comment from our pastor. After this the Oct. 9th and the Nov. 13th elders' meetings were spent in discussing conditions, with the pastor taking the defensive, and continuing to defend his conditional theology. In between these two elders' meetings, at which only elders were present, we had our regular consistory meeting at which the deacons are with us, this was on Oct. 3rd 1952. This meeting was the

First of all, then, I claim that the Rev. Kok and his delegate lied when they made the classis in its January session believe that the consistory had decided that the protest of Mr. Kortering was illegal because the consistory had not had sufficient time. In the first place, it certainly is not true that the consistory did not have sufficient time to treat

Sunday before the celebration of the Lord's Supper. At this meeting during *censura morum*, I told the consistory, that in partaking of communion I reserved the right to protest on the basis of my opinion in the hands of the consistory for consideration at that time."

I will quote no more. From the document read by the Rev. Ophoff on the morning of April 14 we heard how very serious the objections of Mr. Kortering were. So serious indeed that if the pastor were guilty of the charges laid against him by Mr. Kortering, suspension and deposition would surely have to follow if the pastor did not repent. All these charges were therefore present at the consistory since September 12th, and discussed repeatedly, so that certainly it is not true that the consistory had but one evening in which to discuss and weigh the justice and righteousness of Mr. Kortering's demand. It is therefore not true that they did not have sufficient time to treat the matter in hand.

Besides, we have heard from the minutes that the consistory could go no further, that they were deadlocked, and that therefore as far as the consistory is concerned the case certainly was finished, and the only thing Mr. Kortering could do was appeal to classis.

Finally, it is certainly not true that the consistory by an official decision had declared that the protest of Mr. Kortering at the classis was illegal on the ground that they had not had sufficient time to treat it. There was no such decision of the consistory whatsoever. And therefore I maintain that when the Rev. Kok nevertheless took it upon himself in the presence of his fellow elder to state that this was the decision of the consistory, or to leave the impression with the classis that the consistory had so decided, he and his fellow elder were guilty of a statement which they knew was not true.

The same grounds I offer for my second claim, namely, that the Rev. Kok lied when he stated that when Mr. Kortering offered his protest to the consistory, the whole consistory was amazed and dumbfounded and that it came as a thunderclap out of a clear sky. I really cannot judge about the amazement and dumbfoundedness of Rev. Kok and his consistory, for that is a subjective matter. Some people are more easily amazed and dumbfounded than others. But that the protest of Mr. Kortering came as a thunderclap out of a clear sky is an objective statement, and is certainly not true. And not only so, but Rev. Kok and his consistory both know that it is not true. In the first place, this is evident from the very serious charges which Mr. Kortering lodged against his pastor shortly after Sept. 7th. And secondly, this is also evident from the fact that on Oct. 23rd Mr. Kortering announced to the consistory on the occasion of *censura morum* that he would reserve the right to protest against the Rev. Kok. It is possible that the Rev. Kok and the consistory did not take these things seriously. But Mr. Kortering evidently did. And it certainly is not true, but quite contrary to fact, that the protest of Mr. Kortering, when he finally lodged it with the consistory, came as a thunderclap out of a clear sky.

OUR DOCTRINE

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

AN EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM
PART III — OF THANKFULNESS
LORD'S DAY 40

Chapter 2

The Sword-power and the Sixth Commandment (con'td)

And this position of the Reformed confessions is certainly based on the Word of God. Scripture certainly does not support the position that war as such is always and necessarily sin. Mark you well, we do not take up a defense for the wars of the world. It certainly is not our position that the wars of the world are always justified, that they are never sinful. But it certainly cannot be maintained in the light of the Word of God that war as such is always to be condemned. That the sword is given to the magistrate certainly implies that it has received from God the power to kill. And as the Reformed confessions have it, this also implies that the magistrate has authority from God to wage a just war. Of David it is said that he waged the wars of Jehovah. And the same is true of all the wars that were waged by the pious kings of Israel against the enemies of the people of God. Nor is it true that the New Testament in this respect produces a different sound from that of the Old Testament. When the soldiers come to John the Baptist with the question, "What shall we do?" he does not enjoin them to quit the military service, as if it were necessarily a sinful and ungodly occupation, but he says to them: "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages." It was a centurion, an officer in the Roman army, of whom the Lord Jesus testified that He had not seen so great a faith as was manifest in this man even in Israel. And also Cornelius, mentioned in Acts 10, was a centurion of the band called the Italian band. And of him the Scriptures testify that he was "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway." And he became one of the firstfruits of the kingdom of heaven from among the heathen. The fear of God, therefore, is not necessarily in conflict with military service. And war as such is not to be condemned.

This, however, raises another question. If the magistrate may wage war; and if war as such, in the light of Scripture, cannot be condemned; and yet it be also true that wars are by no means always just, on what basis and when may the believer in the world participate in war and have no objection to military service? May we take the position of another class of conscientious objectors, who refuse to be drafted and to take part in any war as long as they individually cannot see the justice of a certain war? It ought to be plain that on the basis of such a negative position no Christian can ever consent to be drafted for military service. The average individual believer cannot possibly be expected to be

so thoroughly informed about the causes of modern wars that he is able to pass sentence on the justice of them. Hence, he must necessarily always be a conscientious objector.

Of course, you understand that the basis upon which this conscientious objector defends his position is that every individual citizen is responsible for any act he performs in obedience to the authority of the government, even though that authority be exercised strictly in its own proper domain, such as in the declaration of war. Hence, before he obeys, he is under obligation to determine whether a given act of the government is morally justified or not. And upon the result of this individual determination it must depend whether any citizen is in duty bound to obey the government or to refuse obedience. Of course, if one adopts the principle from which this conscientious objector proceeds, you will have to grant that in this last stand he is right. In any moral question it is certainly wrong to reason thus: I am not certain whether it is right; therefore I will do it. If war is a matter of individual responsibility, I must be certain of the justice of a given war before I fight. He that doubts if he eats is damned because he does not eat out of faith. Much more so, if one fights if he doubts, if it be true that war is killing people,—and, we may add, innocent people as far as the war is concerned, whether they fight on the just or on the unjust side of the war, and whether they be soldiers or civilians,—and if every individual citizen is personally responsible for this killing of people, then certainly no one may engage in warfare as long as he is uncertain whether the cause for which he is fighting is a just one. No one can kill people unless he is certain that it is the will of God. And if the individual Christian is responsible for his killing of people in war, he must be certain that the war is just.

This is really the stand that was taken by the Christian Reformed Churches in 1939. At that time a "Testimony" was adopted, from which we quote the following paragraph: "The only conscientious objector to military service whose claim the church cannot repudiate is he, who recognizing his duty to obey his government and to defend this country in response to his call to arms, has intelligent and adequate grounds to be convinced that the given war to which he is summoned is an unjust war. When he is absolutely certain in the light of the principles of the Word of God that his country is fighting for a wrong cause, he cannot morally justify his participation in the given war. War is killing people. And for anyone to engage in such killing of fellow-men when he is convinced in his heart that the cause for which he is fighting is an unjust one, this procedure cannot be justified before the tribunal of God and His Word. The only course open to such a person is to resort to passive resistance and to refuse to bear arms in that given war."

This, of course, is based upon identically the same principle as the one that motivated the type of conscientious objector referred to above. Both judge of the justness of a given war. Both act upon this individual judgment, not

from the principle of obedience to the government. Both say to the government: "I will obey if I can see that your cause is not unjust, or at least that I cannot see that it is unjust."

These both implicitly deny that the government only has the authority and power to wield the sword. Both proceed from the supposition that the individual citizen is responsible for the way in which the government wields the sword. The only difference is that the one is uncertain. And therefore, according to the Synod of the Chr. Ref. Church, he must fight. The other is certain, and therefore he must not fight. With this we cannot possibly agree. It is the principle of individualism, and therefore, really the principle of revolution.

Notice that the Synod speaks of "intelligent and adequate grounds to be convinced that the given war to which he is summoned is an unjust war." Intelligent and adequate, we ask, according to what standard? No doubt the Synod will say: according to the standard of the Word of God. But the question remains, nevertheless: who then is to be the judge to determine whether these grounds are intelligent and adequate and according to the standard of Scripture? Certainly, not the church: for she is not the final judge in the matter. But who then? The government? To be sure, if the "Testimony" of the Chr. Ref. Church is also intended as a basis upon which the government must act and excuse certain conscientious objectors, it is she that must judge of these grounds and determine whether they are intelligent and adequate. But this is out of the question, for the government declared the given war, and if she would decide that the grounds of these conscientious objectors were intelligent and adequate to convince anyone that the war is unjust, she would have to retract the very declaration of war. Besides, if the government should decide that the grounds were not intelligent and adequate, such a decision would not change the mind of the conscientious objector himself. He would still be certain that the given war is unjust. In the last analysis, therefore, it must be the conscientious objector himself that determines the intelligence and adequacy of his own grounds for considering the given war unjust.

This leaves it to the decision of the individual citizen whether or not in its own proper domain the magistrate shall wield the sword and wage war.

On this basis, it stands to reason, it will be quite impossible for the government to wage war. For many will be the conscientious objectors that have intelligent and adequate reasons in the light of Scripture to refuse to participate in a given war. Some, indeed, have intelligent and adequate objections against any war; and they also appeal to Scripture for their stand. If you grant the right of citizens to determine whether a given war is just, why deny them the right to take the stand that all war is sinful, and that therefore no Christian can participate in any war. Others, perhaps, will consider a war of self-defense the sole war that is justifiable. Still others may take the stand that it is our solemn duty to

fight on the side of democracy and against totalitarianism and communism. Besides, what is really a just war? How often is justice wholly with the one side of the conflicting nations, and injustice with the other? And suppose that one reaches the certain conclusion that there is at least also unjustness on the side of the government? Must he obey the summons to fight? It is evident that if we give the right to the individual citizens to judge whether a war is just and reasonable, the government will always be handicapped and powerless to wage war.

On the basis of the Word of God and our Reformed confessions, there is but one position possible with regard to the Christian's calling when the government summons him to military service.

As long as the government wields the sword given her by God within her own domain, that is, the civil state, whether it be within its own borders and with respect to its own citizens, or over against other governments and states, she alone has authority. And the citizens must obey unconditionally. However, as soon as the civil government would attempt to exercise her authority in the domain of the church and would turn her God-given sword against Christ and His cause, the government would move in a sphere in which she has no authority whatsoever, and therefore is no longer government, but mere man. And the principle would have to be applied that we must obey God rather than men.

This implies that the individual Christian is not morally responsible for the justness or unjustness of the war that is declared by the government. Nor is he responsible for any act which he performs in strict obedience to the government as such when he is called to the colors and summoned to military service.

The hangman is not responsible when, in obedience to the proper magistrates, he executes the sentence upon the man that is legally condemned to death. The sentence may be a mistake, or it may be grossly unjust. The executioner may be absolutely convinced in his own mind that the condemned man is innocent. But he does not act, or refuse to act, on the ground of his own individual conviction, but merely in obedience to the proper and responsible authorities.

The same relation holds when the citizen is called to arms.

God will have every soul in subjection unto the powers that be. We may not resist. The magistrates bear the sword in the name of God. That sword symbolizes the authority to punish evildoers within her own borders, but it certainly also implies the power to declare and to wage war. And to no other that sword is ever given. The government only has the right to determine whether it shall be war or peace. She only is responsible for the way in which she makes use of that God-given authority. The individual citizens cannot possibly be responsible, or even co-responsible, with the government for the latter's handling of the sword. And therefore, the duty of the citizen is to obey for conscience' sake. One may have his doubts as to the justness of a given war. One may be convinced that a given war is unjust on

the part of the government that summons him. One may, to be sure, even lodge his protest, with the grounds upon which he considers the war unjust, with his government. But obey he must, as long as it concerns the authority of the magistrates, exercised in the domain of the civil state or commonwealth.

If, however, the same government to which we are in subjection as long as she uses her sword-power in her own domain, should attempt to wield that sword in a sphere outside of the civil commonwealth, — a domain over which she was never set in authority by God, — we must refuse to acknowledge that authority. In such cases it is not the question whether we shall be obedient to the government or to God, but whether we shall obey God or man.

Thus the apostles answer the council when the latter forbid them to preach in the name of Jesus. To preach the gospel belongs to the Christ-given calling and authority of the church. The authority of the government does not extend into this domain. Hence, when the Jewish council usurped this power over against the apostles, the latter, through Peter, reminded them that they transgressed the boundaries of their authority by saying that they must obey God rather than men.

This, therefore, is the proper stand in the light of Scripture and the confessions.

Capital punishment is certainly demanded in Scripture as the only proper punishment for the murderer. And war, although not always just, in fact, although frequently unjust, cannot be condemned in the light of Scripture. Nor can refusal on the part of the citizen to obey the summons of the government when it calls him to the battle or to engage in any military service be sustained in the light of the Word of God. We do not deny that the church, as well as the individual Christian, has a moral calling with regard to any war. But we do deny that the individual soldier is responsible for the justness of a given war. And the Christian must always obey the summons of his government to arms.

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Chapter 3

Love of the Neighbor's Person

This, namely, that we love the neighbor's person as we love our own person for God's sake, is the positive idea of the sixth commandment.

This the Heidelberg Catechism explains in the 107th question as follows: "But is it enough that we do not kill any man in the manner mentioned above? No: for when God forbids envy, hatred, and anger, he commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves; to show patience, peace, meekness, mercy, and all kindness, towards him, and prevent his hurt as much as in us lies; and that we do good, even to our enemies."

Here, however, there arise several questions. The first and principal one of these is, no doubt: what in the light of Scripture, is love? In close connection with this principal

question is this other one: is love of the neighbor the same as love of the brethren? In other words, can we love all men in the same sense? Again, in close connection with the former question is this further one: how can we possibly love our enemies? Suppose that these enemies also be enemies of God: how then is it possible to love them as our neighbor, even as we love ourselves, for God's sake?

First of all, then, we must discuss the question: what is love?

When we turn to the Word of God for instruction with respect to the meaning of the word *love*, we discover, first of all, that in the Old Testament there are especially two words used to express the idea of love, though with different shades of meaning. The first word we have in mind has the root meaning of "to join, to fasten." It is also used intransitively, so that it means "to adhere, to stick together." With respect to love, therefore, it emphasizes the idea of a bond of fellowship. It also expresses the notion of delight. The latter idea as an element in love is related to the first, probably as the cause to the effect. One delights in another, and the result is that he longs for the object of his delight, seeks it, and having found it, he cleaves to it. According to this word, then, love is that bond of fellowship between two persons that have delight in each other. Thus the word is used in Deut. 7:7 of the love of God: "The Lord did not set his love upon you (that is, delight in you, seek you, and cleave to you), nor choose you because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people." And also in Ps. 91:14 the same word is used: "Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him." The second word employed in the Old Testament to express the idea of love rather denotes the living action of love than the essence of it as a bond of fellowship. It has the root meaning "to breathe after," and thus, "to long for and strongly desire." It is the word that is used in Deut. 6:4: "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy mind and with all thy soul and with all thy strength." God, as the highest good, therefore, must be the chief and only object of our desire. It is the language of love when Asaph sings in Ps. 73:25: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." And David sings in Ps. 42:12: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." The word is also used to express the love of God for His people, as in Deut. 4:37: "And because he loved thy fathers, therefore, he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in his sight, with his mighty power out of Egypt." And also in Isaiah 63:9: "In his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them and carried them all the days of old." If we combine the various elements expressed by these terms, we may say that love is a spiritual bond of fellowship in which two or more parties adhere to one another, a bond which is the result of the delight these parties have in one another, which causes them to desire and to seek one another.

Also in the New Testament there occur two words, the

one expressing a tender affection, a fondness, which is rather emotional than volitional; the other, however, denoting a love that is rooted in the will and is thoroughly spiritual and ethical. It is well-known how both words are characteristically employed in John 22:15-17, which narrates the restoration of Peter after he had denied the Lord. The Lord inquires of His sorrowful disciple whether he loves Him, twice using the stronger word, that expresses love proper, the last time employing the weaker word, that denotes a tender affection and no more. The apostle, however, dares not use the stronger word, conscious as he is of his recent manifestation of selfconfidence and miserable weakness.

In Col. 3:14 we read: "Above all put on love, which is the bond of perfectness." It would probably be over-emphasizing the real value of this text if we should say that here we have a Biblical definition of love. Yet it approaches the nature of a definition very nearly. Love is the bond of perfectness. By this phrase, "bond of perfectness," we must understand a bond or union that is characterized by perfection in the ethical sense of the word, ethical goodness, such as truth, righteousness, holiness, justice, faithfulness, and the like. Love, then, is a bond that can exist and be maintained only in the sphere of ethical or moral perfection. There is no love in darkness. And they that love darkness do not love one another in the positive sense of the word. If love, as we gathered, is the union or bond that is caused by the delight of one person in the other, by the longing of the one for the other, by the seeking of the other by him that loves, then we now learn that the reason and object of this delight is ethical perfection. He that loves in the true sense of the word delights in perfection, in ethical goodness, in truth and righteousness, in the light. Hence, love requires a perfect subject and a perfect object. Both he that loves and he that is loved must be perfect. Since love is the bond of perfectness, it is the bond that only unites perfect parties. Love, therefore, is preeminently an ethical virtue. It is an attribute and act of the will. It requires a person to love. And it requires a person or an ethical quality to be the object of love. Hence, we must not use the word for animals and things. It is true that in Scripture the word is employed as referring to the very opposite of ethical perfection, as when it is said that men love darkness rather than light, John 3:19, and that they love the praise of men more than the praise of God, John 12:43. However, this merely emphasizes the very perversion of love in the natural man. Even as it is not love, but adultery, when a husband is unfaithful to his wedded wife and is said to love another woman. Love is the bond of perfectness, that unites the ethically perfect as such. For that reason it implies a choice of the will, and is the very antithesis of hatred. A man cannot serve two masters. He will love the one and hate the other. Matt. 6:24. God has loved Jacob, but Esau hath He hated. Rom. 9:13. Love is also the fulfillment of the law. Rom. 13:10. And the love of God is the first and great command-

ment, while the love of the neighbor is like unto it. And the ethically perfect character of love constitutes the basic note of that well-known eulogy of love which we find in I Corinthians 13. Love rejoiceth not in iniquity, but it rejoiceth in the truth. I Cor. 13:6.

If we bear this thoroughly ethical character of love in mind, we are not surprised to read in Scripture that God is love, I John 4:8; and that love is always of God, that is, wherever you may find true love, even among men, it has its origin in God, I John 4:7; and that God is the God of love, II Cor. 13:11; for God is pure perfection. His very Being is the bond of perfectness. God is a light, and there is no darkness in Him at all. He is righteousness, He is truth, He is knowledge and wisdom, He is purity and holiness, He is goodness, the highest good, and the overflowing fountain of all good. Hence, God loves Himself. All the love and delight of His perfect nature is directed to His own infinite perfections. Also in this respect God is perfectly Self-sufficient. He has no need of men's hands to be served. He needs not man's heart to be loved. He is in no need of any creature outside of Himself in order to love. For God is Triune, One in Being and Three in Persons. He knows Himself as Father through the Son and in the Spirit. Constantly, eternally, He beholds His own perfections and delights in them. And the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity are united in the bond of divinely, infinitely perfect love. Hence, we read that the Father loves the Son. John 3:35. And Christ would have the world know that He loves the Father. John 14:31.

Hence, on the basis of Scripture, we may mention the following elements as essential to love. In the first place, it is a bond of fellowship that unites, draws, and fastens. In the second place, it is ethical in nature, and therefore requires an ethical subject and an ethical object. Love requires an ethically perfect subject and an ethically perfect object: both he that loves and he that is loved must be perfect. If in Scripture we are admonished to love our enemies, to love them that persecute us, the meaning is not, therefore, that we are expected to have fellowship with them. The bond of perfectness in such a case cannot possibly exist. The meaning therefore is that we shall bestow acts of love on them, such acts as would tend to draw them into the sphere of perfection. To this we will return later. And finally, love, as an act of the perfect subject towards the perfect object, is delight in perfection, and therefore the longing for and the seeking of the object, in order to cling to him when found. In other words, love is that spiritual bond of perfect fellowship that subsists between persons that are ethically perfect and dwell in the light, and that because of their perfection mutually delight in one another, long for one another, seek one another, and cling to one another. As such God is love, the God of love; and all love is of God. In Him love is absolute and self-sufficient. He is its subject, the one that loves with an infinitely perfect love from eternity to eternity. And He is its object, the one that is loved, God, being the implication of all ethical perfection, has an infinitely perfect delight in Himself, seeks

Himself, and eternally finds Himself, has fellowship with Himself, lives the life of perfect love, of the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit.

God, therefore, is not in need of any creature to have an object of love, nor to be the object of love. For He is sufficient in Himself. Yet, it pleased God to reveal His love in and to a people whom He has chosen from all eternity. For the Scriptures speak of "the beloved according to the election." Rom. 11:28. It teaches us to rejoice that hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts, something which undoubtedly means that we have been made to possess and experience the love of God to us. Rom. 5:5. The apostle John frequently speaks of this love, particularly in his first general epistle. He calls upon us to admire the wonder of that amazing love, when he writes: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." I John 3:1. The same apostle points to the real nature of love, when he explains: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us," meaning that such is the very character and operation of love that it proceeds from God alone. Not from us to Him, neither mutually from Him to us and from us to Him, but from Him it proceeds to us; and our love is but a response to His love, the return of God's own love through our hearts to Him. I John 4:10. He reminds us that God so loved us that He sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. I John 4:10, 11. God does not only love Himself, but He also extends the sphere of His love outside of His own Being and triune life so as to include also us, His people according to the election of grace.

But there is more. Not only do the Scriptures speak of this love of God to us; they also emphatically speak of the love of us to God. Love may be onesided, purely divine in nature and origin and manner of operation. The effect of this operation and manifestation of the love of God is surely that we also love God, so that there is a bond of fellowship between Him and His people. For indeed, He loved us first, and all love is out of Him. But we also love Him, because He loved us first. I John 4:19. In fact, that we love God is the heart of the law. That we love Him with all our heart and mind and soul and strength is the first and great commandment. This love of God, both as it is manifested as God's love to us and as it is our response to the love of God, is a love of God in Christ. For that reason the Word of God teaches us to shout with victorious joy that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. Rom. 8:35. But immediately after, it reminds us that this love of Christ is the same as the love of God, when the same chapter of the epistle to the Romans concludes that no power in heaven or on earth shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Rom. 8:39. And concerning our love to God the Lord tells His disciples: "If ye love me, keep my commandments." John 14:15. And again, "If a man love me, he will keep my words." The reason is that the Word which

He speaks is not His own, but the Father's which sent Him. John 14:23, 24.

And lastly, Scripture speaks not only of God's love to us, and of our love to God. But it also teaches us that by the power of this love of God in our hearts we also love one another: "He that loveth God loveth his brother also." I John 4:21. And again: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another." John 13:23. For "he that loveth his brother dwelleth in the light." I John 2:10. And in this the children of God and the children of the devil are distinctly manifest, that the child of God loves his brother, and he that loveth not his brother is not of God: "For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another." By this even we know that we have passed from death into life, that we love the brethren. For he that loveth not his brother abideth in death. I John 3:10, 11, 14. Everyone, then, who loveth is born of God. I John 4:7. If a man say, I love God, and hate his brother, he is a liar, "for this is the commandment which we have from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." I John 4:20, 21.

Now the question arises: if love is the bond of perfectness, how is it ever possible that God should love us, who are by nature dead in trespasses and sins? Secondly, again if love is the bond of perfectness, how come that we ever love God, we who are by nature enemies of God? Thirdly, if love can never exist in the sphere of darkness, but only in the light, how can we possibly love one another? And in the fourth place, if love is the bond of perfectness, and therefore cannot possibly exist as fellowship between the godly and the ungodly, in what sense of the word do the children of God love their neighbors in general, and even love their enemies, who are and manifest themselves at the same time as enemies of God?

The first question is and can be answered only by the fact of God's eternal election. God from everlasting conceived of His people as perfect before Him in Christ Jesus our Lord, and as such He loves them with an everlasting love: "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." Jer. 31:3. Therefore, "the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children." Ps. 103:17. Jacob hath he loved from eternity, for this was said unto Rebecca before the children were born, neither had done good or evil, that the purpose of God according to the election might stand. Rom. 9:11-13. Moreover, "whom he did foreknow (that is, with a divine, causal, and eternal knowledge of love) he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son," He also called, justified, and glorified. Rom. 8:29, 30. For He blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, "according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him." Eph. 1:3, 4. It is in love that He predestinated us unto the

adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself according to the good pleasure of His will. Eph. 1:5. We must remember that God is immutable, and immutable also is His love. God does not fall in love; He loves eternally. And this does not merely apply to His divine Self-love, but also to His love to His people in Christ Jesus.

What does this imply?

First of all, that eternally God willed to reveal Himself in that which we might, humanly speaking, call the very highest of His divine Being and life, His love. In the second place, that therefore from all eternity He divinely and sovereignly knew, that is, conceived and willed a people that could be the object of His delight and love and that would taste and acknowledge His love and have their delight in Him. In the third place, that therefore He conceived of this people in His eternal counsel as perfect, even as He is perfect: for love is the bond of perfectness, and God cannot love that which is imperfect, sinful, and corrupt. In the fourth place, that He eternally knew His people, not merely as perfect, but as perfected through the deep way of sin and grace. For in order that His love might be manifested all the more gloriously, and they might taste the blessedness of that love more fully and deeply, God determined in His eternal counsel that His people should reach the highest perfection in the way of sin and by the power of grace. They are therefore eternally before Him in His divine counsel, not as corrupt, neither merely as perfect, but as the perfected, the redeemed and delivered out of the world, the adopted children, washed from their sin, called and justified and sanctified and glorified. Thus it is in Rom. 8:29, 30. Hence, it is necessarily so that the object of this love of God are the elect, and the elect only. And again, it follows that God beholds His people eternally in Christ Jesus as their Head, Whom He ordained as such, and to Whom He gave His people. Well, then, if we thus conceive of the people of God, of the object of the love of God, we can understand that love is the bond of perfectness, that it requires a perfect subject and a perfect object, and that nevertheless God can love His people though in time they are sinful in themselves, children of wrath as are also the others. For thus we read in Numbers 23:21: "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel; the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them." He knows them, beholds them eternally as perfected in Christ through the way of sin and death, and as such they are the eternal objects of His immutable love.

Hence, in the fulness of time God gloriously manifests His love in the sacrifice of His Son. Christ is Immanuel, God with us, the Son of God come into the flesh. And in Him, in the bloody tree of Calvary God reveals most gloriously the love wherewith He loved us from before the foundation of the world. For therein is the love of God manifested, that God sent His Son into the world, and sent Him into our death, to be a propitiation for our sin. God reaches out in everlasting love for the object of His love

into the lowest part of the earth, even into the depth of hell, when His Son in human nature cries out from the darkness of Golgotha: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" By that death of His Son He Himself brings the sacrifice for our sins, which we could never bring, nor even thought of bringing. By that death of His Son He reconciled us, that is, the whole church of all ages, all the elect, given to Christ by the Father, unto Himself. For He justified them in His blood. And therefore, He further manifests His love when once more He reaches out into the depth of the death of His Son, and raises Him as the first fruits, gives Him glory, eternal life, lifts Him up on high in Heaven, and exalts Him at His right hand, our Lord Jesus Christ is the central and highest manifestation of the love of God because He died for us while we were yet sinners. And through His death God reconciled us with Himself while we were yet enemies.

The second question is: how is it possible that we, who are by nature sinners, dead in trespasses and sins, can love God? The answer is: because God perfects His love through Christ Jesus in our hearts. Love is always of God, whether in God to Himself, in God to us, or in us to God. How do we come to taste and experience, to know the love of God to us? And how do we come to love Him? Is it perhaps thus, that God merely manifested His love to us as a love to sinners, as a sacrificing love, that He has that love to sinners proclaimed promiscuously to all that hear the gospel, and that by the mere proclamation of that unfathomable love the sinner is moved and attracted and persuaded to love God? That the matter is thus we would gather from much sentimental preaching about the love of God. God loved you so wonderfully: will you not love Him in return? But such is not the case. This might be the case if love were, as it is most generally presented, a sentimental feeling for sinners as such, a sentimental longing to bring them to heaven instead of to hell. But that is not the case. Love is the bond of perfectness. It requires a perfect subject and a perfect object. God, the eternally perfect Subject, loved His eternally perfect people in Christ Jesus as He beheld them in His counsel. But this people cannot taste the love of God to them, neither can or will they love God, until they also are made perfect. By nature they are corrupt, that is, with all their mind and will and heart they stand in enmity against God. For the carnal mind is enmity against God. It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Rom. 8:5-8. We have no delight in God as the only good and perfect. We hate Him. We do not seek Him. We flee from Him. And by nature we love sin and hate perfection, and we do not want to be delivered from the pollution of sin. Hence, we will have none of Him, though He manifest Himself to us in the face of Christ Jesus. He that hateth God hateth His Christ, and will crucify Him anew.

Now it is the same power of the love of God that is manifested in Christ that reaches out into our hearts and draws us with cords of love out of the mire of sin and dark-

ness into the fellowship of His perfection. The exalted Christ received the Spirit. And through that Spirit he returned to His church, dwells in them, and operates in them. It is by that Spirit that He regenerates us, and makes us partakers of His own perfect life of the resurrection. It is by that Spirit that He opens our eyes, that we may see; our ears, that we may hear; that He calls, and through the Word draws us unto Himself. It is by that Spirit that we, on the one hand, are made to see the misery of our sin and darkness and enmity against God; and, on the other hand, are made to thirst for the living God as He revealed Himself in all the beauty of His perfect love in Christ. It is by the Spirit that we are led to the cross, that we appropriate the love of God, the forgiveness of sin, righteousness, and eternal life. It is by that Spirit that the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, so that we know and taste that He loved us with an everlasting love. And, it is by that Spirit too that the power of the love of God, which is love of perfection, or rather, love in the sphere of perfection, causes us to love Him, to have our delight in Him, to seek Him, to thirst after Him, to desire to be pleasing to Him, and therefore to flee from the world and from the corruption of our sin and to do His commandments. It is this truth which is always emphasized in Scripture, and especially in the first epistle of the apostle John: "And hereby do we know that we know him (that is know Him in love), if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, ever as he walked." I John 2:3-6.

H.H



IN MEMORIAM

The consistory of the Prot. Ref. Church at Edgerton, Minn., hereby wishes to express its heartfelt sympathy with our Pastor H. Veldman in the loss of his mother,

MRS. J. VELDMAN

May our God abundantly comfort the bereaved by His Word and Spirit and powerfully strengthen them in the hope of the saints.

John Docter, VicePresident
Ray Brunsting, Clerk.

IN MEMORIAM

The Men's Society of the First Prot. Ref. Church wishes to express its heartfelt sympathy to our president, Mr. M. Swart, in the death of his brother,

MR. JOHN SWART

May the God of grace comfort and sustain him in his sorrow and may he experience abundantly the consolation of the Holy Spirit.

Dan Van Alten, Vice President.
Dick Teitsma, Secretary.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Prophecy of Isaiah

The judgments of God in the whole earth. Chapters XXIV-XXVII.

Our prophet has foretold the judgments of God against the nations that formed the world-power of Israel's own limited world. But he cannot be allowed to put the period here. For this world-power would continue to reappear through the ages under different names. If therefore prophecy was to afford real comfort to God's oppressed people, it had also to come with the gladsome message that one day this world-power would be swallowed up in victory, that is made to pass away with such finality as to be gone forever. And so our prophet by the vision that is now given him next prophesies of things that shall come to pass in the last day, the Gospel period of the world. The reach of the prophecies of these chapters again extends to the end of time. Certainly if God's prophets spake God's own word and not their own, there could be no reason that they could not foretell what even the remotest future holds in store for the church and for the whole earth and all its inhabitants.

It is true that their discourses are lacking in that definiteness that characterizes written history. The total of their predictions are like a glass in which we behold but darkly what is to be the working of God through the ages. This in part is due to the fact that in the point of view of time the prophets did not space the events that they foretold. The result is that in their discourses these events, the near and the far, flow together, so to speak, and are seen as one event,—the near such as for example the destruction of the Chaldean world-power of the prophet's day and the turning of Judah's captivity, and the far event—of which the near was the prophetic type—the final passing away of the world at the appearing of Christ and the gathering of the church in this Gospel period culminating in the appearing of the church in glory at the return of Christ.

But it is also due—is this enigmatical character of prophecy—to the fact that in the prophetic discourse these last things are set forth in the symbolical-typical language of the prophets own land—the holy land—and in the language of his own experience, age and world. It is the only language that he knew and understood. Hence it was also through the instrumentality of this language—God's own creation—that He communicated to the prophet the thoughts of His heart. It was through this language that God spake to the prophet of the heavenly things of Christ's kingdom.

Prophecy therefore was bound to be relatively obscure. But the purpose of the prophetic vision was nevertheless always fully achieved. And this purpose was not to satisfy men's curiosity by a detailed unveiling of the future, but to set forth in broad outline the sovereign decrees of God for all the ages to come,—definitely the purpose was to shed

always more light on the promise—in order that, as things should come to pass, God's believing people might be in the possession of the indisputable evidence, valid, of course, only for faith, that the course of history is indeed directed by Him, the God of their salvation, that He does all His good pleasure, and that therefore His promise to His people cannot and will not fail but shall surely come.

And so this tendency of prophecy to be obscure with regard to the things whereof it speaks only establishes that it is prophecy in the true sense and not human speculation based on human experience or observation. Thus it shows—does this obscurity—that the knowledge of these things had its origin not with a man but with Him to whom all the future is as an open book in that He works all things according to the counsel of His will.

Let us now return to the thread of our prophet's argument.

The devastation of the surface of the whole earth. Chapter XXIV:1-12.

The Lord empties, lays waste, depopulates the whole earth (ver. 1): and the inhabitants are swept away without respect of persons (ver. 2). And this destruction shall be complete; for so has the Lord spoken (ver. 3). The inanimate creature mourns and the proud of the earth are dispirited and fade away (ver. 4). All this is to be expected; for the earth has been corrupted by its inhabitants through their sins (ver. 5). Therefore has the earth been devoured by the curse and the inhabitant, with the exception of a remnant, consumed (ver. 6). The choice fruits of the ground, such as the wine have vanished and with them all joy from the earth (vers. 7-9). The "city of confusion,"—Babylon, the anti-christian world-state,—is in ruins; its houses are closed and unoccupied (ver. 10). Its streets resound with crying for the excellent products of the earth such as the wine that makes glad the heart of man and all joy is departed (ver. 11). Nothing but desolation is left in the city and its gate is destroyed (ver. 12).

The second stage of the catastrophe: the destruction of the globe of the earth. Chapter XXIV: 13-23.

But there are a few men that are not harmed. They are the remnant according to the election, and they appear in the vision under the image of olives that have remained on the tree after the shaking thereof, and of grapes that are still found on the vine when the vintage is done (ver. 13). They sing praises to the Lord God of Israel and glorify His name for His majesty. Their shouts of jubilation are heard from the uttermost parts of the earth; and the theme of their song is: Glory to the Righteous One (vers. 14-16a). This is the signal for new woes. So terrible is now the vision that the strength of the prophet wastes away. But the destruction must go on because of the perfidy and faithlessness of men (ver. 16b). The second catastrophe will consist in a succession of different acts, and they that survive the first stroke will certainly be destroyed by the second or the third. For as at the time of the Deluge the windows of heaven are

open and the foundations of the earth shake (vers. 17, 18). The globe of the earth is shattered. It dissolves. It moves violently. It reels like a drunkard and swings like a hammock. As overloaded with its transgression it falls never again to arise (vers. 19, 20), implying that there shall be new heavens and a new earth upon which shall dwell righteousness.

These judgments will overtake the devil and his angels, "the hosts of the high ones that are on high," as well as the kings of the earth that are hostile to God. All shall be shut up in prison, cast into the abyss. But after the expiration of a certain time they shall be visited (vers. 21, 22).^{*} Then the moon and the sun shall be darkened. But during the process of the fulfillment of these prophecies of doom, the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem (that is above) and to His ancients, that is his saints, shall be glory.

Our prophet's song of praise for deliverance. Chapters XXV:1-5.

Mindful of the fact that the Lord's counsels are faithfulness and truth and that there is no limit to His power to save, and accordingly contemplating the final deliverance of the church as already accomplished, our prophet exalts his God and praises His name for the wonderful things set before his eye by the vision. The Lord has made cities, regarded impregnable, a heap and a ruin, so that they shall never be rebuilt (vers. 1, 2). He has thereby even prepared for Himself praise in the mouth of His vanquished enemies (vers. 3). But to His afflicted people He has been a stronghold and a refuge from the storm (ver. 4). And He has silenced the raging of their enemies against them (ver. 5).

Zion shall be a place of feasting for all nations, but Moab, here representative of the hostile world-power, shall be destroyed. Chapter XXV:6-12.

In Mount Zion the Lord shall prepare for all people a feast of the choicest products of the ground (ver. 6). In this mountain the Lord will remove the vail of unbelief that is spread over the heart of all people and nations. Death shall be swallowed up in victory so that it shall not anywhere be found anymore in all God's holy mountain. Tears shall be wiped away from their faces. And the reproach of God's people shall be taken away from the earth. And however incredible from the point of view of nature, all shall come to pass. For the Lord has spoken it (vers. 7, 8). And in that day it shall be said, Behold, this is our God, meaning that they who thus speak will want to know, serve and love Him only in rejection of all other deities—Him for whose

salvation they have waited and now rejoice in. And His hand will rest in this mountain to sustain and perpetuate it forever (vers 9, 10a). But He shall tread down Moab as straw is trodden down in preparation of its being cast on the dunghill. And Moab's pride shall be humbled as also the spoil of his hands. His fortresses shall be levelled to the ground and reduced to dust (10b, 12).

The strong city and the nation that enters in. Chapter XXVI:1-11.

The prophet recites a song that in that day the redeemed will sing in Judah. Its teaching is this: God's people have a strong city. Its walls and bulwarks are the salvation of their God. Its gates are open only to the righteous nation that keeps truth, whose mind is stayed on the Lord, and that trusts in the Lord as understanding that in Him alone is everlasting strength. This nation the Lord will keep as certainly as He debases them that dwell on high, lays to the ground and crushes to the dust the lofty city that it may be trodden by the feet of the poor and the needy, His afflicted people. (vers. 1-6).

Seeing that the way of the just (nation) is uprightness—and this the Lord, who is upright, well knows, as He weighs their path—they, the just, have waited for Him in the way of judgments; the desire of their soul is to His name and to His remembrance; with all their soul they desired Him in the night, and with their spirit they seek Him early, also because when His judgments are in the earth the world's inhabitants learn righteousness, much to the delight of the just (nation), they being righteous (vers. 7-9).

But this does not apply to the wicked (reprobate). He always deals unjustly, even in the land of uprightness, and even though favor should be shown him. He will not learn righteousness. He will not behold the majesty of the Lord. When the Lord's hand is lifted up, he will not see. But he shall see to his shame the Lord's zeal for His people. And fire shall devour him (them) the Lord's enemies (vers. 10, 11).

On the other hand, the Lord will establish peace for His people, the righteous nation, as He has wrought all their works for them, performed the thing that they could not do themselves, that is redeem them (ver. 12). There had been other lords, sin, death, satan, the world and its devil-gods—lords to whom His people had been in bondage and whom they had willingly served; but the Lord had destroyed them all and made their memory to perish and thereby delivered His people. Therefore they now make mention of His name only (vers. 13, 14).

The Lord has increased the (righteous) nation; He has extended (its) boundaries to the end of the earth, called the church from the four corners of the earth in the Gospel period of this dispensation (ver. 15).

G.M.O.

^{*} This is an obscure statement not understood perhaps by our prophet himself. It may have reference to the loosing of Satan out of his prison that he may go forth to deceive the nations that are in the four corners of the earth (Rev. 20:7).

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of I Peter 2:1-10

I

These first ten verses of Chapter 2 of first Peter are a continuation of the Apostle's instruction in the former Chapter. There the Apostle had instructed the churches of their new Status in Christ by virtue of God's elective grace as this was realized through the power of the resurrection in their hearts, so that they are reborn unto a living hope. Old things have passed away and all things have become new. And in hope we look for the renewal of all things in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Hence, we must gird up the loins of our mind in spiritual sobriety. We must live perfectly in the hope of the Gospel, and live in the holiness that becometh the children of the new obedience. Always we must bear in mind what Christ has performed for us on the Cross, redeeming us not with corruptible things as silver and gold from our vain conversation, but with His own precious blood, as of a Lamb without spot or blemish.

And our loins of the mind must also be girt up in the constant remembrance, that God has made us His regenerated ones out of incorruptible seed through the living and abiding Word of God. Only with this great reality of our new birth in mind, shall we be spiritually fit for eating the only food that can nourish us in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. Only thus will we grow into all the wonders of God's grace, as this grace constitutes us a spiritual sacrifices unto God.

Hence, we read in I Peter 2:1-3 the following: "*Wherefore laying aside all malice and all guile, hypocrisies and envies, and all evil-speakings as newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.*"

We here call attention to the following elements:

In the first place, that, shall we understand the Apostle's argument, we must bear in mind some very important facts of Scripture. We must not lose sight of the fact, that Peter is here not addressing a mixed gathering of potential candidates for heaven and hell; he is not addressing "mankind in general," some "esteemed readers." He is writing to a definite group of churches, who have the living hope, wrought by the power of Christ's resurrection in their hearts. He is writing to a people that have clean garments of righteousness, and who must keep themselves unspotted from the world. Children characterized by the new obedience of faith they are. Peter preaches unconditional salvation to a definite and concrete address and says: Grace unto you and peace be multiplied!

Let us clearly see this all-determining point!

Then, too, we must not lose sight of the fact, that these churches are viewed by Peter as to their standing in this world *in need of nourishment* in the faith and hope. The

children of God must "grow." We must grow in the grace of Jesus Christ, by growing in the "knowledge" of all the graces in Christ. II Peter 3:17, 18. Hence, Peter places the churches under the nurture and admonitions of the Lord. The Lord, our Savior's admonitions are very good; they are very useful and to our profit. In these admonitions we taste that the Lord is "good."

The church thus viewed, under the pedagogy of God, is admonished to long very much for the entire preaching of the living and abiding Word of God. And the aim of this longing for the Word must be *to grow* thereby. They, who are such, that they posses (have tasted the Lord's goodness) will receive more, and taste more of this goodness of Jehovah, as this is ours in the reasonable milk, which is without deception and guile. In this reasonable Word we have the administration of the Father's testament to us the children, calling us out of darkness and constituting us fully men and women in Christ.

Peter proclaims a very definite "admonition" in the text. The form in which he states this admonition is a peculiar one in I Peter. We refer to the relationship of the participle and the finite verb in this admonition. The sentence construction is as follows: ". . . *laying aside* all malice . . . *desire* the sincere milk of the Word." We have the same type of construction in Chapter 1:13, where we read "girding up the loins of your mind . . . hope perfectly," and in 1:22 where we read: "having purified your souls in the obedience to the truth . . . love each other fervently." Notice, that this is the same type of construction, it expresses the same kind of relationship. This relationship is not that of a pre-requisite condition. The thought is not that, to use the words of Huther (Meyer's Commentary) which is "equal to postquam deposuistis (after ye have fulfilled the demand) but expresses the continued purification of the Christian." Compare Eph. 4:22-24; Hebrews 12:1 and Colossians 3:8. Here we do not have the relationship of what is before and afterwards, and then too that the "before" is a command that first must be finished before the latter can begin, but it is the relationship of concomitancy. The longing for the pure milk of the Word, the positive life of holiness and of the new man is only possible and real where the old man of malice, envy and guile and evil speaking is put off completely and constantly. Unto this putting off of the old man and the hungering of the new man we are admonished in this text.

It is an exhortation that comes to us in the ministry of reconciliation. We are admonished to walk in the reconciliation wherewith God has reconciled us to Himself in the redemption in Jesus' blood. That means that we cleanse ourselves in the obedience to the truth of the Gospel. Our "soul" must be purified from all filthiness that makes the pure living together in the fervency of brotherhood impossible. The obstacles of sinful flesh must be removed by the children of the kingdom. They are removed when we obey. Let us beware how we give heed to this admonition! Be not carried away from the steadfastness of obedience in the deceit of the stub-

bornness of sin and the flesh! The Lord is not mocked. Here too a good tree brings forth good fruits. From a regenerated people must proceed such a walk of godliness and true brotherly love which clearly reveals itself in a longing for the pure preaching of the Word, in order to grow thereby. How good and how pleasant it is when brethren dwell together in brotherhood. It is like the precious ointment of consecration that wholly permeated the clothing of Aaron; it is like the dew of Hermon. It is the refreshment of the fresh winds from heaven in a dry and thirsty place!

Does this mean a peace at any price? It means peace except when the very foundations of such a life of peace and growth in Christian graces are destroyed. For when these are destroyed, what can the righteous do? The growth of God's people may not be stunted because the logical milk of the Word is adulterated. It may not give the church spiritual indigestion, upsetting them, disturbing them no end, so that they no longer heart the sound of Jesus' Word that says: Let not your heart be troubled. Ye are a peculiar people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. When this is not heard, all possibility of fervency of brotherhood is impossible.

Wherefore, we must not long for any kind of "milk," but it must be milk that has two characterizations.

In the first place it must be "milk." It must be such that it is nourishment for the children of God in their life of faith. It must be such a Word that it feeds the sheep, and gives suck to the lambs. It is the Word that must be so preached and applied to the needs of the children that the hunger is stilled; the anxious questions must receive the answer that gives peace in the blood of the Cross. The spiritual "stomach" of the saints can only digest such a message and be feed. Spiritual health will then be ours. And when we grow old we will still be fat and flourishing; we will proclaim the goodness and usefulness of the Lord's dealings with us as His children. We will sing: the Lord is my portion forever. He is my Rock, my High Tower, my Great Defence. Such is the nature of the milk for the new-born babes, the entire church as long as she is not yet in the full manhood of heaven's perfection.

For we should not overlook the fact, that in the text here under consideration, the churches are expressly appealed to in their being "new-born" children. When Peter says "as new-born children" he is not simply comparing them to new-born children of natural birth, so that the thought is: as new-born children desire milk, so long ye for this pure milk of the Word. The Apostle is here referring to the essential character of the believers by virtue of the regeneration which is theirs out of incorruptible seed and through the living and abiding Word of God. "As new-born babes" indicates the essential nature of the Church from which must needs follow their hunger for the pure milk of the Word. You never have a longing for the Word of God with a view to spiritual growth or you have to do with a new-born babe. Such hunger is an *evidence* of the new life in Christ and of the living hope upon His final return.

What a fine motivation to long for this milk of the Word.

But there is more in the text to stimulate the church to eat. There is also this element to whet the spiritual appetite of the church, to wit: that they have already *tasted* the goodness of the Lord in this Word. Writes the Apostle: "if you have tasted that the Lord is gracious." The "Lord" here is the same as "Jehovah" in Psalm 34:8. Only here it refers to Jesus, the Son of God in the flesh, as He is the Stone indeed placed by God in Zion, but rejected of the builders. He is the Covenant God, as He dies for His people, becomes from God to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and complete redemption. He spells for us the forgiveness of sin. He moulds us more and more after His own image. He breaks down our sin and pride, and cloths us with meekness and true godliness. O, He is good. He is not simply good in the abstract. He is good in the most concrete sense. He is useful, beneficial to us. He is (chrestos) good, mild, helpful, full of pity and endless goodness for us. One taste of the riches of this goodness, which will be an endless and boundless portion of the saints in the ages to come, and we will desire nothing better. Then we sing: One thing have I desired, that I will I seek after! I will seek the good Word of God, put it in my mouth and eat it, so that it may be health to my navel, afford the rock-bottom joys in my life that shall never fade away.

Someone interrupts and says: Doesn't Peter say "if you have tasted . . .?" We full agree. The "If clause" here is a first class conditional sentence. This means that in the mind of the writer it is assumed that the church has "tasted" the goodness of the Lord. The sense can almost be given in the paraphrase "Since ye have tasted." However, in the "if ye have tasted" there is the warning finger of the Apostle to the children, warning us of the seriousness of not eating, also of the joy that has been ours in tasting that the Lord is good. Thus in this warning we are stimulated to spiritual appetite.

For God works grace through admonitions, precepts of the Gospel! Let it not be overlooked, new-born babes, says Peter. *Also* through these admonitions the living and abiding Word of God is sounded forth whereby we are concretely constituted regenerated ones and reborn children in a healthy state of spiritual growth.

Yes, we must long for the logical unadulterated milk. Just what does this imply. It is more than a satisfaction of mere intellectual curiosity to make an inquiry into the meaning of this nature of the milk. Earlier in this essay we pointed out that this milk has two characteristics. These two are: 1. That it is a reasonable, logical milk. 2. That it is a word that is so unadulterated, that it never traps us into doing the wrong thing; it never leads away from the chief Cornerstone, Christ Jesus. It shines more and more unto the perfect day.

Next time, then, we will D.V. call attention to the nature of the milk for which we must long, and why we will then surely have to put away all the leaven of the sin of malice and envy and all evil-speaking from our souls.

G.L.

IN HIS FEAR

Walking in Error

False doctrine and a corrupt life!

Heresy and schism!

The lie and sin!

Since the day that the devil approached man in paradise till this very day these have always gone hand in hand.

Defending conditional theology and defending lawlessness are inseparably connected!

Deceiving with the lie of false doctrine and deceiving with misrepresentations of the facts go hand in hand!

A corrupt doctrine and walking in error belong together!

We like to have you see that as we begin to write concerning the church political side of the conflict which under God's providence and grace had brought about a purification of the Protestant Reformed Churches. And walking in error is not living in His fear. He who is afraid of the gospel and feels safer with the arminian approach — sometimes called the "pedagogical approach" — cannot walk in God's fear. He must walk in error.

One thing that has deliberately been left out of the facts that were presented (that is, left out by those who want to defend and to be defended in their stand for conditional theology and schismatic action) is that, the Rev. H. Hoeksema protested to Classis against his consistory, the consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan. He did not protest to Classis against Rev. De Wolf. That he did to his consistory, and when his consistory upheld Rev. De Wolf in his heretical statements, the Rev. H. Hoeksema protested to Classis *against his consistory*.

We do not have at hand his protest, since we are at this writing serving the congregation of our Protestant Reformed Church at Redlands, California. And we were not sent here by the Rev. H. Hoeksema, as a recent Concordia article would have it. The Rev. H. Hoeksema is not the evil man of Rev. De Wolf's cross-bill. He does not meddle in the affairs of other congregations and take a man out of his own congregation and send him across the country to a group of people as a lawless dictator. The undersigned was requested by the *consistory* of the Redlands Protestant Reformed Church to labour here, and undersigned's consistory, realizing the need, graciously consented to his coming down here to serve in that need.

But, even then, we remember very clearly that the document he sent to Classis East contained three points of protest. He protested against (1) *his consistory's* action in defending the first heretical statement of Rev. De Wolf. (2) He protested against *the consistory's* action in defending the second heretical statement of Rev. De Wolf. And (3) he protested against the action of *his consistory* in taking a stand contrary to a former decision without first retracting that former decision. Besides, the very minutes of Classis East, we recall, read to the effect that a protest is read of the Rev. H. Hoek-

sema *against his consistory*. The same is true of the Rev. Ophof's protest.

What does all this mean?

It gives the correct answer to the deceptively presented question as to when the case of Rev. De Wolf became the case of his elders, and as to why they had to be deposed. We say that this question has been deceptively presented, because those who asked the question knew very well that the protest was against the consistory and not against Rev. De Wolf. It became the case of these elders the moment the Rev. H. Hoeksema and the Rev. Ophof filed with that consistory their protests which they intended to send in to Classis East. That is why Classis East decided that all the elders who were walking in the error of those three points of protest had to apologize as well as Rev. De Wolf, the author of the statements. We hope to write more on that subject too, a little later, the Lord willing, but let it be stated here that in this Classis was not guilty of "stipulating the whole course of action." It did not do any more than it was called upon to do by the protestants. They asked for a judgment upon the elders as well as upon Rev. De Wolf and his statements.

Another fact which is silenced by those walking in error is that on the consistory meeting of June 1 the motion to adopt the advice of Classis carried by a unanimous vote. To be sure the eleven elders that wanted to defend Rev. De Wolf with his heretical statements did not vote either for or against the motion; and for that reason it was the unanimous vote of the eleven elders, who stood for the truth, against not one single negative vote. But that in no way alters the fact that the motion carried and that unanimously.

From that moment on these eleven men were under discipline and might never vote again in the case. In fact the Church Order declares that they might not even vote on that meeting of June 1 in regard to adopting the advice of Classis. For, as we pointed out above, they were personally involved in the case ever since the Rev. Hoeksema and the Rev. Ophof filed their protests with the consistory as protests to Classis in regard to their behaviour. Article 33 reads, "Those who are delegated to the assemblies shall bring with them their credentials and instructions, signed by those sending them, and they shall have a vote in all matters, except such as particularly concern their persons or churches." And article 29 calls the Consistory such an ecclesiastical assembly. There is one way in which they might be allowed to vote at that June 1 meeting, and that is, they might be given the opportunity to vote *for the adoption* of the advice of Classis in order thereby to reveal that they, after the thorough discussion of the matter by Classis, were now convinced of their error and would not walk in it anymore.

Now it is claimed that these men were intimidated and were under undue pressure, and that they did not vote because of this fact. That is a misrepresentation of the facts. Beside the fact which we just pointed out that they had no right *even then* to vote against the advice of Classis, this thing stands out in bold relief that all the actions of those

men that evening revealed the very opposite of intimidation as does the speech of the Rev. G. Vos as he explained to these men the decision of Classis. That speech of his is a full of brotherly love as man could ever make his speech. He pleaded with them. He showed them that he still had confidence that they would do the right thing. He warned them. Indeed! In love he warned them not to take "to their bosom" those heretical statements. He showed them that he was seeking their good and not threatening them with any evil that he or Classis would bring upon them. He warned them of God's judgment but not of man's retaliation.

And these men were not frightened one bit by his words. Facts show that. After his speech, and even though the whole committee was there to witness it, one of Rev. De Wolf's supporters made very boldly and rebelliously a motion to adjourn the meeting as soon as the committee had presented the decision of Classis. Intimidated? Under undue pressure? Not at all! Nor did this end their boldness. When the motion was then made to adopt the advice of Classis, one of these elders who defended Rev. De Wolf still dared to make in all boldness and rebellion a motion to table the matter. Frightened men do not behave that way. Men under undue pressure are not psychologically able to make such moves.

Indeed, these men were afraid. They had fear in their hearts, but it was not the fear of the Lord. They feared for their own position and honor among men. They were not afraid either of the Classis or of the committee sent by the Classis to acquaint them with its decision. They were not intimidated. They were not under undue pressure. They invented this idea later on in order to deceive those who did not know the facts.

Besides, here is another fact that the Conditional-walkers-in-error will hush and cover up. The eleven faithful elders together with the Rev. C. Hanko and the Rev. H. Hoeksema in the presence of the committee sent by the Classis gave Rev. De Wolf and his elders time to consider the matter and to decide whether they would apologize. They even gave them permission to meet as a group to discuss and to decide what they would do. This was definitely wrong. Such permission should not have been given them. And they should not have been allowed to function in their offices while they took the time to decide. But it does show that they were not put under undue pressure and were not intimidated at all.

Had the consistory sent these eleven men and Rev. De Wolf out of the meeting — as is frequently done in discipline cases — and then called them in one by one to ask each one whether he would apologize, we could understand that they might make the claim of undue pressure and intimidation. Understand well that such procedure would not have been intimidation or undue pressure, but we say that we could understand that they would interpret it as such.

Now it is a plain case of walking in error in order to defend themselves and to maintain themselves in their false doctrine. They know that they were the ones against whom the protest was lodged. They know that Classis judged

them to be wrong. They know too that the Church Order demands that if they think that they have been wronged that they must appeal to a higher body and meanwhile submit to the decision of the majority. **BUT THEY CHOSE TO WALK IN THE WAY OF ERROR!**

And therein is revealed the hypocrisy of Conditional Theology. It falsely clamors time and again: "Tell us what WE must DO. Tell us what God has done. But, by all means, tell us what WE MUST DO!" Don't you believe it. Those addicted to conditional theology do not want to be told what man must do. They choose to walk in error. They insist on preaching the law as a condition to salvation. But they do not intend to walk in that law. They will make their own church order. Conditional theology is not God-centered, does not seek the glory of God in all and it therefore walks in the way which cannot glorify God. It makes a church order that will seek to glorify man. And when you show them their error, they try to hide behind the false claim that to call one's attention to his evil walk is not to love that individual. That to let one continue in his sin is not love to God against whom they sin, they conveniently ignore, because Conditional Theology is not concerned with God's glory but with an erroneous idea of MAN'S salvation.

Conditional theology always asks what the conditions are for man's salvation. It does not begin as its starting point nor have as its goal the glory of God revealed in Christ. It is man centered. Therefore it always asks the question, what must I do to be saved? And that it is a man-made theory and lacks the power of the truth of God ought now to be plain. For though it has been presented to Protestant Reformed membership as essential that man may be kept from being careless and profane, Rev. De Wolf — whom they have let be their mouthpiece and scapegoat — has, with his evil cross bill as well as all his walking in error with his elders and followers, shown us that such a philosophy only leads to walking in error, to more carelessness of walk of life than our churches had ever seen in their midst before. The conditional theology of Rev. De Wolf and followers (instigators also) lead to all the walking in error which followed since June 1.

J.A.H.



IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies Aid of the Protestant Reformed Church of Edgerton, Minnesota, expresses its deepest sympathy to our president, Rev. H. Veldman, in the loss of his Mother,

MRS. J. VELDMAN

on January 17, 1954.

Mrs. Ray Brunsting, Vice President.
Mrs. Henry Huiskens, Secretary.

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

EARLY VIEWS OF THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

The question of infant baptism (continued).

Having called attention in preceding articles to the views of the Church Father, Tertullian, with respect to the question of infant baptism, we wish to conclude this particular phase of the question of infant baptism by calling attention to the views of Origin and Cyprian, two of the most prominent men among the early Church Fathers.

With respect to Origin, considered the most brilliant of the early Church Fathers, we merely wish to remark that he definitely calls infant baptism a usage derived from the apostles and therefore sanctioned this Christian practice. In fact, infant baptism was considered to be a usage derived from the apostles in many large sections of the Church already during the third century. Already then the appeal was made to the rite of infant baptism as customary. This implies that already then it was recognized as a custom.

Cyprian certainly maintained the sacrament of infant baptism. He believed that baptism should be administered to children as early as possible; it should not even be delayed until the eighth day as some in the African church would have it on the basis of a comparison with the rite of circumcision in the Old Dispensation — we recall that the law in the Old Testament required the circumcision of all male children upon the eighth day. The following quotation from this eminent Church Father, concerning the baptism of infants, should be of interest: "But in respect to the case of the infants, which you say ought not to be baptized within the second or third day after their birth and that the law of ancient circumcision should be regarded, so that you think that one who is just born should not be baptized and sanctified within the eighth day, we all thought very differently in our council (Cyprian refers here to a church council which was attended by sixty-six dignitaries of the churches—H.V.) For in this course which you thought was to be taken, no one agreed; but we all rather judge that the mercy and grace of God is not to be refused to any one born of man. For as the Lord says in His Gospel, "the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them," as far as we can, we must strive that, if possible, no soul be lost. For what is wanting to him who has once been formed in the womb by the hand of God? To us, indeed, and to our eyes, according to the worldly course of days, they who are born appear to receive an increase. But whatever things are made by God, are completed by the majesty and work of God their Maker. Moreover, belief in divine Scripture declares to us, that among all, whether infants, or those who are older, there is the same equality of the divine gift. Elisha, beseeching God, so laid himself upon the infant son of the widow, who was lying dead, that his head was applied to his head and

his face to his face, and the limbs of Elisha were spread over and joined to each of the limbs of the child, and his feet to his feet. If this thing be considered with respect to the inequality of our birth and our body, an infant could not be made equal with a person grown up and mature, nor could its little limbs fit and be equal to the larger limbs of a man. But in that is expressed the divine and spiritual equality that all men are like and equal, since they have been once made by God; and our age may have a difference in the increase of our bodies, according to the world, but not according to God; unless that very grace also which is given to the baptized is given either less or more, according to the age of the receivers, whereas the Spirit is not given with measure, but by the love and mercy of the Father alike to all. For God, as He does not accept the person, so does not accept the age; since He shows Himself a Father to all with well-weighed equality for the attainment of heavenly grace. For, with respect to what you say, that the aspect of an infant in the first days after its birth is not pure, so that any one of us would still shudder at kissing it, we do not think that this ought to be alleged as any impediment to heavenly grace. For it is written, "To the pure all things are pure." Nor ought any of us to shudder at that which God hath condescended to make. For although the infant is still fresh from its birth, yet it is not such that any one should shudder at kissing it in giving grace and in making peace; since in the kiss of an infant every one of us ought, for his very religion's sake, to consider the still recent hands of God themselves, which in some sort we are kissing, in the man lately formed and freshly born, when we are embracing that which God has made. For in respect of the observance of the eighth day in the Jewish circumcision of the flesh, a sacrament was given beforehand in shadow and in usage; but when Christ came, it was fulfilled in truth. For because the eighth day, that is, the first day after the Sabbath, was to be that on which the Lord should rise again, and should quicken us, and give us circumcision of the spirit, the eighth day, that is, the first day after the Sabbath, and the Lord's day, went before in the figure; which figure ceased when by and by the truth came, and spiritual circumcision was given to us. For which reason we think that no one is to be hindered from obtaining grace by that law which was already ordained, and that spiritual circumcision ought not to be hindered by carnal circumcision, but that absolutely every man is to be admitted to the grace of Christ, since Peter also in the Acts of the Apostles speaks, and says, "The Lord hath said to me that I should call no man common or unclean." But if any think he could hinder men from obtaining grace, their more heinous sins might rather hinder those who are mature and grown up and older. But again, if even to the greatest sinners, and to those who had sinned much against God, when they subsequently believed, remission of sins is granted — and nobody is hindered from baptism and from grace — how much rather ought we to shrink from hindering an infant, who, being born after the flesh according to Adam, he has contracted the contagion of

the ancient death at its earliest birth, who approaches the more easily on this very account to the reception of the forgiveness of sins—that to him are remitted, not his own sins, but the sins of another. And therefore, dearest brother, this was our opinion in council, that by us no one ought to be hindered from baptism and from the grace of God, who is merciful and kind and loving to all. Which, since it is to be observed and maintained in respect of all, we think is to be even more observed in respect of infants and newly-born persons, who on this very account deserve more from our help and from the divine mercy, that immediately, in the very beginning of their birth, lamenting and weeping, they do nothing else but entreat. We bid you, dearest brother, ever heartily farewell.” — end of quote.

In connection with this rather lengthy quotation of the learned and eminent Cyprian, we wish to make a few observations. In the first place, the thought has probably occurred to us that this eminent Church Father certainly must have entertained an arminian conception of the love and grace of the Lord. He writes, does he not, that “by us no one ought to be hindered from baptism and from the grace of God, who is merciful and kind and loving to all.” We cannot declare with certainty at this time whether this learned leader of the early Christian Church believed in a general love and mercy of the Lord and therefore in a desire of God to save all men. We realize that such a conception of the general love and mercy of the Lord, as revealed by the Lord in connection with the baptism of infants, is entertained today by the Liberated who advocate that the sacrament of baptism is a sign and seal by the Lord of His promise to every child who is baptized, and that this sign and seal is bestowed upon each child in His mercy and love. But we are not prepared to say whether also Cyprian believed in that general love and mercy of the Lord. We do well to bear in mind, and none, I am sure, will dispute this statement, that the knowledge of the Scriptures was certainly and necessarily limited during the New Testament infancy of the Church of God. However, the statement which we have quoted from the writings of Cyprian does not necessarily proclaim and teach a general love and mercy of the Lord. The possibility exists that the infants must not be deprived of the sacrament of baptism inasmuch as the Lord is merciful and kind and loving to all ages, and therefore also as including the ages of infants. In the second place, it did not escape our attention, I am sure, that Cyprian, also in this particular quotation, lays great stress and emphasis upon the sacrament of baptism. He writes, for example, and we again quote: “But we all rather judge that the mercy and grace of God is not to be refused to any one born of man The Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them; as far as we can we must strive that, if possible, no soul be lost And therefore, dearest brother, this was our opinion in council, that by us no one ought to be hindered from baptism and from the grace of God.” One can hardly escape the conclusion, when reading these passages of these

leaders of the Church of God that the early Church Fathers certainly ascribed great significance to the sacrament of baptism, connecting with it the grace of God. In fact, one gains from Cyprian the idea that the sacrament of baptism is indispensable unto salvation, that every effort must be put forth to baptize the child as soon as possible because it must be our striving that, if possible, no soul be lost; yea, they speak of regeneration and the second birth in connection with this sacrament. In the third place, it also appears from this quotation of Cyprian that he seeks the ground for infant baptism in the innocence of the infants. This appears from the following remarks in this quotation, and again we quote: “But again, if even to the greatest sinners, and to those greatest sinners, and to those who had sinned much against God, when they subsequently believed, remission of sins is granted . . . how much rather ought we to shrink from hindering an infant, who, being lately born, has not sinned, except in that, being born, after the flesh according to Adam . . . that to him are remitted, not his own sins, but the sins of another.” Hence, whereas Tertullian regarded the innocence of infants as an argument to reject the baptism of infants, Cyprian uses or sees in this innocence an argument to reject the baptism of infants, Cyprian uses or sees in this innocence an argument to substantiate the baptism of infants. And, finally, this eminent Church Father urges that infants be baptized as soon as possible and that the Church of God should not wait until the eighth day according to the practice in the Old Dispensation when the sign of circumcision was administered to all the male children upon the eighth day. And it is not difficult to understand how the Romish Church, especially in the light of what one may read in the writings of such an eminent Church Father as this Cyprian, should advocate the administration of the sacrament of baptism to the children as soon as possible. Neither is it difficult why children as soon as possible. Neither is difficult to see why the Romish Church, also in the light of what these Church Fathers wrote on the significance of infant baptism, should ascribe to this sacrament the significance which it does. The Church Fathers certainly laid great stress upon this sacrament. This can hardly be denied.

H.V.

IN MEMORIAM

The Young People’s Society of the Edgerton Prot. Ref. Church expresses her deepest sympathy to our Pres. Rev. Herman Veldman, in the death of his Mother,

MRS. J. VELDMAN

That God through His Word and Spirit may comfort the bereaved, is our prayer.

The Young People’s Society
Wm. Buys, Vice President.
Arlene Bleyenburch, Secretary.

The Voice of Our Fathers

The Canons of Dordrecht

PART TWO

EXPOSITION OF THE CANONS

FIRST HEAD OF DOCTRINE OF DIVINE PREDESTINATION

(Article 6, cont.)

It need scarcely be mentioned that again the *Canons* in this connection are infralapsarian, at least by implication. Strictly speaking, this article speaks of God's work in time, of the fact that in time He graciously softens the hearts of the elect, and that in time He leaves the non-elect in His judgment to their own wickedness and obduracy. Nevertheless, it cannot escape our attention that this work of God in time comes forth from His eternal decree, and that therefore by implication the *Canons* present the infralapsarian conception of the decrees of God. And while it is true that we may say that the order of history is "infralapsarian," but that the order of the decrees is supralapsarian, so that history unfolds in exactly the opposite order than the order of the decrees (what is last in history, namely, the glory of God in Christ and in the elect church, is first in God's counsel), nevertheless from all indications this is not the viewpoint of the *Canons*. They teach that God elects and reprobates *fallen* men, not merely *fallible* men. They teach that the logical order in God's decrees is such that the decree of predestination follows the decree of creation and the fall. According to election He raises men out of their fallen state, while according to reprobation He leaves them in their fallen state. God discriminates between men equally involved in ruin. The supralapsarian position, on the other hand, maintains that the decree of predestination logically precedes the decrees of the fall and creation. In harmony with this position the *Canons* also present here the conventional infralapsarian viewpoint, that while election serves the manifestation especially of God's mercy, reprobation is necessary for the display of His righteousness. And while it is true that God's righteousness is displayed in the accomplishment of the decree of reprobation, it is not true that reprobation is necessary unto this end, or even that reprobation is the clearest and highest manifestation of the divine virtue of righteousness. Certainly, in the cross and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ the righteousness of God is maintained and revealed in the highest and most positive manner conceivable. Further, in harmony with this *infra* position is also the expression "leaves" the non-elect, as well as the fact that the *Canons* refer very negatively to the phenomenon that some "do not receive" the gift of faith. Supralapsarianism would speak much more freely of a positive act of reprobation, and also of a hardening process (the counterpart of the irresistible calling), as the revelation of that decree of reprobation. However, we do not intend at this stage to digress from our main subject, the *Canons*, in order to enter into a detailed dis-

cussion and criticism of the two views. We merely wanted to call attention to the fact that the *Canons* are infralapsarian in their presentation of the doctrine of predestination. And whatever our position may be in this respect, we do well to notice that the *Canons* speak very reverently of this decree as being "profound." That one word speaks volumes concerning the proper attitude of the child of God toward the truth of divine predestination. That profound decree of God must not be lightly thought of and spoken of by the child of God. Nor, by the way, must the profound things of God be ignored. But it behooves the elect child of God always to approach this truth in amazement and awe and reverent worship.

In passing, we may also remark that the *Canons* leave no room for a position which men frequently adopt, even in Reformed circles at times, I refer to the attitude that the decree of predestination belongs to the secret things of God, while "the revealed things" are for us and our children. Those who assume this attitude, with a mistaken appeal to the oft-quoted passage of Deuteronomy 29:29, claim, then, that we must not proceed from predestination in the preaching, must not preach about it, — at least not often, — in other words, the Reformed heart-beat of predestination must be a weak and scarcely noticeable heart-beat. And those who do not agree with this attitude are then accused of "prying into the secret things of God." However, the *Canons* here teach us literally that God's discrimination between men is "displayed" in time. And they also emphasize that the decree of election and reprobation is revealed in the Word of God. In other words, the *Canons* literally deny that predestination is to be classified among the "secret things" of God, and they hold no brief for that sickly "hands off" attitude. Still more: in the light of these first six articles of the First Head of Doctrine, it is very plain that our fathers insisted that the gospel of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ cannot be properly understood, or preached, apart from this truth of predestination. Never must a Reformed man, therefore, take the position that we have nothing to do with the divine decree of predestination. Nor must a Reformed man assign to this decree of predestination a separate little niche in the museum of Reformed doctrine, from which niche the doctrines of election and reprobation must occasionally be removed and have the dust of forgetfulness blown off them in a rare sermon. It is simply not Reformed to use an *accusation*, a demerit mark, the fact that a man proceeds from the truth of predestination in his theology and preaching. For the *Canons* teach us here exactly that the work of salvation, God's work of salvation, proceeds from and according to His eternal decree. And if that be true, — and it is true, then it also behooves those who proclaim the glad tidings of salvation to proceed in their preaching from that same decree of election and reprobation. Not to do so, and to assume a "hands off" attitude toward this truth, is a flagrant departure from one's Reformed confessional basis.

Finally, and in close connection with the preceding, the

Canons make a very practical observation in the concluding statement of this article. They teach us, on the one hand, that perverse, impure, and unstable men distort this doctrine to their own destruction. This distortion can take place in various ways. The false prophets of Arminianism distorted that doctrine of predestination very deceitfully by maintaining that they too believed in predestination, and in the meantime changing the Scriptural presentation of that truth. The distortion of that doctrine also takes place when men attempt to reduce the truth of predestination to fatalism, and present the well-known argument that if it be true that our eternal destiny is determined sovereignly from all eternity by God, then it makes no difference anymore how we live and how we walk. If we are saved, we are saved; and if we are damned, we are damned. It makes no difference how much or how little we sin; it makes no difference either whether or not we strive to walk in all good works; it does not even make any difference whether or not we believe (if we have faith, we have it; and if God does not give us faith, we cannot believe anyway). We can be as careless and profane as we please. Such also is a very wicked distortion of this profound truth. The *Canons* classify this distortion correctly, when they say that it proceeds out of a perverse, impure, and unstable mind. And it is certainly also correct to say, as do the fathers, that such distortion can lead only to destruction. It tends to destruction exactly because it is a perverse and impure distortion of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ, the truth of God. Would that the children of our fathers would consistently maintain this same attitude, instead of their frequent and sentimental coddling of such distorters of the truth.

And, on the other hand, to holy and pious souls this truth affords unspeakable consolation. The truth of predestination is for a truly Reformed believer no museum piece, no mere dead, dry doctrine. It certainly is not simply a subject for academic discussion and debate. But it has a very high practical value. It affords unspeakable consolation. In the midst of our sin and darkness, in the midst of weakness and imperfection, it affords the unspeakable consolation of the absolute certainty and unchangeableness of our salvation. And to the church in its proclamation of the gospel (and especially to those who are called to that ministry in the church), when it becomes evident, either on the mission field or in the established congregation, that there are some, many, who do not obey the gospel, it affords consolation because then the church may remember that also the fact that some do not believe is determined by God Himself. And when that Word has been faithfully proclaimed, those who proclaim it may rest then in the knowledge that the fruit of that preaching, whether the faithful be few or many, whether the gospel preached be a savor of life unto life or a savor of death unto death, is not in their own hands, nor determined by the free will of man, but is strictly in the hand of the decreeing God. And mark you well, this consolation is for "holy and pious souls," and for them only. It is impossible to enjoy the con-

solation of this blessed truth in the way of unholiness and impiety. Just as men who are perverse, impure, and unstable distort this doctrine, and *in the way of* their perverse distortion go to destruction; so it is only *in the way of* holiness and piety that this ineffable consolation of the truth of predestination is attained by God's people.

H. C. H.



IN MEMORIAM

The consistory of the Prot. Ref. Church at Edgerton, Minn., hereby wishes to express its heartfelt sympathy with our brother, consistory member, deacon J. Verhey in the loss of his mother,

MRS. ARIE VERHEY, Sr.

May the bereaved experience the comfort of our covenant God in His promise of eternal life.

Rev. H. Veldman, President.
Ray Brunsting, Clerk.



JEHOVAH REIGNS, LET EARTH BE GLAD

Jehovah reigns; let earth be glad,
And all the isles their joy make known;
With clouds and darkness He is clad,
On truth and justice rests His throne.

Consuming fire destroys His foes,
Around the world His lightnings blaze;
The trembling earth His presence knows,
The mountains melt before His gaze.

The heavens His righteousness proclaim,
Through earth His glory shines abroad;
From idol-worship turn with shame
And bow before the living God.

Thy Church rejoices to behold
Thy judgments in the earth, O Lord;
Thy glory to the world unfold,
Supreme o'er all be Thou adored.

All ye that truly love the Lord,
Hate sin, for He is just and pure;
To saints His help He will accord
And keep them in His love secure.

For good men light and joy are sown
To bless them in the harvest-time;
Ye saints, your joy in God make known
And ever praise His Name sublime.

PSALM 97

DECENCY and ORDER

Deciding The Call

In our last article we stated that we believed that the current practice of permitting the minister to decide calls received from other churches is correct. We base this upon the fact that the call is addressed to him and not to his consistory. It is a call for his person, gifts, talents and services. The calling church through its call-letter urgently requests him as an individual servant of Christ to come over and help them. To that request he, and he alone, can and must respond according as the King of the church speaks in his heart, "go here" or "go there." If this were not the case the form and content of the call letter would be a hoax.

We also stated that the consistory must have a voice in the matter. Hers is the prerogative to either grant or refuse her minister the right to *consider* a call from another church. In the event of an acceptance of the call she must issue the necessary credentials of dismissal. The consistory must sever the bond between pastor and the congregation. In the event local circumstances are such that this would be improper and contrary to good order, the consistory must refuse the right to even consider a call elsewhere.

It was also stated that in the process of considering a call mutual consultation between the pastor and the consistory of the church he serves is very necessary. The matter vitally concerns the congregation and her interest and well-being may not be by-passed in the minister's consideration of a new field of labor. This danger is ever present and especially so when labors in a certain place are difficult and somewhat discouraging. The consistory, therefore, should lay before the minister what she regards as best for the congregation. Through prayer and good counsel a proper decision will be reached.

We also wrote last time that this procedure was not always followed in Reformed churches and for that reason the original intention of the tenth article of our church order was quite different from the interpretation we now give to it. When this article was composed, the consistory or the classis decided the call instead of the minister. Examples of this may be cited. In 1601 Rev. Vosculus of Epe wanted to accept a call from Steenwijk but the classis resolved that he should stay and so he did. In 1604 William Crynsz, minister at Maasland, accepted a call from Den Briel. The church of Maasland and the classis of Delft resolved that he should stay. It was not until Crynsz had gained from the synod of South Holland a reversal of the decision of the two aforementioned bodies that he left the congregation to which he was connected. Rev. Hanecopius of Breda accepted a call from Gouda in 1620. Contrary to the advice of the particular Synod of South Holland, Breda insisted that their pastor should stay. Breda's resolve was honored. Hanecopius did not leave for Gouda.

Was this practice right? We think not but, nevertheless, it continued unabated until about the middle of the seventeenth century. Without attempting to justify this practice (for we think it was wrong), we may try to explain it. We must remember that during this period many ministers in the Reformed churches were guilty of wrong doing. Some of them began to preach without an examination and without a calling. Others were self made itinerant preachers. Still others, stationed in a particular place, grew tired of their labor there and without the consent of the consistory and without notifying the classis they would simply leave as they saw fit. Though they did not receive another call they would go out and seek greener pastures for themselves and so became affiliated with another congregation. It was particularly against this last mentioned abuse that the tenth article of our church order was composed. Later many thoughtful men in the Reformed churches saw that the article was not altogether competent and that the treatment afforded many ministers under it was unjustifiable. The need for some change was felt. This became evident in 1771 when the following declaration was incorporated in the "Compendium of the Ecclesiastical Laws of Vriesland":

"dat het een beroepen dienaar vrij zal staan, zijne conditie te stellen in het aannemen zijns dienst (zoo hij eenige heeft, die der wille Gods en Zijn Woord gelijkvormig zijn) en in zulken geval zal men een vroom dienaar niet bezwaren in zijn conscientie, als hij billijke reden van vertrek zal hebben." ("that a called minister shall be free to stipulate his condition (that is, if he has any, conformable to the Word of God and His Word), and in such a case one shall not burden the conscience of a pious minister, if he shall have a just reason for his departure.")

Although this rule did not at one radically alter the practice of letting the consistory decide the call, it was the beginning of a change that gradually transferred the right to decide the call from the consistory to the minister. Thus writes Ds. H. Bouwman in his "Gereformeerd Kerkrecht," pg. 445:

"Het recht eener kerk of van een meerdere vergadering, om het aanvaarden eener roeping te keeren, was tot aan het einde der 17de eeuw onbetwist. Daarna veranderde de beschouwing. Men erkende, dat men toch een dienaar niet tegen zijn zin kan dwingen." ("The right of a church or of a broader gathering to stop the acceptance of a call was undisputed until the end of the 17th century. After that the conception changed. One acknowledged that one could not force a minister against his own conviction (zin).")

Then later in writing about the "consent" of Art. 10 the Prof. has the following to say: "Welk karakter draagt deze bewilling? In de 16e en 17e eeuw, zoo hebben wij gezien, lag de beslissing feitelijk in handen van de kerkeraad en classis, maar sedert de tweede helft der 17e eeuw werd aan den dienaar al meer de vrijheid van beslissing gelaten. Dit is ook noodig. De dienaar des Woords zelf is de geroepene, en hij is voor God en voor de gemeente verantwoordelijk,

dat hij in deze roeping niet willekeurig handelt. Een dienaar, die leeft voor des Heeren kerk, zal het niet licht opnemen, wanneer eene roeping to hem komt, en zal niet alleen overwegen, wat voor hem zelven goed is, maar ook wat tot het welzijn der kerk dienstbaar is. Een beroepen dienaar zal de zaak der roeping stellen voor het aangezicht des Heeren en van Hem smeeken licht en wijsheid, opdat hij eene rechte keuze kan doen. Hij zal ook, indien de verhouding goed is, raadplegen met zijne kerkeraad." ("What character does this consent bear? In the 16th and 17th century we saw that the decision lay factually in the hands of the consistory and the classis, but since the second half of the 17th century the liberty of the decision was left more and more with the minister. And that was also necessary. The servant of the Word himself is the one that is called, and he is responsible, both to God and the congregation, that he will not act arbitrarily. A minister who lives for the Lord's church shall not take it lightly when a call is extended to him, and shall not only consider what is good for himself, but also what will serve the wellbeing of the church. A minister receiving a call will bring the entire matter of that call before the face of the Lord and will supplicate Him for light and wisdom, in order that he may be able to make a correct choice. He will also, that is, if the relationship is harmonious, enter into consultation with his consistory.")

With this we heartily agree. Neither is it necessary that the present article of our church order be changed. In its present form it is capable of this interpretation as we showed in our last article. We must remember that if the consistory decides, an unreasonable consistory may easily do injustice to a pious minister. If, on the other hand, the minister has the sole right to decide, an unscrupulous minister abusing this privilege does injustice to the church. And these things are simply actualities which exist in this present world of sin in which the church for a time must abide. The only safe course, therefore, as we see it, is that the consistory decides the right to consider and that the minister, given that right, has the responsibility of the decision.

In concluding our discussion of this article we may take note that it stipulates that acceptance of a call shall be done "with knowledge on the part of the classis." In the dutch this is "voorweten," prior or foreknowledge. Just what does this mean?

In the commentary of Monsma and Van Dellen this is interpreted to mean that "the minister who desires to accept a call to another church must, therefore, seek consent from his consistory not only, but also the approval of the Classis. And that before he notifies the calling church that he has accepted their call." The minister then could send "a provisional letter of acceptance to the church concerned. He should notify the consistory of the calling church that he has determined to accept the call of their church; that his present consistory has given consent; and that he is seeking classical approval."

Perhaps this, too, was common practice in the churches a few centuries ago. Yet, the question arises as to whether it is proper and whether it does not vest in the classis a power that does not belong there. It is not the current practice in our Protestant Reformed Churches we know. The classis is not asked to approve of the acceptance of calls nor is it informed of these acceptances before they are officially made. When a minister accepts a call, the consistory dismissing him sends the credentials to the Classical Committee or if Classis is about to meet to the Classis itself. This is done after and not before the acceptance of the call. The classis (or through its committee), finding these credentials in order approves them and sends them to the calling church with this additional credential:

"The classical committee of Classis having examined the above credentials, approves them and herewith authorizes the counselor of the church of to proceed to the installation.

The aboved named classical committee."

It appears that this procedure is neither giving consent nor dissent, approving nor disapproving of the acceptance of the call. It is merely expressing satisfaction that the credentials given by the dismissing consistory are in good order. Thereupon it can advise to proceed with installation. Neither does it appear right that a classis exercises the right of approbating the acceptance of a call. The aforementioned commentary states as a reason for which classis should have this opportunity the following:

"Because the classis has a very definite interest in the matter. There may be so many vacancies in the classis or in the neighborhood of the church which the minister concerned is serving, that in the estimation of the classis he cannot well be spared at that time. Classis may also judge that the continued labors of that particular minister are very desirable in the church which he is serving."

With this we disagree. Classis is an advisory body. Only in instances when there is sharp disagreement between a consistory and minister in this matter may she express herself. Then she is requested to do so. Apart from such cases she must confine herself to "examining the credentials." The rest lays outside her jurisdiction. If Classis does more, it would seem she would also have the right to extend calls which she never does except through a particular consistory and congregation.

G.V.D.B.



NOTICE

The Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches of 1953 will resume its sessions, Wednesday morning, March 10, 1954 in the Fourth Protestant Reformed Church at 9:00 A.M.

The Consistory of the calling Church, the First Prot. Ref. Church of Grand Rapids, Mich.

J. M. Faber, Clerk.